AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

Old and New Testament:

WHEREIN
EACH CHAPTER IS SUMMED UP IN ITS CONTENTS; THE SACRED TEXT INSERTED AT LARGE, IN DISTINCT PARAGRAPHS; EACH PARAGRAPH REDUCED TO ITS PROPER HEADS; THE SENSE GIVEN, AND LARGELY ILLUSTRATED;

WITH

PRACTICAL REMARKS AND OBSERVATIONS:

BY MATTHEW HENRY.

EDITED BY

THE REV. GEORGE BURDER, AND THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES, A. M.

WITH THE

LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL PALMER.

First American Edition:

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A PREFACE,

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EXPOSITION
OF
New Testament

[Text continues on the page]
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

UPON THE

HISTORICAL BOOKS

OF THE

OLD TESTAMENT,

NAMELY,

JOSHUA,
JUDGES,
RUTH,
I. SAMUEL,
II. SAMUEL,
I. KINGS,
II. KINGS,

I. CHRONICLES,
II. CHRONICLES
EZRA,
NEHEMIAH,
AND
ESTHER.
My exposition
of
Prophets and Apostles
and
Historical
Treatise
of the
Old Testament

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THE

PREFACE

TO THE

HISTORICAL BOOKS.

THIS methodized and practical exposition of the Historical Books ventures abroad, with fear and trembling, in the same plain and homely dress with the former, on the Pentateuch: omni res jam negat, contenta docet. The subject requires no ornament, to have it apprehended is all. But I trust, through grace, it proceeds from the same honest design, that is, to promote the knowledge of the scripture, in order to the reforming of men's hearts and lives. If I may but be instrumental to make my readers wise and good, wiser and better, more watchful against sin, and more careful of their duty both to God and man, and, in order to that, more in love with the word and law of God, I have all I desire, all I aim at. May he that ministreth seed to the sower, multiply the seed sown, by increasing the fruits of righteousness, 2 Cor. 9. 10.

It is the history of the Jewish Church and Nation, from their first settlement in the promised land, after their four hundred and thirty years' bondage in Egypt, and their forty years' wandering in the wilderness, to their re-settlement there, after their seventy years' captivity in Babylon—from Joshua to Nehemiah. The five books of Moses were taken up more with their laws, institutes, and charters; but after these, more purely historical, and in that way of writing, a great deal of very valuable learning and wisdom has been conveyed from one generation to another.

The chronology of this history, and the ascertaining of the times when the several events contained in it, happened, would very much illustrate the history, and add to the brightness of it; it is therefore well worthy the search of the curious and ingenious, and they may find both pleasure and profit in pursuing the labours of many learned men who have directed their studies that way. I confess I could willingly have entertained myself and reader, in this preface, with a calculation of the times through which this history passes: but I consider, that such a babe in knowledge as I am, could not pretend either to add to, or correct what has been done by so many great writers, much less to decide the controversies that have been agitated among them. I had indeed some thoughts of consulting my worthy and ever-honoured friend Mr. Tallaents of Shrewsbury, the learned author of the View of Universal History, and to have begged some advice and assistance from him in methodizing the contents of this history; but in the very week in which I put my last hand to this part, it pleased God to put an end to his useful life, (and useful it was to the last,) and to call him to his rest in the eighty-ninth year of his age: so that purpose was broken off, that thought of my heart. But that elaborate performance of his, commonly called his Chronological Tables, gives great light to this, as indeed to all other parts of history. And Dr. Lightfoot's Chronology of the Old Testament, and Mr. Cradock's History of the Old Testament, methodized, may also be of great use to such readers as I write for.

As to the particular chronological difficulties which occur in the thread of this history, I have not been large upon them; because many times I could not satisfy myself; and how then could I satisfy my reader concerning them? I have not indeed met with any difficulties so great, but that solutions might be given of them, which are sufficient to silence the atheists and anticriturists, and roll away from the sacred records all the reproach of contradiction and inconsistency with themselves; for to do that, it is enough to show that the difference may be accommodated either this way or that, when at the same time one cannot satisfy one's self which way is the right.

But it is well that these are things about which we may very safely and very comfortably be ignorant and unresolved. What concerns our salvation, is plain enough, and we need not perplex ourselves about the niceties of chronology, genealogy, or chorography. At least, my undertaking leads me not into those labyrinths. What is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, is what I intend to observe; and I would endeavour to open what is dark and hard to be understood, only in order to that. Every author must be taken in his way of writing; the sacred penmen, as they have not left us formal systems, so they have not left us formal annals, but useful narratives of things proper for our direction in the way of duty, which some great judges of common writers have thought to be the most pleasant and profitable histories, and most likely to answer the end. The works of the Prophet, *Habakkuk; Ezekiel; Malachi; Obadiah, 'Isaius exercet*; (Aug. in Joh. Tract. 45.) as one of the Ancients expresses it, that is, it has enough in it that is easy, to nourish the meanest to life eternal, yet enough that is difficult, to try the industry and humility of the greatest.

There are several things which should recommend this part of sacred writ to our diligent and constant search.

I. That it is history; and therefore entertaining and very pleasant, edifying, and very serviceable to the conduct of human life. It gratifies the inquisitive with the knowledge of that which the most intense speculation could not discover any other way. By a retirement into ourselves, and a serious contemplation of the objects we are surrounded with, close reasoning may advance many excellent truths without being beheld to any other. But for the knowledge of past events, we are entirely indebted
(and must be so to) the reports and records of others. A notion or hypothesis of a man's own framing may gain him the reputation of a wit, but a history of a man's own framing will lay him under the reprobate of a cheat, any further than it respects that which he himself is an eye of or ear witness of. How much are we indebted then to the divine wisdom and goodness for these writings, which have made things so long since past as familiar to us as any of the occurrences of the age and place we live in!

History is so edifying, that parables and apochopos have been invented to make up the deficiencies of it, for our instruction concerning good and evil; and whatever may be said of other history, we are sure that in this history there is no matter of fact recorded, but what has its use, and will help either to ex-pound God's providence or guide man's prudence.

II. That it is true history, and what we may rely upon the credit of, and need not fear being deceived in. This history, the best known, reckoned _tempus salutis_, that is, which they knew not long ago all, and _tempus pietatis_, that is, the account of which was wholly fabulous, is to us _tempus insipiens_, that is, what we have a most authentic account of. The Greeks were with them the most celebrated historians, and yet their successors in learning and dominion, the Romans, put them into no good name for their credibil-ity, witness that of the poet: _Et quicquid Graecia mendax audet in Historia—All that lying Greece has dared to record_, Suet. Sat. 10. But the history which we have before us, is of undoubted certainty, and no cunningly-devised fable. To be well assured of this is a great satisfaction, especially since we meet with so many things in it truly miraculous, and many more great and marvellous.

III. That it is ancient history, far more ancient than was ever pretended to come from any other hand. Homer, the most ancient genuine heathen writer now entirely extant, is reckoned to have lived at the beginning of the Olympiads, near the time when it is computed that the city of Rome was founded, which was but about the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah. And his writings pretend not to be historical, but poetical fiction all over: rhapso-odies indeed they are, and the very Alcoran of Paganism.

The most ancient authentic historians now extant are Herodotus and Thucydides, who were contemporaries with the latest of our historians, Ezra and Nehemiah, and could not write with any certainty of events much before their own time. The obscurity, deficiency, and uncertainty, of all ancient history, except that which we find in the scripture, is abundantly made out by the learned Bishop Stiling-fleet, and others. It is well known that the first Greek historian, the so-called Thucydides, was no historian at all; or, so far as he wrote, was only a chronicler of the affairs of other nations, except only as they fall in with the affairs of the Jews; for the Lord's portion is his people, _Jacob is the lot of his inheritance_, Deut. 32. 8, 9. Such a concern has God for his church in every age, and so dear have its interests been to him; let them therefore be so to us, that we may be _followers of him as dear children_.

IV. That it is a divine history, given by inspiration of God, and a part of that blessed book which is to be the standing rule of our faith and practice. And we are not to think it a part of it which might have been spared, or which we may now pass over, or cast a careless eye upon, as if it were indifferent whether we read it or no; but we are to read it as a sacred record, preserved for our benefit _on whom the ends of the world are come_.

1. This history is of great use for the understanding of some other parts of the Old Testament. The account we have here of David's life and reign, and especially of his troubles, is a key to many of his Psalms. And much light is given to most of the prophecies by these histories.

2. Though we have not altogether so many types of Christ here, as we had in the history of the law of Moses, yet even here we meet with divers who were figures of Him that was to come, such as Joshua, Samson, Solomon, Cyrus, but especially David, whose kingdom was typical of the kingdom of the Mes-siah and the covenant of royalty made with him, a dark representation of the covenant of redemption made with the eternal Word; nor know we how to call Christ the son of David, unless we be acquainted with this history; nor how to receive it that John Baptist was the Elias that was to come, Matt. 11. 14.

3. The state of the Jewish Church, which is here set before us, was typical of the Gospel Church, and the state of that in the days of the Messiah; and as the _prophecies_ which related to it, looked farther to the latter days, so did the histories of it; and still _these things happened to them for examples_, 1 Cor. 10. 11. By the tenor of this history we are given to understand these three things concerning the church; for the _thing that hath been, is that which shall be_, Eccl. 1. 9. (1.) That we are not to expect the perfect purity and unity of the church in this world, and therefore not to be stumbled, though we are grieved, at its corruptions, distempers, and divisions; not to think it strange concerning them, as though some strange thing happened, much less to think the worse of its laws and constitutions for the sake of them, or to despair of its perpetuity. What wretched stains of idolatry, impiety, and immor-tality, appear on the Jewish Church; and what a woful breach was there between Judah and Ephraim, yet God took them (as I may say) with all their faults, and never wholly rejected them, till they rejected the Messiah. _Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah, of her God, though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel_, Jer. 51. 5. (2.) That we are not to expect the constant tranquillity and prosperity of the church. It was then often oppressed and afflicted from its youth, had its years of servitude, as well as its days of triumph, was often obscure, diminished, impoverished, and brought low; and yet still God secured to himself a remnant, a _holy seed_, which was _the substance_ thereof, Isa. 6. 13. Let us not then be surprised to see the Gospel-Church sometimes under hatches, and even into the wilderness without a crown against it. (3.) That yet we need not fear the utter extermination of it. The Gospel-Church is called, _the Israel of God_, Gal. 6. 16. and the _Jerusalem which is above_, Gal. 4. 26. _the heavenly Jerusalem_, as _for Israel after the flesh_, and the _Jerusalem that was_, by the wonderful care of the divine Providence, outrode all the storms with which they were
1. Tossed and threatened, and continued in being till they were made to resign all their honours to the Gospel-Church, which they were the figures of; so shall that also, notwithstanding all its shocks, be preserved, till the mystery of God shall be finished, and the Kingdom of Grace shall have its perfection in the kingdom of Glory.

2. This history is great use to us for our direction in the way of our duty; it was written for our learning, that we may see the evil we should avoid, and be armed against it, and the good we should do, and be quickened to it. Though they are generally judges, and kings, and great men, whose lives are here written, yet in them, even those of the meanest rank may see the deformity of sin, and hate it, and the beauty of holiness, and be in love with it; nay, the greater the person is, the more evident are both these; for if the great be good, it is their goodness that makes their greatness honourable; if bad, their greatness does but make their badness the more shameful. The failings even of good people are also recorded here for our admonition, that he who thinks he stands, may take heed lest he fall; and that he who has fallen, may not despair of forgiveness, if he recover himself by repentance.

3. This history, as it shows what God requires of us, so it shows what we may expect from his providence, especially concerning states and kingdoms. By the dealings of God with the Jewish nation, it appears that as nations are, so they must expect to fare; that while princes and people serve the interests of God's kingdom among men, he will secure and advance their interests; but that when they shake off his government, and rebel against him, they can look for no other than an inmundation of judgments. It was so all along with Israel; while they kept close to God, they prospered; when they forsook him, every thing went cross. That great man, Archbishop Tillotson, (Vol. I. Serm. 3. on Prov. 14. 34.) suggests, That though as to particular persons, the providences of God are promiscuously administered in this world, because there is another world of rewards and punishments for them, yet it is not so with nations as such, but national virtues are ordinarily rewarded with temporal blessings, and national sins punished with temporal judgments; because, as he says, public bodies and communities of men, as such, can be rewarded and punished only in this world, for in the next they will all be dissolved. So plainly is God's ways of disposing kingdoms laid before us in the glass of this history, that I could wish Christian statesmen would think themselves as much concerned as preachers, to acquaint themselves with it; they might fetch as good maxims of state and rules of policy from this as from the best of the Greek and Roman historians. We are blessed (as the Jews were) with a divine revelation, and make a national profession of religion and relation to God, and therefore are to look upon ourselves as in a peculiar manner under a divine regiments, so that the things which happened to them, were designed for ensamples to us.

I cannot pretend to write for great ones. But if what is here done, may be delightful to any in reading, and helpful in understanding and improving, this sacred history, and governing themselves by the dictates of it, let God have all the glory, and let all the rivers return to the ocean from whence they came. When I look back on what is done, I see nothing to boast of, but a great deal to be ashamed of; and when I look forward on what is to be done, I see nothing in myself to trust to for the doing of it; I have no sufficiency of my own, but by the grace of God, I am what I am, and that grace shall, I trust, be sufficient for me. Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength. That blessed 1 Pet. 5. 10, in which the apostle speaks of, Phil. 1. 19. that continual supply or communication of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, is what we may in faith pray for, and depend upon, to furnish us for every good word and work. The pleasantness of the study has drawn me on to the writing of this, and the candour with which my friends have been pleased to receive my poor endeavours on the Pentateuch, encourages me to publish it; it is done according to the best of my skill, without some care and application of mind, in the same method and manner with that; I wish I could have done it in less compass, that it might have been more within the reach of the poor of the flock. But then it would not have been so plain and full as I desire it may be for the benefit of the lambs of the flock; Briefs esse laboro, obscurus fio—Labouring to be obscure.

With an humble submission to the divine providence and its dispositions, and a humble reliance on the divine grace and its conduct and operation, I purpose still to proceed, as I have time, in this work. Two volumes more will, if God permit, conclude the Old Testament; and then, if my friends encourage me, and God spare me, and enable me for it, I intend to go on to the New Testament. For though many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those parts of scripture which are yet before us, (Luke 1. 1.) whose works praise them in the gates, and are likely to outline mine, yet while the subject is really so copious as it is, and the manner of handling it may possibly be so various, and while one book comes into the hands of some, and another into the hands of others, and all concur in the same design to advance the common interests of Christ's kingdom, the common faith once delivered to the saints, and the common salvation of precious souls; (Tit. 1. 4. Jude 3.) I hope store, of this kind, will be thought no sere. I make bold to mention my purpose to proceed thus publicly, in hopes I may have the advice of my friends in it, and their prayers for me, that I may be made more ready and mighty in the scriptures, that understanding and utterance may be given to me, that I may obtain of the Lord Jesus, to be found his faithful servant, who am less than the least of all that call him Master.

M. H.

Chester, June 2, 1708.
EXPOSITION,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
UPON THE BOOK OF
JOSHUA.

1. We have now before us, the history of the Jewish nation, in this book, and those that follow it to the end of the book of Esther. These books, to the end of the books of the Kings, the Jewish writers call, the first book of the prophets, to bring them within the distribution of the books of the Old Testament, into the law, the prophets, and the Chetubim, or Hagiographa, Luke 24. 44. The rest they make part of the Hagiographa. For though history is their subject, it is justly supposed that prophets were their penmen: to those books that are purely and properly prophetical the name of the prophet is prefixed, because the credibility of the prophecies depended much upon the character of the prophets; but these historical books, it is probable, were collections of the authentic records of the nation, which some of the prophets (the Jewish Church was for many ages more or less continually blessed with such) were divinely directed and helped to put together for the service of the Church to the end of the world; as their other officers, so their Historiographers, had their authority from Heaven.—It should seem that though the substance of the several histories was written when the events were fresh in memory, and written under a divine direction, yet that under the same direction, they were put into the form in which we now have them, by some other hand, long afterward, probably, all by the same hand, or about the same time. The grounds of the conjecture are, 1. Because former writings are so often referred to, as the Book of Jasher, Josh. 10. 13. and 2 Sam. 1. 18. and the Chronicles of the kings of Israel and Judah often; and the books of God, Nathan, and Jiddo. 2. Because the days when the things were done, are spoken of sometimes as days long since passed; as 1 Sam. 9. 9. He that is now called a prophet, was then called a seer. And 3. Because we so often read of things remaining unto this day, as stones, Josh. 4. 9.—7. 26.—8. 29.—10. 27. 1 Sam. 6. 18. Names of places, Josh. 5. 9.—7. 26. Judg. 1. 26.—15. 19.—18. 12. 2 Kings 14. 7. Rights and possessions, Judg. 1. 21. 1 Sam. 27. 6. Customs and usages, 1 Sam. 5. 5. 2 Kings 17. 41. Which clauses have been since added to the history by the inspired collectors, for the confirmation and illustration of it to those of their own age. And if one may offer a mere conjecture, it is not unlikely that the historical books to the end of the Kings were put together by Jeremiah the prophet a little before the captivity, for it is said of Ziklag, 1 Sam. 27. 6. it pertains to the kings of Judah (which style began after Solomon, and ended in the captivity) unto this day: And it is still more probable that those which follow, were put together by Ezra the scribe, some time after the captivity. However, though we are in the dark concerning their authors, we are in no doubt concerning their authority; they were a part of the oracles of God, which were committed to the Jews, and were so received and referred to by our Saviour and the apostles.—In the five books of Moses we had a very full account of the rise, advance, and constitution, of the Old Testament Church, the family out of which it was raised, the promise, that great charter by which it was incorporated, the miracles by which it was built up, and the laws and ordinances by which it was to be governed. From which one would conceive an expectation of its character and state very different from what we find in this history. A nation that had statutes and judgments so righteous, one would think, should have been very holy; and that had promises so rich, should have been very happy. But, alas! a great part of the history is a melancholy representation of their sins and miseries, for the law made nothing perfect; that was to be done by the bringing in of a better hope. And yet if we compare the history of the Christian Church with its constitution, we shall find the same cause for wonder, so many have been its errors and corruptions; for neither does the Gospel make any thing perfect in this world, but leaves us still in the expectation of a better hope in the future state.

II. We have next before us the book of Joshua, so called, perhaps, not because it was written by him, though that be, it is written concerning him, and if any other wrote it, it was collected out of his journals, or memoirs. It contains the history of Israel under the command and government of Joshua, how he presided as general of their armies, 1. In their entrance into Canaan, ch. 1. 5. 2. In their conquest of Canaan, ch. 6. 12. 3. In the distribution of the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel, ch. 13. 21. 4. In the settlement and establishment of religion among them, ch. 22. 24. In all which he was a great example of wisdom, courage, fidelity, and piety, to all that are in places of public trust. But that is not all the use that

Dr. Lightfoot thinks that Phinehas wrote it. Bishop Patrick is clear that Joshua wrote it himself.
JOSHUA, I.

CHAP. I.

The book begins with the history, not of Joshua's life, (many remarkable passages of that we had before in the books of Moses,) but of his reign and government. In this chapter, I. God appoints him in the stead of Moses, gives him an ample commission, full instructions, great encouragements, v. 1-6. II. He accepts the government, and addresses himself immediately to the business of it, giving orders to the officers of the people in general, v. 16, 11. And particularly to the two tribes and a half, v. 12-15. III. The people agree to it, and take an oath of fealty to him, v. 16-18. A reign which thus began with God, could not but be honourable to the prince, and comfortable to the subject. The last words of Moses are still verified, Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people? Deut. 33. 29.

I. NOW after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, 2. Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. 3. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. 4. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. 5. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. 6. Be strong and of a good courage; for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. 7. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. 8. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. 9. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Honour is here put upon Joshua, and great power lodged in his hand, by Him that is the Fountain of honour and power, and by whom kings reign; instructions are given him by infinite wisdom, and encouragements by the God of all consolation. God had before spoken to Moses concerning him, Num. 27. 18. But now he speaks to him, v. 1, probably, as he spake to Moses, Lev. 1. 1, out of the tabernacle of the congregation, where Joshua had with Moses presented himself, Deut. 31. 14. to learn the way of attending there. Though Eleazar had the brevity of judgment, which Joshua was directed to consult as there was occasion, Num. 27. 21, yet, for his great encouragement, God here speaks to him immediately, some think, in a dream or vision, (as Job 33. 15.) for though God has tied us to instituted ordinances, in them to attend him, yet he has not tied himself to them, but that he may, without them, make himself known to his people, and speak to their hearts otherwise than by their ears.

Concerning Joshua's call to the government, observe here,

I. The time when it was given him, After the death of Moses. As soon as ever Moses was dead, Joshua took upon him the administration, by virtue of his solemn ordination in Moses's life-time; an interregnum, though but for a few days, might have been of ill consequence; but, it is probable, that God did not speak to him to go forward toward Canaan, till after the thirty days of mourning for Moses were ended; not, as the Jews say, because the sadness of his spirit during those days unfitted him for communion with God; (he sorrowed not as one that had no hope;) but by this solemn pause, and a month's adjournment of the public councils, even now when time was so very precious to them, God would put an honour upon the memory of Moses, and give time to the people not only to lament their loss of him, but to repent of their miscarriages toward him during the forty years of his government.
The place Joshua had been in before he was thus preferred. He was Moses's minister, that is, an immediate attendant upon his person and assistant in business. The LXX translate it ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἄντροπου, a workman under Moses, under his direction and command. Observe, 1. He that was here called to honour, had been long bred to business. Our Lord Jesus himself took upon him the form of a servant, and then God highly exalted him. 2. He was trusted in, in subjection, and under command. Those are fittest to rule, that have learnt to obey. 

He that was to succeed Moses was intimately acquainted with him, that he might fully know his doctrine and manner of life, his purpose and long-suffering, (2 Tim. 3. 10.) might take the same measures, walk in the same spirit, in the same steps, having to carry on the same work. 4. He was here in a type of Christ, who might therefore be called Moses's Minister, because he was made under the law, and fulfilled all the righteousness of it. 

The call itself that God gave him, which is very full. 

1. The consideration upon which he was called to the government; Moses my servant is dead, v. 2. All good men are God's servants; and it is no disparagement, but an honour, to the greatest of men to make him his servant. Moses was not only called to extraordinary work, was a steward in God's house, and in the discharge of the trusts reposed in him, he served not himself but God who employed him; he was faithful as a servant, and with an eye to the Son, as is intimated, Heb. 3. 5. where what he did, is said to be for a testimony of the things that should be spoken after; God will own his servants, will confess them in the great day. 

But Moses was not the last of those who were called to extraordinary work, Moses was called to extraordinary work, was a steward in God's house, and in the discharge of the trusts reposed in him, he served not himself but God who employed him; he was faithful as a servant, and with an eye to the Son, as is intimated, Heb. 3. 5. where what he did, is said to be for a testimony of the things that should be spoken after; God will own his servants, will confess them in the great day. 

The time of the business Moses was called to, was very near the end of his days. It was in the midst of his work, that he was called to another task, his usefulness was cut short, and his employment entrusted to another. 

The end is near at hand. Moses, the servant is dead, but God the Master is not, he lives for ever. (2.) "Because Moses is dead, therefore the work devolves upon thee as his successor, for hereunto thou wast appointed. Therefore there is need of thee to fill up his place, Up, and be doing." Note, [1.] The removal of useful men should quicken survivors to be as much the more diligent in doing good. Such and such are dead, and we must die shortly, therefore let us work while it is day. 

2. Joshua must not be idle, he must not sit down, but go on. It is a great mercy to a people, if, when useful men are taken away in the midst of their usefulness, others are raised up in their stead to go on where they broke off. Joshua must not be idle, he must not sit down, but go on. 

He is therefore called to do the work, to finish what Moses began, the latter generations enter into the labour of the former. And thus Christ, our Joshua, does that for us which could never be done by the law of Moses; justifies, Acts 13. 39. and sanctifies, Rom. 8. 3. The life of Moses made way for Joshua, and prepared the people for what was to be done by him: thus the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. And then the death of Moses made room for Joshua: thus we are dead, and Joshua is alive; when we are taken away, that we may be married to Christ, Rom. 7. 4. 

3. The particular service he was now called out to. "Arise, go over this Jordan, this river, which you have in view, and on the banks of which you lie encamped." This was a trial to the faith of Joshua, whether he would give orders to make preparation for passing the river, when there was no visible way of getting over it, at least, not at this place and at this time, when all the banks were overflowed, ch. 3. 15. He had no pontons or bridge of boats by which to convey them over, and yet he must believe, that God, having ordered them over, would open a way for them. "Going over Jordan was going into Canaan," a new birth; to be a minister, was to be joint heir with him; and though Joshua had not always the same presence of mind that Moses had, yet if he had always the same presence of God, he would do well enough. Note, It is a great comfort to the rising generation of ministers and Christians, that the same
grace which was sufficient for those that went before them, shall not be wanting to them, if they be not wanting to themselves in the improvement of it. It is repeated here again, v. 9. "The Lord thy God is with thee as a God of power, and that power engaged for thee whithersoever thou goest." Note, Those that go where God sends them, shall have him with them wherever they go, and they need desire no more to make them easy and prosperous. (2.) That the presence of God should never be withheld from them, even when the law, and the humble people, and the "great and the exceeding" of the Canaanites, and the dividing of Canaan, these he must religiously observe. Joshua was a man of great power and authority, yet he must himself be under command and do as he is bid. No man's dignity or dominion, how great soever, sets him above the law of God. Joshua must not only govern by law, and take care that the people observe the law, but he must observe it himself, and so by his own example maintain the honour and authority of God's command. First, He must do what he writeth; it is not enough to hear and read the word, to commend and admire it, and know and remember it, to talk and discourse of it, but we must do it. Secondly, He must do according to what was written, exactly observing the law as his copy, and doing, not only that which was there required, but in all circumstances according to the appointment. Thirdly, He must do according to all that was written, without excuse or deviation, to respect all God's commandments, even those which are most displeasing to flesh and blood. Fourthly, He must observe to do so, observe the checks of conscience, the hints of providence, and all the advantages of opportunity: careful observance is necessary to universal obedience. Fifthly, He must not turn from it, either in his own practice, or in any act of government, to the right hand or to the left, for there are errors in both hands, and virtue is in the mean. Sixthly, He must be strict and courageous, that he may do according to the law. So many discouragements there are in the way of duty, that those who will proceed and persevere in it, must put on resolution. And (lastly) to encourage him in his obedience, he assures him, that then he shall do wisely, (as it is in the margin,) and make his way prosperous, v. 7. 8. They that make the word of God their rule, and conscientiously walk by that rule, shall find, as well as the whole church, to finish them with the best maxims by which to order their conversation, Ps. 111. 10. And it will entitle them to the best blessings; God shall give them the desire of their heart. (2.) That he encourage himself herein with the promise and presence of God, and make those his stay, v. 6. Be strong and of a good courage. And again, v. 7. as if this was the one thing needful, only be strong and very courageous. And he encourages with this, v. 9. Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed. Joshua had long since signalized his valour in the war with Amalek, and in his dissent from the report of the evil spies, and yet God sees fit thus to inculcate this precept upon him. Those that have grace, have need to be called upon again and again to exercise grace and to improve in it. Joshua was humble and low in his own eyes, and this he was told of God as his portion. He was not diffident of himself, and of his own wisdom, and strength, and sufficiency for the work, especially coming after so great a man as Moses; and therefore God repeats this so often, "Be strong and of a good courage; let not the sense of thine own infirmities dishearten thee, God is almighty. Have not I commanded thee?" [1.] I have commanded thee to do according to all this law. To this end he must meditate therein, not for contemplation sake only, or to fill his head with notions, or that he might find something to puzzle the priests with, but that he might both as a man and as a magistrate observe to do according to what was written therein; and several things were written there, which had particular reference to the business he had now before him, whether concerning the law of the dividing of the Canaanites, and the destroying of the Canaanites, and the dividing of Canaan, these he must religiously observe. Joshua was a man of great power and authority, yet he must himself be under command and do as he is bid. No man's dignity or dominion, how great soever, sets him above the law of God. Joshua must not only govern by law, and take care that the people observe the law, but he must observe it himself, and so by his own example maintain the honour and authority of God's command.
JOSUA, I.

commanded, called, and commissioned, to do it, and therefore will be sure to own thee and strengthen thee, and bear thee out in it." Note. When we are in the way of our duty, we have reason to be strong and very courageous; and it will help very much to animate and embolden us, if we keep our eye upon the divine warrant, and hear God saying, "Have not I commanded thee? I will therefore help thee, succeed thee, accept thee, reward thee." Our Lord Jesus, as Joshua here, was borne up under his sufferings by a regard to the will of God, and the commandment he had received from his Father, John 10. 18.

10. Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, 11. Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare your victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it. 12. And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manassé, spake Joshua, saying, 13. Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, The Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land. 14. Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valour, and help them, 15. Until the Lord have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land which the Lord your God giveth them; then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses, the Lord's servant, gave you on this side Jordan, toward the sun-rising.

Joshua, being settled in the government, immediately applies himself to business; not to take state or to take his pleasures, but to further the work of God among the people over which God had set him. As he that desires the office of a minister, (1 Tim. 3. 1.) so he that desires the office of a magistrate, desires a work, a good work; neither is preferred to be idle.

1. He issues out orders to the people to provide for a march; and they had been so long encamped in their present post, that it would be a work of some difficulty to decamp. The officers of the people that commanded under Joshua in their respective tribes and families, attended him for orders which they were to transmit to the people. Inferior magistrates are as necessary and as serviceable to the public good in their places as the supreme magistrate in his. What would Joshua have done without officers? We are therefore required to be patient and provident in choosing men for office, not to governors, as to them that are sent by him, 1 Pet. 2. 13, 14. By these officers, 1. Joshua gives public notice, that they were to pass over Jordan within three days. These orders, I suppose, were not given till after the return of the spies that were sent to bring an account of Jericho, though the story of that affair follows, ch. 2. And perhaps that was such an instance of his jealousy, and excessive caution, as made it necessary that he should be so often "bidden as he was, to be strong and of a good courage. Observe with what assurance Joshua says it to the people, because God had said to him, Ye shall pass over Jordan, and shall possess the land. We greatly honour the truth of God, when we stagger not at the promises of God. 2. He gives them directions to prepare victuals, not to prepare transport vessels; that he bore them out of Egypt upon eagles' wings, would in like manner bear them into Canaan, to bring them to himself, Exod. 19. 4. But those that were minded to have other victuals beside the manna, which had not yet ceased, must prepare it, and have it ready against the time appointed. Perhaps, though the men of war did not cease till they were come into Canaan, ch. 5. 12, yet since they were come into a land inhabited, (Exod. 16. 35.) where they might be furnished in part with other provisions, it did not fall so plentifully, nor did they gather so much as when they had it first given them in the wilderness, but decreased gradually, and therefore they are ordered to provide other victuals, in which perhaps was included all other things necessary to their much. And some of the Jewish writers considering that having manna, they needed not to provide other victuals, understand it figuratively, that they must repent of their sins, and make their peace with God, and resolve to live a new life, that they might be ready to receive this great favour. See Exod. 19. 10, 11. 2. He reminds the two tribes and a half of the obligation they were under to go over Jordan with their brethren, though they were absent from the land, and families left behind. Interest would make the other tribes glad to go over Jordan, but in this it was an act of self-denial, and against the grain: therefore it was needful to produce the agreement which Moses had made with them, when he gave them their possession before their brethren, v. 13. Remember the word which Moses commanded you. Some of them perhaps were ready to think now that they were too good, which it would be too hard upon them in this matter, they might find some excuse or other to discharge themselves from this engagement, or might prevail with Joshua to dispense with them; but he holds them to it, and lets them know, though Moses was dead, his commands and their promises were still in full force. He reminds them, 1. Of the advantages they had received in being first settled: "The Lord your God hath given you rest, and you now know what you have to trust to, and are not as the rest of the tribes, waiting the issue of the war first and then of the lot. He has also given your families rest, your wives and children, whose settlement is your satisfaction. He has given you rest, by giving you this land, this good land, which you are in full and quiet possession of." Note, When God by his providence has given us rest, we ought to consider how we may honour him with the advantages of it, and what service we may do to our brethren who are unsettled, or not so well settled as we are. When God had given David rest, (2 Sam. 7. 1.) see how restless he was till he had found out a habitation for the ark, Ps. 132. 4, 5. When God has given us rest, we must take heed of slothfulness, and of settling upon our lees. 2. He reminds them of their agreement to help him in the return in the name of God, and that if they should be like sooner given them rest, v. 14, 15. This was, (1.) reasonable in itself; so closely were all the tribes incorporated, that they must needs look upon themselves as members one of another. (2.) It was enjoined them by Moses, the servant of the Lord; he commanded them to do this, and Joshua his successor would see his commands observed. (3.) It was the only expedient they had to save themselves from the guilt of a great sin in settling on that side Jordan, a sin which would one time or other find them out, Num. 32. 23. (4.) It was the con-
dition of the grant Moses had made them of the land they were possessed of, so that they could not be subject to a goatherd, to do for the common enjoyment of the land of their possession, as it is here called, \( v. 15 \). if they did not fulfil the condition. (5.) They themselves had covenanted and agreed therefore unto, Numb. 32. 25. \( Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth. \) Thus we all lie under manifold obligations to strengthen the hands one of another, and not to seek our own welfare only but one another's.

16. And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us we will go. 17. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses. 18. Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage.

This answer was not given by the two tribes and a half only, (though they are spoken of immediately before,) but by the officers of all the people, (\( v. 10 \)) as their representatives, concurring with the divine appointment, by which Joshua was set over them, and they did it heartily, and with a great deal of cheerfulness and resolution.

1. They promise him obedience, \( v. 16 \) not only as subjects to his prince, but as soldiers to their general, of whose particular orders they are to be obedient; he that hath soldiers under him, saith to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; Matt. 8. 9. This the people of Israel here engage themselves to J-shu, \( \text{4all that thou commandest us to do we will readily do, without murmuring or disputing;} \) and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will do it upon our most difficult and perilous expedition, we will go." We must thus swear allegiance to our Lord Jesus, as the Captain of our salvation, and bind ourselves to do what he commands us by his word, and to go whither he sends us by his providence.

And since Joshua, being humbly conscious to himself how far short he came of Moses, feared he should not have such influence upon the people, and such an interest in them, as Moses had, they here promise that they would be as obedient to him as ever they had been to Moses, \( v. 17 \). To speak truth, they had no reason to boast of their obedience to Moses; he had found them a stiff-necked people, Deut. 9. 24. But they mean that they would be as obedient of Joshua as they should have been, and an answer was given (the generality of them at least sometimes) of Moses. Note, We must not so magnify that they are gone, how eminent soever they were, either in the magistracy or in the ministry, as to be wanting in the honour and duty we owe to those that survive and succeed them, though in gifts they may come short of them. Obedience for conscience sake will continue, though Providence may change the hands by which it is done and acts. 2. They pray for the presence of God with him, \( v. 17 \). "\( \text{Only the Lord thy God be with thee, to bless and prosper thee, and give thee success, as he was with Moses.}\) Prayers and supplications are to be made for all in authority, 1 Tim. 2. 1. 2. And the best thing we can ask of God for our magistrates, is, that they may have the presence of God with them; that will make them blessings to us, so that in seeking this for them, we consult our own interest. A reason is here intimated, why they would obey him as they had obeyed Moses, because they believed (and in faith prayed) that God's presence would be with him as it was with Moses.

Those that we have reason to think have favored from God, should have honour and respect from us. Some understand it as a limitation of their obedience, "We will obey only as far as we perceive the Lord is with thee, but no further. While thou keepest close to God, he will keep close to thee; hitherto shall our obedience come, but no further." But they were so far from having any suspicion of Joshua's deviating from the divine rule, that the thought of it needed not such a proviso.

3. They pass an act to make it death to any Israelite to disobey Joshua's orders, or rebel against his commandment, \( v. 18 \). Perhaps, if such a law had been in Moses's time, it might have prevented many of the rebellions that were formed against him, for most men fear the sword of the magistrate more than the justice of God. Yet there was a special reason for the making of this law, now that they were entering upon the ways of Canaan, for in time of war the severity of military discipline is more necessary than at other times. Some think that in this statute they have an eye to that law concerning the prophet God had given like unto Moses, which they think, though it refer chiefly to Christ yet takes in Joshua by the way, as a type of him, that whosoever would not hearken to him, should be cut off from his people, Deut. 18. 19. I will require of him of.

4. They animate him to go on with cheerfulness in the work to which God had called him; and, in viewing that he would be strong and of a good courage, they do in effect promise him that they would do all they could, by an exact, bold and cheerful observance of all his orders, to encourage him. It very much heartens those that lead in a good work, to see those that follow, follow with a good will. Joshua, though of approved valour, did not take it as an affront, but as a great kindness, for the people to bid him be strong and of a good courage.

CHAP. II.

In this we have an account of the scouts that were employed to bring an account to Joshua of the pastures of the land of Jericho: Observe, 1. God sent them, \( v. 1, 2 \). How Rahab received them and protected them, and told a lie for them, \( v. 2, 7 \), so that they escaped out of the hands of the enemy. 2. The account she gave them of the present posture of Jericho, and the fear they were struck with upon the approach of Israel, \( v. 8, 11, 14 \). The bargain she made with them for the security of herself and her relations in the ruin she saw coming upon her city, \( v. 12, 21 \). Their safe return to Joshua, and the account they gave him of their expedition, \( v. 22, 24 \). And that which makes this story most remarkable, is, that Rahab, the person principally concerned in it, is twice celebrated in the New Testament as a great believer, Heb. 11. 31, and as one whose faith proved itself by good works, James 2, 25.

1. And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into a harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there. 2. And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to-night of the children of Israel, to search out the country. 3. And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered
into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country. 4. And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: 5. And it came to pass, about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whether the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. 6. But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof. 7. And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan, unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.

In these verses we have,

I. The prudence of Joshua, in sending spies to observe this important pass, which was likely to be disputed at the entrance of Israel into Canaan, v. 1. Go view the land, even Jericho. Moses had sent spies, Num. 13. (Joshua himself was one of them,) and it proved of ill consequence: yet Joshua now sends, not without a special intreaty to survey the whole land, but Jericho only; not to bring an account to the whole congregation, but to Joshua only; who, like a watchful General, was continually projecting for the public good, and was particularly careful to take the first step, and not to stumble at the threshold. It was not fit that Joshua should venture over Jordan, to make his remarks incognito—in disguise, but he sends two men, two truly appointed of time. Joshua is sure he has God with him, and yet sends men before him. We do not trust God, but tempt him, if our expectations slacken our endeavors. See how ready these men were to go upon this hazardous enterprise; though they put their lives in their hands, yet they ventured in obedience to Joshua their General, in zeal for the service of the camp, and in dependence upon the power of that God, who being the keeper of Israel in general, is the Protector of every particular Israelite in the way of his duty.

II. The providence of God, directing the spies to the house of Rahab. How they got over Jordan we are not told, but into Jericho they came, which was about seven or eight miles from the river, and there seeking for a convenient inn, were directed to the house of Rahab, here called a harlot; a woman that formerly been of ill fame, the reproach of which stuck to her name, though of late she had repented and reformed. Simon the leper, (Matt. 26. 6.) though cleansed from his leprosy, wore the reproach of it in his name as long as he lived; so Rahab the harlot, and she is so called in the New Testament, where both her faith and her good works are praised; to teach us, 1. That the greatness of sin is no bar to pardoning mercy, if it be truly repented of. 2. That there are many, who before their conversion were very wick-
and would not have justified her. But by this it appeared to be both alive and lively, that she exposed herself to the utmost peril, even to death, in obedience to her faith. Note. Those only are true believers, that can find in their hearts to venture for God; and those that by faith take the Lord for their God, take his people for their people, and cast in their lot among them. They that have God for their refuge and hiding-place, must testify their gratitude by their readiness to shelter his people who have occasion: let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Isa. 49:26. And we shall be glad of an opportunity of testifying the sincerity and zeal of our love to God, by hazardous services to his church and kingdom among men.

But, (2.) There is that in it which it is not easy to justify, and yet it must be justified, or else it could not be so good a work as to justify her. [1.] It is plain that she betrayed her country by harboring the spies, and, if, and aiding those that were designing its destruction, which could not consist with her allegiance to her prince, and her affection and duty to the community she was a member of. But that which justifies her in this, is, that she knew that the Lord had given them this land, v. 9. knew it by the incontestable miracles God had wrought for them, which confirmed that grant; and her obligations to God were higher than her obligations to her king, and the prince, or any other. If she knew God had given them this land, it would have been a sin to join with those that hindered them from possessing it. But since no such grant of any land to any people can now be proved, this will by no means justify any such treachery practices against the public welfare. [2.] It is plain that she deceived the officers that examined her, with an untruth. That she knew not whence the men were, that they were gone out of the land, neither where they were gone. What shall we say to this? If she had either told the truth, or been silent, she had betrayed the spies, and that had certainly been a great sin: and it does not appear that she had another way of concealing them, than by this ironical direction to the officers to pursue them another way, which if they would suffer themselves to be deceived by, they were bound to accuse themselves, or their friends, of that which, though inquired after as a crime, they know to be a virtue. This case was altogether extraordinary, and therefore cannot be drawn into a precedent: and that may be justified here, which would be by no means lawful in a common case. Rahab knew by what was already done on the other side Jordan, that no mercy was to be shown to the Canaanites, and from thence inferred, if mercy were not owing them, truth was not; they that might be destroyed, might be deceived. Yet divines generally conceive that it was a sin, which however admitted of this extenuation, that being a Canaanite she was not better taught the evil of lying; but God accepted her faith and pardoned her infirmity: however it was in this case, we are sure it is our duty to speak every man the truth to his neighbour, to dread and detest lying, and never to do evil, that evil, that good may come of it, Rom. 3. 8. But God accepts what is sincerely and honestly intended, though there be a mixture of frailty and folly in it, and is not extreme to mark what we do amiss. Some suggest that what she said might possibly be true of some other men.*

* However the guilt of Rahab’s falsehood may be extenuated, it seems best to admit nothing which tends to explain it away. We are told in Galatians 3:13, that what was good in her conduct, and what was bad, rewarding the former, and pardoning the latter. Her views of the divine law must have been exceedingly dim and confused; a similar falsehood, told by those who enjoy the light of revelation, however laudable the motive, would of course deserve much heavier censure.

8. And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; 9. And she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. 10. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. 11. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. 12. Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father’s house, and give me a true token: 13. And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. 14. And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the Lord hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee. 15. Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt up upon the wall. 16. And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way. 17. And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear. 18. Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by; and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father’s household, home unto thee. 19. And it shall be, that whoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him. 20. And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear. 21. And she said, According unto your words so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window.

The matter is here settled between Rahab and the spies, respecting the service she was now to do
for them, and the favour they were afterward to show to her. She secures them on condition that they should secure her.

I. She gives them, and by them sends to Joshua and Israel, all the encouragement that could be desired to make their intended descent upon Canaan. This was what they came for, and it was worth considering what. Rahab had done and said. 

II. She engaged them to take her and her relations under their protection, that they might not perish in the destruction of Jericho, v. 12, 13. Now, 1. It was an evidence of the sincerity and strength of her faith concerning the approaching revolution in her country, that she was so solicitous to make an interest for herself with the Israelites, and court their favour, and to secure their kindness for her, and of her country, and in the belief of that beneficial lift in her favor from the conquerors. Thus Noah, being moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, and the condemnation of the world, Heb. 11. 7. They who truly believe the divine revelation, concerning the ruin of sinners, and the grant of the heavenly land to God's Israel, will give diligence to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life, 2 Pet. 2. 21. 

2. The provision she made for the safety of her relations, as well as for herself, is a laudable instance of natural affection, and an intimation to us in like manner to do all we can for the salvation of the souls of those that are dear to us, and, with ourselves, to bring them, if possible, into the bond of the covenant. No mention is made of her husband and children, but only her parents and brothers and sisters, whom, though she was herself a housekeeper, she retained a due concern for. 3. Her request that they would swear unto her by Jehovah, is an instance of her acquaintance with the only true God, and her faith in him, and devotion toward him, one act of which is religiously to swear by his name. 4. Her petition is very just and reasonable, that since she had protected them, and should protect her; and since her kindness to them extended to their people, for whom they were now negotiating, their kindness to her she should take in all her's. It was the least they could do for one that had saved their lives with the hazard of her own. Note, Those that show mercy may expect to find mercy. Observe, She does not demand any preference by way of reward for her kindness to them, though they lay so much at her feet: she has the kindness, gratitude, and remembrance of them, but only intends for her life, which in a general destruction would be a singular favour. Thus God promised Ebed-Melech in recompense for his kindness to Jeremiah, that in the worst of times he should have his life for a prey, Jer. 39. 18. Yet this Rahab was afterward advanced to be a princess in Israel, the wife of Salmon, and one of the ancestors of Christ, Matt. 1. 5. Those that faithfully serve Christ, he will not only protect, but prefer, and will do for them more than they are able to ask or think.

III. They solemnly engaged for her preservation in the common destruction, v. 14, "Our life for yours. We will take as much care of your lives as of our own, and would as soon hurt ourselves as any of you. Nay, they impregate God's judgment upon them all, if she should not make the promise to her. She had pawned her life for their's, and now they in requital pawn their lives for her's, and (as public persons) with them they pawn the public faith and the credit of their nation, for they plainly interest all Israel in the engagement of those words, When the Lord has given us the land, meaning not themselves only, but the people whose agents they were. No doubt, they knew themselves sufficiently authorised to treat with Rahab
concerning this matter, and were confident that Joshua would ratify what they did, else they had not dealt kindly and truly with them, v. 14. We will not only be kind in promising now, but true in performing what we promise, and not only true in performing just what we promise, but kind in out-doing thy demands and expectations. The goodness of God is often expressed by his kindness and truth, (Ps. 117. 2.) and in both these we must be followers of him. In particular, "If a hand be upon any in the house with thee, his blood shall be upon our head, v. 19. If hurt come through our carelessness to those whom we are obliged to protect, we thereby contract guilt, and blood will be found a heavy load." 2. The provisos and limitations of their promises. Though they were in haste, and it may be in some confusion, yet we find them very cautious in settling this agreement and the terms of it, not to bind themselves to more than was fit for them to perform. Their servants must be made well provided, (1.) That she tie the scarlet cord with which she was now about to let them down, in the window of her house, v. 18. This was to be a mark upon the house, which the spies would take care to give notice of to the camp of Israel, that no soldier, how hot and eager soever he was in military executions, might offer any violence to the house that was thus distinguished. This was like the blood sprinkled upon the lintel and two sides which secured the first-born from the destroying angel, and being of the same colour, some allude to this also, to represent the safety of believers, under the protection of the blood of Christ sprinkled on the conscience. The same cord that she made use of for the preservation of these Israelites, was to be made use of for her preservation. What we serve and honour God with, we may expect he will bless and make it serviceable to us. (2.) That she should have all those whose safety she had desired in the house with her, and keep them there; and that at the time of taking the town, none of them should dare to stir out of doors, v. 18, 19. This was a necessary proviso, for Rahab's kindred could not be distinguished any other way than by being in her distinguished house; should they mingle themselves with their neighbours, they were taken; But the sword would devour one as well as another. It was a reasonable proviso, that since they were saved purely for Rahab's sake, her house should have the honour of being their castle; and that if they would not perish with them that believed not, they should thus far believe the certainty and severity of the rain coming upon their city, as to retire into a place made safe by promise, as Noah in the ark, and Lot into Zoar. They were saved from this worldwide generation, by separating from it. It was likewise a significant proviso, intimating to us that those who are added to the church that they may be saved, must keep close to the society of the faith-ful, and having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, must take heed of being again entangled therein. (3.) That she should keep counsel, v. 14, 20. If thou utter this our business, that is, "If thou betray us when we are gone, or if thou make this agreement public, so as that others tie scarlet lines in their windows, and so confound us, then we will be quit of thine oath." They are unworthy of the secret of the Lord, that know not how to keep it to themselves when there is occasion. IV. She then took effectual care to secure her new friends, and sent them out another way, James 2. 25. Having fully understood the bargain they made with her, and consented to it, v. 21. she then let them down by a cord over the city wall, v. 15. the situation of her house befriending them herein: Thus Paul made his escape out of Damascus, 2 Cor. 11. 33. She also directed them which way to go for their own safety, being better acquainted with the country than they were, v. 16. She directs them to leave the high road, and abscond in the mountains till the pursuers were returned, for till then they could not safely venture over Jordan. Those that are in the way of God and their duty, may expect that Providence will protect them, but that will not excuse them from taking all prudent methods for their own safety. God will keep us, but we must not willfully expose ourselves. Providence must be our constant care; or, as some, vin thinksthat their charge to Rahab to keep this matter secret, and not to utter it, was intended for her safety, lest she, boasting of her security from the sword of Israel, should, before they came to protect her, fall into the hands of the king of Jericho, and be put to death for treason: thus do they prudently advise her for her safety, as she advised them for their's. And it is good advice, which we should at any time be thankful for, to take heed to ourselves.

22. And they went, and came unto the mountain, and abode there three days, until the pursuers were returned: And the pursuers sought them throughout all the way, but found them not. 23. So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all things that befell them: 24. And they said unto Joshua, Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.

We have here the safe return of the spies Joshua had sent, and the great encouragement they brought with them to Israel to proceed in their descent upon Canaan. Had they been minded to discourage the people, as the evil spies did that Moses sent, they might have told them what they had observed of the height and strength of the walls of Jericho, and the extraordinary vigilance of the king of Jericho, and how narrowly they escaped out of his hands: but they were of another spirit, and depending themselves upon the divine promise, they animated Joshua likewise.

1. Their return in safety was itself an encouragement to Joshua, and a token for good. That God provided for them so good a friend as Rahab was, in an enemy's country, and that he without standing in the way of the king of Jericho, and the eagerness of the pursuers, they were come back in peace, with such an instance of God's great care concerning them for Israel's sake, as might assure the people
of the divine conduct and care they were under, which would undoubtedly make the progress of their arms glorious. He that so wonderfully protected their scouts, would preserve their men of war, and cover their heads in the day of battle.

2. The report they brought was much more encouraging, v. 24. "All the inhabitants of the country, though resolved to stand it out, yet do faint because of us, they have neither wisdom to yield, nor courage to fight;" whence they conclude, "Truly the Lord has delivered into our hands all the land; it is all our own, we have nothing to do, in effect, but to take possession." Sinners’ frights are sometimes sure presages of their fall. If we resist our spiritual enemies, they will flee before us, which will encourage us to hope that in due time we shall be more than conquerors.

CHAP. III.

This chapter, and that which follows it, gives us the history of Israel’s passing through Jordan into Canaan, and a very memorable history it is. Long after, they are bid to remember, what God did for them between Shittim (whence they decamped, v. 1) and Gilgal, where they next pitched, ch. 4. 10. This, that they might know the righteousness of the Lord. By Joshua’s order they marched up on the left of their side, v. 1. and then all mighty power led them through it. They passed through the Red-sea unexpectedly, and in their flight by night, but they have notice some time before of their passing through Jordan, and the expectations raised. I. The people are directed to follow the ark, v. 2. 4. II. They are commanded to sanctify themselves, v. 5. III. The priests with the ark are ordered to lead the van, v. 6. IV. Joshua is magnified and made commander in chief, v. 7. 8. V. Public notice is given of what God is about to do for them, v. 9. 13. VI. The thing is done, Jordan is divided, and Israel brought safely through it, v. 14. 17. This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

AND Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. 2. And it came to pass, after three days, that the officers went through the host; 3. And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. 4. Yet shall there be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure; come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore. 5. And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you. 6. And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.

Rahab, in mentioning to the spies the driving up of the Red Sea, ch. 2. 10. the report of which terrified the Canaanites more than any thing else, intimates that they on that side the water expected that Jordan, that great defence of their country, would in like manner give way to them; whether the Israelites had any expectation of it, does not appear. God often did things for them which they looked not for, Isa. 64. 5. Now here we are told, 1. That they came to Jordan and lodged there, v. 1. Though they were not yet told how they should pass the river, and were improvident for the passing of it in any ordinary way, yet they went forward in faith, having been told, ch. 1. 11. that they should pass it. We must go on in the way of our duty, though we foresee difficulties, trusting God to help us through them, when we come to them. Let us proceed as far as we can, and depend for success on divine sufficiency and grace, and ourselves not sufficient for. In this march Joshua led them, and particular notice is taken of his early rising; as there is afterward upon other occasions, ch. 6. 12.—7. 16. 8. 10. which intimates how little he loved his ease, how much he loved his business, and what care and pains he was willing to take in it. Those that would bring great things to pass, must rise early, lest they come to poverty. Joshua herein set a good example to the officers under him, and taught them to rise early, and to all that are in public stations especially to attend continually to the duty of their place.

II. That the people were directed to follow the ark; officers were appointed to go through the host to give these directions, v. 2. that every Israelite might know both what to do, and what to depend upon.

1. They might depend upon the ark to lead them; that is, upon God himself, of whose presence the ark was an instituted sign and token. It seems, the pillar of cloud and fire was removed, else that had led them, unless we suppose that that now overtook the ark, and so they had a double guide, hence was put upon the ark, and a defence upon that glory. It is called here the ark of the covenant of the Lord. Why? Because the people might understand it, and the inhabitants of Canaan, as to what they could have from this. That the Lord was their God, a God in covenant with them? Here was the ark of the covenant; if God be cur’s, we need not to fear any evil. He was nigh to them, present with them, went before them: What could come amiss to them that were thus guided, thus guarded? Formerly, the ark was carried in the midst of the camp, that now it was put behind the people, as the ark of the covenant. It now passed through the land of Canaan; and, as it were, to give them lively and sensi in the promised land, and put them in possession of it. In the ark the tables of the law were, and over it the mercy-seat, for the divine law and grace reigning in the heart are the surest pledges of God’s presence and favour; and these that would be led to the heavenly Canaan, must take the law of God for their guide. (If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.) and have the great Propitiation in their eye, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

2. They might depend upon the priests and Levites, who were appointed for that purpose to carry the ark before them. The work of ministers is to hold forth the word of life, and to take care of the administration of those ordinances which are the tokens of God’s presence, and the manifestations of his power and grace; and herein they must go before the people of God in their way to heaven.

3. The people must follow the ark. Remove from your place and go after it; (1.) As those that are resolved never to forsake it; wherever God’s ordinances are, there we must be; if they flit, we must remove and go after them. (2.) As those that are entirely satisfied in its guidance, that it will lead in the best way to the best end; and therefore, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. This must be all their care, to attend the motions of the ark, and follow it with an implicit faith. Thus must we walk after the rule of the
word, and the direction of the Spirit in every thing, so shall ye be upon us, as it now was upon the Israel of God. They must follow the priests as far as they carried the ark, but no further; so we must follow our ministers only as they follow Christ.

4. In following the ark, they must keep their distance, v. 4. They must none of them come within a thousand yards of the ark. (1.) They must thus express their awful and reverent regard to that token of God’s presence, lest its familiarity with them should breed contempt. This charge to them, not to come near, was agreeable to that dispensation with respect to God’s tabernacle and brazen altar, but we may through Christ have access with boldness. (2.) Thus it was made to appear, that the ark was able to protect itself, and needed not to be guarded by the men of war, but was itself a guard to them. With what a noble defence of the enemy did it leave all its friends half a mile behind, but the unarmed priests that carried it, as perfectly sufficient for its own safety and their’s that followed it.

(3.) Thus it was the better seen by those that were to be led by it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go, seeing it, as it were, chalked out or tracked by the ark. Had they been allowed to come near it, they would have surrounded it, and none would have had the sight of it but those that were close to it; but as it was put at such a distance before them, they would all have the satisfaction of seeing it, and would be animated by the sight of it. And it was with good reason that this precision was made for their encouragement, for ye have not passed this way heretofore. This had been the character of all their way through the wilderness, it was an untraveled path, but this especially through Jordan. While we are here, we must expect and prepare for unusual events, to pass ways that we have not passed before: and much more will it be so, when we go hence, our way through the valley of the shadow of death is a way we have not gone before, which makes it the more formidable. But if we have the assurance of God’s presence we need not fear, that will furnish us with such strength as we never had, when we come to do a work we never did.

III. They were commanded to sanctify themselves, that they might be prepared to attend the ark; and will be so, when we are prepared to walk with God, tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you, v. 5. See how magnificently he speaks of God’s works, he doeth wonders, and is therefore to be adored, admired, and trusted in. See how intimately acquainted Joshua was with the divine counsels, he could tell beforehand what God would do, and when. See what preparation we must make to receive the discoveries of God’s glory, and the communications of his grace, we must sanctify ourselves. This we must do when we are to attend the ark, and God by it is about to do wonders among us; we must separate ourselves from all other cares, devote ourselves to God’s honour, and cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. The people of Israel were now entering into the holy land, and therefore must sanctify themselves. This must be about to give them an unexampled view of his favour, which by meditation and prayer they must compose their minds to a very careful observation of, that they might give God the glory, and take to themselves the comfort, of these appearances.

IV. The priests were ordered to take up the ark and carry it before the people, v. 6. It was the Levites’ work ordinarily to carry the ark, Numb. 4. and Joshua says this must be the order, but he did not think it proper to be heard, and ordered to do it. And they did as they were commanded, took up the ark, and did not think themselves disparaged, went before the people, and did not think themselves exposed; the ark they carried was both their honour and defence. And now we may suppose that prayer of Moses used, when the ark set forward, Numb. 10. 35, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered. Magistrates are here instructed to stir up ministers to their work, and to make use of their authority for the furtherance of religion; ministers must likewise learn to go before in the way of God, and not to shrink or draw back when dangers are before them. They must expect to be most struck at, but they know whom they have trusted.

7. And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as i was with Moses, so I will be with thee. 8. And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan. 9. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the Lord your God. 10. And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites. 11. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan. 12. Now therefore take ye twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man. 13. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon a heap.

We may observe here how God honours Joshua, and, by this wondrous work he is about to do, designs to make Israel know that he is their governor. And then, how Joshua honours God, and endea vours by it to make Israel know that he is their God. Thus those that honour God he will honour, and those whom he has advanced, should do what they can in their places to exalt him.

1. God speaks to Joshua to put honour upon him, v. 7, 8. 1. It was a great honour God did him that he spake to him, as he had done to Moses from off the mercy-seat, before the priests removed it with the ark. This would make Joshua easy in himself and great among the people, that God was pleased to speak to him alone. 2. That he designed to magnify him in the sight of all Israel. He had told him before he would be with him, ch. 1. 5. that comforted him, but now all Israel shall see it, and that magnified him. Those are truly great with whom God is, and whom he employs and owns in his service. God magnified him, because he would have the people magnify him. Pious magistrates are to be highly honoured and esteemed in their public blessings, and the more we see of God with them, the more we should honour them. By the dividing of the Red-sea, Israel was convinced that God was with Moses in bringing them out of Egypt; therefore they are said to be
baptized into Moses in the sea, 1 Cor. 10. 2. And upon that occasion they believed him, Exod. 14. 31. And now by the dividing of Jordan, they shall be convinced, that God is in like manner with Joshua in bringing them into Canaan. God had magnified Joshua before on several occasions, but now he began to magnify him as the successor of Moses in the government. Some have observed, it was at the bank of Jordan that God began to magnify Joshua, and at the same place he began to magnify our Lord Jesus as Mediator; for John was baptizing at Bethabara, the house of passage, and there it was, that when our Saviour was baptized, it was proclaimed concerning him, This is my beloved Son.

3. That by him he gave orders to the priests themselves, though they were his immediate attendants, v. 8. Thou shalt command the priests, that they shall go before Jordan, to touch the brink of Jordan while the waters part, that it may appear to be at the presence of the Lord, of the mighty God of Jacob, that Jordan is driven back, Ps. 114. 5, 7. God could have divided the river without the priests, but they could not without him. The priests must herein set a good example to the people, and teach them to do their part in the service of God, and trust him for help in time of need.

II. Joshua speaks to the people, and therein honours God.

1. He demands attention, v. 9. "Come hither to me, as many as can come within hearing, and before you see the works, hear the words of the Lord your God, that you may consider them together, and they may be imprinted in your heart, and may be the pattern in your behaviour; for that which you see and hear, shall be a witness against you, if youfbe not faithful in the keeping of the commandments of God which he cometh to make them to hear."

2. He tells them at length, by what way they should pass over Jordan, by the stopping of its stream, v. 13. The waters of Jordan shall be cut off. God could by a sudden and miraculous frost have congealed the surface, so that they might all have passed over Jordan in dry land; but the doing that which was done in one country, by the ordinary power of nature, (Job 38. 30.) it would not have been such an honour to Israel's God, nor such a terror to Israel's enemies; it must therefore be done in such a way as had no precedent but the dividing of the Red-sea: and that miracle is here repeated, to show that God has the same power to finish his work of creation. Gen. 1. 6, 9. That by which we now saw, their belief of that which they there read, might be assisted, and they might know that the God whom they worshipped, was the same God that made the world, and that it was the same power that was engaged and employed for them.

3. The people having been directed before to follow the ark, are here told that it should pass before them into Jordan, v. 11. Observe, (1.) The ark of the covenant must be the guide. During the reign of Moses, the cloud was their guide, but now, in Joshua's reign, the ark; both were visible signs of God's presence and presidency, but divine grace under the Mosaic dispensation was wrapped up as in a cloud and covered with a vail, while by Christ, our Joshua, it is revealed in the ark of the covenant unveiled. (2.) It is called the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth. "He that is your God, v. 9. in covenant with you, is the Lord of all the earth, has both right and power to command, control, use, and dispose of all nations and of all creatures. He is the Lord of all the earth, therefore he needs not you, nor can be benefited by you; therefore it is your honour and happiness to have him for your God, if all the creatures are at your service, and when he pleases, shall be employed for you." When we are praising and worshipping God as Israel's God, and our's through Christ, we must remember that he is the Lord of the whole earth, and reverence him and trust in him accordingly. Some observe an accent in the original, which they think directs us to translate it somewhat more emphatically, Behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth. They are told that the ark should pass before them into Jordan, God would not appoint them to go any where, but where he himself would go before them, and go with them; and they might safely venture, even into Jordan itself, if the ark of the covenant led them. While we make God's precepts our rule, his promises our stay, and his providence our guide, we cannot but dread the forces of unbelief, and meet with in the way of duty. That promise is sure to all the seed, Isa. 43. 2. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.

4. From what God was now about to do for them, he infers an assurance of what he would yet further do. This he mentions first, so much was his heart upon it, and so great a satisfaction did it give him, v. 10. "Hereby you shall know that the living God (the true God, and God of power, not one of the dead gods of the heathen) is among you, though you see him not, nor are to have any image of him; is among you to give you law, secure your welfare, and receive your homage: is among you in this great undertaking now before you; and therefore ye shall, may, he himself, will, without fail, drive out from before you the Canaanites."

5. The conquers of Canaan, if the living God among you, exhaling he will exel, (so the Hebrew phrase is,) from before you the Canaanites. He will do it certainly, and do it effectually. What should hinder him? What can stand in his way, before whom rivers are divided, and dried up? The forcing of the lines was a certain presage of the ruin of all their hosts: how could they stand their ground when Jordan itself was driven back? When they did not courage to dispute this pass, but at the approach of the mighty God of Jacob, Ps. 114. 7. What opposition could they ever make after this? This assurance which Joshua here gives them, was so well grounded, as that it would enable one Israelite to chase a thousand Canaanites, and two to put ten thousand to flight: and it would be abundantly strengthened by remembering the song of Moses, dictated forty years before, which plainly told the dividing of Jordan, and the vengeance which would have upon the driving out of the Canaanites. Exod. 15. 15—17. The inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away, and so be effectually driven out, they shall be as still as a stone till thy people pass over, and then thou shalt bring them in and plant them. Note, God's glorious appearances for his church
and people, ought to be improved by us for the encouragement of our faith and hope for the future. As for God, his work is perfect. If Jordan's flood cannot keep them out, Caanam's force cannot turn them out again.

5. He directs them to get twelve men ready, one of each tribe, who must be within call, to receive such orders as Joshua should afterward give them, v. 12. It does not appear that they were to attend the priests, and walk with them when they carried the ark, that they might more immediately be witnesses of the wonders done by it, as some think; but they were to be at hand for the service they were called to, ch. 4. 4, &c.

14. And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; 15. And as they that bear the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overflooweth all his banks at the time of harvest,) 16. That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon a heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. 17. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan; and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

Here we have a short and plain account of the dividing of the river Jordan, and the passage of the children of Israel through it. The story is not garnished with the flowers of rhetoric, gold need not to be painted; but it tells us, in short, matter of fact.

1. That this river was now broader and deeper than usually it was at other times of the year, v. 15. The melting of the snow upon the mountains of Lebanon, near which this river had its rise, was the occasion, that, at the time of harvest, barley-harvest, which was the spring of the year, Jordan overflowed all his banks. This great flood, just at that time, (which Providence might have restrained for once, or which he might have ordered them to cross at another time of the year,) very much magnified the power of God and his kindness to Israel. Note, Though the opposition given to the salvation of God's people, have all imaginable advantages, yet God can and will conquer it. Let the banks of Jordan be filled to the brink, filled till they run over, it is as easy to Omnipoerse to divide them, and dry them up, as if they were never so narrow, never so shallow; it is all one with the Lord.

2. That as soon as ever the feet of the priests dipped in the brim of the water, the stream stopped immediately, as if a sluice and been made to dam it up, v. 15, 16. So that the waters above swollen, stood on a heap, and ran back, and yet it should seem, did not spread, but congealed; which unaccountable rising of the river was observed with amazement by those that lived upward upon it many miles off, and the remembrance of it remained among them long after; the waters on the other side this invisible dam ran down of course, and the waters below the brink of the river dry as far as Jordan, it is likely, as they welled upward. When they passed through the Red-sea, the waters were a wall on either hand, here only on the right hand.

Note, The God of nature, can, when he pleases, change the course of nature, and alter its properties, can turn fluids into solids, waters into standing rocks, as on the contrary, rocks into standing waters, to serve his own purposes. See Ps. 114. 5, 8. What cannot God do? What will he do not do for the perfecting of his people's salvation? Sometimes he clears the earth with rivers, Hab. 3. 9, and sometimes, as here, clears the rivers without earth.

It is easy to imagine how, when the course of this strong and rapid stream was arrested on a sudden, the waters roared and were troubled, so that the mountains seemed to shake with the swelling thereof, Ps. 46. 3. how the floods lifted their voice, the floods lifted up their waves, while the Lord en high showed himself mightier than the noise of these many waters, Ps. 93. 3. 4. With reference to this, the prophet asks, Was the Lord displeased against the rivers, was thine anger against the rivers? Hab. 3. 8.

No, Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, v. 13. In allusion to this, it is foretold among the great things God will do for the Gospel-church in the latter days, that the great river Eu-rup, the water whereof came down from the habitation of the SAXE of the east may be dried up, Rev. 16. 12. When the time is come for Israel's entrance into the land of promise, all the difficulties shall be conquered, mountains shall become plains, Zech. 4. 7. and rivers become dry, for the ransom of the Lord to pass over. When we have finished our pilgrimage through this wilderness, death will be like this Jordan between us and the heavenly Canaan, but the edge of the water of death has passed through it, it is the last enemy that shall be destroyed.

3. That the people passed over right against Jericho, which was (1.) An instance of their boldness, and a noble defiance of their enemies: Jericho was one of the strongest cities, and yet they dared to face it at their first entrance. (2.) It was an encouragement to them to venture through Jordan, for Jericho was a godly city, and the country about it cultivated. The flowers of the field desire not to be as their own, what difficulties could discourage them from taking possession? (3.) It would increase the confusion and terror of their enemies, who, no doubt, strictly observed their motions, and were the amazed spectators of this work of wonders.

4. That the priests stood still in the midst of Jordan while the people passed over, v. 17. There the ark was appointed to be, to show that the same power that parted the waters, kept them parted as long as there was occasion, and had not the divine presence, of which the ark was a token, been their security, the water had returned upon them and buried them. There the priests were appointed to stand still, (1.) To try their faith, whether they could venture to take their post when God assigned it them, with mountains of water over their heads: as they made a bold step when they passed the ford of Jordan, so made a bold step when they tarried longest in Jordan; but they knew they carried their own protection with them. Note, Ministers in times of peril should be examples of courage and confidence in the divine goodness. (2.) It was to encourage the faith of the people, that they might go triumphantly into Canaan, and fear no evil, no not in this valley of the shadow of death, (for so the divided river was) being assured of God's presence which interposed between them and the greatest danger, between them and the proud waters, which otherwise had gone over their souls.
Thus in the greatest dangers the saints are comforted with his rod and his staff, Ps. 23. 4.

CHAP. IV.

This chapter gives a further account of the miraculous passage of Israel through Jordan. I. The provision that was made at that time to preserve the memorial of it, by twelve stones set up in Jordan, v. 3, and other twelve stones taken up out of Jordan, v. 1. 8. II. The marks of the people through Jordan's channel, the two tribes first, then all the people, and the priests that bare the ark last, v. 10. 14. III. The closing of the waters again upon their coming up with the ark, v. 15. 19. IV. The erecting of the monument in Gilgal, to preserve the remembrance of this work of wonder to posterity, v. 20. 24.

1. And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying, 2. Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, 3. And command you them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones; and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place where you shall lodge this night. 4. Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man: 5. And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of Jordan, and take ye up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel: 6. That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean you by these stones? 7. Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever. 8. And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the Lord spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. 9. And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.

We may well imagine how busy Joshua and all the men of war were, while they were passing over Jordan, when beside their own marching into an enemy's country, and in the face of the enemy, which could not but occasion them many thoughts of heart, they had their wives, and children, and families, their cattle, and tents, and all their effects, bag and baggage, to convey by this strange and untried path which we must suppose either very muddy, or very stony, troublesome to the weak, and frightful to the timorous, the descent to the bottom of the river, and the ascent out of it steep, so that every man must needs have his head full of care and his hands full of business, and Joshua more than any of them. And yet in the midst of all his business, care must be taken to perpetuate the memorial of this wondrous work of God, and this care might not be adjourned to a time of greater leisure. Note, How much better we have to do of business for ourselves, and our families, we must not neglect or omit what we have to do for the glory of God and the serving of his honour, for that is our best business. Now, 1. God gave orders for the preparing of this memorial. Had Joshua done it without divine direction, it might have looked like a design to perpetuate his own name and honour, nor would it have commanded so sacred and venerable a regard from posterity, as now, when God himself appointed it. Note, God's works of wonder ought to be kept in everlasting remembrance, and means devised for the preserving of the memorial of them. Some of the Israelites that passed over Jordan, perhaps were so stupid, and had so little regard for the care of God to them, that they felt no concern to have it remembered; while others, it may be, were so much affected with it, and had such deep impressions made upon them by it, that they thought there needed no memorial of it to be erected, the heart and tongue of every Israelite in every age would be a living, lasting monument of it. But God, knowing their frame, and how apt they had been soon to forget his works, ordered an expedient for the keeping of this in remembrance to all generations, that those who could not, or would not, read the record of it in sacred history, might come to the knowledge of it by the monument set up in remembrance of it, which the common tradition of the country would be an explanation of; it would likewise serve to corroborate the proof of the matter of fact, and would remain a standing evidence of it to those who in after-ages might question the truth of it. A monument is to be erected, and 1. Joshua, as chief captain, must give directions about it, v. 1. When all the people were clean passed over Jordan, not even the feebler, that were the hindmost of them, left behind, so that God had done his work completely, and every Israelite got safe into Canaan, then must be the time to take the materials for this monument. It is the pious care of the learned Bishop Patrick, that Joshua was gone into some place of retirement, to return thanks immediately for this wonderful mercy, and then God met him, and spake thus to him. Or, perhaps, it was by Eleazar the priest, that God gave these and other instructions to Joshua, for though he is not mentioned here, yet when Joshua was ordained by God to take his station, he was not the only one to which he was sent, he was sent to Joshua and the Levites, Numb. 27. 21. 2. Eleazar should ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim, and at his word, Joshua, and all the children of Israel must go out and come in, Numb. 27. 21. 2. One man out of each tribe, and he a chosen man, must be employed to prepare materials for this monument, that each tribe might have the story told them by one of themselves, and each tribe might contribute to set before the glory of God thereby, v. 2. 4. Out of every tribe a man: Not the Levites only, but every Israelite must, in his place, help to make known to the sons of men God's mighty acts, Ps. 145. 12. The two tribes, though seated already in their possession, yet sharing in the mercy, must lend a hand to the memorial of it. 3. The stones that must be set up for this memorial, are ordered to be taken out of the midst of the channel, (where, probably, there lay abun
dance of great stones,) and as near as might be from the very place where the priests stood with the ark, v. 3, 5. This intended monument deserved to have been made of stones curiously cut with the finest and most exquisite art, but these stones out of the bottom of the river were more natural and more apt indications of the miracle; let posterity know by this, that Jordan was driven back, for these very stones were then fetched out of it. In the institution of signs, God always chose that which was most proper and significant, rather than that which is pompous or curious; for God hath chosen the foolish things of the world. These twelve men, after they got over Jordan, must be sent back to the place where the ark stood, being permitted to come near it, (which others might not,) for this service; pass over before the ark, v. 5. that is, "into the presence of the ark, which now stands in the midst of Jordan, and thence fetch these stones." The use of these stones is here appointed for a sign, v. 6. a memorial, v. 7. They would give occasion to the children to ask their parents in time to come, How came these stones thither? Probably the land about was not stony: but the parents would inform them, as they themselves had been informed, that in this place Jordan was divided by the almighty power of God, to give Israel passage into Canaan, as Joshua enlarges on this head, v. 23.

II. According to these orders the thing was done.

1. Twelve stones were taken up out of the midst of Jordan, and carried in the sight of the people to the place where they had their head-quarters that night, v. 8. It is probable that the stones they took, were as big as they could well carry, and as near as might be of a size and shape. But whether they went away with them immediately to the place appointed, or whether they laid down the ark, and kept pace with the solemn procession of that, to grace its triumphant entry into Canaan, is not certain. By these stones, which they were ordered to take up, God did, as it were, give them livery and seisin of this good land, it is all their own, let them enter and take possession: therefore what these twelve did, the children of Israel are said to do, v. 8. because they were the representatives of their resolves and resolution. They would therefore, with the ark, serve, that when the Lord Jesus, our Joshua, having overcome the sharpness of death, and dried up that Jordan, had opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, he appointed his twelve apostles, according to the number of the tribes of Israel, by the memorial of the gospel to transmit the knowledge of this to remote places and future ages.

2. Other twelve stones (probably, much larger than the other, for we read not that they were each of them one man's load) were set up, in the midst of Jordan, v. 9. piled up so high in a heap or pillar, as that the top of it might be seen above water, when the river was low, or seen in the water, when it was clear, or at least the noise or commotion of the water passing over it would be observable, and the bargemen would avoid it, as they do a rock; some way or other, it is likely, it was discernible so as to notify the very place where the ark stood, and to serve for a duplicate to the other monument, which was to be set on dry land in Gilgal, for the confirming of its testimony, and the preserving of its tradition. The sign being doubled, no doubt, the thing was certain.

10. For the priests which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until every thing was finished that the Lord commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua: and the people hasted and passed over. 11. And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over, that the ark of the Lord passed over, and the priests, in the presence of the people. 12. And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them: 13. About forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the Lord unto battle, to the plains of Jericho. 14. On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life. 15. And the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying, 16. Command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, that they come out of Jordan. 17. Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan. 18. And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before. 19. And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.

The inspired historian seems to be so well pleased with his subject here, that he is loath to quit it, and is therefore very particular in his narrative, especially in observing how closely Joshua pursued the orders God gave him, and that he did nothing without divine direction, finishing all that the Lord had commanded him, (v. 10.) which is also said to be what Moses commanded. We read not of any particular command of Moses to Joshua about this matter, the thing was altogether new to him. It must therefore be understood of the general instructions Moses had given him to follow the divine conduct, to deliver that to the people, which he had received of the Lord, and to take all occasions to remind them of their duty to God, as the best return for his favours to them: This which Moses, who was now dead and gone, had said to him, he had in mind at this time, and did accordingly. It is well for us to have the good instructions that have been given us, ready to us, when we have occasion for them.

1. All the people hasted and passed over, v. 10. Some understand it of the twelve men that carried the stones, but it seems rather to be meant of the body of the people; for though an account was given of their passing over, v. 1. yet here it is repeated for the sake of this circumstance, which was added, that they passed over in haste, either because Joshua by their officers ordered them to make haste, for it was to be but one day's work, and they must not leave a hoof behind; or, perhaps, it was their own inclination that hastened them. (1.) Some hasted, because they were not able to trust God, they were afraid the waters should return upon them, being conscious of guilt, and diffluent of the divine power and goodness. (2.) Others, because they were not willing to tempt God to continue the mira-
ele longer than needs must, nor would they put the patience of the priests that bare the ark too much to the stretch by any special delay. (3.) Others, because they were eager to be in Canaan, and would thus show how much they longed after that pleasant land. (4.) Those that considered least, yet tasted because others did. He that believeth, maketh haste, not to anticipate God's counsels, but to attend them. Isa. 28. 16.

2. The two tribes and a half led the van, v. 12, 13. They were, no doubt, chosen by lot, when they had their lot given them on that side Jordan, Num. 32. 27. And Joshua had lately reminded them of their promise, ch. 1. 12, &c. It was fit that they who had the first settlement, should be the first in the encounter of difficulties, the rather, because they had not the incumbrance of families with them as the other tribes had, and they were all chosen men, and fit for service, ready armed. It was a good instance, that they had so strong a body to lead them on, and would be an encouragement to the rest. And the two tribes had no reason to complain, the post of danger is the post of honour.

3. When all the people were got clear to the other side, the priests with the ark came up out of Jordan. This, one would think, should have been done of course, their own reason would tell them they were now safe and secure, and no need ofemons in punishing them, yet they did not stir a step till Joshua ordered them to move, and Joshua did not order them out of Jordan till God directed him to do so, v. 15. 17. So observant were they of Joshua, and he of God, which was their praise, as it was their happiness to be under such good direction. How low a condition soever God may at any time bring his priests or people to, let them patiently wait, till by his providence he shall call them up out of it, as the priests here were called to come up out of Jordan, and let them not be weary of waiting, while they have the tokens of God's presence with them, even the ark of the covenant, in the depth of their adversity.

4. As soon as ever the priests and the ark were come up out of Jordan, the waters of the river, which had stood on a heap, gradually flowed down again, and the usual stream was soon filled the channel again, v. 18. This makes it yet more evident, that the stop which had now been given to the river, was not from any secret natural cause; but purely from the power of God's presence, and for the sake of his Israel, for when Israel's turn was served, and the token of his presence was removed, immediately the water went forward again; so that if it be asked, What ailed thee, Lord Joshua, that thou wast driven back? It must be answered, It was purely in obedience to the God of Israel, and in kindness to the God of Israel: there is therefore none like unto the God of Joshua—happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people? Some observe here, by way of allusion, that when the ark and the priests that bare it, are removed from any place, the flood-gates are again opened, the defence is departed, and an inundation of judgments is to be expected shortly. Those that are unchurched, will soon be undone. The glory is departed, if the ark be taken.

5. Notice is taken of the honour put upon Joshua by all this, v. 14. On that day the Lord magnified Joshua, both by the fellowship he admitted him to with himself, speaking to him upon all occasions, and being ready to be consulted by him, and by the tokens he had call'd him up out of the stream, and people. Those that honour God he will honour, and when he will magnify a man, as he had said he would magnify Joshua, (ch. 3. 7.) he will do it effectually. Yet it was not for Joshua's sake only that he was thus magnified, but to put him in a capacity of doing so much the more service to Israel, for hereupon they feared him as they feared Moses. See here what is the best and surest way to command the respect of inferiors, and to gain their reverence and observance, not by blustering and threatening, and carrying it with a high hand, but by holiness and love, and all possible indications of a constant regard to their welfare, and to God's will and honour. These are feared in the best manner, and to the best purpose, who appear that God is with them, and that they set him before them. Those that are sanctified are truly magnified, and are worthy of double honour. Favourites of heaven should be looked on with awe.

6. An account is kept of the time of this great event, v. 19. It was on the tenth day of the first month, just forty years since they came out of Egypt, wanting five days. God had said in his wrath that they should wander forty years in the wilderness, but to make up that forty we must take in the first year, which was then past, and had been a year of triumph in their deliverance out of Egypt, and this last, which had been a year of triumph likewise on the other side Jordan, so that all the forty were not years of sorrow; and at last he brought them into Canaan, five days before the forty years were ended, to show how little pleasure God derived from their unhappiness, how swift he is to show mercy, and that for the elect's sake the days of trouble are shortened, Matt. 24. 22. God ordered it so that they should enter Canaan four days before the annual solemnity of the passover, and on the very day when the preparation for it was to begin, Exod. 12. 3. because he would have their entrance into Canaan grace and sanctified with that religious feast, and would have them to be reminded of their deliverance out of Egypt, that comparing them together, God might be glorified as the Alpha and Omega of their bliss.

20. And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. 21. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? 22. Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. 23. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over: 24. That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty; that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.

The twelve stones which were laid down in Gilgal, v. 8. are here set up either one upon another, yet so as that they might be distinctly counted, or one by another in rows; for after they were fixed, they are not called a heap of stones, but these stones. I. It is here taken for granted, that posterity would inquire into the meaning of them, supposing them intended for a memorial. Your children shall ask their fathers, (for whom else should they ask?) What mean these stones? Note, These that will be wise when they are old, must be inquisitive when they are young. Our Lord Jesus, though he had in himself the fulness of knowledge, has by his examples taught children and young people to hear and
ask questions, Luke 2. 46. Perhaps when John was baptizing in Jordan at Bethabara, (the house of passage where the people were gathered) he pointed at these very stones, while saying, Matt. 3. 9, 

God is able of these stones (which were at first set up by the twelve tribes) to raise up children unto Abraham. The stones being the memorial of the miracles, the children's question gave occasion for the improvement of it; but our Saviour says, Luke 19. 40, If the children should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out; for one way or other the Lord will be glorified in his works of wonder.

II. The parents are here directed what answer to give to this inquiry, v. 22. Ye shall let your children know that which you have yourselves learned from the written word, and from your fathers. Note, It is the duty of parents to acquaint their children betimes with the word and works of God, that they may be trained up in the way they should go. I. They must let their children know that Jordan was driven back before Israel, who went through it upon dry land, and, that this was the very place where they passed over. They saw how deep and strong a stream Jordan now was, but the divine power put a stop to it, even then when it overflowed all its banks—this and this for you, that live so long after. Note, God's mercies to our ancestors were not meant only to be remembered by them, but should be the occasion of reviving the remembrance of the great things God did for our fathers in the days of old. The place thus marked would be a memorandum to them; Israel came over this Jordan. A local memory would be of use to them, and the sight of the place remind them of that which was done there; and not only the inhabitants of that country, but strangers and travellers, would look upon these stones, and receive instruction. Many an upstart, the sight of the stones, would go to their bibles, and there read the history of this wondrous work; and some, perhaps, upon reading the history, though living at a distance, would have the curiosity to go and see the stones.

2. They must take that occasion to tell their children of the drying up of the Red-sea forty years before, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea. Note, It greatly magnifies later mercies to compare them with former mercies, for, by making the comparison, it appears that God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. (2.) Later mercies should bring to remembrance former mercies, and revive our thankfulness for them.

3. They must put them in the way of making a good use of these works of wonder, the knowledge whereof was thus carefully transmitted to them, v. 24. (1.) The power of God was hereby magnified. All the world was, or might be, convinced that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that nothing is too hard for God to do; nor can any power, no, not that of nature itself, obstruct what God will effect. The deliverances of God's people are instructions to all people, and fair warnings not to contend with Omnipotence. (2.) The people of God were engaged and encouraged to persevere in his service; This might be the Lord's doing, and he will subsequently do your duty to him, and this for ever, or all days. (Margin.) Every day, all the days of your lives, and your seed throughout your generations. The remembrance of this wonderful work should effectually restrain them from the worship of other gods, and constrain them to abide and abound in the service of their own God. Note, In all the instructions and informations parents give their children, they should have chiefly in their eye to teach and engage them to fear God forever. Serious godliness is the best learning.

Israel is now got over Jordan, and the waters which had opened before them to favour their march forward, are closed again behind them to forbid their retreat backward; they have now got footing in Canaan, and must apply themselves to the conquest of it; in order to which this chapter tells us, I. How their enemies were dispirited, v. 1. II. What was done at their first landing to assist and encourage them. 1. The covenant of circumcision was renewed, v. 2–3. 2. The Feast of the passover was celebrated, v. 10. 3. Their camp was visited with the corn of the land, whereupon the men ceased, v. 11, 12. 4. The Captain of the Lord's host himself appeared to Joshua, to animate and direct him, v. 13–15.
wilderness, is now come up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved, and looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners: how terrible she was to all her enemies, we are here told. 

v. 1, how fair and clear she was made in the eyes of her friends, by the rolling away of the reproach of Egypt, we are told in the following verses.

I. Here is the fright which the Canaanites were put into by their miraculous passing over Jordan, v. 1. The news of it was soon dispersed all the country over, not only as a prodigy in itself, but as an alarm to all the kings and Kingdoms of Canaan. Now, as when Babylon was taken, One prophet rode to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to carry the amazing tidings to every corner of their land. Jer. 51. 51. And here we are told what impressions the tidings made upon the kings of this land, their heart melted like wax before the fire, neither was there spirit in them any more. This intimates that though the heart of the people generally had fainted before, as Rahab owned, ch. 2. 9. yet the Kings held till now up their spirits pretty well, had promised themselves that, being in possession, their country populous, and their cities fortified, they should be able to make their part good against the invaders; but when they heard, not only that they were come over Jordan, and that that defence of their country was broken through, but that they were come over by a miracle, the God of nature manifestly fighting for them, their hearts failed them and they gave up the ghost for fear, and were now at their wits' end. And, 1. They had reason enough to be afraid; Israel itself was a formidable body, and much more so when God was its head, a God of almighty power. What can make him dread against them, if Jordan be driven back before them? 2. God impressed these fears upon them, and disproved them, as he had promised, Exod. 23. 33. 

2. Here is the counsel which the spies gave up to the people, v. 2. God may make the wicked to fear where no fear is, Ps. 33. 5. much more where there is such cause for fear as was here. He that made the soul, can, when he pleases, make his sword thus to approach to it and kill with its terrors.

II. The opportunity which this gave to the Israelites to circumcise these among them who were uncircumcised, At that time, v. 2. when the country was thus opened up to them, God directed Joshua to circumcise the children of Israel, for at that time it might be done with safety even in an enemy's country; their hearts being melted, their hands were tied, that they could not take this advantage against them as Simeon and Levi did against the Shechemites, to come upon them when they were sore. Joshua could not be sure of this, and therefore if he had ordered this general circumcision then, he had been to his shame, to be justly have been censured as imprudent, for how good soever the thing was in itself, in the eye of reason it was not seasonable at this time, and might have been of dangerous consequence; but when God commanded him to do it, he must not consult with flesh and blood; he that bid them do it, no doubt, would protect them and bear them out in it. Now observe,

1. The occasion there was for this general circumcision. (1.) All that came out of Egypt were circumcised, v. 5. While they had peace in Egypt, doubtless, they circumcised their children the eighth day, according to the law. But after they began to be oppressed, especially when the edict was made for the destruction of their male infants, the administration of this ordinance was interrupted; many of them were uncircumcised, of whom there was a general circumcision, either during the time of the three days' darkness, as Dr. Lightfoot con-

jectures, or a year after, just before their eating a second passover at mount Sinai, and in order to that solemnity, Numb. 9. 2. as many think. And it is with reference to that general circumcision, that the learned Masius thinks it refers to the general circumcision of Abraham's Family, when the ordinance was first instituted, Gen. 17. 25. That first confirmed the promise of the land of Canaan, this second was a thankful celebration of the performance of that promise. But, (2.) All that were born in the wilderness, namely, after their walking in the wilderness, became by the divine sentence a judgment upon them for their disobedience, as is intimated by that repetition of the sentence, v. 6. all that were born since that fatal day, on which God swore in his wrath that none of that generation should enter into his rest, were uncircumcised.

But what shall we say to this? Had not God enjoined it to Abraham under a very severe penalty, that every man-child of his seed should be circumcised, on the eighth day? Gen. 17. 9-14. Was it not the seal of the everlasting covenant? Was it not so great a stress laid upon it then when they were coming out of Egypt, that when immediately after the first passover the law concerning that feast was made perpetual, this was one clause of it, that no uncircumcised person should eat of it, but should be deemed as a stranger? And yet under the government of Moses himself, to have all their children that were born for thirty-eight years together left uncircumcised, is unaccountable. So great an omission could not be generally but by divine direction.

Now, [1.] Some think circumcision was omitted because it was needless: it was appointed to be a mark of distinction between the Israelites and other nations, and therefore, in the wilderness, where they were so perfectly separated from all, and mingled with none, there was no occasion for it. [2.] Others think that they did not look upon the precept of circumcision so, as to think themselves in Canaan, for in the covenant made with them at mount Sinai, nothing was said about circumcision, neither was it of Moses but of the fathers, John 7. 22. and with particular reference to the grant of the land of Canaan, Gen. 17. 8. [3.] Others think that God favourably dispensed with the omission of this ordinance in consideration of the unsettledness of their state, and their frequent removes while they were in that wilderness state. Either way, they who were uncircumcised, even after they were circumcised, should rest for some time while they were sore, and stirring them might be dangerous to them; God therefore would have mercy and not sacrifice. This reason is generally acquiesced in, but to me it is not satisfactory, for sometimes they stayed a year in a place, Numb. 9. 22. if not much longer; and in their removes the little children, though sore, might be wrappt so warm, and carried so tenderly, as to be as well instructed and might certainly be much better accommodated than the mothers in travail or while lying-in. Therefore, [4.] To me it seems to have been a continued token of God's displeasure against them for their unbelief and murmuring. Circumcision was originally a seal of the promise of the land of Canaan, as we observed before. It was in the believing hope of that promised land, that the patriarchs circumcised their children; but when God had this concern concerning the men of war which came out of Egypt, that they should be consumed in the wilderness, and never enter Canaan, nor come within sight of it, (as that sentence is here repeated, v. 6. reference being made to it,) as a further ratification of that sentence, and to be a constant memorandum of it to them, all that fell under that sentence, and were to fall by it, were forbidden to circumcise their children; by which they were plainly told, that
whatever others might, they should never have the benefit of that promise which circumcision was the seal of. And this was such a significant indication of God's wrath, as the breaking of the tables of the covenant was, when Israel had broken the covenant by making the golden calf. It is true, there is no express mention of this judicial prohibition in the account of that sentence; but an intimation of it, Numb. 14. 35. Your children shall bear your iniquity, and hereafter be silenced, that they may observe them in the land which they were going, Deut. 6. 1, 12. 1. [3.] This second circumcision, as it is here called, was typical of the spiritual circumcision with which the Israel of God, when they enter into the gospel-rest, are circumcised; it is the learned Bishop Pierson's observation, That this circumcision being performed under the conduct of Jesus, Moses's successor, it placed men in the situation of another circumcision than that of the flesh, commanded by the law, even the circumcision of the heart, Rom. 2. 29, called the circumcision of Christ, Col. 2. 11.

3. The people's obedience to these orders. Joshua circumcised the children of Israel, v. 3. not himself with his own hands, but he commanded that it should be done, and took care that it was done; it might seem to be unnecessary, seeing the prohibition was that it should be done by a priest or Levite, but any one might be employed to do it. All those that were under twenty years old when the people were numbered at mount Sinai, and not being numbered with them, fell not by the fatal sentence, were circumcised, and by them all the rest might be circumcised in a little time. The people had promised to hearken to Joshua, as they had hearkened to Moses. v. 17. and by that promise they had engaged to their dutifulness, submitting to this painful institution, and not calling him for the sake of it a bloody governor, as Zipporah because of the circumcision called Moses a bloody husband.

Lastly, The names given to the place where this was done, to perpetuate the memory of it. (1.) It was called the hill of the foreskins, v. 5. Probably, the foreskins that were cut off, were laid on a heap, and covered with earth, so that they made a little hillock. (2.) It was called Gilgal, from a word which signifies to take away, from that which God said to Joshua, v. 2. This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt. God is jealous for the honour of his people, his own honour being so much interested in it; and whatever reproach they may lie under for a time, first or last it will certainly be rolled away, and every tongue that riseth up against them, he will condemn. [1.] Their circumcision rolled away the reproach of Egypt. They were hereby owned to be the free-born children of God, having all the seal of the covenant in their flesh, and so the reproach of their bondage in Egypt was removed. They were tainted with the idolatry of Egypt, and that was their reproach; but now that they were circumcised, it was now expected of God, or rather God expected of them, that their affection to Egypt would be rolled away. [2.] Their coming safe to Canaan rolled away the reproach of Egypt, for it silenced that spiteful suggestion of the Egyptians, that for mischief they were brought out, the wilderness had shut them in, Exod. 14. 3. Their wandering so long in the wilderness confirmed the reproach, but now that they had entered Canaan in the truth, that reproach was done away. When God glorifies himself in perfecting the salvation of his people, he not only silences the reproach of their enemies, but rolls it up on themselves.

10. And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the bur-
teenth day of the month, at even, in the
plains of Jericho. 11. And they did eat of the
old corn of the land, on the morrow after the
passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn
in the self-same day. 12. And the manna ceased
on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

We may well imagine that the people of Canaan were astonished, and that when they observed the motions of the enemy they could not but think them very strange. When soldiers take the field, they are apt to think themselves excused from religious exercises, (they have not time or thought to attend them,) yet Joshua opens the campaign with one act of devotion after another. What was afterwards said to another Joshua, might truly be said to this, Hear now, O Joshua, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee, are men wondered at, Zech. 3. 8. and yet indeed he took the right method. This is likely to end well, that begins with God.

Here is,

I. A solemn passover kept, at the time appointed by the law, the fourteenth day of the first month, and in the same place where they were circumcised, v. 10. While they wandered in wilderness, they were denied the benefit and comfort of this ordinance, as a further token of God's displeasure; but now, in answer to the prayer of Moses, upon the passing of that sentence, Ps. 90. 15. God comforted them again, after the time that he had afflicted them, and therefore now that joyful ordinance is revived again. Now that they had entered into Canaan, it was very reasonable to remember those wondrous works of divine power and goodness, by which they were brought out of Egypt. The finishing of mercies should bring to mind the beginning of them; and when it is perfect day we must not forget how welcome the morning light was, when we had long waited for it. The solemn passover followed immediately after the solemn circumcision; thus, when they that received the word were baptized, immediately we find them breaking of bread, Acts 2. 41. 42. They kept this passover in the plains of Jericho, as it were in defiance of the Canaanites that were round about them and enraged against them, and yet could not give them any disturbance. Thus God gave them an early instance of the performance of that promise, that when they went up to keep the feasts, their land should be taken under the special protection of the Divine Providence, Exod. 23. 4. 5. Neither of it to any desire thy land. He now prepared a table before them in the presence of their enemies, Ps. 23. 5.

II. Provision made for their camp of the corn of their land, and the ceasing of the manna thereupon, v. 11, 12. Manna was a wonderful mercy to them when they needed it; but it was the mark of a wilderness state, it was the food of children, and therefore, though it was an angel's food, and common to all, it was peculiar to them, as light bread, yet it would be more acceptable to them to eat of the corn of the land, and that they are now furnished with; the country people being retired for safety into Jericho, left their barns and fields, and all that was in them, which served for the subsistence of this great army. And the supply came very seasonable, for, 1. After the passover, they were to keep the feast of unleavened bread, which they could not do according to the appointment, when they had nothing but manna to live upon; perhaps this was one reason why it was intermitted in the wilderness. But now they found old corn enough in the barn of the Canaanites to supply them plentifully for that occasion; thus the wealth of the earth was laid up for the just, and little did they who laid it up, think, whose all it should be, which they had provided. 2. On the morrow after the passover-sabbath, they were to wave the sheaf of first-fruits before the Lord, Lev. 23. 10, 11. And this they were particularly ordered to do, when they were come into the land which God would give them; and they were furnished for this with the fruit of the land that year, v. 12. which was then growing and beginning to be ripe. Thus they, were well provided for, both with old and new corn, as good householders, Matt. 13. 32. And as soon as ever the fruits of this good land came to their hands, they had an opportunity of honouring God with them, and employing them in his service according to his appointment. And thus, behold all things are clean and comfortable to them. Calvin is of opinion, that they had kept the passover every year in its season during their wandering in the wilderness, though it is not mentioned, and that God dispensed with their being uncircumcised, as he did not withstanding that, admit them to offer other sacrifices. But some gather from Amos 5. 25. that after the sentence passed upon them, there were no sacrifices offered till they came to Canaan, and consequently no passover kept. And it is observable, that after that sentence, Num. 14. the law which follows, ch. 15. concerning sacrifices, begins, v. 2. When ye shall be come into the land of your habitations, you shall do so and so.

Notice is taken of the ceasing of the manna as soon as ever they had eaten the old corn of the land; (1.) To show that it did not come by chance or common providence, as snow or hail does, but by the special designation of divine wisdom and goodness; (2.) To teach us not to expect extraordinary supplies, when they may be had in an ordinary way. If God had dealt with Israel according to their deserts, the manna had ceased then when they called it light bread; but as long as they needed it, God continued it, though they despised it; and now that they needed not, God withdrew it, though perhaps some of us may be tempted to remember, though wise Father, who knows the necessities of his children, and accommodates his gifts to them, not to their humours. The word and ordinances of God are spiritual manna, with which God nourishes his people in this wilderness, and though often forfeited, yet they are continued while we are here; but when we come to the heavenly Canaan, this manna will cease, for we no longer have need of it.

13. And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and beheld, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? 14. And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? 15. And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

We have hitherto found God often speak to Joshua, but we read not till now of any appearance
of God's glory to him; now that his difficulties increased, his encouragements were increased in proportion. Observe,

I. The time when he was favoured with this vision; it was immediately after he had performed the great solemnities of circumcision, and the passover: then God made himself known to him. Note, We are not to expect the dispensations of the divine grace, when we are found in the way of our duty, and are diligent and sincere in our attendance on holy ordinances.

II. The place where he had this vision; it was by Jericho, in Jericho, so the word is, in it by faith and hope, though as yet he had not begun to lay siege to it; in it in thought and expectation, or in the fields of Jericho, hard by the city; there, it should seem, he lay still, all alone, fearless of danger, because sure of the divine protection. There he was (some think) meditating and praying, and to those who are so employed, God often graciously manifests himself. Or, perhaps, there he was to take a view of the city, to observe its fortifications, and contrive how to attack it, and perhaps he was at a loss within himself how to make his approaches, when God came and directed him. Note, God will often reveal himself to men, in ways that are all alone, and in dark and secret places, because sure of the divine protection. He was (some think) meditating and praying, and to those who are so employed, God often graciously manifests himself. Or, perhaps, there he was to take a view of the city, to observe its fortifications, and contrive how to attack it, and perhaps he was at a loss within himself how to make his approaches, when God came and directed him. Note, God will often reveal himself to men, in ways that are all alone, and in dark and secret places, because sure of the divine protection. He was (some think) meditating and praying, and to those who are so employed, God often graciously manifests himself. Or, perhaps, there he was to take a view of the city, to observe its fortifications, and contrive how to attack it, and perhaps he was at a loss within himself how to make his approaches, when God came and directed him. Note, God will often reveal himself to men, in ways that are all alone, and in dark and secret places, because sure of the divine protection.

III. The appearance itself; Joshua, as is usual with those that are full of thought and care, was looking downward, his eyes fixed on the ground, when of a sudden he was surprised with the appearance of a man who stood before him at some little distance, which obliged him to lift up his eyes, and gave a diversion to his musings, v. 13. he appeared unto him as a man, but a considerable man, and one fit to be taken notice of. Now, 1. We have reason to think that this man was the Son of God, the eternal Word, who before he assumed the human nature for a perpetuity, frequently appeared in a human shape. So Bishop Patrick thinks, consomant to the judgment of the Fathers. Joshua gave him divine honours, and he received them, which a created angel would not have done, and he is called Jehovah, ch. 6. 2. He here appeared as a soldier, with his sword drawn in his hand. To Abraham in his tent, he appeared as a traveller; to Joshua in the field as a man of war: Christ will be to his people what their faith expects and desires. Christ had his sword drawn, which served, (1.) To justify the war Joshua was engaging in, and to show him that it was of God, who gave him commission to kill and slay. If the sovereign draws the sword, that proclaims war, and authorizes the subject to do too. The sword is then well drawn when Christ draws it, and gives the banner to them that fear him, to be displayed because of the truth, Ps. 60. 4. (2.) To encourage him to carry it on with a cheerful spirit. Joshua's sword drew a red line; in his hand it denotes how ready he is for the defence and salvation of his people, who through him shall do valiantly. His sword turns every way.

IV. The bold question with which Joshua accosted him; he did not send a servant, but stepped up to him himself, and asked, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? Which intimates his readiness to entertain him if he were for them, and to fight him if he were against them. He was a brave soldier, and himself a brave commander. His own courage and resolution. He was not ruffled by the suddenness of the appearance, nor daunted with the majesty and bravery, which no doubt appeared in the countenance of the person he saw; but, with a presence of mind that became so great a General, put this fair question to him. God had bid Joshua be courageous, and by this it appears that he was so for what God by his word requires of his people, he does by his grace work in them. 2. His great concern for the people and their cause; so heartily has he embarked in the interests of Israel, that none shall stand by him with the face of a man, but he will know whether he be a friend or a foe. It should seem, he suspected him for an enemy, a Goliath that was come to destroy the armies of the living God, and to give him a challenge. Thus apt are we to look upon that as against us, which is most for us. The question plainly implies, that the cause between the Israelites and Cannanites, between Christ and Belzebub, will not admit of a neutrality. He that is not with us, is against us. V. The account he gave of himself, v. 14. " Nay, not for your adversaries, you may be sure, but I am for you, to assist you. I am come, not only for you as a friend, but over you, as commander in chief." Here were now, as of old, Gen. 32. 2. Mahanaim, two hosts, a host of Israelites ready to engage the Cannanites, and a host of angels to protect them therein, and he, as Captain of both, conducts the host of Israel, and commands the host of angels to their assistance. Perhaps in allusion to this, Christ is called the Captain of our salvation, Heb. 2. 10. as a Captain over the multitude to the people, Isa. 55. 5. They cannot but be victorious, that have such a Captain. He now came as Captain to review the troops, to animate them, and to give the necessary orders for the besieging of Jericho.

VI. The great respect Joshua paid him when he understood who he was; it is probable that he perceived not only by what he said, but by some other sensible indications, that he was a divine person, and not a man.

1. Joshua paid homage to him. He fell on his face to the earth and did worship. Joshua was himself General of the forces of Israel, and yet he was far from looking with jealousy upon this stranger, who produced a commission as Captain of the Lord's host above him; he did not offer to dispute his claims, but cheerfully submitted to him as his commander. It well becomes the greatest men to be humble and reverent in their addresses to God.

2. He begged to receive commands and directions from him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? His former question was not more bold and soldier-like, than this was pious and saint-like; nor was it any disparagement to the greatness of Joshua's spirit, thus to humble himself when he had to do with God; even crowned heads cannot bow too low before the throne of the Lord Jesus, who is King of kings, Ps. 2. 10. 11. —72. 10. 11. Rev. 19. 16. Observe, (1.) The relation he owns between himself and Christ; that Christ was his Lord, and himself his servant and under his command, Christ his Captain, and himself a soldier under him, to do as he is bidden, Matt. 8. 9. Note, The foundation of all acceptable obedience is laid in a sincere dedication of ourselves, 2 Cor. 10. 5. as soldiers of our Lord, Eph. 6. 10. 16. (2.) The inquiry he makes pursuant to this relation, What saith my Lord? Which implies an earnest desire to know the will of Christ, and a cheerful readiness and resolution to do it. Joshua owns himself an inferior officer, and stands to receive orders; this temper of mind shows him fit for the post he was in, for those know best how to command, that know how to obey.

VII. The further expressions of reverence which this divine Captain required from Joshua, v. 15. Looseth thy shoe from off thy foot, in token of reverence and respect, which with us are signified by uncovering the head; and as an acknowledgment of a divine presence, which, while it continued there, did in a manner sanctify the place and dig
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ify it. We often say of a person whom we have a
great affection for, that we love the very ground he
goes upon; thus Joshua must show his reverence 
for this divine person, he must not tread the ground 
he stood on with his shoes on, Excl. 3. 1. Outward 
expressions of inward reverence, and a religious 
awe of God, well become us, and are required of 
us, whenever we approach to him in solemn ordi-
nances. Bishop Patrick well observes here, that the 
very same orders that God gave to Moses at the bush, 
when he was sending him to bring Israel out of 
Egypt, Exod. 3. 5. he here gives to Joshua, for the 
confirming of his faith in the promise he had lately 
given him, that as he had been with Moses, so he 
would be with him, ch. 1. 5. Had Moses such a 
presence of God with him, as, when it became sen-
sible, sanctified the ground? So had Joshua.

CHAP. VI.

Joshua opened the campaign with the siege of Jericho, 
a city which could not trust so much to the courage of 
its people, as to act offensively and to send out its forces 
to oppose Israel's landing and encamping, but trusted 
much to the strength of its walls, as to stand upon its 
defence, and not to surrender, or desire conditions of 
peace. Now here we have the story of the taking of it. 
I. The directions and assurances which the Captain of 
The Lord's host gave concerning it, v. 1. 3. III. The 
trial of the people's patient obedience in walking round 
the city six days, v. 6. 14. III. The wonderful delivery 
of it into their hands the seventh day, with a solemn 
charge to them to use it as a devoted thing, v. 13. 21. 
and v. 24. IV. The preservation of Rahab and her rela-
tions, v. 22, 23, 25. V. A curse pronounced upon the man 
that should dare to rebuild this city, v. 26, 27. An 
ab

1. NOW Jericho was strangely shut up, 
because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in. 2. And 
the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have 
given into thine hand Jericho, and the king 
thereof, and the mighty men of valour. 3. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men 
of war, and go round about the city once. 
Thus shalt thou do six days. 4. And sev-

en priests shall bear before the ark seven 
trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh 
day ye shall compass the city seven times, 
and the priests shall blow with the trump-

ets. 5. And it shall come to pass, that 
when they make a long blast with the rams'
horns, and when ye hear the sound of the 
trumpet, all the people shall shout with 
a great shout; and the wall of the city shall 
fall down flat, and the people shall ascend 
up, every man straight before him.

We have here a contest between God and the 
men of Jericho, and their different resolutions, upon 
which it is easy to say whose word shall prevail.

1. Jericho resolves Israel shall not be its master, 
v. 1. It was straitly shut up, because of the chil-
dren of Israel it did shut up, and it was shut up. 
So it is in the margin, it did shut up itself, being 
strongly fortified both by art and nature, and it was 
shut up, by the obstinacy and resolution of the in-
habitants, who agreed never to surrender or so 
much as sound a parley; none went out as deserts 
or to treat of peace, nor were any admitted in to 
offer peace. Thus were they infuriated, and their 
hearts hardened to their own destruction—the mis-
rable case and character of all those that strengthen 
themselves against the Almighty, Job 15. 25.

2. God makes the word to be done, and very 
quickly. The captain of the Lord's host, here 
called Jehovah, taking notice how strongly Jericho 
was fortified, and how strictly guarded, and know-
ing Joshua's thoughts and cares about reducing it, 
and perhaps his fears of a disgrace there, and of 
stumbling at the threshold, gave him here all the 
assurance he could desire of success, v. 2. See, I 
have given into thine hand Jericho. Not, "I will 
reduce it to ruins, but I will give it to thee, and 
as it were already in thy possession." It was 
designed that this city, being the first-fruits of Canaan, 
should be entirely devoted to God, and that neither 
Joshua nor Israel should ever be one mime the richer 
for it, and yet it is here said to be given into their 
hand, for we must reckon that most our own, 
which we have an opportunity of honouring God 
with, and employing in his service. Now, 1. The 
captain of the Lord's host gives directions how the 


5. To magnify his own power, that he might be 

structor in his own strength, Ps. 21. 13. not in 
the strength of instruments. God would hereby yet 
further make bare his own almighty arm for the 
encouragement of Israel, and the terror and confu-
sion of the Canaanites. 2. To put an honour 
upon his ark, the instituted token of his presence, 
and to give a reason for the laws by which the peo-
ple were obliged to look upon it with the most pro-
found veneration and respect. 3. While all this 
was going on, the ark was brought into the camp 
with its appointed ceremonies, even through the 
orders of God, it was looked upon as a profession 
of it, and the people paid dear for their presumpsion, 1 Sam. 4. 5, 8c. But now that it was 
done by the divine appointment, it was an honour to 
the ark of God, and a great encouragement to the 
faitb of Israel. 3. It was likewise to put honour 
upon the priests, who were appointed upon this oc-
casion to carry the ark and sound the trumpet, 
and in this case they were all employed, and not 
merely the priests excused from war; that that 
privilege, with other honours and powers 
that the law had given them, might not be grudged 
them, in this service they are principally employed, 
and so the people are made sensible what blessings 
they were to the public, and how well worthy of all 
the advantages conferred upon them. 4. It was 
to try the faith, obedience, and patience, of the 
people, to try the public spirit of the nation, to oblige 
them to observe a peculiar, which to human policy 
seemed foolish to obey, and believe a promise which in human 
probability seemed impossible to be performed. 
They were also proved, whether they could patiently 
endure the reproaches of their enemies, and patiently 
wait for the salvation of the Lord. Thus, by faith, 
not by force, the walls of Jericho fell down.
It was to encourage the hope of Israel, with reference to the remaining difficulties that were before them. That suggestion of the evil spies, that Canaan could never be conquered, because the cities were walled up to heaven, (Deut. 1. 28.) would by this be for ever silenced. The strongest and highest walls cannot hold out against Omnipotence; they needed not to fright, and therefore needed not to fear, because God fought for them.

6. And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord. 7. And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the Lord. 8. And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the Lord, and blew with the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of the Lord followed them. 9. And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rearward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets. 10. And Joshua commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout. 11. So the ark of the Lord compassed the city, going about it once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp. 12. And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord. 13. And seven priests, bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord, went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them but the rearward came after the ark of the Lord, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets. 14. And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days. 15. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times. 16. And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city.

We have here an account of the cavalcade which Israel made about Jericho, the orders Joshua gave concerning it, as he had received them from the Lord, and their punctual observance of these orders. We do not find that he gave the people the express assurances God had given him, that he would deliver the city into their hands; he tried whether they would obey orders with a general confidence that it would end well, and we find them very observant both of God and Joshua.

I. Wherever the ark went the people attended it, v. 9. The armed men went before it to clear the way, not thinking it any advantage to keep near the ark, to be pioneers to the ark of God. If any obstacle should be found in crossing all the roads that led to the city, (which they must do in walking round it,) they would remove it; if any opposition should be made by the enemy, they would encounter it, that the priests' march with the ark might be easy and safe. It is an honour to the greatest of men to do any good offices for those that are styling under God's protection, and to send them forward in the religion in their country. The rearward, either another body of armed men, or Dan's squadron, which marched last through the wilderness, or, as some think, the multitude of the people who were not armed or disciplined for war, (as many of them as would,) followed the ark, to testify their respect to it, to grace the solemnity, and to be witnesses of what was done. Every faithful zealous Israelite did their utmost to help in the work, and to share in the same hazard with the priests that bare the ark.

II. Seven priests went immediately before the ark, having trumpets in their hands, with which they were continually sounding, v. 4, 5, 9, 13. The priests were God's ministers, and thus in his name, 1. They proclaimed war with the Canaanites, and so struck a terror upon them; for by terrors upon their spirits they were to be conquered and subdued. Thus God's ministers, by the solemn declarations of his wrath against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, must blow the trumpet in Sion, and sound an alarm in the holy mountain, that the sinners in Sion may be afraid. They are God's heralds to denounce war against all those that go on still in their trespasses, but say, "We shall have peace, though we go on." 2. They proclaimed God's gracious presence with Israel, and so put life and courage into them. It was appointed that when they went to war, the priests should encourage them with the assurance of God's presence with them, Deut. 20. 2... 4. And particularly their blowing with trumpets was to be a sign to the people, that they should be remembered before the Lord their God in the day of battle, Num. 10. 9. It encouraged Abijah, 2 Chron. 13. 12. Thus their thunders by sounding forth the jubilee note of the everlasting gospel, which proclaims liberty and victory, must encourage the good soldiers of Jesus Christ in their spiritual warfare.

III. The trumpets they used, were not these silver trumpets which were appointed to be made for their ordinary service, but trumpets of rams' horns, bored hollow for the purpose, as some think; these trumpets were of the basest matter, dully sounding, goad-like to show that the excellency of the power might be of God. Thus by the foolishness of preaching, fitly compared to the sounding of these rams' horns, the devil's kingdom is thrown down, and the weapons of our warfare, though they are not carnal, nor seem to a carnal eye likely to bring any thing to pass, are yet mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds, 2 Cor. 10. 4, 5. The word here translated 'trumpet' is, such trumpets as they used to blow withal in the year of jubilee; many interpreters understand it so, as signifying the complete liberty to which Israel was now brought, and the bringing of the land of Canaan into the hands of its just and rightful owners.

IV. All the people were commanded to be silent, not to speak a word, nor make any noise, v. 10, that they might the more carefully attend to the sound
of the sacred trumpets, which they now were to look upon as the voice of God among them; and it does not become us to speak when God is speaking. It likewise intimates their reverent expectation of the event, Zech. 2. 13, Be silent, O all flesh before the Lord. Exod. 14. 14, God shall fight, and ye shall hold your peace. 

V. They were to do this once a day for six days together, and seven times the seventh day, v. 14, 15. God could have caused the walls of Jericho to fall upon the first surrounding of them, but they must go round them thirteen times before they fall, that they might be kept waiting patiently for the Lord. Though they were lately come into Canaan, and their time was very precious, (for they had a great deal of work before them,) yet they must linger so many days about Jericho, seeming to do nothing, nor to make any progress in their business. As promised deliverances must be expected, God's way, so they must be expected in his time. He that believes, does not make haste, nor more haste than God would have him make. Go yet seven times before any thing hopeful appears, 1 Kings 18. 43. 

VI. One of these days must needs be a sabbath-day, and the Jews say that it was the last, but that is not certain; however, if he that appointed them to rest on the other sabbath-days, appointed them to work on this, they were not so much as to justify them in it; he never intended to bind himself by his own laws, but that when he pleased him might dispense with them. The impotent man went upon this principle when he argued, John 5. 11, He that made me whole (and therefore has a divine power,) he said unto me, Take up thy bed. And in this case here, it was an honour to the sabbath-day, by which our time is divided into weeks, that just so much work in this work, and seven priests were employed to sound seven trumpets; that number being, on this occasion, as well as many others, made remarkable, in remembrance of the six days' work of creation, and the seventh day's rest from it. And, besides, the law of the sabbath forbids our own work, which is servile and secular, but this which they did, was a religious act. It is certainly no breach of the sabbath rest, therefore, for the sake of which the rest was instituted; and what is the sabbath-work but to attend the ark in all its motions? 

VII. They continued to do this, during the time appointed, and seven times the seventh day, though they saw not any effect of it, believing that at the end the vision would speak and not lie, Hab. 2. 3. If we persevere in the way of duty, we shall lose nothing by it in the long run. It is probable they walked at such a distance from the walls, as to be out of the reach of the enemies' arrows, and out of the hearing of their scoffs. We may suppose the oddness of the thing did at first amuse the besieged, but by the seventh day they were grown secure, feeling no harm from that, which perhaps they looked upon as an enchantment. Probably, they bantered the besiegers, as they, Neh. 4. 2, "What do these feeble Jews? Is this the people they thought so formidable? Are these their methods of attack?" Thus they cried Peace and Safety, that the destruction might be the more terrible when it came. Wicked men (says Bishop Hall) think God in jest when he is preparing for their judgment; but they will be convinced of their mistake when it is too late. 

VIII. At last they were to give a shout, and did so, and immediately the walls fell, v. 16. This was a shout for mastery, a triumphant shout, the shout of a king is among them, Numb. 23. 21. This was a shout of faith; they believed that the walls of Jericho would fall, and by that faith they were thrown down. It was a shout of prayer, an echo to the sound of the trumpets which proclaimed the promise that God would remember them; with one accord, as one man, they cry to heaven for help, and help comes in. Some allude to this to show that we must never expect a complete victory over our own corruptions till the very evening of our last day, and then we shall shout in triumph over them, when we come to the number and mastery of our Israelite gods. Bishop Hall explains it, A good heart (says he) groans under the sense of his infirmities, faint would be rid of them, and strives and prays, but when all is done, until the end of the seventh day it cannot be; then judgment shall be brought forth unto victory. And at the end of time, when our Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the sound of a trumpet, Satan's kingdom shall be completely ruined, and not till then, when all opposing rule, principality, and power, shall be effectually and eternally put down. 

17. And the city shall be assured, even it and all that are therein, to the Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. 18. And you, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take off the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. 19. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord. 20. So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city: 21. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword. 22. But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye have sworn unto her. 23. And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel. 24. And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. 25. And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. 26. And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth up and buildeth
this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it. 27. So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noise[d] throughout all the country.

The people had religiously observed the orders given them concerning the besieging of Jericho, and now at length Joshua had told them, v. 16, "The Lord hath given you the city, enter and take possession." Accordingly, in these verses we have, I. The rules they were to observe in taking possession; God gives it them, and therefore may direct it to what uses and intents, and clothe it with what provisos and limitations he thinks fit. It is given to them, to God, and therefore must be devoted to God, and perhaps the worst, of all the cities of Canaan.

I. The city must be burnt, and all the lives in it sacrificed without mercy to the justice of God. All this they knew was included in those words, v. 17. The city shall be a charem, a devoted thing, it and all therein, to the Lord; no life in it might be ransomed upon any terms, they must all be surely put to death, Lev. 27. 29. So He appoints, from whom as creatures they had received their lives, and from whose sinners they had forfeited them; and who may dispute his sentence? Is God unrighteous, who thus taketh vengeance? God forbid we should entertain such a thought! There was more of God seen in the taking of Jericho, than of any other of the cities of Canaan, and therefore that must be more than any other devoted to him. And the severe usage of this city would strike a terror upon all the rest and melt their hearts yet more before Israel. Oh! when this severity is ordered, Rahab and her family are excepted; she shall live and all that are with her. She had distinguished herself from her neighbours by the kindness she shewed to Israel, and therefore shall be distinguished from them by the speedy return of that kindness.

2. All the treasure of it, the money and plate and valuable goods, must be consecrated to the service of the tabernacle, and brought into the stock of dedicated things: The Jews say, because the city was taken on the sabbath-day. Thus God would be honoured by the beautifying and enriching of his tabernacle; thus preparation was made for the extraordinary expenses of his service; and thus the Israelites were taught not to set their hearts upon worldly wealth, nor to aim at heaping up abundance of it for themselves. God had promised them a land flowing with milk and honey, not a land abounding with silver and gold, for he would have them live comfortably in it, that they might serve him cheerfully, but not covet either to trade with distant countries, or to hoard for aftertimes. He would likewise have them reckon themselves enriched in the enriching of the tabernacle; and to think that which was laid up in God's house as truly their honour and wealth as if it had been laid up in their own.

A particular caution is given them to take heed of meddling with the forbidden spoil; for what was devoted to God, if they offered to appropriate it to their own use, would prove accursed to them; therefore, v. 18, "In any wise keep yourselves from the accursed things; you will find yourselves inclined to reach towards it, but check yourselves, frighten yourselves, lest you fall into any temptation to do with it." He speaks as if he foresaw the sin of Achan. We have an account of it in the next chapter, when he gives that reason for the caution, lest ye make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it, as it proved that Achan did.

II. The entrance that was opened to them into the city by the sudden fall of the walls, or at least that part of the wall over-against which they then were when they gave the shout, v. 20, The wall fell down flat, and, probably, killed abundance of people; the guards that stood sentinel upon it, or others that crowded upon it, to look at the Israelites that were walking around. We read of thousands killed by the fall of a wall, 1 Kings 20. 30. That which they trusted to for defence, proved their destruction. The sudden fall of the wall, no doubt, put the inhabitants into such a consternation, that they had no strength nor spirit to make any resistance, but they became an easy prey to the sword of Israel, and saw to how little purpose it was to shut their gates against a people that had the Lord on the head of them, Mic. 2. 13. Note, The God of heaven easily can, and certainly will, break down all the opposing power of his and his church's enemies. Gates of brass and bars of iron, before are as nothing as straw and rotten wood, Isa. 45. 1, 2. Who will bring me into the strong city? Will not thou, O God? Ps. 60. 9, 10. Thus shall Satan's kingdom fall, nor shall any prosper, that hardened themselves against God.

III. The execution of the orders given concern this devoted city. All that breathed, were put the sword; not only the men that were found in the city, but also the cattle and all that breathed. Though they cried for quarter, and begged ever earnestly for their lives, there was no room for compassion, pity must be forgotten, they utterly were destroyed, v. 21. If they had not had a divi warrant, under the seals of miracles for this execution, it could not have been justified, nor can justify the like now, when we are sure no such warrant can be produced. But being appointed by the righteous judge of heaven, whoever is not unrighteous in taking vengeance, they are to be applauded in doing it, as the faithful ministers of his justice. Work for God was then bloody work; and cursed was he that did it deceitfully, keeping back his sword from blood, Jer. 48. 10. But the spirit of the gospel is very different, for Christ came not to destroy men's lives but to save them, Luke 9. 56. Christ's victories were of another nature, the whole world was to be his, and we were to be his owners, as additional sacrifices to the divine justice. The cattle of the Israelites, when slain at the altar, were accepted as sacrifices for them, but the cattle of those Canaanites were required to be slain as sacrifices with them, for their iniquity was not to be purged with sacrifice and offering: both were for the glory of God. 2. The city was burnt with fire, and all that was in it, v. 24. The Israelites, perhaps, when they had taken Jericho, a large and well-built city, hoped they should have that for their head-quarters; but God will have them yet to dwell in tents, and therefore fires this nest, lest they should nestle in it. 3. All the silver and gold, and all those vessels which were capable of being purified by fire, were brought into the treasury of the house of the Lord; not that he needed it, but he would have honoured it, and the rest of his hosts, of their best, in particular, the God that gave the victory, and therefore might demand the spoil; either the whole, as here, or, as sometimes, a tenth, Heb. 7. 4.

IV. The preservation of Rahab the harlot, or inn-keeper, who perished not with them that believed not, Heb. 11. 31. The public faith was engaged for her safety, by the two spies, who acted therein as public persons; and therefore though the hurry they were in at the taking of the town, no doubt, was very great, yet Joshua took effectual care for her preservation. The same persons that she had secured, were employed to secure her, v. 22, 23. They were best able to do it, who knew her and her house, and they were fittest to do it, that it might appear it was for the sake of her kindness to them; that she
useless, and had her life given her for a prey. All her kindred were saved with her; like Noah she believed to the saving of her house; and thus in faith Christ brings salvation to the house, Acts 16. 31. Some ask, how her house, which is said to have been up on the wall, ch. 2. 13, escaped falling with the wall; we are sure it did escape, for she and her relations were safe in it; either though it joined so near to the wall as to be said to be upon it, yet it was so far off as not to fall either with the wall or under it; or rather that part of the wall on which her house stood, fell not. Now being preserved alive, 1. She was left for some time without the camp to be purified from the gentle superstition, which she was to renounce, and to be distributed for her admission as a proselyte. 2. She was in due time incorporated with the church of Israel, and she and her posterity dwelt in Israel, and her family was remarkable long after. We find her the wife of Salmon, prince of Judah, mother of Boaz, and named among the ancestors of our Saviour, Matt. 1. 5. Having received Israelites in the name of Israelites, she had an Israelite's reward. Bishop Pearson's promise of the habitation of the harlot, and admitting her into Israel, was a figure of Christ's receiving into his kingdom, and entering there, the publicans and the harlots, Matt. 21. 31. Or it may be applied to the conversion of the Gentiles.

V. Jericho is condemned to a perpetual desolation, and a curse pronounced upon the man that at any time hereafter should offer to rebuild it, v. 26. Jericho. This is a happy striking of that is, the elders and the people of Israel, not only by their own consent, obliging themselves and their posterity never to rebuild this city, but by the divine appointment; God himself having forbidden it under the severe penalty here annexed. 1. God would hereby show the weight of a divine curse; where it rests there is no contending with it nor getting from under it; it brings ruin within the city or realm. 2. By it would it remain in its ruins a standing monument of his wrath against the Canaanites, when the measure of their iniquity was full; and of his mercy to his people, when the time was come for their settlement in Canaan. The desolations of their enemies were witnesses of his favour to them, and would upbraíd them with their ingratitude to that God who had done so much for them. The situation of the city was very pleasant, and probably, its nearness to Jordan was an advantage to it, which would tempt men to build up upon the same spot; but they are here told it is at their peril if they do it. Men build for their posterity, but he that builds Jericho, shall have no posterity to enjoy what he builds; his eldest son shall die when he begins the work, and if he take not warming by that stroke to desist, but will go on presumptuously, the finishing of his work shall be attended with the funeral of his sons, and we may suppose, those all the rest cut off between. This curse, not being a curse causeless, did come upon that man who long after rebuilt Jericho, 1 Kings 16. 34. but we are not to think it made the place over the worse when it was built, or brought any hurt to them that inhabited it. We find Jericho afterw ward graced with the presence, not only of these two great prophets Elijah and Elisha, but of our blessed Saviour himself, Luke 18. 35. Note, Though the children of Israel, in the ignorance of a dangerous thing to attempt the building up of that which God will have to be destroyed. See Mal. 1. 4.

Lastly, All this magnified Joshua and raised his reputation, v. 27. it made him not only acceptable to Israel, but formidable to the Canaanites, because it appeared that God was with him of a truth: the Word of the Lord was with him, so the Chaldee, even Christ himself, the same that was with Moses. Nothing can more raise a man's reputation, nor make him appear more truly great, than to have the evidences of God's presence with him.

CHAP. VII.

More than once we have found the affairs of Israel, then when they were in the happiest posture, and gave the most hopeful prospects, perplexed and embarrassed by sin, and a stop thereby put to the most promising proceedings. The golden calf, the murmuring at Kadesh, and the iniquity of Phoeb, had broken their measures and given them great disturbance; and in this chapter we have such another instance of the interposition given to the progress of their arms by sin. But it being only the sin of one person or family, and soon expiated, the consequences were not so mischievous as of those of Joshua's. But however it served to let them know that they were still upon their good behaviour. We have here, I. The sin of Achan in meddleling with the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel. 2. And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-aven, on the east side of Beth-el, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai. 3. And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few. 4. So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai. 5. And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down; wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

The story of this chapter begins with a but. The Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was noised through all that country; so the foregoing chapter ends, and it left no room to doubt but that he would go on as he had begun, conquering and to conquer. He did right, and observed his orders in every thing. But the children of Israel committed a tres pass, and so set God against them; and then even Joshua's name was not mentioned, his instance or the thing could do them no service. If we lose our God, we lose our friends, who cannot help us unless God be for us. Now here is,

I. Achan sinning; v. 1. Here is only a general mention made of the sin, we shall afterward have a more particular account of it from his own mouth. The sin is here said to be taking of the accursed thing, in disobedience to the command, and in defiance of the threatening, ch. 6. 19. In the sucking
of Jericho, orders were given, that they should neither spare any lives, nor take any treasure to themselves; we read not of the breach of the former prohibition, (there were none to whom they showed any mercy,) but of the latter. Compasion was put off, and yielded to the law, but covetousness was indulged. The love of the world is the root of bitterness, which of all others is most hardly rooted up. Yet the history of Achan is a plain intimation that he of all the thousands of Israel was the only delinquent in this matter. Had there been more in like manner guilty, no doubt we should have heard of it; and it is strange there were no more. The temptation was strong, it was easy to suggest what a pity it was that so many thousands of Israel had not died. But would it have been easy to keep their ground, now they were under guilt and wrath, than this small party, and to them the defeat would have been much more grievous and dishonourable. However, it was bad enough as it was, and served, (1.) To humble God's Israel, and to teach them always to rejoice with trembling. Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as he that putteth it off. (2.) To harden the Canaanites, and to make them more secure, notwithstanding the terrors they had been struck with, that their ruin, when it came, might be the more dreadful. (3.) To be an evidence of God's displeasure against Israel, and a call to them to purge out the old leaven. And this was principally intended in their defeat.

2. The retreat of this party in disorder, put the whole camp of Israel into a fright; the hearts of the people were smitten, not so much for the loss as for the disappointment. Joshua had assured them that the living God would without fail drive out the Canaanites from before them, ch. 3. 10. How can this event he reconciled to that promise? To every thinking man among them it appeared an indication of God's displeasure, and an omen of something worse, and therefore no marvel it put them in such a consternation; if God turn to be their enemy and fight against them, what will become of them? True Israelites tremble when God is angry.

3. And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the even-tide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads. 7. And Joshua said, Alas! O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their back before their enemies! 9. For the Cannanites, and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us around, and cut off our name from the earth: and what will thou do unto thy great name?

We have here an account of the deep concern Joshua was in, upon this sad occasion. He, as a public person, interested himself more than any other in this public loss; and is therein an example to princes and great men, and teaches them to lay much to heart the calamities that befall their people: he is also a type of Christ, to whom the blood of his subjects is precious, Ps. 72. 14.

Observe, 1. How he grieved; he rent his clothes, v. 6. in
token of great sorrow for this public disaster, and especially a dread of God's displeasure, which was certainly the cause of it. Had it been but the common chance of war, (as we are too apt to express it,) it had not become a General to droop thus under it: but when God was angry, it was his duty to honour and feel thus. One of the bravest soldiers that ever was, owned that his first trembled for fear of God, Ps. 119, 150. Now had not himself under the hand of God, he fell to the earth upon his face, not thinking it any disarrayment to him to lie thus low before the great God, to whom he directed this token of reverence, by keeping his eye toward the ark of the Lord. The elders of Israel, being interested in the cause, and influenced by his example, prostrated themselves with him, and, in token of deep humiliation, put dust upon their heads, not only as mourners, but to signify that he was not for some sin or other, that God did thus contend with them, (though they knew not what it was,) they humbled themselves before God, and thus deprecated the progress of his wrath. This they continued until even-tide, to show that it was not the result of a sudden feeling, but proceeded from a deep conviction of their misery and danger if God were any way provoked to depart from them. Joshua, in the full force of his powers for their misinformation concerning the strength of the enemy, nor upon the soldiers for their cowardice, though perhaps both were blame-worthy, but his eye was set upon God, for is there any evil in the camp, and he has not done it? His eye is upon God as displeased, and that troubles him.

11. How he prayed, or pleaded rather, humbly everywhere for the case with God; not sullen, as David when the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah, but much affected; his spirit seemed to be somewhat ruffled and discomposed, yet not so as to be put out of frame for prayer; but by giving vent to his trouble in an humble address to God, he keeps his temper, and it ends well.

1. Now he wishes they had all taken up with the lot of the two tribes on the other side Jordan, v. 7. He thinks it had been better to have entered there and been cut short, than come hither to be cut off. This savours too much of discontent and distrust of God, and cannot be justified, though the surprise and disappointment to one deeply concerned for the public interest may in part excuse it. Those words, Wherefore hast thou brought us over Jordan to destroy us? are too like what the murmurers often said, Exod. 14. 11, 12. 16. 3.—17. 3. Numbr. 14. 2, 3. but he that seizes the heart, removes the fear, from another spirit, and therefore was not extreme to mark what he said amiss. Had Joshua considered that this disorder which their affairs were put into, no doubt, proceeded from something amiss, which yet might easily be redressed, and all set to rights again, (as often in his predecessor's time) he would have not spoken of it as a thing taken for granted, that they were delivered into the hands of the Amorites to be destroyed. God knows what he does, though we do not; but this we may be sure of, he never did, nor ever will, do us any wrong.

2. He speaks as one quite at a loss concerning the meaning of this event, v. 8. "What shall I say, what construction can I put upon it, when Israel, thy own people, for whom thou hast lately done such great things, and to whom thou hast promised the full possession of this land, when they turn their backs before their enemies, (as the word is,)" when they not only flee before them, but fall before them, and become a prey to them? What shall we think of the divine power, Is the Lord's arm shortened? Of the divine promise Is his word yea and nay? Of what God has done for us, Shall that be all undone again and prove in vain?" Note, The methods of Providence are often intricate and perplexing, and such as the wisest and best of men know not what to say to; but they shall know hereafter, John 13. 7.

3. He pleads the danger Israel was now in of being ruined; he gives up all for gone. "The Canaanites shew us they are strong, and hardened to death, that now our defence is departed, and the scales turned in their favour, we shall be in their eyes as contemnible as ever we were formidable, and they shall cut off our name from the earth," v. 9. Thus even good men, when things go against them a little, are too apt to fear the worst, and make harder conclusions than there is reason for. But this comes in here as a plea; "Lord, let not Israel's name, which has been so dear to thee and so great in the world, be cut off."

4. He pleads the reproach that would be cast on God, and that if Israel were ruined, his glory would suffer by it. They will cut off our name, says he, yet as if he had corrected himself for insisting upon that, it is no great matter (thinks he) what comes of our little name, (the cutting off of that will be a small loss,) but what will thou do for thy great name? This he looks upon and laments as the great aggravation to the calamity, he feared it would reflect on God, his wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness; what would the Egyptians say? Note, Nothing is more grievous to a gracious soul than dishonour done to God's name. This also he insists upon as a plea for the preventing of his fears, and a return of God's favour; it is the only word in all his address, that has any encouragement in it, and he concludes with it, leaving it to this issue, Father, glorify thy name. The name of God is a great name, above every name; and whatever happens, we ought to believe that he will, and pray that he would, work for his own name, that that may not be polluted. This should be our concern more than any thing else, on this we must fix our eye as the end of all our desires, and from this we must fetch our encouragement as the foundation of all our hopes; we cannot urge a better plea than this, Lord, what wilt thou do for thy great name? Let God in all be glorified, and then welcome his whole will.

10. And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? 11. Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. 12. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. 13. Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you. 14. In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the Lord
We have here God's answer to Joshua's address, which, we may suppose, came from the oracle over the ark, before which Joshua had prostrated himself. v. 6. Those that desire to know the will of God, must attend with their desires upon the lively oracles, and wait at wisdom's gates for wisdom's dictates, Prov. 8. 34. And let those that find themselves under the tokens of God's displeasure, never complain of him, but complain to him, and they shall receive an answer of peace. The answer came immediately, while he was yet speaking, Isa. 63. 18. v. 9. 20. 24.

I. God encourages Joshua against his present despondencies, and the black and melancholy apprehensions he had of the present posture of Israel's affairs, v. 10. "Get thee up, suffer not thy spirits to droop and sink thus, wherefore hast thou thus upon thy face?" No doubt, Joshua did well to humble himself before God, and mourn as he did, under the tokens of his displeasure; but now God tells him, it was enough, he would not have him continue any longer in that melancholy posture, for God delights not in the grief of penitents when they afflict their souls, further than as it qualifies them for pardon and peace; the days even of that mourning must be ended. Arise, shake thyself from the dust, Isa. 52. 2. Joshua continued his mourning till even-tide, v. 6. so late, that they could do nothing that night toward the discovery of the criminal, but were forced to put it off till next morning. Daniel (ch. 9. 21.) and Ezra (ch. 9. 5, 6.) continued their mourning only till the time of the evening sacrifice; that revived them both, but Joshua went past that time, and therefore is thus roused; "Get thee up, do not lie all night there." Yet we find that Moses fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, to make intercession for Israel, Deut. 9. 18. Joshua must get up because he has other work to do than lie there; the accused thing must be discovered and cast out, and the sooner the better; Joshua is the man that must do it, and therefore it is time for him to lay aside his mourning weeds, and put on his judge's robes, and clothe himself with zeal as a elect; weeping must not hinder sowing, nor one duty of religion justly cut another. Every thing is beautiful in its season. Shechaniah perhaps had an eye to this in what he said to Ezra upon a like occasion. See Ezra 10. 2-4.

II. He informs him of the true and only cause of this disaster, and shows him wherefore he contended with them, v. 11. Israel hath sinned. "Think not that God's mind is changed, his arm shortened, or his promise about to fail; no, it is sin, it is sin, that great mischief-maker, that has stopped the current of divine favours, and has made this breach upon you. A sound judgment should teach you, that all things are described; but it is spoken of as the act of Israel in general, till they have fastened it upon the particular person, and their godly sorrow have so wrought a clearing of themselves, as the r's did, 2 Cor. 7. 11. Observe how the sin is here made to appear exceeding sinful. 1. They have transgressed my covenant, an express precept with a penalty annexed to it. It was agreed, that God should have all the spoil of Jericho, and they should have the spoil of the rest of the cities of Canaan, but in robbing God of his part, they transgressed this covenant. 2. They have even taken of the devoted thing, in contempt of the curse which was so solemnly denounced against them, that should, if they had not transgressed God's property, as if that curse had nothing in it formidable. 3. They have also stolen; they did it clandestinely, as if they could conceal it from the divine omniscience, and they were ready to say, The Lord shall not see, or will not miss so small a matter out of so great a spoil. Thus thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself. 4. They have dissembled also. Probably, when the action was over again, and all were called and examined of them, whether they had faithfully disposed of the spoil according to the divine command, and charged them, if they knew of any transgression, they should discover it; but Achai joined with the rest in a general protestation of innocency, and kept his countenance, like the adulterous woman that eats and hides her mouth, and says, I have done no wickedness. Nay, 5. They have put the accused thing among the accursed thing, and hearkened to them, and made good a title to that as to any thing they have; never expecting to be called to an account, nor designing to make restitution. All this Joshua, though a wise and vigilant ruler, knew nothing of, till God told him, who knows all the secret wickedness that is in the world, which men know nothing of. God could at this time have told him who the person was that had done this thing, but does not. (1.) To exercise the zeal of Joshua and Israel, in searching out the criminal. (2.) To give the sinner himself space to repent and make confession. Joshua, no doubt, proclaimed immediately throughout the camp, that there was such a transgression committed, upon which, if Achai had surrendered himself, and penitently owned his guilt, and prevented the scrutiny, who knows but he might have had the benefit of that law which accepted of a trespass-offering, with restitution, from those that had sinned through ignorance in the holy things of the law? Lev. 5. 15. 16. But Achai never discovering himself till the lot discovered him, evinced the hardness of his heart, and therefore he found no mercy.

III. He awakens him to inquire further into it, by telling him, 1. That this was the only ground for the controversy God had with them, this, and nothing else; so that when this accused thing was put away, he needed not fear, all would be well, the ruin of their successees, when this one obstruction was removed, would run as strong as ever. 2. That if this accused thing were not destroyed, they could not expect the return of God's gracious presence; in plain terms, neither will I be with you any more as I have been, except ye destroy the accused, that is, the accused person, who is made so by the accused thing. That which is accused, will be destroyed; but he that is intrusted with the word, hear it in vain, if they make it not a terror to that wickedness which brings these judgments of God on a land. By personal repentance and reformation, we destroy the accused thing in our own hearts, and unless we do that, we must never expect the favour of the blessed God. Let all men know that it is nothing but sin that separates between them and God, and if that be not sincerely renounced, it will not be removed. IV. He directs him in what method to make this inquiry and prosecution. 1. He must sanctify the people, now over-night, that is, as it is explained, he must command them to sanctify themselves, v. 13. And what can either magistrates or ministers do more toward sanctification? They must put
themselves into a suitable frame to appear before God, and submit to the divine scrutiny; must examine themselves, now that God was coming to examine them; must prepare to meet their God. They were called to sanctify themselves, when they were to receive the divine law, Exod. 19. and now also when they were to come under the divine judgment; in order to be attuned to the most impiety. There is an accrued thing in the midst of thee, and therefore sanctify yourselves, that is, "Let all that are innocent, be able to clear themselves, and be the more careful to cleanse themselves: the sins of others may be improved by us, as furtherances of our sanctification, as the scandal of the incestuous Corinthian occasioned a blessed reformation in that church, 2 Cor. 7. 11. 2. He must have them all, and must continue them, because the impiety of the lot is such a thing, and however casual it seems, is under the direction of infinite wisdom and justice; and to show, that when the sin of sinners finds them out, God is to be acknowledged in it; it is he that seizes them, and the arrests are in his name. God hath found out the impiety of thy servants, Gen. 44. 16. It is also intimated with what a certain and unerring judgment the righteous God does and will distinguish between the innocent and the guilty, so that though for a time they seem involved in the same condemnation, as the whole tribe did, when it was first taken by the lot, yet he who has his fan in his hand, will effectually provide for the taking out of the precious from the vile; so that though the righteous be of the same tribe, and family, and household, with the wicked, yet they shall never be treated as the wicked, Gen. 18. 25. 3. When the criminal was found out, he must be put to death without mercy, (Heb. 10. 28.) and with all the expressions of a holy detestation, v. 15. He and all that he has, must be burnt with fire, that there might be no remainder of the accursed thing among them; and the reason given for this severe sentence, is, because the criminal has, (1.) Given a great affront to God, he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord, who is jealous particularly for the honour of the holy covenant. (2.) He has done a great injury to the church of God, he has wronged folly in Israel, has shamed that nation which is looked upon by all its neighbours as a wise and an understanding people; has infected that nation which is sanctified to God, and troubled that nation of which He is the Protector. These being crimes so heinous in their nature, and of such pernicious consequence and example, the execution, which otherwise would have come under the imputation of cruelty, is to be applauded as a piece of necessary justice. It was sacrifice, it was invading God's rights, alienating his property, and converting to a private use that which was devoted to his glory, and appropriated to the service of his sanctuary—this was the crime to be thus severely punished, for warning to all people in all ages to take heed how they rob God.

16. So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken: 17. And he brought the family of Judah: and he took the family of the Zarehites: and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: 18. And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. 19. And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. 20. And Achan answered Joshua and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: 21. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. 22. So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. 23. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and hid them out before the Lord. 24. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan, the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. 25. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. 26. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

We have in these verses, I. The discovery of Achan by the lot, which proved a perfect lot, though it proceeded gradually. Though we may suppose that Joshua slept the better, and with more ease and satisfaction, when he knew the worst of the disease of that body, which, under God, he was the head of, and which was put into a certain method of cure, yet he rose up early in the morning, v. 16. so much was his heart upon it, to put away the accursed thing. We have found Joshua upon other occasions an early riser, here, it shows his zeal and vehement desire to see Israel restored to the divine favour. In the scrutiny observe, 1. That the guilty tribe was that of Judah, which was, and was to be, of all the tribes the most honourable and illustrious; this was an allay to their dignity, and might serve as a check to their pride, that the sons of the other tribes might be disposed to offer excuses, here was one that was its reproach. Let not the best families think it strange, if there be those found in them, and descending from them, that prove their grief and shame. Judah was to have
the first and largest lot in Canaan, the more inex-
cusable is one of that tribe, if, not content to wait for
his own share, he break in upon God's property.
The Jews' tradition is, that when the tribe of Ju-
dah was taken, the valiant men of that tribe drew
their swords, and pretended they would not sheathe
them again till they saw the criminal punished, and
themselves cleared who knew their own innocence.
1. That the guilty person was put to death, according to
the law, Gen. 34 v. 21. That a man's-helper, and
the man, shall be put to death. Thus the man, v. 18.
It was strange that Achan, being con-
scientious to himself of guilt, when he saw the lot come
nearer and nearer to him, had not either the wit to
make an escape, or the grace to make a confession;
but his heart was hardened through the deceitful-
ness of sin, and it proved to be to his own destruc-
tion. We may well imagine how his countenance
ingaged, when he was singled out as the delinquent, when
the eyes of all Israel were fastened upon him,
and every one was ready to say, Have we found thee,
O our enemy? See here, (1.) The folly of those that promise themselves secrecy in sin; the
righteous God has many ways of bringing to light
the hidden works of darkness, and so bringing to
tame and ruin those that continue their fellishness
with secret complacency. Jesus, v. 19. (2.) When
God pleases, shall carry the voice, Eccl. 10.
20. See Ps. 94. 7, Etc. (2.) How much it is our
concern, when God is contending with us, to
find out what the cause of action is, what the
particular sin is, that, like Achan, troubles our
camp. We must thus examine ourselves and care-
fully review the records of conscience, that we may
dive out the accursed thing, and pray earnestly with
the holy Job, Lord, show me wherefore thou con-
test with me. Discor er the traitor, and he shall
no longer be harboured.
II. His arraignment and examination, v. 19.
Joshua sits judge, and through abundantly satisfied
of his guilt by the determination of the lot, yet urges
him to make a penitent confession, that his soul
might be saved by it in the other world, though he
could not give him any encouragement to hope that the
sin, so far as he appeared, could be covered by it. How
he accepts him, with the greatest mildness and tender-
ness that could be, like a true disciple of Moses. He
might at first have called him "thief," and
"rebel," "Raca," and "thou fool," but he calls
him "son;" he might have adjured him to confess, as
the High Priest did our blessed Saviour, or
threatened him with the torture to extort a con-
fession, make him an example, I pray thee, make con
fession. This is an example to all, not to insult over those that are in misery, though they have brought themselves into it by
their own wickedness, but to treat even offenders
with the spirit of meekness, not knowing what we
ourselves should have been and done, if God had
put us into the hand of our own counsels. It is like-
wise an example to magistrates, in executing justice,
to consider the tender age, the infirmities, the in-
patient hand, and never suffer themselves to be trans-
ported by them into any indecencies of behaviour or
language, no, not towards those that have given the
greatest provocations. The wrath of man work-
eth not the righteousness of God. Let them re-
member the judgment is God's, who is Lord of his
anger. This is the likeliest method of bringing of-
fenders to repentance. 2. What he wishes him to do
is, to confess the fact, to confess it to God, the party
offended by the crime; Joshua was to him in God's
stead, so that in confessing to him, he confessed to
God. Hereby he would satisfy Joshua and the congregation concerning which was laid to his
charge; his confession would also be an evidence of
his repentance, and a warning to others to take
heed of sinning after the similitude of his trans-
gression: but that which Joshua aims at herein, is,
that God might be honoured by it as the Lord,
the God of infinite knowledge and power, from
whom no secrets are hid; and as the God of Israel,
who as he does particularly resent affronts given
to his Israel, so he does the affronts given him by
Israel. Note, In confessing sin, as we take shame
out of ourselves, so we give glory to God, as a righteous
God, owning him that dispossesses us, and as a
good God who will not improve our confessions as
evidences against us, but is faithful and just to for-
give, when we are brought to own that he would be
faithful and just if he should punish. By sin we have
injured God in his honour; Christ by his death has
made satisfaction for the injury: but it is required,
that we by repentance show our good-will to his
honour, and, as far as in us lies, give glory to him.
Bishop Patrick quotes the Scripture chronicle,
making Joshua to say here to Achan, Lift up thine
eyes to the King of heaven and earth, and acknow-
ledge that nothing can be hid from him who knoweth
the greatest secrets.
III. His confession, which, now at last, when he
saw it was to no purpose to conceal his crime, was
free and ingenious enough, v. 20. Here is,
1. A confession of the crime, v. 20. Indeed I have
sinned, what I am charged with is too true to be denied, and too bad to be excused. I
own it, I lament it; the Lord is righteous in bring-
ing it to light, for indeed I have sinned. This is
the language of a penitent that is sick of his sin,
and whose conscience is loaded with it. "I have
nothing to accuse any one else of, but a great deal
to say against myself; it is with me that the ac-
cursed thing is found, I am the man who have
perverted that which was right, and it profited
me not." And that where with he aggravates the
sin, is, that it was committed against the Lord
God of Israel. He was himself an Israelite, a
sharer with the rest of that exalted nation in their
privileges, so that, in offending the God of Israel,
he offended his own God, which laid him under
the guilt of the basest treachery and ingratitude
imaginable.
2. A particular narrative of the fact, Thus and
thus have I done. God had told Joshua in general,
that a part of the devoted things was alienated, but
leaves it to him to draw from Achan an account of
the particulars; for, one way or other, God will
make sinners' own tongues to fall upon themselves,
(Pr 64. 8.) if he ever bring them to repentance,
they will be their own accusers, and their awaken-
ings and convictions will be instead of a thenud and
witnesses. Note, It becomes penitents, in the confes-
sion of their sin to God, to be very particular, not
only, "I have sinned," but, "In this and that in-
stance I have sinned;" reflecting with regret upon
all the steps that led to the sin, and all the circum-
stances that aggravated it and made it exceeding
sinful; thus and thus have I done. He confesses,
1 To God he made it known, and to Jericho he found a goodly Babylonian garment; the
word signifies a robe, such as princes wore when they appeared in state, probably it belonged
to the king of Jericho; it was far-fetched, if fetched, as
we translate it, from Babylon. A garment of di-
vers colours, so some render it; whatever it was,
in his eyes it made a glorious show; A thousand pitties" (think Achan). He puts it to him, it should be burnt,
then will it do nobody any good, if I take it for my
self, it will serve me many a year for my best gar-
ment. Under these pretences, he makes bold
with this first, and thinks it no harm to save it from
the fire; but his hand being thus in, he proceeds to
take a bag of money, two hundred shekels, that is,
one hundred ounces of silver, and a wedge of gold
which weighed fifty shekels, that is, twenty-five ounces. He could not plead that, in taking these, he saved them from the fire, (for the silver and gold laid up in the treasury,) but they that make a slight excuse to serve in daring to commit one sin, will have their hearts so hardened by that, that they will venture upon the next without such an excuse, for the way of sin is downhill. See what a poor prize it was for which Achan ran this desperate hazard, and what an unanswerable loser he was by the bargain. See Matt. 16. 26. (2.) He confesses the manner of taking them. [1.] They began in the eye. He says (like Eve) as Eve saw the forbidden fruit, and was strangely charmed with the sight. See what comes of suffering the heart to walk after the eyes, and what need we have to make this covenant with our eyes, that if they wander, they shall be sure to weep for it. Look not thou upon the vine that is red, upon the woman that is fair; close the right eye that thus offends thee, to prevent the necessity of flinching it out, and casting it from thee, Matt. 5. 29. [2.] It proceeded out of the heart. He owns, I coveted them. Thus lust conceived and brought forth this sin. They that would be kept from sinful actions, must mortify and check in themselves sinful desires, particularly the desire of worldly wealth, which we more particularly call covetousness. O what a world of evil is the love of money the root of! Had Achan looked upon these things with an eye of sense, he would not have coveted them, and would have dreaded them, but looking upon them with an eye of sense only, he saw them goodly things, and coveted them. It was not the looking, but the lusting, that ruined him. [3.] When he had committed it, he was very industrious to conceal it. Having taken of the forbidden treasures, fearing lest any search should be made for prohibited goods, he employed one that resolved to keep what he had gotten, and never to make restitution. Thus does Achan confess the whole matter, that God might be justified in the sentence passed upon him. See the deceitfulness of sin; that which is pleasing in the commission, is bitter in the reflection, at the last it bites like a serpent. Particularly, see what comes of ill-gotten goods, and how they will be chanted that rob God. He, in the next verse, is sentenced down rich, and he shall vomit them up again.

IV. His conviction. God had convicted him by the lot, he had convicted himself by his own confession; but that no room might be left for the most discontented Israelite to object against the process, Joshua has him further convicted by the searching of his tent, in which the goods were found which he confessed to. Particular notice is taken of the haste which the messengers made; they did not tarry to search, they ran to the tent, v. 22. Not only to show their readiness to obey Joshua’s orders, but to show how uneasy they were till the camp was cleared of the accursed thing, that they might regain the divine favour. They that feel themselves under wrath, find themselves concerned not to defer the putting away of sin. Delays are dangerous, and it is no time to trifle. When the stolen goods were brought to the altar laid up in the treasury, v. 23, that all Israel might see how plain the evidence was against Achan, and might adore the strictness of God’s judgments in punishing so severely the stealing of such small things, and yet the justice of his judgments in maintaining his right to devoted things, and might be afraid of ever offending in the like kind. In laying them out before the Lord, they acknowledged his title to them, and waited to receive his directions concerning them. Note, Those that think to put a cheat upon God, do but deceive themselves; what is taken from him, he will recover, Hos. 2. 9, and he will be a loser by no man at last.

V. His condemnation. Joshua passes sentence upon him, v. 25. Why hast thou troubled us? There is the ground of the sentence, O, how much hast thou troubled us? So some read it. He refers to what was said when the warning was given not to meddle with the accursed thing, ch. 6. 18, lest ye make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. Note, Sin is a very troublesome thing, not only to a sinner himself, but to all about him. He that is greedy of gain, as Achan was, troubles his own house, Prov. 13. 27. So all the communities he belongs to. New (says Joshua) God shall trouble thee. See why Achan was so severely dealt with, not only because he had robbed God, but because he had troubled Israel; over his head he had (as it were) this accusation written, Achan, the troubleuer of Israel, as Ahab, 1 Kings 18. 18. This therefore is his doom, God shall trouble thee. Note, The righteous God will certainly recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people, 2 Thess. 1. 6. Those that are troublesome, shall be troubled. Some of the Jewish doctors, from that word, which determines the troubling of him to this day, infer, that therefore he should not be troubled in the world to come; the flesh was destroyed, that the spirit might be saved, and if so, the dispensation was really less severe than it seemed. In the description, both of his sin and of his punishment, by the word troublesome, that was in his time, and the application of his sentence to his name Achan, or, as he is called, 1 Chron. 2. 7, Achar, which signifies trouble. He did too much answer his name.

VI. His execution. No reprieve could be obtained, a gangrene member must be cut off immediately. When he is proved to be an anaehema, and the trouble of the camp, we may suppose all the people and the camp, would be so disturbed by the word, Achan, away with him! Stone him, stone him! Here is, 1. The place of execution: they brought him out of the camp, in token of their putting far from them that wicked person, 1 Cor. 5. 13. When our Lord Jesus was made a curse for us, that by his trouble we might have peace, he suffered as an accursed thing without the gate, bearing our reproach, Heb. 13. 12. 13. The execution was at a distance, that the camp was not defiled by Achan’s sin, might not be defiled by his death.

2. The persons employed in his execution; it was the act of all Israel, v. 24. 25. They were all spectatoors of it, that they might see and fear. Public executions are public examples. Nay, they were all consenting to his death, and as many as could, were active in it, in token of the universal detestation in which they held his sacrilegious attempt, and their dread of God’s displeasure against them.

3. The partakers with him in the punishment; for he perished not alone in his iniquity, ch. 22. 20. (1.) The stolen goods were destroyed with him, the garment burnt, as it should have been with the rest of the combustible things in Jericho, and the silver and gold defaced, melted, lost, and buried, in the ashes of the rest of his goods, under the heath of, so as need to be put to any other use. (2.) All his other goods, his vineyard, his sheep and oxen, were taken away, not only his tent, and the furniture of that, but his oxen, asses, and sheep; to show, that goods gotten unjustly, especially if they be gotten by sacrilege, will not only turn to no account, but will blast and waste the rest of the possessions to which they are added. The eagle in the fable, that stole flesh from the altar, brought a cake of fire with it, which burnt her nest, Hab. 2. 9, 10. Zach. 5. 3, 4. With them they lose their own, that grasp at more than their own. (3.) His sons and daughters were put to death with him. Some indeed think that they were brought
out, (v. 24.) only to be the spectators of their father’s punishment, but most conclude that they died with him, and that the stock of which they were the progeny, v. 25. who had died, they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. God had expressly provided that magistrates should not put the children to death for the father’s sins; but he did not intend to bind himself by that law, and in this case he had expressly ordered, v. 15. that the criminal and all that he had, should be burnt. Perhaps his sons and daughters were aiders and abettors in the villainy he had helped to carry off of the spoil of war, and it is very probable that they assisted in the concealment, and that he could not hide them in the midst of his tent, but they must know and keep his counsel, and so they became accessories ex post facto)—after the fact; and if they were ever so little partakers in the crime, it was so heinous, that they were justly sharers in the punishment. However, God was hereby glorified, and the judgment executed was thus made the more tremendous.

4. The punishment itself that was inflicted on him; he was stoned, some think, as a sabbath-breaker, supposing that the sacriilege was committed on the sabbath-day; and then his dead body was burnt as an accursed thing, of which there should be no remainder left. The concurrence of all the people in this execution, teaches us how much the perpetuation of sin, or the continuance of it in the body, should contribute what they can, in their places, to the suppression of vice and profaneness, and the reformation of manners; sin is a reproach to any people, and therefore every Israelite indeed will have a stone to throw at it.

5. The pacifying of God’s wrath hereby, v. 26. The Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. The putting away, even by true repentance and reformation, as it is the only way, so it is the most effectual way, to recover the divine favour. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

VII. The record of his conviction and execution; care was taken to preserve the remembrance of it, for warning and instruction to posterity: 1. A heap of stones was raised on the place where Achan was executed, every one perhaps of the congregation that stood at the hinder part of his dejectation of the crime. 2. A new name was given to the place; it was called, the Valley of Achor, or Trouble. This was a perpetual brand of infamy upon Achan’s name, and a perpetual warning to all people not to invade God’s property. By this severity against Achan, the honour of Joshua’s government, now in the infancy of it, was maintained, and Israel, at their entrance upon the promised Canaan, were minded to observe, at their peril, the provisions and limitations of the grant by which they held it. The Valley of Achor is said to be given for a door of hope, because when we put away the accursed thing, then there begins to be hope in Israel, Hos. 2 15. Ezra 10. 2.

CHAP. VIII.

The embarrassment which Achan’s sin gave to the affairs of Israel being over, we have them here in a very good posture again, the affairs both of war and religion. Here is, 1. The glorious progress of their arms in the taking of Ai, v. 1-3. In which they had lately suffered disgrace, v. 4. 2. Joshua gives orders accordingly to the men of war, v. 3-8. The stratagem is managed as it was projected, and succeeds as it was desired, v. 9-22. 4. Joshua becomes master of this city, puts all to the sword, burns it, hangs the king, but gives the plunder to the soldiers, v. 23-24. II. The great solemnity of writing and reading the law before a general assembly of all Israel, drawn up for that purpose upon the two mountains of Gerizim and Ebal, according to an order which Moses had received from the Lord, and delivered to them, v. 30-35. Thus did they take their work before them, and make the business of their religion to keep pace with their secular business.

A N D the Lord said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land. 2. And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.

Israel were very happy in having such a commander as Joshua, but Joshua was more happy in having such a director as God himself; when any difficulty occurred, he need not to call a council of war, who had God so nigh unto him, not only to answer, but even to prevent his inquiries. It should seem, Joshua was now at a stand, had scarcely recovered from the discomposure he was put into by the trouble Achan gave them, and could not think, without fear and trembling, of pushing forward, as they had done in the other cities; but if Joshua had thought it, then God spoke to him, either by vision, as before, ch. 5. as a man of war with his sword drawn, or by the breastplate of judgment. Note, When we have faithfully put away sin, that accursed thing, which separates between us and God, then, and not till then, we may expect to hear from God to our comfort, and God’s directing us how to go on in our work and warfare, and not to be surprised at the verdict of his being reconciled to us. Observe here,

I. The encouragement God gives to Joshua to proceed; Fear not, neither be thou dismayed, v. 1. This intimates that the sin of Achan, and the consequence of it, had been a very great discouragement to Joshua, and made his heart almost ready to fail. Corruptions within the church we ken the hands, and damp the spirits of her guides and helpers, more than do our aversions from without; treacherous Israelites are to be dreaded more than the malicious Canaanites. But God bids Joshua not to be dismayed; the same power that keeps Israel from being ruined by their enemies, shall keep them from ruining themselves. To animate him, 1. He assures him of success against Ai, tells him it is all his own; but he must take it as God’s gift, I have given it into thy hands, which secured him both the title and possession, and obliged him to give God the glory of both, Ps. 44. 3. 2. He allows the people to take the spoil to themselves. Here the spoil was not consecrated to God as that of Jericho, and therefore there was no danger of the people’s committing such a trespass as they had committed there. Observe, How Achan, who caught at forbidden spoil, lost that, and life, and all; but the city of Ai, who had with great difficulty retracted from the accursed thing, were quickly compensated for their obedience with the spoil of Ai; the way to have the comfort of what God allows us, is, to forbear what he forbids us. No man shall lose by his self-denial; let God have his ducats first, and then all will be clean to us and sure, 1 Kings 17. 13. God did not bring them to these goodly cities, and fill their houses with all good things, to tantalize them with the sight of that which they might have; but, having received the first-fruits from Jericho, the spoil of Ai, and of all the cities which from henceforward came into their hands, they might take for a prey to themselves.
II. The direction he gives him in attacking Ai. It must not be such a work of time as the taking of Jericho was, that would have prolonged the war too much; they that had patiently waited seven days for Jericho, shall have Ai given them in one day. Nor was it, as that, to be taken by miracle, and purely by the act of God, but now their own conduct and courage must be exercised; having seen God work for them, they must now bestir themselves. God directs him, I. To take all the people, that they might all be spectators of the action, and sharers in the spoil. Hereby God gave him a tacit rebuke for sending so small a detachment against Ai, in the former attempt upon it, ch. 7. 4. 2. To lay an ambush behind the city; this was a method which Joshua would not have thought of at this time, if God had not directed him to it; and though now we are not to expect direction, as here, by visions, voices, or oracles, yet whenever those who are instructed with public counsels, take prudent securities for the public good, it must be acknowledged that God puts it into their hearts; he that teaches the husbandman discretion, no doubt, teaches the statesman and general.

3. So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valour, and sent them away by night. 4. And he commanded them, saying, Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, even behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready: 5. And I, and all the people that are with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them. 6. (For they will come out after us,) till we have drawn them from the city: for they will say, They flee before us, as at the first: therefore we will flee before them. 7. Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the Lord your God will deliver it into your hand. 8. And it shall be, when ye have taken the city, that ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the Lord shall ye do. See, I have commanded you. 9. Joshua therefore sent them forth: and they went to lie in ambush, and abode between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of Ai: but Joshua lodged that night among the people. 10. And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. 11. And all the people, even the people of war that were with him, went up, and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north side of Ai: now there was a valley between them and Ai. 12. And he took about five thousand men, and set them to lie in ambush between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of the city. 13. And when they had set the people, even all the host that was on the north of the city, and their liers in wait on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley. 14. And it came to pass, when the king of Ai saw it, that they hasted and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he wist not that there were liers in ambush against him behind the city. 15. And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. 16. And all the people that were in Ai were called together to pursue after them: and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city. 17. And there was not a man left in Ai or Beth-el that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel. 18. And the Lord said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city. 19. And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand; and they entered into the city, and took it, and hasted, and set the city on fire. 20. And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way: and the people that fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers. 21. And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and slew the men of Ai. 22. And the other issued out of the city against them; so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side: and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape.

We have here an account of the taking of Ai by stratagem. The stratagem here used, we are sure, was lawful and good: God himself appointed it, and we have no reason to think, but that the like is lawful and good in other wars. Here was no league broken, no oath or promise violated, nor any thing like it; it was not by the pretense of a parley, or treaty of peace, that the advantage was gained, no, these are sacred things, and not to be jested with, nor used to serve a turn; truth, when once plighted, becomes a debt even to the enemy. But in this stratagem here was no untruth told; nothing was concealed but their own counsels, which no enemy ever pretended a right to be entrusted with; nothing was dissembled, nothing counterfeited but a retreat, which was no natural or necessary indication at all of their inability to maintain their onset, or of any design not to renew it; the enemy ought to have been upon their guard, and to have kept within the defence of their own walls; common prudence, had they been governed by it, would have directed
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them not to venture on the pursuit of an army which they saw was so far superior to them in numbers, and, leave their city unprovided for: but, "If ye will go with me, then ye shall see Jehovah's ark of the covenant go before me into the city." Now in the account here given of this matter,

I. There is some difficulty in adjusting the numbers that were employed to effect it. Mention is made, v. 3, of thirty thousand, that were chosen and sent away by night, to whom the charge was given to surprise the city as soon as ever they perceived it was evacuated, v. 4, 7, 8. And yet afterward, v. 12. It is said, Joshua took five thousand men, and set them to lie in ambush behind the city, and that ambush entered the city, and set it on fire, v. 19. Now, 1. Some think there were two parties sent out to lie in ambush, thirty thousand first, and afterward five thousand to guard the roads, and to intercept those of the city that might think to save themselves by flight, or to strengthen those that were first sent out; and that Joshua made his open attack upon the city, with all the thousands of Israel. So the learned Bishop Patrick, insisting upon God's command, v. 1, to take all the people of war with him. But, 2. Others think that all the people were taken only to encamp before the city, and that out of them Joshua chose out thirty thousand men to be employed in the action, out of which he sent five thousand to lie in ambush, which were as many as could be supposed to march incognito — without being discovered: (more would have been seen, and thus the design would have been broken;) and that then with the other twenty-five thousand he made the open attack, as Masius thinks, or with the thirty thousand, which, as Calvin thinks, he kept entire for that purpose, having, beside them, sent out five thousand for an ambuscade. And those five thousand (they think) must be meant by them, v. 3, which he sent away by night, with orders to lie in wait behind the city, though the particular number is not specified till v. 12. If we may admit such a seeming disturbance in the order of the passage, the things which our instances might be cited from the other scripture-histories,) it seems most probable that there was but one ambuscade, which consisted only of five thousand, enough for such a purpose.

II. Yet the principal parts of the story are plain enough, that a detachment being secretly marched behind the city, on the other side to that on which the main body of the army lay, (the situation of the city not being discernible to their concealment,) Joshua, and the forces with him, faced the city; the garrison made a vigorous sally out upon them, whereupon they withdrew, gave ground and retreated in some seeming disorder toward the wilderness; which being perceived by the men of Ai, they drew out all the force they had to pursue them. This gave a fair opportunity for them that lay in ambush to make them, even to the very gates of the city, and they had given notice, by a smoke to Joshua, he, with all his force, returned upon the pursuers, now, when it was too late, were aware of the snare they were drawn into, for their retreat being intercepted, they were every man of them cut off. The like artifice we find used, Judg. 20, 29, &c.

Now in this story we may observe,

1. What a brave commander Joshua was. See, (1.) His conduct and prudence. God gave him the hint, v. 2, that he should lay in ambush behind the city, but left him to himself to order the particulars, which he did admirably well. Doubtless, Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten mighty men, Excl. 7. 19. (2.) His care and industry, v. 10. He rose up early in the morning, that he might lose no time, and so that he might show his mind was upon his business. Those that would maintain their spiritual conflicts, must not love their ease.

3. His courage and resolution; though an army of Israelites had been repulsed before Ai, yet he, in the name of God, with the forces in person in the second time, v. 5. Being himself also an elder, he took the elders of Israel with him to make this attack upon the city, v. 10. as if he were going rather to sit in judgment upon them as criminals, than to fight them as enemies. (4.) His caution and consideration, v. 13. He went that night into the midst of the valley, to make the necessary dispositions for an attack, and to see that every thing was in good order. It is the pious conjecture of the learned Bishop Patrick that he went into the valley alone to pray to God for a blessing upon his enterprise, and he did not seek in vain. (5.) His constancy and perseverance; when he had stretched out his spear toward the city, v. 18. (a spear almost as fatal and formidable to the enemies of Israel as the rod of Moses was) he never drew back his hand till the work was done. His hands in fighting, like Moses's in interceding, were stretched out against the whole host of the sun. Those that have stretched forth their hands against their spiritual enemies, must never draw them back. Lastly, What Joshua did in the stratagem is applicable to our Lord Jesus, of whom he was a type. Joshua conquered by yielding, as if he had himself been conquered; so our Lord Jesus, when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, seemed as if death had triumphed over him; and as if he and all his interests had been rejected and ruined: but he rose again, and gave the powers of darkness a total defeat; he broke the serpent's head, by suffering him to bruise his heel. A glorious stratagem!

2. What an obedient people Israel was; what Joshua commanded them to do according to the command of the Lord, v. 8. they did it without murmuring or disputing. They that were sent to lie in ambush between Bethel and Ai, (two cities condemned by God's judgment,) did not neglect their business, and had they been discovered, might all have been cut off, and yet they ventured it; and when the body of the army retreated and fled, it was both disgraceful and perilous; and yet, in obedience to Joshua, they did it.

3. What an infuriated enemy the king of Ai was, (1.) That he did not by his scouts discover those that lay in ambush behind the city, v. 14. Some observe it as a remarkable instance of God in making men blind to their own interest, and the things that belong to their peace, that he waited not that there were lies in wait against him. They are most in danger, who are least aware that they are so. (2.) That when Israel seemed to fly, he drew out all his forces to pursue them, and left none to guard his city and to secure his retreat, v. 17. Thus the church's enemies often run themselves into destructions; they see not the cares and the extent of their rage against the Israel of God. Pharaoh plunged himself into the Red-sea by the eagerness with which he pursued Israel. (3.) That from the killing of thirty-six men out of three thousand, when Israel made the former attack upon his city, he should infer the total rout of so great an army as now he had to deal with, v. 6. They flee before us as at the first. See how the prosperity of fobs deeds and hardens them to their ruin. God had made use of the men of Ai as a scourge to chast-
tise his people for meddling with the accused thing, and this had puffed them up with a conceit, that they must have the honour of delivering their country from these formidable invaders; but they were soon made to see their mistake, and that when the Israelites had reconciled themselves to their God, they could have no power against them. God had made use of them only for the rebuking of Israel, with a purpose, when the correction was over, to throw the rod itself into the fire; howbeit, they meant not so, but it was in their heart to destroy and cut off, Isa. 10. 5-7.

4. What a complete victory Israel obtained over them by the favour and blessing of God. Each did his part. The devil forthran off Israel, by signals agreed on, understood one another, and every thing proceeded according to the project; so that the men of Ai, then when they were most confident of victory, found themselves surrounded, so that they had neither spirit to resist nor room to fly, but were under a fatal necessity of yielding their lives to the destroyers. And now it is hard to say, whether the shouts of the men of Israel, or the shrieks of the men of Ai, were the louder, but easy to imagine what terror and confusion they were filled with, when their highest assurances sunk so suddenly into the heaviest despair. Note, The triumphing of the wicked is short, Job 20. 5. They are excited for a little while, that their fall and ruin may be the sorer, Job 24. 24. See how easily, how quickly, the scale turns against them that have not God on their side.

23. And the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua. 24. And it came to pass, when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness wherein they chased them, and when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with the edge of the sword. 25. And so it was, that all that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai. 26. For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. 27. Only the cattle and the spoil of that city, Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of the Lord, which he commanded Joshua. 28. And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it a heap for ever, even a desolation, unto this day. 29. And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until even-tide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day.

We have here an account of the improvement which the Israelites made of their victory over Ai. 1. They put all to the sword, not only in the field, but in the city, man, woman, and child, none of them remained, v. 24. God, the righteous Judge, had passed this sentence upon them for their wickedness, so that the Israelites were only the ministers of his justice, and the executioners of his doom. Once in this story, and but once, mention is made of the men of Beth-el, as confederates with the men of Ai, v. 17. Though they had a king of their own, and were not subjects to the king of Ai, (for the king of Beth-el is reckoned among the thirty-one kings that Joshua destroyed, ch. 12. 16.) yet so; but whom a strong place, they threw themselves into that, for their own safety, and the strengthening of their neighbours' hands, and so (we may presume) were all cut off with them; thus, that by which they hoped to prevent their own ruin hastened it. The whole number of the slain, it seems, was but twelve thousand, an inconsiderable body to make head against all the thousands of Israel; but when God will destroy, he infatuates. Here it is said, v. 26, that Joshua drew not his hand back wherewith he stretched out the spear, v. 18. till the slaughter was completed. Some think the spear he stretched out, was not to slay the enemies, but to animate and encourage his own soldiers, some flag or ensign being hung out at the end of this spear; and, they observe it as an instance of self-denial, that though the fire of courage was kindled in all the Israelites, yet Joshua pushed him forward, sword in hand, into the hottest of the action, yet, in obedience to God, he kept the inferior post of a standard-bearer, and did not quit it till the work was done. By the spear stretched out, he directed the people to expect their help from God, and to him to give the praise. 2. They plundered the city, and took all the spoil to themselves, v. 27. Thus the wealth of the conquerer is laid up for the just; the spoil they brought out of Egypt, by borrowing of their neighbours, was much of it expended upon the tabernacle they had reared in the wilderness, for which they are now reimbursed with interest. The spoil here taken, it is probable, was all brought together, and distributed by Joshua in due proportions, as that of the Midianites was, Numb. 31. 26, 27. It was not cursed with irregularity or violence, for God is the God of order and equity, and not of confusion. 3. They laid the city in ashes, and left it to remain so, v. 28. Israel must yet dwell in tents, and therefore this city, as well as Jericho, must be burnt. And though there was no curse entailed upon him that should rebuild it, yet, it seems, it was not rebuilt, unless it be the same with Alja, which we read of, long after, Neh. 11. 31. Some think it was not rebuilt, because Israel had received a defeat before they reached this place, of which should be buried in the ruins of the city. 4. The king of Ai was taken prisoner and cut off, not by the sword of war, as a soldier, but by the sword of justice, as a malefactor. Joshua ordered him to be hanged, and his dead body thrown at the gate of his own city, under a heap of stones, v. 23, 29. Some particular reason, no doubt, there was for this; but it is probable it was, because it was likely he had been notoriously wicked and vile, and a blasphemer of the God of Israel, perhaps, upon occasion of the repulse he had given to the forces of Israel in their first onset. Some observe, that his dead body was thrown at the gate where he had been wont to sit in judgment, that so much the greater contempt might thereby be poured upon the dignity he had been proud of, and he might be ashamed for the ground he had made his throne, to be become the very place where he had made them. Thus the Lord is known by the judgments which he executes.

30. Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal, 31. As Moses the servant of the Lord commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, An altar of whole stones, upon which no man
hath lifted up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt-offerings unto the Lord, and sacrificed peace-offerings. 32. And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel. 33. And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side, before the priests the Levites, which brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord, as well the stranger as he that was born among them: half of them over against mount Gerizim; and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. 34. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. 35. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.

This religious solemnity which we have here an account of, comes in somewhat surprisingly in the midst of the history of the wars of Canaan. After the taking of Jericho and Ai, we should have expected that the next news should have been of their taking possession of the country, the pushing on of their victories in other cities, and the carrying of the war into the bowels of the nation, now that they had made themselves masters of these frontier towns. But here a scene opens of quite another nature; the camp of Israel is drawn out into the field, not to engage the enemy, but to offer sacrifice, to hear the law read, and to say Amen to the blessings and the curses.

Some think this was not done till after some of the following victories were obtained, which we read of, ch. 10. and 11. But it should seem by the maps, that Shechem, (near to which these two mountains, Gerizim and Ebal, were) was not so far off from Ai, but that when they had taken that, they might penetrate into that country, with ease, as far as those two mountains, and therefore I would not willingly admit a transposition of the story; and the rather, because as it comes in here, it is a remarkable instance, 1. Of the zeal of Israel for the service of God and for his honour. Though never was war more honourable, more pleasant, or more gainful, nor ever was war more sure of victory, or more necessary to a settlement, (for they had not had a conquest of their own, till they had won them by the sword, no, not Joshua himself,) yet all the business of the war shall stand still, while they make a long march to the place appointed, and there attend this solemnity. God appointed them to do this when they were over Jordan, and they did it as soon as possibly they could, though they might have had a colourable pretence to have put it off. Note, It is not to be feared of our covenanting with God till we are settled in the world, nor must any business put us by from minding and pursuing the one thing needful. The way to prosper, is to begin with God, Matt. 6. 33. 2. It is an instance of the care of God concerning his faithful servants and worshippers. Though they were in an enemy's country, as yet unconquered, yet in the service of God they were safe, as Jacob, when in this very country he was going to Beth-el to pay his vows, the terror of God was upon the cities round about, Gen. 35. 5. Note, When we are in the way of duty, God takes us under his special protection.

Twice 34. And gave express orders for this solemnity; once Deut. 11. 29. 30. where it seems he had pointed to the very place where it was to be performed; and again, Deut. 27. 2. &c. It was a federal transaction: the covenant was now renewed between God and Israel upon their taking possession of the land of promise, that they might be encouraged in the conquest of it, and might know upon what terms they held it, and come under fresh obligations to obedience. In token of the covenant, There was an altar erected and offered sacrifice to God, v. 30. 31. in token of their dedication of themselves to God, as living sacrifices to his honour, in and by a mediator, who is the altar that sanctifies this gift. This altar was erected on mount Ebal, the mount on which the curse was put, Deut. 11. 29. to signify that there, where by the law we had reason to expect a curse, by Christ's sacrifice of himself for us, and his mediation, we have peace with God. It was this redemption, that could make the law by being made a curse for us, Gal. 3. 13. Even then where it was said, by the curse, Ye are not my people; there it is said, through Christ the Altar, Ye are the children of the living God, Hos. 1. 10. The curses pronounced on mount Ebal would immediately have been executed, if atonement had not been made by sacrifice.

By the sacrifice offered on this altar they did likewise give God the glory of the victories they had already obtained, as Exod. 17. 15. Now that they had had the comfort of them in the spoils of Ai, it was fit that God should have the praise of them; and they also implored his favour for their future success; for supplications as well as thanksgivings were intended in their peace-offerings. The way to prosper in all that we put our hand to, is, to take God along with us, and in all our ways to acknowledge him by prayer, praise, and dependence.

The altar they built, was of rough unhewn stone, according to the law, Exod. 20. 25. for which that is most plain and natural, and least artful and affected in the worship of God, he is best pleased with. Man's device can add no beauty to God's institutions.

II. They received the law from God; and this they must do, that would find favour with him, and expect to have their offerings accepted. They must turn away our ear from hearing the law, our prayers will be an abomination. When God took Israel into covenant, he gave them his law, and they, in token of their consent to the covenant, subjected themselves to the law. Now here,

1. The law of the ten commandments was written upon stones in the presence of all Israel, as an abridgment of the whole, v. 32. This copy was the transcript of the original, which was written in the ark, that was to be done only by the finger of God; it is his prerogative to write the law in the heart, but the stones were plastered, and it was written upon the plaster, Deut. 27. 4. 8. It was written, that all might see what it was that they consented to, and that it might be a standing remaining testimony to posterity, of God's goodness in giving them such good laws, and in claiming their consent to them, if they were disobedient to them. It is a great mercy to any people to have the law of God in writing, and it is fit that the written law should be exposed to common view in a known tongue, that it may be seen and read of all men.

2. The blessings and the curses, the sanctions of the law, were publicly read, and the people, (we may suppose,) according to Moses's appointment, said Amen to them, v. 33. 34. The auditory was
AND it came to pass, when all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard thereof, 2. That they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord.

Hitherto the Canaanites had acted defensively, the Israelites were the aggressors upon Jericho and Ai; but here the kings of Canaan are in consultation to attack Israel, and concert matters for a vigorus effort of their united forces, to check the progress of their victorious armies. Now, 1. It was strange they did not do this sooner. They had noticed long since of their approach: Israel's design upon Canaan was no secret; one would have expected that a prudent concern for their common safety should have put them upon taking some measures to oppose their coming over Jordan, and maintain that pass against them, or to have given them a warm reception as soon as they were over. It was strange they did not attempt to raise the siege of Jericho, or at least fall in with the men of Ai, when they had given them a defeat. But they were either, through pre-sumption or despair, wonderfully infatuated, and at their wit's end; many knew not the things that belonged to their peace till they are hid from their eyes. 2. It was more strange that they did it now. Now that the conquest of Jericho had given such a pregnant proof of God's power, and that of Ai of Israel's policy, one would have thought the end of their consultation should have been, to make peace with Israel, but to make peace with them, and to gain the best terms they could for themselves. This had been their wisdom, Luke 14. 32. but their minds were blinded, and their hearts hardened to their destruction.

Observe, (1.) What induced them now at last to enter upon this consultation. When they heard thereof, v. 1. not only of the conquest of Jericho and Ai, but of the convention of the states of mount Ebdl, which we have an account of immediately before; when they heard that Joshua, as if he thought himself already complete master of the country, had had all his people together, and had read the laws to them, by which they must be governed, and taken their promises to submit to those laws, then they perceived the Israelites were in good earnest, and thought it was high time for them to bestir themselves. The pious devotions of God's people sometimes provokes and exasperates their enemies more than any thing else. (2.) How unanimous they were in their resolves. Though they were many kings of different nations, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, &c. doubtless of different interests, and that had often been at variance one with another, yet they determined, nemine contradicente—unanimously, to unite against Israel. O that Israel would learn this of Canaanites, to sacrifice private interests to the public welfare, and lay aside all animosities among themselves, that they may cordially unite against the common enemies of God's kingdom among men!

3. And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, 4. They did work wildly, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors; and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine-bottles, old, and rent, and bound...
up; 5. And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. 6. And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us. 7. And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you? 8. And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye? 9. And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come, because of the name of the Lord thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt, 10. And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroth. 11. Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us. 12. This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy: 13. And these bottles of wine, which we filled, were new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey. 14. And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.

Here,

I. The Gibeonites desire to make peace with Israel, being alarmed by the tidings they heard of the destruction of Jericho, v. 3. Other people heard those tidings, and were irritated thereby to make war upon Israel; but the Gibeonites heard them, and were induced to make peace with them. Thus the discovery of the glory and the grace of God in the gospel, is to some a savour of life unto life; but to others, a savour of death unto death, 2 Cor. 2. 16. The same sun soteth wax and hardens clay. I do not remember that we read any where of a king of Gibeon. Had their government been at this time in a single person, perhaps his heart would have been too high to yield to Israel, and he would have joined with the rest of the kings against Israel. But these four united cities, mentioned v. 17. seem to have been governed by elders or senators, v. 11. who consulted the common safety more than their own personal dignity. The inhabitants of Gibeon did well for themselves. We have,

II. The method they took to compass it. They knew that all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan were to be cut off, perhaps they had some spies in the congregation at Ebal, when the law was read, who observed and brought them notice of the command given to Israel, Deut. 7. 1-3. that they should show no mercy to the Canaanites, give them no quarter in battle, which made them afraid of fighting them, and that they should make no covenant with them, which made them despair of gaining any advantage by treating with them: and therefore there was no way of saving their lives from the sword of Israel, unless they could, by disguising themselves, make Joshua believe that they came from a very far country, which the Israelites were not commanded to be afraid of, and forbidden to make peace with, but were particularly appointed to offer peace to, Deut. 20. 10, 15. Unless they could be admitted under this notion, they saw there was but one way with them, they must submit to the fate of Jericho and Ai. Though the neighbouring princes knew that all the men thereof were mighty, (ch. 10. 2.) and they knew it themselves, yet they dared not contend with Israel, who had an Almighty God on their side. Thus therefore is the only game they have to play, and they play it very artfully and successfully; never was any such thing more craftily managed.

1. They came under the character of ambassadors from a foreign state, which they thought would please the princes of Israel, and make them proud of the honour of being courted by distant countries: we find Hezekiah fond of those that came to him from a far country, Isa. 39. 3. they had not used to be thus courted.

2. They pretended to have undergone the fatigues of a very long journey, and produced what passed for an ocular demonstration of it. It should seem it was then usual for those that undertook long journeys, to take with them, as we do now for long voyages, all manner of provision in kind, the country not being furnished as our is now with houses on the way, for the accommodation of strangers. When we have occasion to make use of them, we have reason to be very thankful. Now, they here pretended that their provision, when they brought it from home, was fresh and new, but now it appeared to be old and dry, whereas it might well be presumed they had not loitered, but made the best of their way; so that from hence it must be inferred that they came, as they said they did, from a very far country, or from nations so remote, as when we have occasion to make use of them, we have reason to be very thankful. Now, they here pretended that their provision, when they brought it from home, was fresh and new, but now it appeared to be old and dry, whereas it might well be presumed they had not loitered, but made the best of their way; so that from hence it must be inferred that they came, as they said they did, from a very far country, or from nations so remote, as

3. When they were suspected, and more strictly examined from whence they came, they did industriously declined telling the name of their country, and of their settled; (1.) The men of Israel suspected a fraud, v. 7. "Peradventure ye dwell among us, and then we may not, we must not, have war with you;" this might have discouraged the Gibeonites from urging the matter any further, concluding that if the peace were made, the Israelites would not think themselves obliged to keep it, having thus solemnly protested against it, in case they should dwell between them; but they had some hope at all if they stood it out, they bravely ventured a submission; "Who knows but the people of Israel may save us alive, though thus inveigled into a promise, and if we tell them at last, we shall but die." (2.) Joshua put the questions to them, Who are ye? and from whence come
ye? He finds himself concerned to stand upon his
guard against secret fraud, as well as against open
force; we in our spiritual warfare must stand against
the serpent, who, like a subterfuge, is a subtle
serpent as well as a roaring lion. In all leagues of
relation and friendship we must first try, and then
trust, lest we repent at leisure agreements made in
haste. (3.) They would not tell whence they
came; but still repeat the same thing, We are come
from a very far country, v. 9. They will have it
thought, that it is a country Israel knows nothing
of, nor ever heard of, and therefore would be never
the surer, they should tell him the name of it.

4. They profess a respect for the God of Israel,
the more to ingratiate themselves with Joshua, and
we charitably believe they were sincere in this pro-
cession, We are come because of the name of the
Lord thy God, v. 9. because of what we have heard
of that name, which has convinced us that it is
above every name, and because we have a desire
toward that name, and the remembrance of it, and
would gladly come under its protection.

5. They fetch their inducements from what had
been done some time before in Moses's reign, the
tidings whereof might easily be supposed ere this to
have reached distant regions, the plagues of Egypt
and the destruction of Sihon and Og, v. 9, 10. but
prudently say nothing of the destruction of Jericho
and Ai, (though that was the true inducement, v.
3.) because they will have it supposed that they
came from some long before theose conquests were
made. We need not be long to seek for reasons why
we should submit to the God of Israel; we may be
furnished either with new or old, which we will.

6. They make a good submission, We are your
servants, and humbly sue for a general agreement,
make a league with us, v. 11. They insist not upon
terms, but will be glad of peace upon any terms;
nor will the case admit of delays, lest the fraud be
discovered; for they would have the bargain struck
up immediately; if Joshua will but make a league
with them, they have all they come for, and they
hope their ragged clothes and clouted shoes will be
no exception against them; God and Israel reject
none for their poverty.

Now, (1.) Their falsehood cannot be justified, nor
ought it to be drawn into a precedent. We must not
do evil, that good may come. Had they owned their
counter but renounced that name, it would have
seduced the people of it to Israel, and themselves
to the God of Israel, we have reason to think Joshua
would have been directed by the oracle of God to
spare their lives, and they needed not to have made
these pretensions. It is observable, when they had
once said, We are come from a far country, v. 6.
they found themselves necessitated to say it again,
v. 9. and to say what was utterly false concerning
their bread, their bottles, their clothes, v. 12, 13. for
when they came they made no league, the third, and
so on. The way of that sin is down-hill.

But (2.) Their faith and prudence are to be greatly
commended; our Lord commended even the unjust
steward, because he had done wisely and well for
himself, Luke 16. 8. In submitting to Israel, they
submitted to the God of Israel, which implied a
renunciation of the God they had served, a resig-
nation to the laws of the true religion. They had
heard enough to convince them of the excellency
of the God of Israel, and from thence might infer
his other perfections of wisdom and goodness; and
how can we do better for ourselves, than surrender
at discretion to infinite wisdom, and cast ourselves
upon the mercy of a God of infinite goodness? The
submission of these Gibeonites was the more laud-
able, because it was, [1.] Singular; their neighbours
took another course, and expected they should join
with them. [2.] Speedy; they did not stay till Is-
rael had besieged their cities; then it had been too
late to capitulate; but when they were at some dis-
tance, they desired conditions of peace. The way
to avoid a judgment is to meet it by repentance.

Let us imitate these Gibeonites, and make our peace
with God in the rags of humiliation, godly sorrow,
and mortification, so our iniquity shall not be
our ruin. Let us be servants to Jesus, our blessed
Joshua, and make a league with him and the Israel
of God, and we shall live.

15. And Joshua made peace with them, and
made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation
sware unto them. 16. And it came to pass,
at the end of three days, after they had
made a league with them, that they heard
that they were their neighbours, and that
they dwelt among them. 17. And the chil-
dren of Israel journeyed, and came unto
their cities on the third day. Now their
cities were Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Be-
roth, and Kirjah-jearim. 18. And the chil-
dren of Israel smote them not, because
the princes of the congregation had sworn unto
them by the Lord God of Israel. And all
the congregation murmured against the
princes. 19. But all the princes said unto
all the congregation, We have sworn unto
them by the Lord God of Israel: now, there-
fore we may not touch them. 20. This
we will do to them; we will even let them
live; lest wrath be upon us, because of the
oath which we sware unto them. 21. And
the princes sware unto them. Let them live;
but let them be hewers of wood and drawers
of water unto all the congregation; as the
princes had promised them

Here is,

1. The treaty soon concluded with the Gibe-
oneites, v. 14, 15. The thing was not done with much
formality, but in short. They agreed to let
them live, and more the Gibeonites did not ask. In
a common war this had been but a small matter to
be granted; but in the wars of Canaan, which were
to make a general destruction, it was a great favour
to a Canaanite to have his life given him for a prey,
Jer. 45. 5. 2. This agreement was made not by
Joshua only, but by the princes of the congregation,
in conjunction with him. Though Joshua had an
extraordinary influence over the government, and ex-
traordinary qualifications for it, yet he would not act in
an affair of this nature, without the counsel and con-
currence of the princes, who were neither kept in
the dark nor kept under foot, but were treated by
him as sharers in the government. 3. It was rati-
fied by an oath, they sware unto them, not by any
of the gods of Canaan, but by the God of Israel
only, v. 19. They that mean honestly, do not
startle at assurances, but satisfy those with whom
they treat, and glorify God, by calling him to wit-
tness to the sincerity of their intentions. 4. Nothing
appears to have been culpable in all this, but that
it was done rashly; they took of their victuals, by
which they satisfied themselves that it was indeed
old and dry, but did not consider that that was no
proof of their bringing it fresh from home; so that,
making use of their senses only, but not their rea-
son, they received the men (s the margin reads it)
because of their vicissuits, perceiving perhaps, upon the view and taste of their bread, not only that now it was old, but that it had been fine and very good at first. This inferred that they were persons of some quality; and therefore the friendship of their country was not to be despised. But they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. They had the Urim and Thummim with them, which they might have advised with in this difficult case, and that would have told them no lie, would have led them into no error; but they relied so much on their own politics, that they thought it needless to bring their counsel by the oracle. Joshua himself was not altogether without blame herein. Note, We then make more haste than good speed in any business, when we stay not to take God along with us, and by the word and prayer to consult him. Many a time we see cause to reflect upon it with regret, that such and such an affair miscarried, because we asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord; would we acknowledge him in all our ways, we should find them more safe, easy, and successful.

II. The fraud soon discovered by which this league was procured. A lying tongue is but for a moment, and truth will be the daughter of time. Within three days they found, to their great surprise, that the cities which these ambassadors had treated for, were very near them, but one night's foot-march from the camp at Gilgal, ch. 10. 9. Either their own scouts, or the parties that sailed out to acquaint themselves with the country, or perhaps some deserters that came over to them from the enemy, informed them of the truth of this matter. They that suffer themselves to be deceived by the wiles of Satan, will soon be undeceived to their confusion, and will find that near, even at the door, which they imagined was very far off.

III. The disgust of the congregation at this. They did indeed submit to the restrains which this league put upon them, and smoothed the mind of the Gibeonites, neither slew the persons, nor seized the prey; but it vexed them to have their hands thus tied, and they murmured against the princes, (v. 18.) it is to be feared, more from a jealousy for their own profit, than from a zeal for the fulfilling of God's command, though some of them perhaps had a regard to that. Many are forward to arrange and censure the actions of princes while they are ignorant of the springs of those actions, and are creatures of the reasons of state that govern them. While therefore we are satisfied in general that those who are over us aim at nothing but the public good, and sincerely seek the welfare of their people, we ought to make the best of what they do, and not exercise ourselves in things above us.

IV. The prudent endeavours of the princes to pacify the discontented congregation, and to accommodate the matter; herein all the princes concurred and were unanimous, which doubtless disposed the people to acquiesce.

1. They resolved to spare the lives of the Gibeonites, for so they had expressly sworn to do, v. 15. to let them live.

(1.) The oath was lawful, else it had not bound them any more than Herod's oath bound him to cut off John's head; it was given them to decide the point, to determine, and if they had not then appointed them to destroy all the Canaanites, but that law must be construed in favorem vitie— with some tender allowance, to mean those only that stood it out, and would not surrender their country to them, and not to bind them so far to put off the sense of honour and humanity, as to slay those who had never lifted up a hand against them, nor ever would, but before they were reduced to any extremity, or ever attempted any act of hostility, with one consent humbled themselves; the kings of Is-
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have been made with all possible honesty and fairness? If the fraud of others will not justify or excuse our falsehood, certainly the honesty of others in dealing with us, will aggravate and con
duct in a similar case, be decisive with them.

2. Though they spared their lives, yet they seized their liberties, and sentenced them to be hewers of wood, and drawers of water, to the congrega
tion, v. 21. By this proposal the discontented congregation was pacified; for (1.) They who were angry that the Gibeonites lived, might be content when they saw them condemned to that which, in the general apprehension, is worse than death, perpetual servitude. (2.) They who were angry that they were not spoiled, might be content when their service of the congregation would be more to the public advantage, than their best effects could be; and, in short, the Israelites would be no losers either in honour or profit by this peace with the Gibeonites; convince them of this, and they will be satisfied.

22. And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you; when ye dwell among us? 23. Now therefore ye are cursed; and there shall none of you be freed from being bond
men, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God. 24. And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to de
stroy all the inhabitants of the land from be
to you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing. 25. And now, behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee do unto us, do. 26. And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not. 27. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and draw-
ers of water, for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.

The matter is here settled between Joshua and the Gibeonites, and an explanation of the league agreed upon; we may suppose that now, not the messengers were first sent, but the elders of Gibeon, and of the cities that were dependent upon it, were themselves present, and treated with, that the matter might be fully compromised.

I. Joshua reproves them for their fraud, v. 22. And they excuse it as well as they can, v. 24. 1. Joshua gives the reproof very mildly; Wherefore have ye beguiled us? He does not load them with any ill names, does not give them any harsh pro
voking language, does not call them base base bars, but only asks them, Why have ye beguiled us? Under the greatest pro
vocations, it is our wisdom and duty to keep our temper, and to bridle our passion; a just cause needs not anger to defend it, and a bad one is made never the better by it. 2. They make the best ex
cuse for themselves that the thing would bear, v. 24. They found by the word of God, that sentence of death was passed upon them, (the command was to destroy all the inhabitants of the land, without exception,) and they found by the works of God already wrought, that there was no opposing the execution of this sentence; they considered that God's sovereignty is incontestable, his justice in
flexible, his power irresistible, and therefore re
solved to try what his mercy was, and found it was not in vain to cast themselves upon it. They do not go about to justify their lie, but in effect beg pardon for it, pleading it was purely to save their lives that they did it, which every man that finds in himself the force of the law of self-pre
servation, will therefor make great allowances for. As for their argument, excepting that fear was not merely of the power of man, (if that were all, one might flee from that to the divine protection,) but of the power of God himself, which they saw engaged against them.

II. Joshua condemns them to servitude, as a pun
ishment of their fraud, v. 25. And they submit to the sentence, v. 25. and for aught that appears, both sides are pleased.

2. Joshua pronounces them perpetual bondmen. They had purchased their lives with a lie, but that being no good consideration, he obliges them to hold their lives under the rent and reservation of their continual labours, in hewing wood and drawing wa
ter, the meanest and most toilsome employments. Thus their lie was punished; had they dealt fairly and plainly with Israel, perhaps they had had more honourable conditions granted them, but now, since they gain their lives with ragged clothes and clout
ed shoes, they are condemned for ever to wear such, so must their doom be. And thus the ransom of their lives is paid; do
minion is acquired by the preservation of a life that lies at mercy (Servus dicitur a servando—A serv
ant is so called from the act of saving,) they owe their service to them to whom they owe their lives. Observe how the judgment is given against them. (1.) Their servitude is made a curse to them. (2.) They who were cursed of Canaan," from whom these Hivites descended, a servant of servants shall thou be, Gen. 9. 25. What shall be done to the false tongue but this? Cursed shall it be. (2.) Yet this curse is turned into a blessing; they must be servants, but it shall be for the house of my God. The princes would have them slaves unto all the congregation, v. 21. at least, they chose to express themselves so, for the pacification of the people that were prejudgment: Da
vid himself could have wished to be a door-keeper there. Even servile work becomes honourable when it is done for the house of my God, and the offices thereof.

[1.] They were hereby excluded from the liberties and privileges of true-born Israelites, and a re
mainder mark of distinction put upon their posterity throughout all their generations. [2.] They were hereby excluded from such service as would require personal attendance upon the altar of God, in the place which he should choose, v. 27. which would bring them to the knowledge of the law of God, keep them tight to that holy religion to which they were proselyted, and prevent their revolt to the idolatries of their fathers. [3.] This would be a great advantage to the priests and Levites to have so many, and those mighty men, constant attend

ants upon them, and engaged by office to do all the drudgery of the tabernacle. A great deal of wood must be hewed for God's house, not only to keep the fire burning continually upon the altar, but to boil the flesh of the peace-offerings, &c. And a great deal of water must be drawn for the divers washings which the law required to be done in the court, and other such servile works, such as washing the vessels, carrying out ashes, sweeping the courts, &c. which otherwise the Levites must have done themselves, these Gibeonites were appointed to do. [4.] They were herein servants to the congregation too; for whatever promotes and helps forward the worship of God, is real service to the commonwealth. It is the interest of every Israelite, that the altar of God be well attended. Hereby also the congregation was excused from much of this servile work, which perhaps would otherwise have been expected from some of them. God had made a law that the Israelites should never make any of their brethren bondmen; if they had slaves, they must be of the heathen that were round about them, Lev. 25. 44. Now, in honour of this law, and of Israel that was honoured by it, God would not have the drudgery, no, not the drudgery of the Gentiles, but by Gibeonites, who were afterward called Nethinim, men given to the Levites as they were to the priests, (Numb. 3. 9.) to minister to them in the service of God. [5.] This may be looked upon as typifying the admission of the Gentiles into the Gospel-Church. Now they were taken in upon their submission to be under-officers, but afterward God promises that he will take of them for priests and Levites, Isa. 66. 22. 2. They sinned in this condition, v. 25. Conscious of a fault in framing a lie whereby to deceive the Israelites, and sensible also how narrowly they escaped with their lives, and what a kindness it was to have them spared, they acquiesce in the proposal, Do as it seemeth right unto thee. Better live in servitude, especially such servitude, than not live at all. Those of the very meanest and most despicable condition, are described to be heroes of wood, and dwell in tents, (Deut. 29. 19.) Ye shall give, and they shall not give thee a skin, liberty and labour, and all that a man hath, will he give for his life, and no ill bargain. Accordingly the matter was determined, (1.) Joshua delivered them out of the hands of the Israelites that they should not be slain, v. 26. It seems there were those who would have fallen upon them with the sword, if Joshua had not interposed with his authority; but wise generals know when to lock up the sword, as well as when to draw it. (2.) He then delivered them again into the hands of the Israelites to be enslaved, v. 27. They were not to keep possession of their cities, for we find afterward that three of them fell to the lot of Benjamin, and one to that of Judah; nor were they themselves to be at their own disposal, but, as Bishop Patrick thinks, were dispersed into the cities of the priests and Levites, and came up with them in their courses to serve under some of the profits of which, it is probable, they were maintained. And thus Israel's bondmen became the Lord's freemen, for his service in the meanest office is liberty, and his work is its own wages. And this they got by their early submission. Let us, in like manner, submit to our Lord Jesus, and refer ourselves to him, saying, "We are thy hand, do unto us as seemeth good and right unto thee; only save our souls, and we shall be content;" and it is certain, if we be patient, cross, and draw in his yoke, and serve at his altar, that shall be afterward neither shame nor grief to us, while the meanest office in God's service will entitle us to a dwelling in the house of the Lord all the days of our life.

**CHAP. X.**

We have in this chapter an account of the conquest of the kings and kingdoms of the southern part of the land of Canaan, as, in the next chapter, of the reduction of the northern parts, which together completed the glorious successes of the wars of Canaan. In this chapter we have an account, I. Of the routing of their forces in the field. In which observe, 1. Their con- federacy against the Gibeonites, v. 1...5. 2. The Gibeonites' request to Joshua to assist them, v. 6. 3. Josh- ua's speedy march under divine encouragement for their relief, v. 7...9. 4. The defeat of the armies of these confederate kings, v. 10, 11. 5. The miraculous prolonging of the day by the standing still of the sun in favour of the conquerors, v. 12...14. II. Of the execu- tion of the kings that escaped out of the battle, v. 15...27. III. Of the taking of the particular cities and the total destruction of all that were found in them. Mak- kedah, v. 28. Libnah, v. 29, 30. Lachish, v. 31, 32, and the king of Gezer that attempted its rescue, v. 33. Eg- libeth, v. 34. Hebron, v. 36, 37. Debir, v. 38, 39. And the bringing of all that country into the hands of Israel, v. 40...42. And lastly, the return of the army to their head-quarters.

1. **NOW** it came to pass, when Adoni- zedek king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibe- on had made peace with Israel, and were among them; 2. That they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty. 3. Wherefore Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent unto Hoham king of Heb- ron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto De- bir king of Lachish, saying, 4. Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Is- rael. 5. Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered them- selves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it. 6. And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp at Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Am- orites that dwell in the mountains are gather- ed together against us.

Joshua and the hosts of Israel had now been a good while in the land of Canaan, and no great matters were effected; they were made masters of Jericho by miracle, of Ai by stratagem, and of Gib- con by surrender, and that was all; hitherto the progress of their victories has not seemed propor- tionable to the magnitude of their enterprise and the glory of their beginnings. Those among them that were impatient of delays, it is probable, complai- ned of Joshua's slowness, and asked why they did not immediately penetrate into the heart of the country, before the enemy could rally their forces to make
head against them; why they stood trifling, while they were so confident both of their title and of their success. Thus Joshua's prudence, perhaps, was censured as slothfulness, cowardice, and want of spirit. But, 1. Canaan was not to be conquered in a day. God had said, that by little and little he would drive out the Canaanites, Exod. 23. 30. He that believeth, will not make haste, or conclude that the promise will never be performed, because it is not performed so soon as we expected. 2. Joshua waited for the Canaanites to be the aggressors; let them first make an onset upon Israel, on the allies of Israel, and then their destruction will be, or at least will appear to be, the more just and the more justifiable. Joshua had warrant sufficient to set upon them, yet he stays till they strike the first stroke, that he might provide for honest things, in the sight, not only of God, but of men; and they would be the more excusable in their resistance, now that they had seen what favour the Gibeonites found with Israel. 3. It was for the advantage of Israel to sit still a while, that the forces of these little kings might unite in one body, and so might the easier be cut off at one blow. This God had in his eye when he put it into their hearts to combine against Israel; though they designed thereby to strengthen one another, that which he intended, was, to gather them as sheaves into the floor, to fall together, Mic. 4. 12. Thus oftentimes that seeming paradox proves wholesome counsel, Stay a while, and we shall have done the sooner.

After Israel had waited a while for an occasion to make war upon the Canaanites, a fair one offers itself.

I. Five kings combine against the Gibeonites. Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem was the first mover and planning chief of this confederacy. He had a good name, it signifies Lord of righteousness; a descendant perhaps from Melchizedek, King of righteousness; but notwithstanding the goodness of his name and family, it seems he was a bad man, and an impiacable enemy to the posterity of that Abraham, whom his predecessor, Melchizedek, was such a faithful friend to. He called upon his neighbours to join against Israel, either because he was the most honorable prince, or had the precedence in time. These kings, (perhaps they had some dependence upon him, at least they paid a deference to him, as the most public, powerful, and active man they had among them,) or, because he was first or most apprehensive of the danger his country was in, not only by the conquest of Jericho and Ai, but the surrender of Gibeon, which, it seems, was the chief thing that alarmed him, it being one of the most considerable frontier-towns they had. Against Gibeon therefore all the force he could raise, must be levelled; Come, says he, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon. This he resolves to do, either, 1. In policy; that he might retake the city, because it was a strong city, and of great consequence to his country, in whose hands it was; or, 2. In passion, that he might chastise the citizens for making peace with Joshua, pretending that they had perfidy betrayed their country and race, and brethren the common enemy, whereas they had really done the greatest kindness imaginable to their country by setting them a good example, if they would have followed it. Thus Satan and his instruments make war upon those that make peace with God: marvel not if the world hate you, and treat those as deserters, who are converts to Christ.

II. The Gibeonites send notice to Joshua of the distress and danger they were in, v. 6. Now they expect benefit from the league they had made with Israel, because though it was obtained by deceit, it was afterward confirmed when the truth came out. They think Joshua obliged to help them, 1. In conscience, because they were his servants, not in compliment, as they had said in their first address, ch. 9. 8, We are thy servants, but in reality made servants to the congregation; and it is the duty of masters to take care of the poorest and meanest of their servants, and not to see them wronged when it is in the power of their hand to right them. They that pay allegiance may reasonably expect protection. Thus David pleads with God, Ps. 119. 94, I am thine; save me; and so may we, if indeed we be his. 2. In honour, because the ground of their enemies' quarrel with them, was, the respect they had shown to Israel, and the confidence they had in a covenant with them. Joshua cannot refuse to help them, when it is for their affection to him, and to the name of his God, that they are attacked. David thinks it a good plea with God, Ps. 69. 7, For thy sake I have borne reproach. When our spiritual enemies set themselves in array against us, and threaten to swallow us up, let us, by faith and prayer, apply ourselves to Christ, our Joshua, for strength and succour, as St. Paul did, and we shall receive the same answer of peace, My grace is sufficient for thee, 2 Cor. 12. 8. 9.

7. So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour. 8. And the Lord said unto Joshua, Fear them not; for I have delivered them into thine hand: there shall not a man of them stand before thee. 9. Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night. 10. And the Lord discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Beth-horon, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah. 11. And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword. 12. Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gilboa; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. 13. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. 14. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel.

Here

I. Joshua resolves to assist the Gibeonites, and God encourages him in that resolve. 1. He ascended from Gilgal, v. 7. that is, he designed, determined, and prepared for, this expedition to relieve
Gideon, for it is probable it was before he stirred a
gaze that God spake to him to encourage him. It
was given the prophet in Joshua to help his new al-
ligiis through perhaps the king of Jerusalem, when
he attacked them, little thought that Joshua would
have been so ready to help them, but expected he
would abandon them as Canaanites, the rather
because they had obtained their league with him by
fraud; therefore he speaks with assurance, v. 4. of
smiling Gideon. But Joshua knew that his promise
to let them live, obliged him, not only not to
render his hand to them, but to stand by them in their
smiting, when it was in the power of his hand to
prevent it, Prov. 24. 11, 12. He knew that when
they embraced the faith and worship of the God
of Israel, they came to trust under the shadow of
his wings, (Ruth 2. 12.) and therefore, as his
servants, he was bound to protect them. 2. God uni-
amated him for his undertaking, v. 8. Fear not, that
is, (1.) Joshua need not dread the power of the enemy;
though so many enemies are confederate against thee, and are resolved to make
their utmost efforts for the reduction of Gideon, and, it may be, will fight desperately in a desperate
cause; yet let not that discourage thee, I have de-
livered thee from the hand of thy enemies; and neither resist, nor escape, whom God has
marked for destruction.
II. Joshua applies himself to execute this resolve,
and God assists him in the execution. Here we have,
1. The great industry of Joshua, and the power
of God working with that for the defeat of the en-
emy. In this action,
1. Joshua showed his good-will in the haste he made to possess the land of Gideon, v. 9. He came unto
them suddenly; for the extremity was such as would
not admit of delay. If one of the tribes of Israel had
been in danger, he could not have showed more care or zeal for its relief than here for Gideon, re-
membering in this, as in other cases, there must be
one law for the stranger that was proselyted, and
for him that was born in the land. Scarcely had the
confederate princes got their forces together, and
sat down to their dinner, when Joshua came upon
them, the surprise of which would put them into the
greatest confusion. Now that the enemy were
actually drawn up into a body, which had all as it
were but one neck, despatch was as serviceable to
his cause, as before delay was, while he waited for
this general rendezvous; and now that things were
ripe for execution, no man more expeditious than
Joshua could have gone slower. Now you may
ever be said, He left that to do to-morrow which
he could do to-day. When Joshua found he could
not reach Gideon in a day, lest he should lose any
real advantages against the enemy, or so much as
seem to come short, or to neglect his new allies, he
marched all night, resolving not to give sleep to his
eyes, nor slumber to his eye-lids, till he had accom-
plished this enterprise. It was well the forces he
took with him were most valiant men of valor, not
only able-bodied men, but men of spirit and resolu-
tion, and hearty in the cause, else they neither
could nor would have borne this fatigue, but would
have murmured at their leader, and would have
asked, 'Is this the rest we were promised in Ca-
nan?' But they well considered that the present
toll was in order to a happy settlement, and there-
fore were reconciled to it. Let the good soldiers
of Jesus Christ learn from hence to endure hard-
ness, in following the Lamb whithersoever he goes, and
not think themselves undue, if their religion
lose them now and then a night's sleep; it will be
enough to rest, when we come to heaven.
But why needed Joshua to put himself and his
men so much to this stretch? Had not God prom-
ised him, that without fail he would deliver the
enemies into his hand? It is true he had; but God's
promises are intended, not to slacken and super-
sede, but to quicken and encourage our endeavours.
He that believeth, doth not make haste to antici-
plate providence, but doth make haste to attend it,
with a diligent, not a distrustful speed.
2. God showed his great power in defeating the
enemies which Joshua so rigorously attacked, v.
10, 11. Joshua had a very numerous and powerful
army with him, hands enough to despatch a dis-
pired enemy, so that the enemy might have been scattered by the ordinary fate of war; but God him-
self would appear in this great and decisive battle,
and draw up the artillery of heaven against the
Canaanites, to demonstrate to his people, that they
got not this land in possession by their own sword,
but either did the hand to fall into his hands; for there is no
right hand and his arm, Ps. 44. 3. The Lord dis-
comfited them before Israel; Israel did what they
could, and yet God did all. [1.] It must needs be a
very great terror and confusion to the enemy, to perceive that heaven itself fought against them; for
who can contest with, flee from, or fence against the
powers of heaven? They had affronted the true God, and robbed him of his honour, by wor-
shiping the heathen gods, and attacking the creature which is due to the Creator only; and
now the host of heaven fights against them, and
even that part of the creation which they had idolized, is at war with them, and even triumphs in
their ruin, Jer. 8. 2. There is no way of making any creature propitious to us, no not by sacrifice or
offering, but only by making our peace with God, and
keeping ourselves in his love. This had been enough to make them an easy prey to God's
victorious Israelites, yet this was not all. [2.] Beside the
terror struck upon them, there was a great slaugh-
ter made of them by hail-stones, which were so
large, and came down with such a force, that more
were killed by the hail-stones than by the sword of
the Israelites, though no doubt, they were busy.
God himself speaks to Job of treasures, or maga-
sins, of the hail-stones, that with them he would
exterminate the day of battle and war, Job 38. 22, 23. and here
they are made use of to destroy the Canaanites.
Here was hail shot from God's great ordinance, that,
against whosoever it was directed, was sure to
hit, (and never glanced upon the Israelites mixed
with them,) and whenever it hit was sure to kill.
See here how miserable they are, that have
God for their enemy, and how sure to perish; it is
clear it is a fearful and terrible revenge that was
brought against them, and it is not by way of
fleeing out of them. Some observe, that Beth-
horon lay north of Gideon, Azекah and Makkedah
lay south, so that they fled each way; by which way
soever they fled, the hail-stones pursued them,
and met them at every turn.
2. The great faith of Joshua, and the power of
God crowning that with the miraculous arrest of
the sun, that the day of Israel's victories might be
prolonged, and so the enemy totally defeated.
The hail-stones had their rise no higher than the clouds,
but, to show that Israel's help came from above the
clouds, the sun itself, who by his constant motion
serves the whole earth, by halting when there was
occasion, served the Israelites, and did them a kind-
ness; the sun and moon stood still in their habitations,
at the sight of thine arrows which gave the signal,
Hab. 3. 11.
(1.) Here is the prayer of Joshua that the sun
might stand still. I call it his prayer, because it is
said, v. 12, he spake to the Lord; as Elijah, though
we read, 1 Kings 17. 1. only by his prophesying of
the drought, yet is said, James 3. 17, to pray for it.
Observe, [1.] An instance of Joshua's unwearied activity in the service of God and Israel, that though he had marched all night and fought all day, and, one might expect, would be inclined to repose himself and get a little sleep, and give his army some time to rest, that, like the hireling, he would earnestly have desired the shadow, and bid the night welcome, when he had done such a good day's work, yet, instead of that, he stood for nothing so much as the prolonging of the day. Note, Those that wait on the Lord, and work for him, shall renew their strength, shall run and not be weary, shall walk and not faint, Isa. 40. 31. [2.] An instance of his great faith in the almighty power of God, as above the power of nature, and able to control and alter the usual course of it. No doubt, Joshua had an extraordinary impulse or impression upon his spirit, which he knew to be of divine original, prompting him to desire that this miracle might be wrought upon this occasion, else it had been presumption in him to desire or expect it, the prayer had not been granted by the divine power, if it had not been dictated by the divine grace; God wrought this faith in him, and then said, "According to thy faith, and thy prayer of faith, be it unto thee." It cannot be imagined however that such a thing as this should have entered into his mind at the same time, that he would have had a thousand projects in his head for the completing of the victory, before he would have thought of desiring the sun to stand still; but even in the Old Testament saints, the Spirit made intercession according to the will of God; what God will give, he inclines the hearts of his praying people to ask; and for what he will do, he will be inquired of, Ezek. 36. 37.

21. But, It looked great for Joshua to say, Sun, stand thou still. His ancestor Joseph had indeed dreamed that the sun and moon did obeisance to him; but who would have thought that, after it had been fulfilled in the figure, it should again be fulfilled in the letter to one of his posterity. The prayer is thus expressed with authority, because it was not an ordinary prayer, such as is directed and supported only by God's common providence or power. It is, as it were, a conquest made, not of an enemy, but of the sun's power; the prayer is divinely inspired for this purpose; and yet it intimates to us the prevalency of prayer in general, so far as it is regulated by the word of God, and may remind us of that honour put upon prayer, Isa. 45. 11, Concerning the work of my hands, command ye me. He bids the sun stand still upon Gibeon, the place of action and the seat of the war, intimating that what he designed in this request, was, the advantage of Israel against their enemies; it is probable that the sun was now declining, and that he did not call for the lengthening out of the day, until he observed it hastening toward its period. He does likewise, in the name of the King of kings, arrest the moon, perhaps because it was requisite for the preserving of the harmony and good order of the spheres, that the course of the rest of the heavenly bodies should be stayed likewise, otherwise, while the sun shone, he needed not the moon; and here he mentions the valley of Ajalon, which was near to Gibeon, because there he was at that time.

Secondly, It was bold indeed to say so before Israel, and argues a very strong assurance of faith. If the event had not answered the demand, nothing could have been a greater slur upon him; the Israelites would have concluded he was certain in going method, he had never talked sooth. But he knew well God would own him, as an answer to a petition which he himself directed to be drawn up and presented, and therefore was not afraid to say before all Israel, calling them to observe this work of wonder Sun, stand thou still, for he was convinced in him whom he had trusted. He believed the almighty power of God; else he could not have expected that the sun, going on in its strength, driving in a full career, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race, should be stopped in an instant. He believed the sovereignty of God in the kingdom of nature; else he could not have expected that the established law and course of nature should be changed and altered for nothing so much as the prolonging of the day. Note, That they that walk and do not fear, but believe on God, Ps. 31. 9.

Observe, [1.] That he was the first that ever asked the sun to stand still, or gave any reason why it should stand still; God had his time and season for all things, and it was not the invention of a man to stay it, though ever so great change of it should have been fit, it must be done by God. [2.] That this was the first miracle that was wrought in the sight of Israel, because they saw what he had done before. Note, When God has wrought one miracle for our profit and improvement, it is our duty to expect other miracles. [3.] That they could not have this miracle of Joshua's, nor their former miracles, but by the special permission of God. Note, We cannot have a miracle of God but by the special permission of God, for he cannot be commanded to do his will.
And all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace: none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel. 22. Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave. 23. And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. 24. And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them. 25. And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight. 26. And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanged upon the trees until the evening. 27. And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day.

It was a brave appearance, no doubt, which the five kings made when they took the field, for the reducing of Gibeon, and a brave army they had following them; but they were all routed, put into disorder first, and then brought to destruction, by the hail-stones. And now Joshua thought, his work being done, he might go with his army into quarters of refreshment: accordingly it was resolved, perhaps in a council of war, that they should presently return to the camp to Gilgal, v. 15. till they should receive orders from God to take possession of the country they had now conquered: but he soon finds he has more work cut out for him, the victory must be pursued, that the spoils might be divided. Accordingly he applies himself to it with renewed vigour.

I. The force that had dispersed themselves, must be followed and smitten. When tidings are brought to Joshua where the kings were, he ordered a guard to be set upon them for the present, v. 18. reserving them for another day of destruction, and to be brought forth to a day of wrath, Job 21. 30. He directs his men to pursue the common soldiers, as much as might be, to prevent their escaping to the towns, for these would strengthen them, and make the reduction of them the more difficult, v. 19. Like a prudent general, he does that first, which is most needful, and defers his triumphs till he has completed his conquests; nor was he in such haste to insult over the captive kings, but that he would first prevent the rallying again of their scattered forces. The success of this vigorous pursuit, was, 1. That a very great slaughter was made of the enemies of God and Israel. And, 2. The field was cleared of them, so that none remained but such as
got into fenced cities, where they would not long be
safe themselves, nor were they capable of doing any
service to the cities that sheltered them, unless the
cities were by him only fenced, as Joshua, v. 21.
None moved his tongue against any of the children
of Israel, v. 21. This expression intimates, (1.)
their perfect safety and tranquillity: some think it
should be read, from Exod. 11. 7, Against any of
the children of Israel did not a dog move his tongue;
no, not against any one man of them. They were
not threatened by any danger at all after their vic-
tory, no, not so much as the barking of a dog. Not
one single Israelite (for the original makes it so
particular) was brought into any distress, either in
the battle, or in the pursuit. (2.) Their honour
and reputation; no man had any reproach to cast
upon them, or an ill word to give them. God not
tied the hands, but stopped the mouths of their
enraged enemies, and put lying lips to silence. (3.)
The Chaldee paraphrase makes it an expression of
their unalloyed joy for this victory, reading it,
there was no hurt or loss to the children of Israel,
for which any man should afflict his soul. When
the army came to be reviewed after the battle,
there was none slain, none wounded, none missing,
not one Israelite had occasion to lament either the
loss of a friend, or the loss of a limb. So easy, so
easy, so glorious, was this victory.
II. The kings that had hidden themselves, must
now be called to an account, as rebels against the
Israel of God, to whom, by the divine promise and
grant, this land did right belong, and should have
been surrendered upon demand.
See here, 1. How they were secured. The cave
which they fled to, and trusted in for a refuge, be-
came their prison, in which they were clapped up,
till Joshua sat in judgment on them, v. 18. It seems,
they all escaped both the hail-stones and the sword,
God so ordering it, not in kindness to them, but that
they might deliver up their prisoners to the exec-
rible execution; as, for this cause, Pharaoh survived
the plagues of Egypt, and was made to stand, that
God might in him show his power, Exod. 9. 16.
They all fled, and met at the same place, Provi-
dence directing them; and now they who were
lately consulting against Israel, were put upon new
counsels to preserve themselves, and agreed to take
shelter in the same cave. The information brought
to them, v. 18, seems to intimate, that there were
those of the country, who knew the holes and fast-
nesses of it, that were in his interests. And the care
Joshua took to keep them there when they were
there, as it is an instance of his policy and presence
of mind, even in the heat of action; so, in the suc-
cess of their project, it shows how they not only
deceive themselves, but destroy themselves, who
think to hide themselves from God. Their refuge
of lies, and their trust in their confidence, was thus
found to be a trap.
2. How they were triumphed over. Joshua or-
dered them to be brought forth out of the cave, set
before him at the bar, and their names called over,
v. 22, 23. And when they either were bound and
cast upon the ground, unable to help themselves,
or throw themselves upon the ground, humbly to
beg for their lives, he called for the general officers
and great men of Israel, and committed them to trample
upon these kings, and liver their feet upon their
necks; not in sport, and to make themselves and
the company merry, but with the gravity and deco-
rum that became the ministers of the divine justice,
who were not herein to gratify any pride or passion
of their own, but to give glory to the God of Israel
as higher than the highest, who treadeth upon princes
as his footstool, (Isa. 41. 25.) and is terrible to the
kings of the earth, Ps. 76. 12. The thing does indeed
look barbarous, thus to insult over men in misery,
that were suddenly fallen from the highest pitch of
honour into this disgrace; it was hard for crowned
heads to be thus trodden upon, not by Joshua him-
self, (that might better have been borne,) at least
not by any of his men; the majesty and power of
God certainly ought not to be drawn into a precedent,
for the case was extraordinary, and we have reason
to think it was by divine direction and impulse that
Joshua did this. (1.) God would hereby punish the
abominable wickedness of these kings, the measure
of whose iniquity was now full. And by this public
act of justice done upon these ringleaders of the
Canaanites in sin, he would possess his people with
the greater dread and detestation of those sins of
the nations that God cast out from before them,
which they would be tempted to imitate. (2.) He
would hereby have the promise by Moses made
good, (Deut. 33. 29.) Thou shalt tread upon their
high places, that is, their great men, which should
the rather be speedily fulfilled in the letter, because
they are the very last words of Moses that we find
upon record. (3.) He would hereby encourage the
faith and hope of his people Israel, in reference to
the wars that were yet before them. Therefore
Joshua said, v. 25, Fear not, nor be dismayed. [1]
“Fear not these kings, or any of their’s, as if there
were any danger of having this afront now put upon
them, in after-time revenged upon yourselves; a
consideration which keeps many from being insol-
ent toward those they have at their mercy, because
they know not how soon the uncertain fate of war
may turn the same wheel upon themselves; but you
need not fear that any should rise up ever to re-
venge this quarrel.” [2] “Fear not any other
kings, who may at any time be in confederacy
against you, for you see these brought down, whom
you thought formidable. This shall the Lord do
to all your enemies; now that they begin to fall,
to fall so low, that you may set your feet on their
necks, you may be confident they shall not prevail;
they shall zumi, or be hurled to destruction. He
would hereby give a type and figure of Christ’s
victories over the powers of darkness, and believers’
victories through him. All the enemies of the Re-
deemer shall be made his footstool, Ps. 110. 1.
(And, see Ps. 18. 40.) The kings of the earth set
themselves against him, Ps. 2. 2. but sooner or
later we shall see all things put under him, Heb. 2.
8. and principalities and powers made a show of,
Col. 2. 15. And as these conquerors, may tread
upon the Lion and adder, Ps. 91. 13. may ride on the
high places of the earth, Isa. 58. 14. and may be confident that the God of
peace shall tread Satan under our feet, shall do it
shortly, and do it effectually, Rom. 16. 20. See
Ps. 149. 8, 9.
3. How they were put to death. Perhaps when
they had undergone that terrible mortification of
being trodden upon, that they often are ready to say, as Agag, Surely the bitterness
of death is past, and that sufficient unto them was
this punishment which was inflicted by many; but
their honours cannot excuse their lives, their fer-
feited, devoted lives. Joshua smote them with the
sword, and then hanged up their bodies till evening,
when they were taken down, and thrown into the
cave in which they had hid themselves, v. 26, 27.
And this it seems, that which had been shelter;
was made their prison first, and then their
grate; so shall we be disappointed in that which we
flee to from God, yet to good people the grave is
still a hiding-place, Job. 14. 15. If these five kings
had humbled themselves in time, and had begged
peace instead of waging war, they might have sav-
ed their lives; but now the decree was gone forth,
and they found no place for repentance, or the re-
versal of the judgment, it was too late to expect it,
though, perhaps, they sought it carefully with tears.

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28. And that day Joshua took Makkedah, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof he utterly destroyed, them, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain: and he did he to the king of Makkedah as he did unto the king of Jericho. 29. Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, unto Libnah, and fought against Libnah: 30 And the Lord delivered it also, and the king thereof, into the hand of Israel; and he smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain in it; but did unto the king thereof as he did unto the king of Jericho. 31. And Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, unto Lachish, and encamped against it, and fought against it: 32. And the Lord delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, which took it on the second day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein, according to all that he had done to Libnah. 33. Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua smote him and his people, until he had left him none remaining. 34. And from Lachish Joshua passed unto Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it, and fought against it: 35. And they took it on that day, and smote it with the edge of the sword; and all the souls that were therein he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish. 36. And Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, unto Hebron; and they fought against it: 37. And they took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon; but destroyed it utterly, and all the souls that were therein. 38. And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir, and fought against it: 39. And he took it, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining: as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir, and to the king thereof; as he had done also to Libnah, and to her king. 40. So Joshua snote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded. 41. And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Gos ben even unto Gibeon. 42. And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel. 43. And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp at Gilgal.

We have here Joshua's improvement of the late glorious victory he had obtained, and the advantages he had gained by it, and to do this well is a general's praise.

Here is a particular account of the several cities which he immediately made himself master of. 1. The cities of three of the kings whom he had conquered in the field, he went and took possession of, Lachish, v. 31, 32. Eglon, v. 34, 35. and Hebron, v. 36, 37. The other two, Jerusalem and Jarmuth, were not taken at this time; perhaps his forces were either so much fatigued with what they had done, or so well content with what they had got, that they had no mind to attack those places, and so they slipped the fairest opportunity they could ever expect of reducing them with ease, which afterward was not done without difficulty, Judg. 1. 1. 2 Sam. 5. 6. 2. Three other cities, and royal cities too, he took; Makkedah, into the neighbourhood of which the five kings were fled, which brought Joshua and his forces thither in pursuit of them, and so hastened its ruin, v. 28. Libnah, v. 29, 30. and Debir, v. 38, 39. 3. One king that brought in his forces for the relief of Lachish, that had lost its king, proved to meddle to its own hurt; it was Horam king of Gezer, who, either in friendship to his neighbours, or for his own security, offered to stop the progress of Joshua's arms, and was cut off with all his forces, v. 33. Thus wicked men are often snared in their counsels, and, by opposing God in the way of his judgments, bring them the sooner on their own heads.

A general account of the country which was hereby reduced and brought into Israel's hands, v. 40, 42. The part of the land of Canaan which they first got possession of lay south of Jerusalem, and afterward fell, for the most part, to the lot of the tribe of Judah.

Observe in this narrative, 1. The great speed Joshua made in taking these cities, which, some think, is intimated in the manner of relating it, which is quick and concise. He flew like lightning from place to place; and though they all stuck it out to the last extremity, and none of these cities opened their gates to him, yet in a little time he got them all into his hands, summoned them, and seized them, the same day, v. 28. or in two days, v. 32. Now that they were struck with fear by the defeat of their armies, and the death of their kings, Joshua prudently followed his blow. See what a great deal of work may be done in a little time, if we will but be busy, and improve our opportunities.

2. The great severity Joshua used toward those he conquered. He gave no quarter to man, woman, or child, put to the sword all the souls, v. 28, 30, 32, 35, c. utterly destroyed all that breathed; v. 40, and left none remaining. Nothing could justify this military execution, but that here in they did as the Lord God of Israel commanded, v. 40. which is sufficient answer to all inquiries: only to say, it saved them from the imputation of cruelty, but to sanctify what they did, and make it an acceptable piece of service to his justice. God would hereby, (1.) Manifest his hatred of the idolatries, and other abominations, which the Canaanites had been guilty of, and leave us to judge how great the provocation was, which they had given him, by the greatness of the destruction which was brought upon them when the measure of their iniquity was full. (2.) He would hereby magnify his love to his
people Israel, in giving so many men for them, and people for their life, Is. 43. 4. when the heathen are to be cast out to make room for this vine; (Ps. 80. 8.) Divine justice appears more prodigal than ever of human blood, that the Israelites might find themselves for ever obliged to speak of lives to the glory of that God, who had sacrificed so many of the lives of his creatures to their interest. (3.) Hereby was typified the final and eternal destruction of all the impotent implacable enemies of the Lord Jesus, who having slighted the riches of his grace, must for ever feel the weight of his wrath; and shall have judgment without mercy. Nations that be @ r y . God shall be turned against them, 5. held, as against all to God's infinite goodness.

3. The great success of this expedition. The spoil of these cities was now divided among the men of war that plundered them; and the cities themselves, with the land about them, were shortly to be divided among the tribes, for the Lord fought for Israel, v. 42. They could not have gotten the victory, if God had not undertaken the battle; then we conquer when God fights for us; and if he be for us, who can be against us?

CHAP. XI.

This chapter continues and concludes the history of the conquest of Canaan; of the reduction of the southern parts we had an account in the foregoing chapter; after which we may suppose Joshua allowed his forces some breathing-time; now here we have the story of the war in the north, and the happy success of that war. I. The confederacy of the northern kingdoms against Israel, v. 4. 5. II. The encouragement which God gave to Joshua to engage them, v. 6. III. His victory over them, v. 7. 8. IV. The taking of their cities, v. 10. 15. V. The destruction of the Amakims, v. 21, 22. VI. The general conclusion of the story of this war, v. 16. 20, 23.

1. AND it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor had heard those things, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph, 2. and to the kings that were on the north of the mountains, and of the plains south of Chinneroth, and in the valley, and in the borders of Dor on the west, 3. and to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and to the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and to the Hivite under Hermon, in the land of Mizpeh. 4. And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea-shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many. 5. And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel. 6. And the Lord said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for to-morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire. 7. So Joshua came, and all the people of war with him, against them by the waters of Merom suddenly; and they fell upon them. 8. And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Misrephoth-maim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh eastward; and they smote them, until they left them none remaining. 9. And Joshua did unto them as the Lord bade him: he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire.

We are here entering upon the story of another campaign that Joshua made, and it was a glorious one, no less illustrious than the former in the success of it, though in respect of miracles, it was inferior to it in that respect. The wars, which they wrought for them, were to initiate and encourage them to act vigorously themselves. Thus the war carried on by the preaching of the Gospel against Satan's kingdom, was at first forwarded by miracles; but the war being by them sufficiently proved to be of God, the managers of it are now left to the ordinary assistance of divine grace in the use of the sword of the Spirit, and must not expect hailstones, or the standing still of the sun.

In this story we have,

I. The Canaanites taking the field against Israel. They were the aggressors, God hardening their hearts to begin the war, that Israel might be justified beyond exception in destroying them. Joshua and all Israel were returned to the camp at Gilgal, and perhaps these kings knew no other than that they intended to sit down content with the conquest they had already made, and yet they prepare war against them. Note, Sinners bring ruin upon their own heads, so that God will be justified when he speaks, and they alone shall bare the blame for ever. Judah was now crouched as a lion gone up from the烽火; if the northern kings raise him up, it is at their peril, Gen. 49. 9. Now,

I. Several nations joined in this confederacy, some in the mountains, and some in the plains, v. 2. Canaanites from east and west, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, &c. v. 3. of different constitutions, and divided interests among themselves, and yet they here unite against Israel, as against a common enemy. Thus are the children of this world more unanimous, and therein wiser, than the children of light. The enmity of the church's enemies should shame the church's friends out of their discord and divisions, and engage them to be one. The head of this confederacy was Jabin king of Hazor, v. 1. As Adoni-zedek was of the former; it is said, v. 10. Hazor had been the head of all those kingdoms, which could not have revolted, without occasioning ill-will; but that was forgotten and laid aside upon this occasion, by consent of parties, (Luke 23. 12.) When they had all drawn up their forces together, every kingdom bringing in its quota, they were a very great army, much greater than the former, as the sand on the sea-shore in multitude; and, upon this account, much stronger and more formidable, that they had horses and chariots very many, which we do not find the southern kings had; whereby they had a great advantage against Israel, for their army consisted only of foot, and they never brought horses or chariots into the field. Josephus tells us, that the army of the Canaanites consisted of three hundred thousand foot, two hundred thousand horse, and twenty thousand chariots. Many there be that have it up against God's Israel; doubtless their number made them very confident of success, but it proved that so much the greater slaughter was made of them.

II. The encouragement God gave to Joshua to give them the meeting, even upon the ground of their own choosing, v. 6. Be not afraid because of them. Joshua was remarkable for his courage, it
was his master-grace, and yet it seems, he had need to be again and again cautioned not to be afraid. Fresh dangers and difficulties make it necessary to fetch in fresh supports and comforts from the word of God, which we have always nigh unto us, to be made the more necessary in every case. Those who have God on their side, need not be disturbed at the number and power of their enemies; more are they that are with us, than they that are against us; they have the hosts of the Lord, that have the Lord of hosts engaged for them. 

For his encouragement, 1. God assures him of success, and fixes the hour; To-morrow about this time, when an engagement (though possibly) was expected and designed on both sides, I will deliver them up slain. Though they were to be slain by the sword of Israel, yet it is spoken of as God's work, that he would deliver them up. 2. He appoints him to hough their horses, hamstring them, lame them, and burn their chariots, not only that Israel might not use them hereafter, but that they might not fear them now, their God designing this contempt to be put upon them. Let Israel look upon their chariots but as rotten wood designed for the fire, and their horses of war as disabled things, scarcely good enough for the cart.

This encouragement which God here gave to Joshua, no doubt, he communicated to the people, who perhaps were under some apprehensions of danger from this vast army, notwithstanding the experiences they had had of God's power engaged for them. And the wisdom and goodness of God is to be observed, (1.) In instructing the counsels of the enemy, that all the kings of Canaan, who were not dispersed at such a distance from each other, but that they might have got altogether in a body, did not at first confederate against Israel, but were divided into the southern and northern combination, and so became less formidable. And, (2.) In preparing his people to encounter the greater force, by but little breaking them. They first engage with five kings together, and now with many more. God proportions our trials to our strength, and our strength to our trials.

III. Joshua's march against these confederate forces, v. 7, He came upon them suddenly, and surprised them in their quarters. He made this haste, 1. That he might put them into the greater confusion, by giving them an alarm, when they were raw and unprepared. 2. That he might be sure not to come short of the honour God had fixed, to give him the meeting at the enemy's camp, to-morrow about this time. It is fit we should keep time with God. 

IV. His success, v. 8. He obtained the honour and advantage of a complete victory; he smote them and chased them, in the several ways they took in their flight; some fled toward Zidon, which lay to the north, and others toward Mizpeh, eastward, both the parties Joshua sent out, pursued them each way. So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel; they would not deliver themselves into the hands of Israel to be made proselytes and tributaries, and so offered up to God's grace, Rom. 15. 16. and therefore God delivered them into their hands to be made sacrifices to his justice; for the Israelites were honoured by us or upon us.

V. His obedience to the orders given him, in destroying the horses and chariots, v. 9, which was an instance, 1. Of his subjection to the divine will, as one under authority, that must do as he is bidden. 2. Of his self-denial, and crossing his own genius and inclination in compliance with God's command. 3. Of his confidence in the power of God engaged for Israel, which enabled them to destroy the chariots and horses which others trusted in, Ps. 20. 7.—33. 17. 4. Of his care to keep up in the people the like confidence in God, by taking that from them, which they would be tempted to trust too much to. This was cutting off a right hand.

10. And Joshua at that time turned back, and took Hazor, and smote the king there of with the sword; for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms. 11. And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them: there was not any left to breathe: and he burnt Hazor with fire. 12. And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them, did Joshua take, and smote them with the edge of the sword; and he utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the Lord commanded. 13. But as for the cities that stood still in their strength, Israel burned none of them, save Hazor only; that did Joshua burn. 14. And all the spoil of these cities, and the cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves; but every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, neither left they any to breathe.

We have here the same improvement made of this victory, that was of that in the foregoing chapter. 1. The destruction of Hazor is particularly recorded, because in it, and by the king thereof, this daring design against Israel was laid, v. 10, 11. The king of Hazor, it seems, escaped with his life out of the battle, and thought himself safe when he was got back into his own city, and Joshua was gone in pursuit of the scattered troops another way; but it proved that that which he thought would have been for his welfare, was his trap, in it he was taken as in an evil net, there he was slain, and his city, for his sake, burnt. Yet we find that the remains of it being very well looked after by Israel, the Canaanites rebuilt it, and settled there under another king of the same name, Judg. 4. 2. 2. The rest of the cities of that part of the country are spoken of only in general; that Joshua got them all into his hands, but did not burn them as he did Hazor, for Israel was to dwell in great and goodly cities which they builded not, Deut. 6. 10. and in these among the rest. And here we find Israel rolling in blood and treasure. (1.) In the blood of their enemies; they smote all the souls, v. 11. neither left they any to breathe, v. 14. that there might be none to infect them with the abominations of Canaan, and none to disturb them in the possession of it. The children were cut off, lest they should afterward lay claim to any part of this land in the right of their parents. (2.) In the wealth of their enemies; the spoil, and the cattle, they took for a prey to themselves, v. 14. As they were enriched with the spoil of their oppressors when they came out of Egypt, wherewith to defray the charges of their apprenticeship in the wilderness; so they were now enriched with the spoil of their enemies, for a stock wherewith to set up in the land of Canaan. Thus is the wealth of the sinner laid up for the just.
and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all the LORD commanded Moses. 16. So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same; 17. Even from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, unto Baal-gad, in the valley of Lebanon, unto mount Hermon: and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them. 18. Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

22. There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle. 20. For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses. 21. And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities.

22. There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained. 23. So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel, according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.

We have here the conclusion of this whole matter.

A short account is here given of what was done in four things.

1. The occupancy of the Canaanites in their opposition to the Israelites. It was strange, that though it appeared so manifestly that God fought for Israel, and in every engagement the Canaanites had the worst of it, yet they stood it out to the last; not one city made peace with Israel, but the Gibeonites only, who understood the things that belonged to their peace better than their neighbours, v. 9.

2. It is intimated that other cities might have made as good terms for themselves, withoutragged clothes and clouted shoes, if they would have humbled themselves, but they never so much as desired conditions of peace. We are told whence this unaccountable inactivity came, It was of the LORD to harden their hearts, v. 20. As Pharaoh's heart was hardened by his own pride and wilfulness first, and afterward by the righteous judgment of God, to his destruction, so were the hearts of these Canaanites. To punish them for all their other follies, God left them to this, to make those their enemies, whom they might have made their friends.

This was it that ruined them, they came against Israel in battle, and gave the first blow, and therefore might have no favour showed them. Those knew not what they do, who give the provocation to divine justice, or the authorised instruments of it.
ed when he was in his grave. Yes, they were, so did Joshua, who was, in his place, as faithful, as Moses in his. He left nothing undone (Heb. he removed nothing) of all that the Lord commanded Moses. They that leave their duty undone, do what they can to remove or make void the command of God, by which they are obliged to it; but Joshua, by performing the precept, confirmed it, as the expression is, Deut. 27. 26. Joshua was himself a great commander, and yet nothing was more to his praise than his obedience. They that rule both at their will, must themselves be ruled by the divine will, then their power is indeed their honour, and not otherwise. The pious obedience for which Joshua is here commended, respects especially the command to destroy the Canaanites, and to break down their altars, and burn their images, Deut. 7. 2. — 5. Exod. 23. 24. — 34. 13. Joshua, in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, spared neither the idols nor the idolaters. Sory, v. 1. 6. II. Their partial obedience, to the command of God, for the utter destruction of the Amalekites, cost him his kingdom. It should seem, Joshua himself gives this account of his most careful and punctual observance of his orders in the execution of his commission, that in all respects he had done as Moses commanded him; and then it intimates that he had more pleasure and satisfaction in reflecting upon his obedience to the command of God in all this war, and valued himself more upon that, than upon all the gains and triumphs with which he was enriched and advanced.

2. That all the promises God had given to Moses, relating to this conquest, were accomplished on his part, v. 23. Joshua took the whole land, conquered it, and took possession of it, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses. God had promised to his people a land flowing with milk and honey, Exod. 33. 14. and to bring them down, Deut. 9. 3. And now it was done. There failed not one word of the promise. Our successes and enjoyments are then doubly sweet and comfortable to us, when we see them flowing to us from the precept; this is according to what the Lord said: as our obedience is then acceptable to God, when it has an eye to the precept. And if we make conscience of our duty, we need not question the performance of the promise.

CHAP. XII.

This chapter is a summary of Israel's conquests, 1. Their conquests under Moses, on the other side Jordan, (for we now suppose ourselves in Canaan,) eastward, which we have the history of, Numb. 21. 24, &c. And here are the abridgment of that history: their conquests under Joshua, on this side Jordan, westward. 1. The country they subdued, v. 7, 8. 2. The kings they subdued, thirty-one in all, v. 9. 24. And this comes in here, not only, as a conclusion of the history of the wars of Canaan, (that we might at one view see what they had got) but as a preface to the history of the dividing of Canaan, that all that might be put together, which they were now to make a distribution of.

1. Now these are the kings of the land, which the children of Israel smote, and possessed their land on the other side Jordan, toward the rising of the sun; from the river Arnon unto Mount Hermon, and all the plain on the east: 2. Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and ruled from Aror, which is upon the bank of the river Armon, and from the middle of the river, and from half Gilead, unto the river Jabbok, which is the border of the children of Ammon; 3. And from the plain to the sea of Chinneroth on the east, and unto the sea of the plain, even the salt sea on the east, the way to Beth-jeshimoth; and from the south, under Ashdoth-pisgah:

4. And the coast of Og king of Bashan, which was of the remnant of the giants, that dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei. And reigned in mount Hermon, and in Sealeah, and in all Bashan, unto the border of the Geshurites, and the Maachathites, and half Gilead, the border of Sihon king of Heshbon. 6. Them did Moses the servant of the Lord and the children of Israel smite: and Moses the servant of the Lord gave it for a possession unto the Reubenites, and Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

Joshua, or whoever else is the historian, before he comes to sum up the new conquests Israel had made, in these verses recites their former conquests in Moses's time, under whom they became masters of the great and potent kingdoms of Sihon and Og. Note. Fresh mercies must not drown the remembrance of former mercies, nor must the glory of the present instruments of good to the church, be suffered to eclipse and diminish the just honour of those who have gone before them, and who were the blessings and ornaments of their day. Joshua's services and achievements are confessedly great, but let not those under Moses be overlooked and forgotten, since God was the same who wrought both, and both put together, proclaim him the alpha and omega of Israel's great salvation. Here is,

1. A description of this conquered country, the measure and bounds of it in general, v. 1. From the river Arnon, in the south, to mount Hermon in the north. In particular, here is a description of the kingdom of Sihon, v. 2. 3. and that of Og, v. 4. 5. Moses had described this country very particularly, Deut. 2. 36. — 3. 4. &c. and this description here agrees with his. King Og is said to dwell at Ashtaroth and Edrei, v. 4. probably, because they were both his royal cities, he had palaces in both, and resided sometimes in one, and sometimes in the other; one perhaps was his summer-seat, and the other his winter-seat, but Israel took both from him, and made one grave to serve him, that could not be content with one palace.

2. The distribution of this country; Moses assigned it to the two tribes and a half, at their request, and divided it among them, v. 6. of which we request the story at large, Numb. 32. The dividing of it when it was conquered by Moses, is here mentioned as an example to Joshua, which he must observe. Joshua had conquered the country on this side Jordan. Moses, in his time, gave to one part of Israel a very rich and fruitful country, but it was on the outside of Jordan; Joshua gave to all Israel the holy land, the mountain of God's sanctuary, within Jordan; so the law conferred upon some few of God's spiritual Israel, external temporal blessings, which were earnest of good things to come. But the Lord Jesus, who conquered this country, has provided for all the children of promise spiritual blessings, the privileges of the sanctuary, and the heavenly Canaan. The triumphs and grants of the Law were glorious, but those of the Gospel far exceed in glory.

7. And these are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel
smote on this side Jordan on the west, from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon even unto the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir; which Joshua gave unto the tribes of Israel for a possession, according to their divisions: 8. In the mountains, and in the valleys, and in the plains, and in the springs, and in the wilderness, and in the south country; the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: 9. The king of Jericho, one; the king of Ai, which is beside Bethel, one; 10. The king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one; 11. The king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one; 12. The king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one; 13. The king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one; 14. The king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one; 16. The king of Makkedah, one; the king of Beth-el, one; 17. The king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hepher, one; 18. The king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one; 19. The king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one; 20. The king of Shimron-meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one; 21. The king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one; 22. The king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam of Carmel, one; 23. The king of Dor in the coast of Dor, one; the king of the nations of Gilgal, one; 24. The king of Tirzah, one: All the kings thirty and one.

We have here a breviate of Joshua's conquests.

I. The limits of the country he conquered; it lay between Jordan on the east, and the Mediterranean sea on the west, and extended from Baal-gad near Lebanon in the north, to Halak, which lay upon the country of Edom in the south, v. 7. The boundaries are more largely described, Num. 34, 2, &c. this only is enough to show that God had been as good as his word, and had given them possession of all he had promised them by Moses, if they would but have kept it.

II. The various kinds of land that were found in this country, which contributed both to its pleasantness and to its fruitfulness, v. 8. There were mountains, not craggy and rocky and barren, which are frightful to the traveller, and useless to the inhabitants, but fruitful hills, such as put forth flowers, that were entertaining and instructive to the spectator's eye, and filled the owner's hand. And valleys, not mossy and boggy, but covered with corn, Ps. 65, 13. There were plains, and springs to water them; and even in that rich land there were wildernesses too, or forests, which were not so thickly inhabited as other parts, yet had towns and houses in them, but served as foils to set off the more pleasant and fruitful countries.

III. The several nations that had been in possession of this country, Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, &c. all of them descended from Canaan the accursed son of Ham, Gen. 10, 15-18. Seven nations they are called, Deut. 7, 1. and so many are there reckoned up, but here six only are mentioned, the Gergashites being here either lost or left out, though we find them, Gen. 10, 16. and 15, 21. Either they were incorporated with the other nations, or, as the tradition of the Jews is, upon the approach of Israel under Joshua, they all withdrew and went into Africa, leaving their country to be possessed by Israel, with whom they saw it was to no purpose to contend, and therefore they are not named among the nations that Joshua subdued.

IV. A list of the kings that were conquered and subdued by the sword of Israel, some in the field, others in the towns. Thirty in all, all very particularly named and counted, it should seem, in the order in which they were conquered; for the catalogue begins with the kings of Jericho and Ai, then takes in the king of Jerusalem, and the princes of the south that were in confederacy with him, and then proceeds to those of the northern association. Now, 1. This shows what a very fruitful country Canaan then was, which could support so many kingdoms, and in which so many kings chose to throng together, rather than disperse themselves into other countries, which we may suppose not yet inhabited, but where, though they might find more room, they could not expect such plenty and pleasure: this was the land God spied out for Israel; and yet at this day it is one of the most barren, despicable, and unpromising countries in the world; but the effect of the curse it lies under, since its possessors rejected Christ and his Gospel, as was foretold by Moses, Deut. 29, 23.

2. It shows what narrow limits men's ambition was then confined to. These kings contented themselves with the government, each of them, of one city, and the towns and villages that pertained to it; and no one of them, for aught that appears, aimed to make himself master of the world; but, when there was occasion, united for the common safety. Yet it should seem that what was wanting in the extent of their territories, was made up in the absoluteness of their power, their subjects being all their tenants and vassals, and entirely at their command.

3. It shows how good God was to Israel, in giving them victory over all these kings, and possession of all these kingdoms, and what obligations he hereby laid upon them to observe his statutes, and to keep his laws, Ps. 105, 44, 45. Here were thirty-one kingdoms, or signories, to be divided among nine tribes and a half of Israel. Of these there fell to the lot of Judah, the kingdoms of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, Debir, Arad, Libnah, and Adullam, eight in all, beside part of the kingdom of Jerusalem, and part of Geder. Benjamin had the kingdoms of Jericho, Ai, Jerusalem, Makkedah, Beth-el, and the nations of Gilgal, s x in all Simeon had the kingdom of Hormah, and part of Geder. Ephraim had the kingdoms of Gezer and Tirzah. Manasseh (that half-tribe) had the kingdoms of Tappuah and Hepher, Taanach and Megiddo. Asher had the kingdoms of Aphek and Achshaph. Zebulan had the kingdoms of Japhlet, Shimron-meron and Jokzach. Naphtali had the kingdoms of Madon, Hazor, and Kedesh. And Issachar had that of Dor. These were some of the great and famous kings that God smote, for his mercy endureth for ever; and gave their land for a heritage, even a heritage unto Israel his servant, for his mercy endureth for ever, Ps. 136, 17, &c.

CHAP. XIII.

At this chapter begins the account of the dividing of the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel by lot; a narrative not so entertaining and instructive as that of the conquest of it, and yet it is thought fit to be inserted in the sacred history, to illustrate the performance of the
promised to do the Fathers, that this land should be
given to his children, Jacob, and him, and not to any
other. The preserving of this distribution would be of
great use to the Jewish nation, who were obliged by the
law to keep up this first distribution, and not to transfer
inheritances from tribe to tribe, and therefore, we are not
without some use for the expounding of other scriptures:
the learned know how much light the geographical
description of a country gives to the history of it. And
therefore we are not to skip over these chapters of hard
matters, as meditations not to be remedied, where God
has a mouth to speak, and a hand to write, we should
find an ear to hear, and an eye to read; and God give us
a heart to profit! In this chapter, I. God informs Joshua
what parts of the country that were intended in the grant
of land to Israel, yet remained unconquered, and not in pos-
session, v. 1, 6. II. He appoints him, notwithstanding,
to make a distribution of what was conquered, v. 7. III.
He commands him to prepare a census of the tribes, v. 1.
It is a repetition of the distribution Moses had made of the land on the other
side Jordan; in general, v. 8, 14. In particular, the lot
of Reuben, v. 15, 29. Of Gad, v. 24, 28. Of the half-
tribe of Manasseh, v. 29, 33.

1. N
ow Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the Lord said unto him,
Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be pos-
sessed. 2. This is the land that remaineth: all the borders of the Philistines, and
all Geshuri. 3. From Sihor, which is before Egypt, even unto the borders of Ekron
northward, which is counted to the Canaan-
ite: five lords of the Philistines; the Gazath-
ites, and the Ashdodites, the Eshkalonites, the
Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites: 4. From the south, all the land of
the Canaanites, and Mearah that is beside
the Sidonians, unto Aphek, to the borders
of the Amorites: 5. And the land of the
Giblites, and all Lebanon, toward the sun-
rising, from Baal-gad under mount Hermon
unto the entering into Hamath: 6. All the
inhabitants of the hill country, from Leba-
on unto Misrephoth-maim, and all the Si-
donians, them will I drive out from before
the children of Israel: only divide thou it by
lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance as
I have commanded thee.

Here,

I. God puts Joshua in mind of his old age, v. 1.
It is said that Joshua was old and stricken in
years, and he and Caleb were at this time the only
old men among the thousands of Israel; none (ex-
cept them) of all those who were numbered at
mount Sinai being now alive. He had been a man
of war from his youth, Exod. 17. 10. but now he
yielded to the infirmities of age, with which it is in
vain for the stoutest man to think of contesting. It
should seem Joshua had not the same strength and
vigour in his old age, that Moses had; all that come
to old age, do not find it alike good; generally, the
days of old age are evil days, and such as there is
no pleasure in them, nor expectation of service from
them. 2. God takes notice of it to him, God said
to him, Thou art old. Note, It is good for those
who are old and stricken in years, to be in rem-
embrance of their being so. Some have gray hair
because they have lived long, and therefore do not divide it not, Hos. 7, 9. they do not care to think of it, and there-
fore need to be told of it, that they may be quick-
ced to do the work of life, and make preparation
for death which is coming toward them apace.

But God mentions Joshua's age and growing in-
firmities, (1.) As a reason why he should now lay by
the thoughts of pursuing the war; he cannot expect
to see any thing done, it quickly worn out his
much land, more perhaps than he thought, to be
possessed, in several parts remote from each other:
and it was not fit that at this age he should be put
upon the fatigue of renewing the war, and carrying
it to such distant places; no, it was enough for him
that he had reduced the body of the country, let
him be gathered to rest, with honour and the thanks
of his people, for the good services he had done
them, and let the conquering of the skies of the
land be left for those that shall come after. As
he had entered into the labours of Moses, so let
others enter into his, and bring forth the top-stone;
the doing of which was reserved for David long
after. Observe, God considers the frame of his
people, and would not have them bethought with
work above their strength. It cannot be expected
that old people should do as they have done for God
and their country. (2.) As a reason why he should
speedily apply himself to the dividing of that which
he had conquered. That work must be done, and
done quickly; it was necessary that he should pre-
side in the doing of it, and therefore, he being old
and stricken in years, and not likely to continue
long, let him make that his concluding piece of ser-
vise to God and Israel. All people, but especially
old people, should set themselves to do that which
must be done before they die, lest death pre-
vent them, Excl. 9, 10.

II. He gives him a particular account of the land
that yet remained unconquered, which was intended
for Israel, and which, in due time, they should
be masters of, if they did not put a bar in their own
door. Divers places are here mentioned, some in
the south, as the country of the Philistines, govern-
ed by five lords, and the land that lay toward the
south, as some v. 4. Some wasteland, as toward
the Sidonians, v. 4. Some eastward, as all
Lebanon, v. 5. Joshua is told this, and he made
the people acquainted with it, 1. That they might
be the more affected with God's goodness to them
in giving to them this good land, and might thereby
be engaged to love and serve him; for if this which
they had was too little, God would moreover give
them such and such things, 2 Sam. 12. 8. 2. That
they might avoid the temptation of supposing
they could contract any dangerous familiarity with these their
neighbours, so as to learn their way, but might rather
be jealous of them, as people that kept them
from their right, and that they had just cause of
quarrel with. 3. That they might keep them-
seives in a posture for war, and not think of putting
off the harness, as long as there remained any land
to be possessed. Nor must we lay aside our spiritual
armour, nor be as if our labours were all, our
victory be complete in the kingdom of glory.

III. He promises that he would make the Israel-
ites masters of all those countries that were yet
unsubdued, though Joshua was old, and not able to
do it, old and not likely to live to see it done.
Whatever becomes of us, and however we may be
laid aside as despised broken vessels, God will
do his work, and perform it in his own way, and
not in our, and bring it out. The original is emphatical, "It is that
will do it, I that can do it, when thou art dead and
gone, and will do it, if Israel be not wanting to themselves." "I will do it by my Word," so the
Chaldee here, as in many other places, "by the
eternal Word, the Captain of the hosts of the
Lord." This promise that he would drive them out
from before the children of Israel, plainly supposes
it as the condition of the promise, that the chil-
dren of Israel must themselves attempt and endea-
vor their extirpation, must go up against them,
else they could not be said to be driven out before them; if afterwards, Israel, through sloth, or cowardice, or affection to these idolaters, set still and let them alone, they must blame themselves, and not God, if they be not driven out. We must work out our salvation, and then God will work in us, and work with us; we must resist our spiritual enemies, and then God will tread them under our feet; we must go forth to our Christian work and warfare, and then God will go forth before us.

7. Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance unto the nine tribes and the half tribe of Manasseh. 8. With whom the Reubenites and the Gadites have received their inheritance, which Moses gave them, beyond Jordan eastward, even as Moses the servant of the Lord gave them; 9. From Aroer, that is upon the bank of the river Arnon, and the city that is in the midst of the river, and all the plain of Medeba unto Dibon; 10. And all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, unto the border of the children of Ammon; 11. And Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites and Maachathites, and all mount Hermon, and all Bashan unto Salcah; 12. All the kingdom of Og in Bashan, which reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei, who remained of the remnant of the giants: for these did Moses smite, and cast them out. 13. Nevertheless the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor the Maachathites; but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day. 14. Only unto the tribe of Levi he gave none inheritance; the sacrifices of the Lord God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance, as he said unto them. 15. And Moses gave unto the tribe of the children of Reuben inheritance according to their families: 16. And their coast was from Aroer, that is on the bank of the river Arnon, and the city that is in the midst of the river, and all the plain by Medeba; 17. Heshbon, and all her cities that are in the plain; Dibon, and Bamoth-baal, and Bethbaal-meon, 18. And Jahaza, and Kedemoth, and Mephaath, 19. And Kirjathaim, and Sibmah, and Zareth-shahar in the mount of the valley, 20. And Beth-peor, and Ashdoth-pisgah, and Beth-jeshimoth, 21. And all the cities of the plain, and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses smote with the princes of Midian, Evi, and Rekem, and Zir, and Hur, and Reba, which were dukes of Sihon, dwelling in the country. 22. Baalath also the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them. 23. And the border of the children of Reuben was Jordan, and the border thereof. This was the inheritance of the children of Reuben after their families, the cities and villages thereof. 24. And Moses gave inheritance unto the tribe of Gad, even unto the children of Gad, according to their families: 25. And their coast was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilgal, and half the land of the children of Ammon, unto Aroer that is before Rabbah; 26. And from Heshbon unto Ramath-mizpeh, and Betonim; and from Mahanaim unto the border of Debar; 27. And in the valley, Beth-aram, and Beth-nimrah, and Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, Jordan and his border, even unto the edge of the sea of Chinneroth, on the other side Jordan eastward. 28. This is the inheritance of the children of Gad after their families, the cities, and their villages. 29. And Moses gave inheritance unto the half tribe of Manasseh: and this was the possession of the half tribe of the children of Manasseh by their families. 30. And their coast was from Mahanaim, all Bashan, all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair, which are in Bashan, three-score cities; 31. And half Gilead, and Ashtaroth, and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan, were pertaining unto the children of Machir the son of Manasseh, even to the one half of the children of Machir by their families. 32. These are the countries which Moses did distribute for inheritance in the plains of Moab, on the other side Jordan, by Jericho, eastward. 33. But unto the tribe of Levi, Moses gave not any inheritance: the Lord God of Israel was their inheritance, as he said unto them.

Here we have,

1. Orders given to Joshua to assign to each tribe its portion of this land, including that which was yet unsubdued, which must be brought into the lot, in a believing confidence that it should be conquered when Israel was multiplied, so as to have occasion for it, v. 7. New divide this land. Joshua thought all must be conquered, before any must be divided. “No,” said God, “there is as much conquered as will serve your turn for the present, divide that, and make your best of it, and wait for the remainder hereafter.” Note, We must take the comfort of what we have, though we cannot compass all we would have.

1. The land must be divided among the several tribes, and they must always live in common, as now they did. Which way soever a just property is acquired, it is the will of that God who has given the earth to the children of men, that there should be such a thing, and that every man should know his own, and not invade that which is another's. The world must be governed, not by force, but right, by the law of equity, not of arms.

2. That it must be divided for an inheritance, though they got it by conquest. (1.) The promise
of it came to them as an inheritance from their fathers; the land of promise pertained to the children of promise, who were thus assured for their fathers' sakes, and for their own. The possession of it was to be transmitted by them, as an inheritance to their children. Frequently, what is got by force, is soon lost again; but Israel, having an incontestable title to this land by the divine grant, might see it thereby secured as an inheritance to their seed after them, and that God kept his mercy for thousands.

3. That Joshua must divide it, not by his own will, though he was a wise, good man, it must not be left to him to give what pleased him to each tribe; but he must do it by lot, which referred the matter wholly to God, and to his determination, for he it is that appoints the bounds of our habitation, and every man's judgment must proceed from him. But Joshua must preside in this affair, must manage this solemn appeal to Providence, and see that the lot was drawn fairly and without fraud, and that every tribe did acquiesce in it. The lot indeed causeth contention to cease, Prov. 18. 18. But if upon this lot any controversy should arise, Joshua by his wisdom and authority must determine it, and prevent any ill consequences of it. Joshua must have the honour of dividing the land, (1.) Because he had undergone the fatigue of conquering it; and when, through his hand, each tribe received its allotment, they would thereby be made the more solicitous of obedience to him. And what a pleasure must it needs be to a man of such a public spirit as Joshua was, to see the peep e that were so dear to him, eating the labour of his hands! (2.) That he might be herein a type of Christ, who has not only conquered for us the gates of hell, but has opened to us the gates of heaven, and having purchased the eternal inheritance for all believers, will in due time put them all in possession of it.

4. An account is here given of the distribution of the land on the other side Jordan, among the Reubenites, and Gadites, and half of the tribe of Manasseh, which comes in. 1. As the reason why this land within Jordan must be divided only to the nine tribes and a half, because the other two and a half were already provided for. 2. As a pattern to Joshua in the work he had now to do. He had seen Moses divide the land, and Joshua himself was called to do the same in distributing this, and from thence he might take his measures; only this was to be done by lot, but it should seem, Moses did that himself, according to the wisdom given unto him. 3. As an inducement to Joshua to hasten the dividing of this land, that the nine tribes and a half might not be kept any longer than was necessary out of their possession, since their brethren of the two tribes and a half were so well settled in their's; and that they might not be differed from God, their common Father, would not have such a difference made between his children.

(1.) Here is a general description of the country that was given to the two tribes and a half, which Moses gave them, even as Moses gave them, v. 8. The repetition implies a ratification of the grant by Joshua, Moses settled that matter, and as Moses settled it, so shall it rest; Joshua vindicated, under any pretense about to alter it, the justice of the ratification. This reason is intimated why he would not, because Moses was the servant of the Lord, and acted in this matter by secret direction from him, and was faithful as a servant. Here we have, [1.] The fixing of the boundaries of this country, by which they were divided from the neighbouring nations, v. 9, &c. Israel must know their own, and keep to it, and may not under pretence of their being God's peculiar people, encroach upon their neighbours, and invade their rights and properties, to which they had a good and firm title by providence, though not, as Israel, a title by promise. [2.] An exception of one part of this country from Israel's possession, though it was in their grant, n. m. lely, the Geshurites, and the Maachathites, v. 13. They had not leisure to reduce all the remote and obscure corners of the country in Moses's time, and afterward they had no mind to it, being easy with what they had. Thus those who are not straitened in God's promises, are yet straitened in their own faith, and prayers, and endurances.

(2.) A particular account of the inheritance of these two tribes and a half; how they were separated from each other, and what cities, with the towns, villages, and fields, commonly known and reputed to be appurtenances to them, belonged to each tribe. This is very fully and exactly set down, [1.] That posteriorly might, in reading this history, be the more affected with the goodness of God to their ancestors, when they found what a large and fruitful country, and what abundance of great and famous cities, he put them in possession of. God's grunts look best, when we descend to the particulars. [2.] That the limits of each tribe being punctually set down in this authentic record, disputes might be prevented, and such contests between the tribes, as commonly happen where boundaries have not been adjusted, nor this matter brought to a certainty. And we have reason to think the intermediate register has been still preserved, and the description of the lot of each tribe, was of great use to Israel in after-ages, was often appealed to, and always acquiesced in, for the determining of meum and tuum—mine and thine.

First, We have here the lot of the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's first-born; who, though he had lost the dignity and power which pertained to the birth-right, yet, it seems had the advantage of being first settled. For we find these tribes had no division to them, just in desiring to be seated on that side Jordan, that, since they could not expect the benefit of the best lot, they might have the credit of the first. In the account of the lot of this tribe, mention is made of the slaughter, 1. Of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who reigned in this country, and might have kept it and his life, if he would have been neighbourly, and have suffered Israel to pass through his territories, but he thought it would be to his own good to fight, and did thus ruin upon himself, Numb. 21. 21, &c. 2. Of the princes of Midian, who were slain afterward in another war, Numb. 31. 8. and yet are here called dukes of Sihon, and are said to be smitten with him, because they were either tributaries to him, or, in his opinion to Israel, confederates with him, and hearty in his interests, and his full made way for their's not long after. 3. Of Balah, particularly, that would, if he could, have ruined Israel, and was soon after recompensed according to the wickedness of his endeavour, Ps. 28. 4. For he fell with those that set him on. This was recorded before, Numb. 31. 8. and is here repeated, because the defeating of Balah's purpose to curse Israel, was the turning of that curse into a blessing, and was such an instance of the power and goodness of God, as was fit to be set up in everlasting remembrance, See Micah 6. 5.

Within the lot of this tribe was that mount Pisgah, from the top of which Moses took his view of the earthly Canaan, and his flight to the heavenly. And not far off thence Elijah was, when he was fetched up to heaven in a chariot of fire. The separation of this tribe from the rest by the river Jordan, was that which Deborah lamented; and the preference they gave to their private interest above the public, was what she censured, Judg. 5. 15, 16. In this tribe lay Heshbon and Sihim, famed for their fruitful fields and vineyards. See Isa. 16. 8, 9. Jer. 48. 32. This tribe, with that
of Gad, was sorely shaken by Hazael king of Syria, 2 Kings 10. 33. and afterward dishonored and carried into captivity, twenty years before the general captivity of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria, 1 Chron. 5. 26.

Secondly, The lot of the tribe of Gad, v. 24.-28. This lay north of Reuben's lot; the country of Gilead lay in this tribe, so famous for its balm, that it is thought strange indeed if there be no balm in Gilead, 2 Kings 4. But in the tribe of Gad, I Jabez, Gilead, and Re-moth-Gilead, which we often read of in scripture. Succoth and Peniel, which we read of in the story of Gideon, were in this tribe; and that forest which is called the wood of Ephraim, (from the slaughter Jephthah made there of the Ephraimites,) in which Absalom's rebellious army was beaten, while his father David lay at Mahanaim, one of the frontiers of this tribe, v. 26. Sharon was in this tribe, famous for Roses. And within the limits of this tribe lived those Gadarenes, that loved their swine better than their Saviour, fitter to be called Gargashites than Israelites.

Thirdly, The lot of the half-tribe of Manasseh, v. 29.-31. Bashan, the kingdom of Og, was in this allotment, famous for the best timber, witness the oaks of Bashan, and the best breed of cattle, witness the bulls and rams of Bashan. This tribe lay north of Gad, reached to Mount Hermon, and had in it part of Gilead. Mizpeh was in this half-tribe, and Jephthah was one of its ornaments; so was Elijah, for in this tribe was Thisebe, whence he is called the Tishbite, and Jair was another. In the edge of the tribe stood Chorazin, honoured with Christ's wondrous works, but ruined by his righteous woe for not improving them.

Lastly, Twice in this chapter it is taken notice of that the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance, v. 14. 33. for so God had appointed, Numb. 18. 20. If they had been appointed to a lot entire by themselves, Moses would have served them first, not because it was his own tribe, but because it was God's, but they must be provided for in another manner; their habitation must be scattered in all the tribes, and their maintenance brought out of all the tribes, and God himself was the portion both of their inheritance and of their cup, Deut. 10. 9.—18. 2.

CHAP. XIV.

Here is, I. The general method that was taken in dividing the land, v. 1. 1. 2. The demand Caleb made of Hebron, as his by promise, and therefore not to be put into the lot with the rest, v. 6. 12. III. And Joshua's grant of that demand, v. 13. 15. This was done at Gilgal, which was as yet their head-quarters.

1. AND these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them. 2. By lot was their inheritance, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes, and for the half tribe. 3. For Moses had given the inheritance of two tribes and a half tribe on the other side Jordan: but unto the Levites he gave none inheritance among them. 4. For the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim: therefore they gave no part unto the Levites in the land, save cities to dwell in, with their suburbs for their cattle and for their substance. 5. As the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and they divided the land.

The historian, having in the foregoing chapter given an account of the disposal of the countries on the other side Jordan, now comes to tell us what they did with the countries in the land of Canaan. They were not conquered to be left desert, a habitation for dragons, and a court for owls, Isa. 34. 13. No. The Israelites that had hitherto been closely encompassed in a body, and the greatest part of them such as knew any other way of living, must now disperse themselves to replenish these new conquests. It is said of the earth, God created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited, Isa. 45. 18. Canaan would have been subdued in vain, if it had not been inhabited. Yet every man might not go and settle where he pleased, but there seems to have been in the days of Peleg an orderly and regular division of the habitable earth among the sons of Noah, Gen. 10. 25. 32. so there was now such a division of the land of Canaan among the sons of Jacob. God had given Moses directions how this distribution should be made, and those directions are here punctually observed. See Numb. 33. 53. &c.

I. The managers of this great affair, were Joshua the chief magistrate, Eleazar the chief priest, and ten princes, one of each of the tribes that were now to have their inheritance, whom God himself had nominated (Numb. 34. 17. &c.) some years before, and it should seem, they were all now in being, and attended this service, that every tribe having a representative of its own, might be satisfied that there was fair dealing, and might the more contentedly sit down by its lot.

II. The tribes among whom this dividend was to be made, were nine and a half. 1. Not the two half tribes that were already seated, v. 1. 2. Though perhaps now that they saw what a good land Canaan was, and how effectually it was subdued, they might some of them repent their choice, and wish they had now been to have their lot with their brethren, upon which condition they would gladly have given up what they had on the other side Jordan; but it would not be admitted, they had made their election without power of revocation, and so must remain in their lot, v. 12. They might, however, if they had not been appointed to a lot by themselves, and it should seem, they were all now in being, and attended this service, that every tribe having a representative of its own, might be satisfied that there was fair dealing, and might the more contentedly sit down by its lot.

III. The rule by which they went, was the lot, v. 13. The disposal of that is of the Lord, Prov. 16. 33. It was to be an affair of wholeheartedness which could not otherwise be accommodated to universal satisfaction, and it was used in a solemn religious manner as an appeal to God, by consent of parties. In dividing by lot, 1. They referred themselves to God, and to his wisdom and sovereignty, believing him fitter to determine for them, than for they themselves, Ps. 47. 4. He shall choose our inheritance for us. 2. They preferred a willingness to abide by the determination of it; for every man must take what is his lot, and make the best of it.
In allusion to this, we are said to obtain an inheritance in Christ, Eph. 1. 11. 12. "Now we have obtained it by lot. So the word signifies; for it is obtained by a divine designation. Christ, our Joshua, gives eternal life to as many as were given him, John 17. 2.

6. Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnear. 7. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barna to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. 8. Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the Lord my God. 9. And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land wherein thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God. 10. And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. 11. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out and to come in. 12. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou hearest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said. 13. And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, Hebron for an inheritance. 14. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb, the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel. 15. And the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba; which Arba was a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war.

Before the lot was cast into the lap for the determining of the portions of the respective tribes, the particular portion of Caleb is assigned him, who was now, except Joshua, not only the eldest man in all Israel, but was twenty years older than any of them, for all that were above twenty years old when he was forty, were dead in the wilderness; it was fit therefore that this phcenix of his age should have some particular marks of honour put upon him in the dividing of the land. Now, I. Caleb here presents his petition, or rather, makes his demand, to have Hebron given him for a possession, ('this mountain, he calls it, v. 12.') and not to have that put into the lot with the other parts of the country. To justify his demand, he shows that God had long since, by Moses, promised him that very mountain; so that God's mind being already made known in this matter, it would be a vain and needless thing to consult it any further by casting lots, which we are to appeal to God in those cases only which, cannot otherwise be decided, not in those which like this here, are already determined. Caleb is here called the Kenezite, some think, from some remarkable victory obtained by him over the Kenezites, as the Romans gave their great generals titles from the countries they conquered, as Africanus, Germanicus, &c. 2. He enforced his petition, not only by the children of Judah, that is, the heads and great men of that tribe, along with him, to present it, who were willing thus to pay their respects to that ornament of their tribe, and to testify their consent that he should be provided for by himself, and that they would not take it as any reflection upon the rest of his tribe. Caleb was the person whom God had chosen out of that tribe to be employed in dividing the land, Numb. 34. 19. And therefore, he was entitled to the land he was to receive being commissioner for his own private advantage and satisfaction, he brings his brethren along with him, and waving his own power, seems rather to rely upon their interest. 2. He appeals to Joshua himself concerning the truth of the allegations, upon which he grounded his petition. Thou knowest the things, v. 6. 3. He makes a very honourable mention of Moses, which he knew would not be at all unpleasing to Joshua, Moses the man of God, v. 6, and the servant of the Lord, v. 7. What Moses said, he took as from God himself, because Moses was his mouth, and his agent, and therefore he had reason both to desire and expect it should be made good. What can be more earnestly desired than the tokens of God's favour? And what more confidently expected than the grants of his promise? Caleb, in his petition, sets forth,

1. The testimony of his conscience concerning his integrity in the management of that great affair, on which it proved the fate of Israel turned, the spying out of the land. Caleb was one of the twelve that were sent out on that errand, v. 7, and he now reflected upon it with comfort, and mentioned it, not in pride, but as that which, being the consideration of the grant, was necessary to be inserted in the plea. [1.] That he made his report as it was in his heart, that is, he spake as he thought, and he spake so honourably of the land of Canaan, so confidently of the power of God to put them in possession of it, and so contemptibly of the opposition that the Canaanites, even the Anakims themselves, could make against them, as we find he did, Numb. 13. 30.—14. 7—9. He did not do it merely to please Moses, or to keep the people quiet, much less from a spirit of contradiction to his fellows, but from a full conviction of the truth of what he said, and a firm belief of the divine promise. [2.] That herein he wholly followed the Lord his God, that is, he kept close to his duty, and sincerely aimed at the glory of God in it. He conformed himself to the divine will with an eye to the divine favour. He had obtained this testimony from God himself, Numb. 14. 24. and therefore it was vain-glory in him to speak of it, any more than it is in them who have God's written spirit within them, with their spirits, they are the children of God, humble and thankfully to tell others for their encouragement what God has done for their souls. Note, They that follow God fully when they are young, shall have both the credit and comfort of it when they are old, and the reward of it for ever in the heavenly Canaan. [3.] That he did this when all his
brethren and companions in that service, except Joshua, did otherwise. They made the heart of the people glad, in that they showed to how pernicious the consequences of it were, was very well known. It adds much to the praise of following God, if we adhere to him when others desert and decline from him. Caleb needed not to mention particularly Joshua's conduct in this matter, it was sufficiently known, and he would not seem to flatter him; it was enough to say, v. 6, Thou knowest what the Lord spake concerning me and thee.

Now, he expected, he had had of God's goodness to him ever since to this day. Though he had wandered with the rest in the wilderness, and had been kept thirty-eight years out of Canaan, as they were, for that sin, which he was so far from having a hand in, that he had done his utmost to prevent; yet, instead of complaining of that, he mentions, to the glory of God, his mercy to him in two things, [1.] That he was kept alive in the wilderness not only notwithstanding the common perils and fatigues of that tedious march, but though all the generation of Israelites, except himself and Joshua, were one way or other cut off by death: with what a grateful sense of God's goodness to him does he speak it! v. 10. Now, behold, (believe and wonder,) the Lord hath kept me alive these forty and five years—thirty-eight years in the wilderness, through the plagues of the desert, and seven years in Canaan, and he is already eighty-five years old. While we live, it is God that keeps us alive; by his power he protects us from death, and by his bounty supplies us continually with the supports and comforts of life. He holdeth our soul in life. Secondly, The longer we live, the more sensible we should be of God's goodness to us in keeping us alive, his care in prolonging our frail lives, his patience in prolonging our forfeited lives. Has he kept me alive these forty-five years? Is it about that time of life with us? Or is it more? Or is it less? We have reason to say, It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. How much are we indebted to the favour of God, and what shall we render? Let the life thus kept by the providence of God, be devoted to his praise. Thirdly, The death of many others round about us, should make us the more thankful to God for sparing us and keeping us alive. Thousands falling on our right hand and our left, then and now; and yet others who are now living, and have enjoyed by his power and distinguishing favours imposed on us strong obligations to singular obedience. [2.] That he was fit for business, now that he was in Canaan. Though eighty-five years old, yet as hearty and lively as when he was forty, v. 11. As my strength was then, so it is now. This was the fruit of the promise, and out-did what was said; for God not only gives what he promises, but he gives more: life by promise, shall be life, and health, and strength, and all that will make the promised life a blessing and a comfort. Moses had said in his prayer, Ps. 90. 10. that at eighty years old even their strength is labour and sorrow, and so it is most commonly, but Caleb was an exception to the rule; his strength at eighty-five was ease and joy, this he got by following the Lord fully. Caleb takes notice of this here to the glory of God, and as an excuse for his asking a portion of the land when he enters it, that his brother and companion had before him, to show that he was not Joshua tell him he knew not what he asked; could he get the possession of that which he begged for a title to? "Yes," says he, "why not? I am as fit for war now as ever I was." (3.) The promise Moses had made him in God's name, that he should have this mountain, v. 9. This promise is his chief plea, and that on which he relies. As we find it, Numb. 14. 24. it is general, "him will I bring into the land whither he went, and his seed shall possess it:" but it seems it was more particular, and Joshua knew it; both sides understood this mountain for which Caleb was now a suitor, to be intended. This was the place from which, more than any other, the spies took their report, for here they met with the sons of Anak, Numb. 13. 22. the sight of whom made such an impression upon them, v. 33. We may suppose that Caleb, observing what stress they laid upon the difficulty of conquering Hebron, a city garrisoned by the giants, and how from thence they inferred that the conquest of it was utterly impracticable, in opposition to their suggestions, and to convince the people that he spake as he thought, bravely desired to have that city which they called invincible, assigned to himself for his own portion; "I will undertake to deal with that, and if I cannot get it for my inheritance, I will be without." "Well," said Moses, "it shall be thine own then, win it and wear it." Such a noble heroic spirit Caleb shewed as he was the first to his brethren with it, that he chose this place, only because it was the most difficult to be conquered. And to show that his soul did not decay any more than his body, now forty five years after he adheres to his choice, and is still of the same mind. (4.) The hopes he had of being master of it, though the sons of Anak were in possession of it, v. 12. If the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out. Though of Hebron, ch. 10. 37. "the mountain which belonged to it, and which was inhabited by the sons of Anak, was yet unconquered, for though the cutting off the Anakims from Hebron was mentioned, ch. 11. 21. because the historian would relate all the military actions together, yet it seems it was not conquered till after they had begun to divide the land. Observe, He builds his hopes of driving out the sons of Anak upon the presence of God with him. He does not say, "Because I am now as strong for war as I was at forty, therefore I shall drive them out," depending upon his personal valour; nor does he depend upon his interest in the warlike tribe of Judah, who attended him now in making this address, and no doubt would assist him. Nor does he court Joshua's aid, or put it upon that, If thou wilt be with me I shall gain my point." But if the Lord will be with me. Here, [1.] He seems to speak doubly of God's being with him, not from any boast of his own goodness or faithfulness. He had spoken without the least hesitation of God's presence with Israel in general, Numb. 14. 9. The Lord is with us; but for himself, from a humble sense of his own unworthiness of such a favour, he chooses to express himself thus, If the Lord will be with me. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, If the Word of the Lord be my kether, that Word which is God, and in the fullness of time was made flesh, and is the Captain of our salvation. [2.] But he speaks without the least doubt, he is assured that if God were with him, he should be able to dispossess the sons of Anak. "If God be with us, if God be for us, who can be against us, so as to prevail?" It is also intimated that if God were not with him, though all the forces of Israel should come in to his assistance, he should not be able to gain his point. Whatever we undertake, God's being with us, is our security of success; that therefore we must earnestly pray for, and carefully make sure of, by keeping ourselves in the love of God; and on that we must depend, and from that take our encouragement against the greatest difficulties. Upon the whole matter, Caleb's request is, v. 12. Give me this mountain. First, Because it was formerly in God's promise, and he would be sure, Israel knew how much he valued the promise, insisting upon this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that
day, as most desirable, through perhaps as good a portion might have fallen to him by lot in common with his brethren. This last live by faith, whose life
which is given by promise far above that which is given by providence only. Secondly, Because it was now in the Anakims possession, and he would let Israel know how little he feared the enemy, and would by his example animate them to push on their conquests. Herein Caleb answered his name, which signifies all heart.

11. Joshua grants his petition, v. 10. Joshua blessed him, commended his bravery, applauded his request, and gave him what he asked. He also prayed for him, and for his good success in his intended undertaking against the sons of Anak. Joshua was both a prince and a prophet, and upon both accounts it was proper for him to give Caleb his blessing, for the less is blessed of the better. Hebron was settled on Caleb and his heirs, v. 14, because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel. And happily we, if we follow him. Note, Singular piety shall be crowned with singular favours. Now, 1. We are here told what Hebron had been; the city of Arba, a great man among the Anakims, v. 15. We find it called Kirjath-arba, Gen. 23. 2, as the place where Sarah died. Hereabouts Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, lived most of their time in Canaan, and near to it was the cave of Machpelah where they were buried, which perhaps had led Caleb hither, when he went to spy out the land, and had fixed upon this rather than any other part for his inheritance.

2. We are afterward told what Hebron was. (1.) It was one of the cities belonging to the priests. Josh. 21. 13, and a city of refuge, Josh. 20. 7, when Caleb had it, he contented himself with the country about it, and cheerfully gave the city to the priests and Lord's ministers: thinking it could not be better bestowed, no not upon his own children, nor that it was less than he expected on taking that city, for it was the most desirable, according to his own thoughts. (2.) It was a royal city, and in the beginning of David's reign the metropolis of the kingdom of Judah; thither the people resorted to him, and there he reigned seven years. Thus highly was Caleb's city honoured; pitty there should have been such a bless

ishment upon his family long after, as Nabal was, who was of the house of Caleb, 1 Sam. 25. 3. But the best men cannot entail their virtues.

CHAP. XV.

The land, though not completely conquered, yet being (as was said in the close of the foregoing chapter) at rest from war, for the present, their armies all drawn out of the field to a general rendezvous at Gilgal, there they began to divide the land, though the work was afterward perfected at Shiloh, ch. 18. 1, &c. In this chapter, we have the lot of the land of Judah, which in this, as in other things, had the precedence: I. The borders or bounds of the inheritance of Judah, v. 1. 12. II. The particular assignment of Hebron and the country thereunto about Caleb and his family, v. 13. 19. III. The number of the several cities that fell within Judah's lot, v. 21. 63.

1. THIS then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their families, even to the border of Edom; the wilderness of Zin southward was the utmost part of the south coast. 2. And their south border was from the shore of the salt sea, from the bay that looked southward: 3. And it went out to the south side to Maaleah-acrabbim, and passed along to Zin, and ascended up on the south side unto Kadesh-barnah; and passed along to Hezron, and went up to Adar, and fetched a compass to Karkaa: 4. From thence it passed toward Azmon, and went out unto the river of Egypt; and the goings out of that coast were at the sea: This shall be your south coast. 5. And the east border was the salt sea even unto the end of Jordan. And their border in the north quarter was from the bay of the sea at the uttermost part of Jordan: 6. And the border went up to Beth-hoglah, and passed along by the north of Beth-arabah; and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben: 7. And the border went up toward Debir from the valley of Achor, and so northward, looking toward Gilgal, that is before the going up to Adummim, which is on the south side of the river: and the border passed toward the waters of En-she-mesh, and the goings out thereof were at En-rogel: 8. And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom unto the south side of the Jebusite; the same is Jerusalem: and the border went up to the top of the mountain that lieth before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the end of the valley of the giants northward: 9. And the border was drawn from the top of the hill unto the fountain of the water of Noph-toah, and went out to the cities of mount Ephron; and the border was drawn to Baalah, which is Kirjath-jearim: 10. And the border compassed from Baalah westward unto mount Seir, and passed along unto the side of mount Jearim, which is Chesalon, on the north side, and went down to Beth-shemesh, and passed on to Timnah: 11. And the border went out unto the side of Ekron northward: and the border was drawn to Shicron, and passed along to mount Baalah, and went out unto Jabneel; and the goings out of the border were at the sea: 12. And the west border was to the great sea, and the coast thereof. This is the coast of the children of Judah round about, according to their families.

Judah and Joseph were the two sons of Jacob, on whom Reuben's forfeited birthright devolved. Judah had the dominion entailed on him, and Joseph the double portion, and therefore these two tribes were first settled; Judah in the southern part of the land of Canaan, and Joseph in the northern part, and on them the other seven did attend, and had their respective lots as appurtenances to these two; the lots of Benjamin, Ephraim, and Dan, were appendant to Judah, and those of Issachar and Zebulon, Naphtali and Asher, to Joseph. These two were first set up to be provided for, it should seem, before there was such an exact survey of the land as we find afterward, ch. 18. 9. It is probable that the most considerable parts of the northern and southern countries, and those that lay nearest to Gilgal, and which the people were best acquainted with, were first part into two portions, and the lot was cast upon them between these two principal tribes, of the one of which Joshua was, and of the other Caleb, who
was the first commissioner in this writ of partition; and by the decision of that lot, the southern country fell to Judah, and which we have an account of in this chapter, and the northern to Joseph, of which we have an account in the two following chapters. And when this was done, there was a more equal dividend (either in quantity or quality) of the remainder among the seven tribes. And this, probably, was the general method of which is given concerning this partition, Numb. 33. 54, to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less, and every man's inheritance shall be where his lot fell, that is, 'Ye shall appoint two greater portions which shall be determined by lot to those more numerous tribes of Judah and Joseph, and then the rest shall be lesser portions to be allotted to the less numerous tribes.' The former was done in Gilgal, the latter in Shiloh. In these verses we have the borders of the lot of Judah, which as the rest, is said to be by their families, that is, with an eye to the number of their families. And it intimates that Joshua and Eleazar, and the rest of the commissioners, when they had by lot given each tribe its portion, did afterward (it is probable by lot likewise) subdivide those larger portions, and assign to each family its inheritance, and thus, which bears the better to be done by this supreme authority, and be apt to give less disgust, than if it had been left to the inferior magistrates of each tribe to make that distribution. The borders of this tribe are here largely fixed, yet not unalterably, for a good deal of that which lies within these bounds was afterward assigned to the lots of Simeon and Dan. 1. The eastern border was all, and only, the salt sea. 4. Every sea is salt, but this was of an extraordinary and more than natural saltness, the effects of that fire and brimstone with which Sodom and Gomorrha were destroyed in Abraham's time, whose ruins lie buried in the bottom of this dead water, which never either was moved itself, or had any living thing in it. 2. The southern border was that of the land of Canaan in general as will appear by comparing v. 1-4, with Numb. 34. 3-5. So that this powerful and warlike tribe of Judah guarded the frontiers of the whole land, on that side which lay toward their old sworn enemies, (though their two fathers were twin-brothers,) the Edomites. Our Lord therefore, who sprang out of Judah, and whose kingdom is, shall judge the mount of Esau, Obad. 21. 3. The northern border divided it from the lot of Benjamin. In this, mention is made of the stone of Bohan a Reubenite, v. 6. who, probably, was a great commander of those forces of Reuben that came over Jordan, and died in the camp at Gilgal, and was buried not far off under this stone. The valley of Achor likewise lies under this border, v. 7, to remind the men of Judah of the trouble which Achan, one of their tribe, gave to the congregation of Israel, that they might not be too much lifted up with their services. This northern line touched close upon Jerusalem, v. 8, so close as to include in the lot of this tribe, mount Zion and mount Moriah, though the greater part of the city lay in the lot of Benjamin. 4. The west border went near to the great sea at first, v. 12, but afterward the lot of the tribe of Dan took off a good part of Judah's lot on that side; for the lot was only to determine between Judah and Joseph, which should have the north, and which the south, and not immovably to fix the border of either. Judah's inheritance had its boundaries determined; though it was a powerful warlike tribe, and had a great interest in the other tribes, yet they must not therefore be left to their own choice, to enlarge their possessions at pleasure, but must live so as that their neighbours might live by them. Those that are placed high, yet must not think to be placed alone in the midst of the earth. 13. And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua, even the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron. 14. And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak. 15. And he went up thence to the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher. 16. And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. 17. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. 18. And it came to pass, as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou? 19. Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs. The historian seems pleased with every occasion to make mention of Caleb, and to do him honour, because he had honoured God in following him fully. The grant Joshua made him of the mountain of Hebron for his inheritance is here repeated, v. 13. And it is said to be given him, 1. According to the command of the Lord to Joshua. Though Caleb, in his petition, did make out a very good title to it by promise, yet because God had ordered Joshua to divide the land by lot, he would not in this one single instance, no not to gratify his old friend Caleb, do otherwise, without orders from God, whose oracle, it is probable, he consulted upon this occasion. In every doubtful case it is very desirable to know the mind of God, and to see the way of our duty plain. 2. It is said to be a part among the children of Judah; though it was assigned him before the lot of the tribe came up, yet it proved, God so directing the lot, to be in the heart of that tribe, which was graciously ordered in kindness to him, that he might not be as one separated from his brethren, and surrounded by those of other tribes. Now Caleb having obtained this grant, we are told, How he signalized his own valour in the conquest of Hebron, v. 14. He drove thence the three sons of Anak; he and those that he engaged to assist him in this service. This is mentioned here, to show that the confidence he had expressed of success in this affair through the presence of God with him, ch. 14. 12. did not deceive him, but the event answered his expectation. It is not said that he slew those giants, but he drove them thence, which intimates that they retired upon his approach, and fled before him; the strength and stature of their bodies could not keep up the courage of their minds, but, with the countenances of lions, they had the hearts of trembling hares. Thus does God often cut off the spirit of princes, Ps. 76. 12. take away the heart of the chief of the people, Job 12, 4. and so shame
the confidence of the proud; and thus if we resist the devil, that roaring lion, though he fall not, yet he will flee.

II. How he encouraged the value of those about him in the conquest of Debir, v. 15, &c. It seems, though Joshua had once made himself master of Debir, ch. 10. 39, yet the Canaanites had regained the possession in the absence of the army, so that the work was to be done a second time; and when Caleb had completed the reduction of Hebron, which was for himself and his own family, to show his zeal for the public good, as much as for his own private interest, he pressed on his conquest to Debir, and will not lay down his arms till he sees that city also effectually reduced, which lay but ten miles southward from Hebron, though he had not any particular concern in it, but the reducing of it would be to the general advantage of his tribe. Let us learn hence, not to seek and mind our own things only, but to concern and engage ourselves for the welfare of the community we are members of; we are not born for ourselves, nor must we live to ourselves.

1. Notice is taken of the name of this city. It had been called Kirjath-sepher, the city of a book, and Kirjath-sannah, v. 40, which some translate the city of learning; so the LXX. πας γραμματων, whence some conjecture that it had been an universal academy among the Canaanites, like Athens in Greece, in which they were most cultivated; or perhaps the books of their chronicles or records on the antiquities of the nation, were laid up there; and, it may be, this was it that made Caleb so desirous to see Israel master of this city, that they might get acquainted with the ancient learning of the Canaanites.

2. The proffer that Caleb made of his daughter, and a great provision to her, though one that would undeceive the city, and its Canaanite forces that should be employed in that service, v. 15. Thus Saul promised a daughter to him that would go to Goliath, 1 Sam. 17. 25. neither of them intending to force their daughter to marry such as they could not love, but both of them presuming upon their daughter's obedience, and submission to their father's will though it might perhaps be contrary to their own humour or inclination. Caleb's family was not in any way polluted or corrupted, but religious; he that himself followed the Lord fully, no doubt, taught his children to do so, and therefore it could not but be a desirable match to any young gentleman. Caleb, in making the proposal, aims, (1.) To do service to his country by the reducing of that important place: And, (2.) To marry a daughter well, to a man of learning, that would have a particular affection for the city of books, and a man of war, that would be likely to serve his country and do worthy in his generation. Could he but marry his child to a man of such a character, he would think her well bestowed, whether the share in the lot of his tribe were more or less.

3. The place was bravely taken by Othniel, a nephew of Caleb's, whom, probably, Caleb had thoughts of when he made the proffer, v. 17. This Othniel was himself when he was young, long after, in his advanced years, was led by the Spirit to be both a deliverer and a judge in Israel, the first single person that presided in their affairs after Joshua's death; it is good for those who are setting out in the world, to begin betimes with that which is great and good; that, excelling in service when they are young, they may excel in honour when they grow old.

4. Here (as parties being agreed) Othniel married his cousin-german, Achsah, Caleb's daughter. It is probable that he had a kindness for her, before which put him upon this bold undertaking to obtain her. Love to his country, an ambition of honour, and desire to find favour with the princes of his people, might not have engaged him in this great action, but his affection for Achsah did, that made it intolerable to him to think that any one else should do more to win her favour than he would, and so inspired him with this generous fire. Thus is love strong as death, and jealousy cruel as the grave.

5. Because the historian is now upon the dividing of the land, he gives us an account of Achsah's portion, which was in land, as more valuable, because enjoyed by virtue of the divine promise, though we may suppose the conquerors of Canaan, who had had the spoil of so many rich cities, were full of money too. (1.) Some land she obtained by Caleb's free grant, which was allowed while she married within her own tribe and family, as Zelophehad's daughter did. He gave her a south land, v. 19. Land indeed, but a south land, dry, and hot, to be parched. (2.) She obtained more upon her request; she would have had her husband to ask for a field, probably, some particular field, or champaign ground, which belonged to Caleb's lot, and joined to that south land which he had settled upon his daughter at marriage. She thought her husband had the best interest in her father, who, no doubt, was extremely pleased with his late glorious achievement, but he thought it was more for the interest of her to ask, and she would be more likely to prevail; accordingly she did, submitting to her husband's judgment, though contrary to her own; and she managed the undertaking with great address. [1.] She took the opportunity when her father brought her home to the house of her husband, when the satisfaction of having disposed of his daughter so well, would make him think nothing too much to do for her. [2.] She lighted off her gross, in token of her submission to her husband, err, whom she would honour still, as much as before her marriage. She cried over sighted, from off her ass, so the LXX. and the vulgar Latin read it, she expressed some grief and concern, that she might give her father occasion to ask her what she wanted. [3.] She calls it a blessing, because it would add much to the comfort of her settlement; and she was sure, that since she married, not only with her father's consent, but that of the congregation, it was a blessing; for if she married, and the command, he would not deny her his blessing. [4.] She asks only for the water, without which the ground she had would be of little use, either for tillage or pasture, but she means the field in which the springs of water were; the modesty and reasonableness of her request gave it a great advantage. Earth without water would be like a tree without sap, or the body of an animal without blood; therefore when God gathered the waters into one place, he wisely and graciously left some in every place, that the earth might be enriched for the service of man. See Ps. 104. 10, &c. Well, Achsah gained her point, her father gave her what she asked, and perhaps more, for he gave her the upper springs and the nether springs. Two fields, so called from the springs that were in them; as we commonly distinguish between the higher field and the lower field. Those who understand it but of one field, watered both with the rain of heaven and the springs that issued out of the bowels of the earth, gave countenance to the allusion we commonly make to this, when we pray for spiritual and heavenly blessings which relate to our souls, as blessings of the upper springs, and those which relate to the body and the life that now is, as blessings of the nether springs.

From this story, we learn, First, That it is no breach of the tenth commandment, moderately to desire those comforts and conveniences of this life, which we see attainable in a fair and regular way.
Secondly, That husbands and wives should mutually advise, and jointly agree about that which is for the common good of their family; and much more should they concur in asking of their heavenly Father the best blessings, those of the upper springs. Thirdly, That parents must never think that lost, which is bestowed upon their children for their real advantage, but must be free in giving them portions as well as maintenance, especially when they are dutiful. Caleb had sons, 1 Chron. 4. 15. and yet gave thus liberally to his daughter. Those parents forget themselves and their relations, who grudge their children what is convenient for them, when they can conveniently part with it.

20. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families. 21. And the uttermost cities of the tribe of the children of Judah, toward the coast of Edom southward, were Kabzeel, and Eder, and Jagur, 22. And Kinah, and Dimonah, and Adadah, 23. And Kittim, and Hazor, and Ibmaun, 24. Ziph, and Telem, and Bealoth, 25. And Hazor, Hadattah, and Kerioth, and Hazron, which is Hazor, 26. Amam, and Shema, and Moladah, 27. And Hazar-gaddah, and Heshmon, and Beth-palet, 28. And Hazarsual, and Beer-sheba, and Bizjothjah, 29. Baalah, and Iim, and Azem, 30. And Eltolad, and Chesil, and Hormah, 31. And Ziklag, and Madmannah, and Sansannah, 32. And Lebaoth, and Shihim, and Ain, and Rimmon; all the cities are twenty and nine, with their villages: 33. And in the valley, Eshtoal, and Zoreah, and Ashnah, 34. And Zanoah, and Engannim, Tappuah, and Enam, 35. Jarmuth, and Adullam, Socoh, and Azekah, 36. And Sharaim, and Adithaim, and Gerar, and Gederothaim; fourteen cities with their villages: 37. Zenan, and Hadashah, and Migdal-gad, 38. And Dilean, and Mizpah, and Joktheel, 39. Lachish, and Bozkath, and Eglon, 40. And Cabbon, and Lahmam, and Kithlish, 41. And Gederoth, Beth-dagon, and Naamah, and Makkedah; sixteen cities with their villages: 42. Libnah, and Ether, and Ashan, 43. And Japhthah, and Ashnah, and NZib. 44. And Keilah, and Achzib, and Mareshah; nine cities with their villages. 45. Ekron with her towns and their villages: 46. From Ekron even unto the sea, all that lay near Ashdod, with their villages: 47. Ashdod with her towns and her villages, Gaza with her towns and her villages, unto the river of Egypt, and the great sea, and the border thereof: 48. And in the mountains, Shamir, and Jattir, and Socoh, 49. And Dannah, and Kirjath-sannah, which is Debir, 50. And Anab, and Eshtemoah, and Anini. 51. And Goshen, and Holon, and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages: 52. Arab, and Dumah, and Eshean, 53. And Janum, and Beth-tappuah, and Aphek, 54. And Humah, and Kirjath-arba (which is Hebron,) and Zior; nine cities with their villages: 55. Maon, Carmel, and Ziph, and Juttah, 56. And Jezreel, and Jokdeam, and Zanoah, 57. Cain, Gibeon, and Timnah; ten cities with their villages: 58. Halhul, Beth-zur, and Gedor, 59. And Maarath, and Beth-anoth, and Eltekon; six cities with their villages: 60. Kirjath-baal (which is Kirjath-jearim) and Rabbah; two cities with their villages: 61. In the wilderness, Beth-arabah, Middin, and Secacah, 62. And Nibshan, and the city of Salt, and En-gedi; six cities with their villages. 63. As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.

We have here a list of the several cities that fell within the lot of the tribe of Judah, which are mentioned by name, that they might know their own, and both keep it, and keep to it, and might, neither through cowardice nor sloth, lose the possession of what was their own, nor through covetousness, seek the possession of what was not their own. The cities are here named, and numbered in several classes, which they then could account for the reason of, better than we can now. Here are, 1. Some that are said to be the uttermost cities toward the coast of Edom, v. 21-32. Here are thirty-eight named, and yet said to be twenty-nine, v. 32, because nine of these were afterward transferred to the lot of Simeon, and are reckoned as belonging to that, as appears by comparing ch. 19. 2, &c. therefore those only are counted, (though the rest are named,) which remained to Judah. 2. Others that are said to be in the valley, v. 33. are counted to be fourteen, yet fifteen are named; but it is probable, that Gederoth, and Gederothaim were either two towns, or names, or two parts, of one and the same city. 3. Then sixteen are named without any head of distinction, v. 37. and nine more, 42. 44. 4. Then the three Philistine cities, Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza, v. 45. 47. 5. Cities in the mountains, eleven in all, v. 48. 51. nine more, v. 52-54. ten more, v. 55-57. six more, v. 58, 59. then two, v. 60 and six in the wilderness, a part of the country not so thick of inhabitants as other parts were. Now here, (1.) We do not find Bethlehem, which was afterward the city of David, and was enabled by the birth of our Lord Jesus in it. But that city, which at the best was but little among the thousands of Judah, Mic. 5. 2. except that it was thus dignified, was now so little as not to be accounted one of the cities, but perhaps was one of the villages not named. Christ came to give honour to the places he was related to, not to receive honour from them. (2.) Jerusalem is said to continue in the hands of the Jebusites, v. 63, for the children of Judah could not drive them out, through their sluggishness, stupidity and unbelief: had they attempted it with vigour and resolution, we have reason to think God would not have been wanting to them, to give them success; but they could not do it, because they would not. Jerusalem was afterward to be the holy city, the royal city,
the city of the great King, the brightest ornament of all the land of Israel, God had designed it should be so. It may therefore be justly looked upon as a punishment of their neglect to conquer other cities which God had given them, that they were so long kept out of this. Among the cities of Judah (in all one hundred and fourteen) we meet with Libnah, which in Jor-

man’s days revolted, and probably set up for a free independent state, 2 Kings 8. 22. and Lachish, where king Amaziah was slain, 2 Kings 14. 19. it led the dance in idolatry, Mic. 1. 13. it was the be-

ginning of sin to the daughter of Sion. Giloh, Ahitophel’s town, is here mentioned, and Tekoa, of which the prophet Amos was, and near which Jehoshaphat obtained that glorious victory, 2 Chron. 20. 20. &c. and Mareshah, where Asa was a conqueror. Many of the cities of this tribe occur in the history of David’s troubles. Adullam, Ziph, Kehelah, Maon, En-geedi, Ziklag, were places here reckoned in this tribe, near which David had most of his haunts; for though sometimes Saul drove him out from the inheritance of the Lord, yet he kept as close to it as he could. The wilderness of Judah he frequented much, and in it John Baptist preached, and there the kingdom of heaven commenced, Matt. 3. 1. The riches of this country, not distrusted by Jacob’s blessing this branch of his seed, that he should wash his garments in wine, Gen. 49. 11. And in general, Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren should praise, not envy.

CHAP. XVI.

It is a pity that this and the following chapter should be separated, for both of them give us the lot of the chil-

dren of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, who, next to Judah, were to have the post of honour, and there-fore had the first and best portion in the northern part of Canaan, as Judah now had in the southern part.

In this chapter, we have, 1. A general account of the lot of these two tribes together, v. 1. 4. II. The borders of the lot of Ephraim in particular, v. 5. 10. That of Manasseh following in the next chapter.

1. A ND the lot of the children of Joseph fell from Jordan by Jericho, unto the water of Jericho on the east, to the wilder-

ness that goeth up from Jericho throughout mount Beth-el. 2. And goeth out from Beth-el to Luz, and passeth along unto the borders of Archi to Araroth. 3. And goeth down westward to the coast of Japhleti, unto the coast of Beth-horon the nether, and to Gezer: and the goings out thereof are at the sea. 4. So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheri-

bance.

Though Joseph was one of the younger sons of Jacob, yet he was his eldest by his most just and best beloved wife, Rachel; was himself his best beloved son, and had been the greatest ornament and sup-
port of his family, kept it from perishing in a time of famine, and had been the shepherd and stone of Israel, and therefore his posterity were very much favoured by the lot. Their portion lay in the very heart of the land of Canaan. It extended from Jordan in the east, v. 1. to the sea, the Mediterr-

ean sea, in the west, so that it took up the whole breadth of Canaan from side to side; and, no ques-
tion, the fruitfulness of the soil answered the bless-
ings both of Jacob and Moses, Gen. 49. 25. 26. and Deut. 33. 13. &c.

The portions allotted to Ephraim and Manas-

sach are not so particularly described as those of the other tribes; we have only the limits and bound-
daries of them, not the particular cities in them, as before we had of the cities of Judah, and after-
ward those of the other tribes. For which no rea-

son can be assigned, unless we may suppose that Joshua, being himself of the children of Joseph, they referred it to him alone to distribute among them the several cities that lay within their lot, and therefore did not bring in the names of the cities to the great council of their princes which sat upon this affair; by which means it came to pass that they were not inserted with the rest in the books.

5. And the border of the children of Ephraim, according to their families, was thus; even the border of their inheritance on the east side was Ataroth-addar, unto Beth-horon the upper: 6. And the border went out toward the sea to Michmethah, on the north side; and the border went about eastward unto Taanath-shiloh, and passed by it on the east to Janohah: 7. And it went down from Janohah to Atharoth, and to Naarah, and came to Jericho, and went out at Jordan. 8. The border went out from Tappuah westward unto the river Ka-

nah; and the goings out thereof were at the sea. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim by their families. 9. And the separate cities for the children of Ephraim were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages. 10. And they drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute.

Here,

1. The border of the lot of Ephraim is set down, by which it was divided on the south from Ben-
jamin and Dan, who lay between it and Judah, and on the north from Manasseh; for east and west it reached from Jordan to the great sea. The learned, who aim to be exact in drawing the line according to the directions here, find themselves very much at a loss, the description here being short and indefinite. The report of those who in these latter ages have travelled those countries, will not serve to clear the difficulties, so vastly unlike is it now to what it was then; not only cities have been so destroyed, as that no mark or footstep of them remains, but brooks are dried up, rivers alter their courses, and even the mountain falling cometh to naught, and the rock is removed out of his place, Job. 14. 8. Unless I could hope to solve the doubts that arise upon this draught of the border of Ephraim, it is to no purpose to mention them; no doubt, they were then perfectly understood, so as that the first intention of recording them was ef-
fectually answered, which was to notify the ancient landmarks, which posterity must by no means re-
move.

2. Some separate cities are spoken of, that lay not within these borders, at least, not if the line were drawn direct, but lay within the lot of Manasseh, v. 9. which might better be read, and there were separate cities for the children of Ephraim, among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh; because it proved that Manasseh could spare them, and Ephraim had need of them, and it might be hoped
that no inconvenience would arise from this mixture of these two tribes together, who were both the sons of Joseph, and should love as brethren. And by this it appears, that though when the tribes were numbered in the plains of Moab, Mahlah, and Zilpah, at the start of Ephraim in number, for Manasseh was then fifty-two thousand, and Ephraim but thirty-two thousand, Numb. 26. 34, 37. yet by the time they were well settled in Canaan, the hands were crossed again, and the blessing of Moses was verified, Deut. 33. 17. They are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh. Families and kingdoms are diminished and increased, increased and diminished again, as God pleases.

3. A brand is put upon the Ephraimites, that they did not drive out the Canaanites from Gezer, v. 10. Either through carelessness or cowardice, either for want of faith in the promise of God, that He would give them success if they would make a vigorous effort, or for want of zeal for the command of God, which obliged them utterly to drive out the Canaanites, and to make no peace with them. And though they hoped to satisfy the law by putting them under tribute, yet (as Calvin thinks) that made the matter worse, for it shows that they spared them out of covetousness, that they might be profited by their labours, and by dealing with them for their tribute they were in danger of being infected with their idolatry; yet some think, when they brought them under tribute, they obliged them to renounce their idols, and to observe the seven precepts of the sons of Noah; and I should think, for that we find in the sequel of the story, that the Israelites were so far from restraining idolatry in others, that they soon fell into it themselves.

Many famous places were within this lot of the tribe of Ephraim, though not mentioned here. In it were Ramah, Samuel's city, called in the New Testament, Arimathea, of which Joseph was, that took care of our Saviour's burial, and Shiloah, where the tabernacle was first set up. Tirzah, also, the royal city of Jeroboam and his successors, and Deborah's palm-tree, under which she judged Israel, were in this tribe. Samaria, built by Omri, after the burning of the royal palace of Tirzah, was in this tribe, and was long the royal city of the kingdom of the ten tribes; not far from it were Shechem, and the mountains Ebal and Gerizim, and Sychar, near which was Jacob's well, where Christ talked with the woman of Samaria. We read much of mount Ephraim in the story of the Judges, and of a city called Ephraim, it is probable in this tribe, to which Christ retired, John 11. 54. The whole kingdom of the ten tribes is often in the prophets, especially in Hosea, called Ephraim.

CHAP. XVII.

The half-tribe of Manasseh comes next to be provided for; and here we have, 1. The families of that tribe that were to be portioned, v. 1. 3. The country that fell to their lot to be portioned, v. 1. 7. 3. The tribes that descended from Joseph, for the enlargement of their lot, and Joshua's answer to that request, v. 14. 18.

1. THERE was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the first-born of Joseph; to wit, for Machir the first-born of Manasseh, the father of Gilead; because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan. 2. There was also a lot for the rest of the children of Manasseh by their families; for the children of Abiezer, and for the children of Helek, and for the children of Asriel, and for the children of Shechem, and for the children of Heper, and for the children of Shenida: these were the male children of Manasseh, the son of Joseph by their families. 3. But Zelophehad, the son of Heper, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters, Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 4. And they came near before Eleazar the priest, and before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the princes, saying, The Lord commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brethren. Therefore, according to the commandment of the Lord, he gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father. 5. And there fell ten portions to Manasseh, beside the land of Gilead and Bashan, which were on the other side Jordan; 6. Because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons: and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead.

Manasseh was itself but one half of the tribe of Joseph, and yet was divided and subdivided.

1. It was divided into two parts, one already settled on the other side Jordan, consisting of those who were the posterity of Machir, v. 1. This Machir was born to Manasseh in Egypt, there he had signalized himself as a man of war, probably, in the contest between the Ephraimites and the men of Gath, 1 Chron. 7. 21. His warlike disposition descended to his posterity, and therefore Moses gave them Gilead and Bashan, on the other side Jordan, of which before, ch. 13. 31. It is here said, that the lot came to Manasseh, for he was the first-born of Joseph. Bishop Patrick thinks it should be translated, though he was the first-born of Joseph, and then the meaning is plain, that the second lot was for Manasseh, because, though he was the first-born, yet Jacob had preferred Ephraim before him.

See the names of those heads of the families that settled on the other side Jordan, 1 Chron. 5. 24.

2. That part on this side Jordan was subdivided into ten families, v. 5. There were six sons of Gilead here named, v. 2. the same that are recorded, Numb. 26. 30. 32. only that he who is there called Jecarz (or Jecarz), is here called Abiezer; five of these had each of them a portion, namely, v. 6. which was Heper, had his male line cut off in his son Zelophehad, who left daughters only, five in number, of whom we have often read, and these five had each of them a portion; though perhaps they claiming under Heper, all the five portions were not equal to one of the portions of the five sons. Or if Heper had other sons beside Zelophehad, in whom the name of his family was kept up, their posterity married to the daughters of Zelophehad the elder brother, and in their right had these portions assigned them. See Numb. 26. 12.

Here is, (1.) The claim which the daughters of Zelophehad made, grounded upon the commands God gave to Moses concerning them, v. 4. They had themselves, when they were young, pleaded their own cause before Moses, and obtained the grant of an inheritance with their brethren, and now they could not lose the benefit of that grant.
for want of speaking to Joshua, but seasonable put in their demand themselves, as it should seem, and not their husbands for them. (2.) The assignment of their portions according to their claim: Joshua knew very well what God had ordered in their case, and did not object, that they having not served in the wars of Canaan, there was no reason why they should share in the possessions of Canaan, but readily gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father. And now they reaped the benefit of their own pious zeal and prudent forecast in this matter. Thus they who take care in the wilderness of this world, to make sure to themselves a place in the inheritance of the saints in light, will certainly have the comfort of it in the other world, while those that neglect it now, will lose it for ever.

7. And the coast of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethath, that lieth before Shechem; and the border went along on the right hand unto the inhabitants of En-tappuah. 8. Now Manasseh had the land of Tappuah: but Tappuah, on the border of Manasseh, belonged to the children of Ephraim. 9. And the coast descended unto the river Kanah, southward of the river: these cities of Ephraim are among the cities of Manasseh: the coast of Manasseh also was on the north side of the river, and the out-goings of it were at the sea: 10. Southward it was Ephraim's, and northward it was Manassæh's, and the sea is his border; and they met together in Asher on the north, and in Issachar on the east. 11. And Manasseh had in Issachar, and in Asher, Beth-shean and her towns, and Ibleam and her towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of En-dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and her towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns, even three countries. 12. Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. 13. Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out.

We have here a short account of the lot of this half-tribe. It reached from Jordan on the east, to the great sea on the west, on the south it lay all along contiguous to Ephraim, but on the north it abutted upon Asher and Issachar; Asher lay north-west, and Issachar north-east, which seems to be the meaning of the ch. 10: that is, that this (that is, Manasseh, and Ephraim as related to it, both together making the tribe of Joseph) met in Asher on the north, and Issachar on the east, for Ephraim itself reached not those tribes.

Some things are particularly observed concerning this lot: 1. That there was great communication between this tribe and that of Ephraim. The city of Tappuah belonged to Ephraim, but the country adjoining to Manasseh, v. 8, there were likewise many cities of Ephraim, that lay within the border of Manasseh, v. 9, of which before, ch. 16. 9. 2. That Manasseh liked the cities with their appurtenances in the tribes of Issachar and Asher, v. 11. God so ordering it, that though each tribe had its peculiar inheritance, which might not be alienated from it, yet they should thus intermix one with another, to keep up mutual acquaintance and correspondence between the tribes, and to give occasion for the doing of good offices one to another, as became those, who, though of different tribes, were all one Israel, and were bound to love as brethren.

3. That they suffered the Canaanites to live among them, contrary to the command of God, serving their own ends by conning at them, for they made them tributaries, v. 12, 13. The Ephraimites had done the same, ch. 16, 10, and from them perhaps the Manassites learned it, and, with their example excused themselves in it. The most remarkable person of this half-tribe in after time, was Gideon, whose great actions were done within this lot. He was of the family of Abiezer; Cesarea was in this lot, and Antipatris, famed in the latter ages of the Jewish state.

14. And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto? 15. And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee. 16. And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanities that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Beth-shean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel. 17. And Joseph spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power; thou shalt not have one lot only: 18. But the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong.

Here.

1. The children of Joseph quarrel with their lot; if they had had any just cause to quarrel with it, we have reason to think Joshua would have relieved them, by adding to it, or altering it, which it does not appear he did. It is probable, because Joshua was himself of the tribe of Ephraim, they promised themselves that they should have some particular provision that was made for them, as much, for aught that appears, as they were able to manage, and yet they call it in disdain but one lot, as if that which was
assigned to them both, was scarcely sufficient for one. The word for complainers (Judg. 16.) is προσλογίσας, blamers of their lot, like the children of Jacob, who cried before the departure of the Lord. Two things they suggest, to enforce their petition for an augmentation of their lot. 1. That they were very numerous, through the blessing of God upon them, v. 14. I am a great people, for the Lord has blessed me; and we have reason to hope that he that hath sent mouths, will send meat. "I am a great people, and in so small a lot shall not have room to thrive."

2. That the present increase, do they not speak confidently of the continuance of it; "the Lord has blessed me hitherto, however he may see fit to deal with me for the future." The uncertainty of what may be, must not make us unthankful for what has been, and is done in kindness to us. 2. That a good part of that country which was now fallen to their lot, was in the hands of the Canaanites, and that they were formidable enemies, who brought into the field of battle chariots of iron, v. 16. That is, chariots with long scythes fastened to the sides of them, or the axle-tree, which made great destruction of all that came in their way, mowing them down like corn. They urge, that though they had a good portion assigned them, yet it was in bad hands, and they could not come to the possession of it, wishing to have their lot in those countries that were more thoroughly subdued. II. Joshua endeavours to reconcile them to their lot, he owns they were a great people, and being two tribes, ought to have more than one lot only, v. 17. but tells them, that what was fallen to their share, would be a sufficient lot to them both, if they would but work and fight. They desired a lot in which they might indulge themselves in ease and luxury; but, says Joshua, you must not count upon that; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, is a sentence in force, even in Canaan itself. He retorts their own argument, that they were a great people, "If so, you are the better able to help yourselves, and have the less reason to expect help from others. If thou hast many mouths to be filled, thou hast twice as many hands to be employed; earn and then eat."

2. He bids them work for more, v. 18. Get thee up to the good-country, which is within thy own border, and let all hands be set on work to cut down the trees, rid the rough lands, and make them, with art and industry, good arable ground. Note, Many wish for large possessions, who do not cultivate and make the best of what they have, think they should have more talents given them, who do not trade with those with which they are supplied. Most people's poverty is the effect of their idleness; whereas they would have need not beg.

2. He bids them fight for more, v. 17, 18. when they pleaded that they could not come at the woodlands he spoke of, because in the valley between them and it, there were Canaanites whom they durst not enter the list with. "Never fear them," said Joshua, thou hast God on thy side, and thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, if thou wilt set thine heart to do it, and be not afraid of "the rioters." We straiten ourselves by apprehending the difficulties in the way of our enlargement to be greater than really they are. What can be insuperable to faith and holy resolution?

CHAP. XVIII.

In this chapter we have, I. The setting up of the tabernacle at Shiloh, v. 1. II. The stirring up of the seven tribes that were yet unsettled, to look after their lot, and the putting of them in a method for it, by Joshua, v. 2. III. The distributing of the land into seven lots, by certain men employed for that purpose, v. 3, 9. IV. The determining of these seven into the several tribes yet unprovided for by lot, v. 10. V. The particular lot of the tribe of Benjamin, the borders of it, v. 11-20. And the cities contained in it, v. 21-28. The other six tribes we shall find well provided for in the next chapter.

1. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them.

In the midst of the story of the dividing of the land, comes in this account of the setting up the tabernacle, which had hitherto continued in its old place in the centre of their camp; but now that three of the four squadrons that used to surround it in the wilderness, were broken and diminished, those of Judah, Ephraim, and Reuben, by the removal of those tribes to their respective possessions, and that of Dan only remained entire, it was time to think of removing the tabernacle itself into a city. Many a time the priests and Levites had taken it down, carried it, and set it up again in the wilderness, according to the directions given them, Num. 4. 5, &c. but now they must do it for good and all, not one of the stakes thereof must any more be removed, nor any of the cords thereof broken, Josh. 33. 20. 21.

1. The place to which the tabernacle was removed, and in which it was set up. It was Shiloh, a city in the lot of Ephraim, but lying close upon the lot of Benjamin. Doubtless, God himself did some way or other direct them to this place, for he had promised to choose the place where he would make his name to dwell, Deut. 12. 11. It is most probable, God made his mind in this matter by "Observing the judgment of Uriah." This place was not so much upon, (1.) Because it was in the heart of the country, nearer the centre than Jerusalem was, and therefore the more convenient for the meeting of all Israel there from the several parts of the country; it had been in the midst of their camp in the wilderness, and therefore must now be in the midst of their nation, as that which sanctified the whole, and was the glory in the midst of them. See Ps. 4. 5. (2.) Because it was in the lot of that tribe of which Joshua was, who was now their chief magistrate, and it would be both for his honour and convenience, and for the advantage of the country, to have it near him. The testimony of Israel and the thrones of judgment do well together, Ps. 122. 4. 5. (3.) Some think there was an eye to the name of the place, Shiloh being the name by which the Messiah was known, in dying Jacob's prophecy, Gen. 49. 10. which name is well known among the Jews; the setting up of the tabernacle in Shiloh gave them a hint, that in that Shiloh, whom Jacob spoke of, all the ordinances of this worldly sanctuary should have their accomplishment in a greater and more perfect tabernacle, Heb. 9. 1, 11. And Dr. Lightfoot thinks that the place where the tabernacle was set up, was therefore called Shiloh, because of the peaceableness of the land at this time, as afterwards Salem was his temple, which also signifies peaceable.

2. The solemn manner of doing it. The whole congregation assembled together to attend the solemnity, to do honour to the ark of God, as the token of his presence, and to bid it welcome to its settlement. Every Israelite was interested in it, and therefore all testified their joy and satisfaction upon this occasion. See 2 Sam. 6. 15. It is probable, those tribes that were yet encamped when the tabernacle was removed to Shiloh, decamped from
Gilgal, and pitched about Shiloh, for every Israelite will desire to fix there where God's tabernacle fixes. Mention is made, on this occasion, of the land's being subdued before them, to intimate, that the country, hereabouts at least, being thoroughly reduced, they met with no opposition, nor were they apprehensive of any danger, but thought it time to make this grateful acknowledgment of God's goodness to them in the constant series of successes with which he had blessed them. It was a good presage of a comfortable settlement to themselves in Canaan, when their first care was to see the ark well settled, as soon as they had a safe place ready to settle it in. Here the ark continued about three hundred years, till the sins of Eli's house forfeited the ark, lost it, and ruined Shiloh, and its ruins were long after made use of as warnings to Jerusalem; Go, see what I did to Shiloh, Jer. 7. 12. Ps. 78. 60.

2. And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance. 3. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long are ye slack to go to possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you? 4. Give out from among you three men for each tribe: and I will send them, and they shall rise and go through the land, and describe it, according to the inheritance of them; and they shall come again to me. 5. And they shall divide it into seven parts: Judah shall abide in their coast on the south, and the house of Joseph shall abide in their coasts on the north. 6. Ye shall therefore describe the land into seven parts, and bring the description hither to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the Lord our God. 7. But the Levites have no part among you; for the priesthood of the Lord is their inheritance: and Gad, and Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh, have received their inheritance beyond Jordan on the east, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave them. 8. And the men arose, and went away: and Joshua charged them that went to describe the land, saying, Go and walk through the land, and describe it, and come again to me, that I may here cast lots for you before the Lord in Shiloh. 9. And the men went, and passed through the land, and described it by cities, into seven parts, in a book, and came again to Joshua to the host at Shiloh. 10. And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the Lord: and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel, according to their divisions. Here, I. Joshua reproves those tribes which were yet unsettled, that they did not bestir themselves to gain a settlement in the land which God had given them. Seven tribes were yet unprovided for: though sure of an inheritance, yet uncertain where it should be, and, it seems, in no great care about it, v. 2. and with them Joshua reasons, v. 3, How long are ye slack? 1. They were too well pleased with their present condition, liked well enough to live in a body together, the more the merrier, and, like the Babel-builders, had no mind to be scattered abroad, and break good company. The spoil of the cities they had taken, served them to live plentifully upon for the present, and they banished the thoughts of time to come. Perhaps, the tribes of Judah and Joseph, who had already received their inheritance in the countries next adjoining, were generous in entertaining their brethren, who were not provided for, so that they went from one good house to another among their friends, with which, instead of grudging that they were postponed, they were so well pleased, that they cared not of going to houses of their own. 2. They were slothful and dilatory; it may be, they wished the thing done, but had not spirit to stir in it, or move toward the doing of it, though there was so much for their own advantage; like the sluggard, that hides his hand in his bosom, and it grieves him to bring it to his mouth again. The countries that remained to be divided, lay at a distance, and some parts of them in the hands of the Canaanites. If they go to take possession of them, the cities must be rebuilt or repaired, they must drive their flocks and herds a great way, and carry their wives and children to strange places, and this they cannot do without an expedition through some hardships; thus, He that observes the wind, shall not sow; and he that regards the clouds shall not reap, Eccl. 11. 4. Note, Many are diverted from real duties, and debauched from real comforts, by seeming difficulties. God by his grace has given us a title to a good land, the heavenly Canaan, but we are slack to take possession, we enter not into that rest, as we might, by faith, and hope, and holy hands, as not being able to go on without our accoutrements; though, by setting our affections on things above, and having our conversation there, How long shall it be thus with us? How long shall we thus stand in our own light, and forsake our own mercies for lying vanities? Joshua was sensible of the inconveniences of this delay, that while they neglected to take possession of the land that was conquered, the Canaanites were recovering strength and spirit, and gaining possessions in the adjacent countries, and not only by the violence of their hands, which would make the total expulsion of them the more difficult. They would lose their advantages by not following their blow; and therefore as an eagle stirreth up her nest, so Joshua stirs them up to take possession of their lot. He is ready to do his part, if they will but do theirs. II. He puts them in a way to settle themselves 1. The land that remained must be surveyed, at the account taken of the cities, and the territories belonging to them, v. 4. These must be divided into seven equal parts, as near as they could guess at their true value, which they must have an eye to, and not only to the number of the cities, and extent of the country. Judah is fixed on the south, and Joseph on the north, of Shiloh, to protect the tabernacle, v. 5. and therefore they need not describe their country, but those countries only that were yet undisposed of. He gives a reason, v. 7. why they must divide it into seven parts only, because the Levites were to have no temporal estate, (as we say,) but their benefits only, which were entail upon their families. The priesthood of the Lord is their inheritance, and a very honourable, comfortable, plentiful inheritance it was. Gad and Reuben, with half of the tribe of Manasseh, were already fixed, and needed none, but a further care taken of them. Now, (1.) The surveyors were three men out of each of the seven tribes that were to be provided for, v. 4. one-and-twenty in all, who, perhaps, for greater expedition, because they had already lost time, divided themselves into three
companies, one of each tribe in each company, and took each their district to survey. The matter was thus referred equally, that there might be neither any partiality used in making up the seven lots, nor any embargo or suspicion given, but all might be satisfied that they had right done them. 2. The survey was accordingly made, and brought in to Joshua, v. 8, 9. Josephus says it was seven months in the doing. And we must in it observe, [3.] The faith and courage of the persons employed, abundance of Canaanites remained in the land, and all raging against Israel, as a bear robbed of her whelps, the business of these surveyors would soon be known, and what could they expect but to be waylaid, and have their brains knocked out by the fierce observers? But, in obedience to Joshua’s command, and in dependence upon God’s power, they thus put their lives in their hands to serve their country. 2. The good providence of God in protecting them from the many deaths they were exposed to, and bringing them all safe again to the host at Shiloh. When we are in the way of our duty, we are under the special protection of the Almighty.

2. When it was surveyed, and reduced to seven lots, then Joshua would by appeal to God, and direction from him, determine which of the three parts should belong to each tribe, v. 6. That I may cast lots for you here at the tabernacle (because it was a sacred transaction) before the Lord our God, to whom each tribe must have an eye, with thankfulness for the conveniences, and submission to the inconveniences, of their allotment. What we have in the world, we must acknowledge God’s property in, and dispose of it as before, with justice and charity, and dependence upon Providence. The heavenly Canaan is described to us in a book, the book of the scriptures, and there are in it mansions and portions sufficient for all God’s spiritual Israel; Christ is our Joshua that divides it to us, on him we must attend, and to him we must apply ourselves, for an inheritance with the saints in light. See John 17. 2, 3.

11. And the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according to their families: and the coast of their lot came up forth between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph. 12. And their border, on the north side, was from Jordan: and the border went up to the side of Jericho on the north side, and went up through the mountains westward; and the going out thereof were at the wilderness of Bethaven. 13. And the border went over from thence toward Luz, to the side of Luz, (which is Bethel,) southward; and the border descended to Astaroth-adar, near the hill that lieth on the south side of the nether Bethhoron. 14. And the border was drawn thence, and compassed the corner of the sea southward, from the hill that lieth before Bethhoron southward; and the going out thereof were at Kirjathbaal (which is Kirjath-jearim,) a city of the children of Judah: this was the west quarter. 15. And the south quarter was from the end of Kirjathjearim; and the border went out on the west, and went out to the well of waters of Nephtoah: 16. And the border came down to the end of the mountain that lieth before the valley of the son of Hinnom, and which is in the valley of the giants on the north, and descended to the valley of Hinnom, to the side of Jebusi on the south, and descended to Enrogel, 17. And was drawn from the north, and went forth to En-shemesh, and went forth toward Gelithoth, which is over against the going up of Adummin, and descended to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben, 18. And passed along toward the side over against Arabah northward, and went down unto Arabah: 19. And the border passed along to the side of Beth-hoglah northward: and the beginnings of the border were at the north bay of the salt sea, at the south end of Jordan: this was the south coast. 20. And Jordan was the border of it on the east side. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, according to the coasts thereof round about, according to their families. 21. Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, according to their families, were Jericho, and Beth-hoglah, and the valley of Keziz, 22. And Beth-arabah, and Zemaraim, and Beth-erel, 23. And Avim, and Parah, and Ophrah, 24. And Chepharhaammonai, and Ophni, and Gaba; twelve cities with their villages: 25. Gibeon, and Ramah, and Beeroth, 26. And Mizpah, and Chephirah, and Moza, 27. And Rekem, and Irpeel, and Taralah, 28. And Zelah, Eleph, and Jebusi (which is Jerusalem,) Gibeah, and Kirjath, fourteen cities with their villages. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, according to their families.

We have here the lot of the tribe of Benjamin, which Providence cast next to Joseph on the one hand, because Benjamin was own and only brother to Joseph, and was little Benjamin, Ps. 68. 27. that needed the protection of great Joseph, and yet had a better Protector, for the Lord shall cover them all the day long, Deut. 33. 12. And next to Judah, on the other hand, that this tribe might hereafter unite with Judah in an adherence to the throne of David, and the temple at Jerusalem. Here we have, 1. The exact borders and limits of this tribe, which we need not be exact in the explication of; as it had Judah on the south, and Joseph on the north, so it had Jordan on the east, and Dan on the west. The western border is said to compass the corner of the sea southward, v. 14. whereas no part of the lot of this tribe came near to the great sea. Bishop Fuller suggests that since it is not called the great sea, but only the sea, which often signifies any lake or mere, it may be meant of the pool of Gibeon, which may be called a corner or canto of a sea; it is called the great waters in Gibeon, Jer. 41. 12. and it is compassed by the western border of this tribe. 2. The particular cities in this tribe, not all, but the most considerable, twenty-six, are here named. Jericho is put first, though dismantled, and forbidden to be rebuilt as a city with gates and walls, because it might be built and inhabited as a country
village, and so was not useless to this tribe. Gilgal was in this tribe, where Israel first encamped when Saul was made king, 1 Sam. 11. 14. It was afterward a very profane place, Hos. 9. 15. All their wickedness is in Gilgal. Beth-El was in this tribe, a famous place; though Benjamin adhered to the house of David, yet Beth-el, it seems, was in the possession of the house of Joseph, Judg. 1:23. 25. and their descendants set up a pillar at Beth-el, and Gilgal was in this tribe, where the altar was in the beginning of Solomon's time, 2 Chron. 1. 3. Gibeah likewise, that infamous place, where the Levite's concubine was abused; Mizpeh, and near it, Samuel's Eben-ezer; Anathoth also, Jeremiah's city, were in this tribe, as was the northern part of Jerusalem. Paul was the honour of this tribe, Rom. 11. 1. Phil. 3. 5. but where his land lay, we know not, he sought the better country.

CHAP. XIX.

In the description of the lots of Judah and Benjamin, we have an account both of the borders that surrounded them, and of the cities contained in them. In that of Ephraim and Manasseh we have the hand of God, but not the cities; in this chapter, Simeon and Dan are described by their cities only, and not their borders, because they lay very much within Judah, especially the former, the rest have both their borders described, and their cities named, especially frontiers. Here is 1. The lot of Simeon, v. 1. to 9. II. Of Zebulun, v. 10. to 16. III. Of Issachar, v. 17. to 25. IV. Of Asher, v. 24. to 31. V. Of Naphtali, v. 32. to 39. VI. Of Dan, v. 40. to 45. Lastly, the inheritance assigned to Joshua himself and his own family, v. 49. to 51.

1. And the second lot came forth to Simeon, even for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah. 2. And they had in their inheritance, Beer-sheba or Sheba, and Moladah, 3. And Hazar-shual, and Balah, and Azem, 4. And Eتلolad, and Bethul, and Hormah, 5. And Ziklag, and Beth-marcarboth, and Hazar-susah, 6. And Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuruhen; thirteen cities and their villages; 7. Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and Ashan; four cities and their villages: 8. And all the villages that were round about these cities to Baalath-beer, Ramath of the south. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families. 9. Out of the portion of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon; for the part of the children of Judah was too much for them; therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them.

Simeon's lot was drawn after Judah's, Joseph's, and Benjamin's, because Jacob had put that tribe under disgrace, yet it is put before the two younger sons of Leah and the three sons of the hand-maidens. Not one person of note, either judge or prophet, was of the tribe, that we know of.

1. The situation of their lot was within that of Judah, v. 1. and was taken from it, v. 9. It seems, they that first surveyed the land, thought it larger than it was, and that it would have held out, to give every tribe in proportion as large a share as they had carved out of Judah; but, upon a more strict inquiry, it was found that it would not reach, v. 9, the part of the children of Judah was too much for them, more than they needed, and more, as it proved, than fell to their share. Yet God did not by the lot lessen it, but left it to their prudence and care afterward to discover and rectify the mistake, which, as they did, (1.) The men of Judah did not oppose the taking away of the cities again, which by the first distribution fell within their border, when they were convinced that they had more than their proportion. In all such cases, errors must be expected, and even admitted if there be occasion. Though, in strictness, what fell to their lot, was their right against all the world, yet they would not insist upon it, when it appeared that another tribe would want what they had to spare. Note, We must look on the things of others, and not on our own only. The abundance of some must supply the wants of others, that there may be some of an equality, for which there may be equity where there was not before; and thus they that had thus taken off from Judah to be put into a new lot, Providence directed to the tribe of Simeon, that Jacob's prophecy concerning this tribe might be fulfilled, I will divide them in Jacob. The cities of Simeon were scattered in Judah, with which tribe they were surrounded, except on that side toward the sea. This brought them into a confederacy with the tribe of Judah, Judg. 1. 3. and afterward was a proper occasion of the adherence of many of this tribe to the house of David, at the time of the revolt of the ten tribes to Jeroboam, 2 Chron. 15. 9, out of Simeon they fell to Asa in abundance. It is good being in a good neighbourhood.

2. The cities within their lot are here named. Beer-sheba, or Sheba, for they seem to be the same place, is put first, Ziklag is one of them, which we read of in David's story. What course they took to enlarge their borders and make room for themselves, we find 1 Chron. 4. 39. &c.

10. And the third lot came up for the children of Zebulun, according to their families: and the border of their inheritance was unto Sarid; 11. And their border went up toward the sea, and Maralah, and reached to Dabbasbeth, and reached to the river that is before Jokneam; 12. And turned from Sarid eastward, toward the sun-rising, unto the border of Chisloth-tabor, and then goeth out to Daberath, and goeth up to Japhia, 13. And from thence passeth on along on the east to Gittah-hepher, to Ittah-kazin, and goeth out to Remmon-methoar to Neah: 14. And the border compasseth it on the north side to Hannathon: and the outgoings thereof are in the valley of Jiphthah-el: 15. And Kattath, and Nahalal, and Shimron, and Idalah, and Beth-lehem: twelve cities with their villages. 16. This is the inheritance of the children of Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages.

This is the lot of Zebulun, who, though born of Leah after Issachar, yet was blessed by Jacob and Moses before him; and therefore it was so ordered, that his lot was drawn before that of Issachar's, north of which it lay, and south of Asher.

1. The lot of this tribe was washed by the great sea on the west, and by the sea of Tiberius on the north, answering Jacob's prophecy, Gen. 49. 13. Zebulun shall be a haven of ships; trading ships on the great sea, and fishing ships on the sea of Galilee.

2. Though there were some palaces in this tribe
which were made famous in the Old Testament, especially Mount Carmel, on which the famous trial was between God and Baal in Eliah’s time, yet it was made much more illustrious in the New Testament, for within the lot of this tribe was Nazareth, where our blessed Saviour spent so much of his time on earth, and from which he was called Jesus of Nazareth, and Mount Tabor on which he was transfigured, and that coast of the sea of Galilee on which Christ preached so many sermons, and wrought so many miracles.

17. And the fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of Issachar according to their families. 18. And their border was toward Jezreel, and Chesulloth, and Shunem, 19. And Haphraim, and Shihon, and Anaharath, 20. And Rabbith, and Kishion, and Abez, 21. And Remeth, and Engannim, and En-haddah, and Beth-pazzez; 22. And the coast reacheth to Tabor, and Shazimuth, and Beth-shemesh; and the outgoings of their border were at Jordan: sixteen cities with their villages. 23. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar according to their families, the cities and their villages.

The lot of Issachar ran from Jordan in the east, to the great sea in the west, Manasseh on the south, and Zebulun on the north. A numerous tribe, Numb. 26. 25. Tola, one of the judges, was of this tribe, Judg. 10. 1. So was Baasha, one of the kings of Israel, 1 Kings 15. 27. The most considerable places in this tribe were, 1. Jezreel, in which was Ahab’s palace, and near it Naboth’s vineyard. 2. Shunem, where lived the good Shunamite, that entertained Elisha. 3. The river Kishon, on the banks of which, in this tribe, Sisera was beaten by Deborah and Barak. 4. The mountains of Gilboa, on which Saul and Jonathan were slain, which were not far from En-dor, where Saul consulted the witch. 5. The valley of Megiddo, where Josiah was slain, near Hadad-rimmon, 2 Kings 23. 29. Zech. 12. 11.

24. And the fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families. 25. And their border was Helkath, and Hali, and Bethen, and Achshaph, 26. And Alammelech, and Amad, and Mishael; and reacheth to Carmel westward, and to Shihor-libnah; 27. And turneth toward the sun-rising to Beth-dagon, and reacheth to Zebulun, and to the valley of Jiphthah-el, toward the north side of Bethemek, and Neiel, and goeth out to Cabul on the left hand, 28. And Hebron, and Rehob, and Hammon, and Kanah, even unto great Zidon; 29. And then the coast turneth to Ramah, and to the strong city Tyre; and the coast turneth to Hosah; and the outgoings thereof are at the sea, from the coast to Achzib: 30. Ummah also, and Aphek, and Rehob: twenty and two cities with their villages. 31. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.

The lot of Asher lay upon the coast of the great sea; we read not of any famous person of this tribe, but Anna the prophetess, who was a constant resident in the temple at the time of our Saviour’s birth, Luke 2. 36. Nor were there many famous places in this tribe. Apehek, mentioned v. 30. was the place near which Ben-hadad was beaten by Ahab, 1 Kings 20. 50. But close adjoining to this tribe were the celebrated sea-port towns of Tyre and Sidon, which we read so much of. Tyre is called here that strong city, v. 29. But Bishop Patrick thinks it was not the same Tyre, that we read of afterwards, for that was built on an island; this old strong city was on the continent. And it is conjectured by some, that into these two strong holds, Sidon and Tzor, or Tyre, many of the people of Canaan fled and took shelter, when Joshua invaded them.

32. The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali, even for the children of Naphtali according to their families. 33. And their coast was from Heleph, from Alon to Zaanannim, and Adamim, Nekeb, and Jabbeneel, unto Lakum; and the outgoings thereof were at Jordan; 34. And then the coast turneth westward to Aznoth-tabor, and goeth out from thence to Hukkok, and reacheth to Zebulun on the south side, and reacheth to Asher on the west side, and to Judah upon Jordan toward the sun-rising. 35. And the fenced cities are Ziddim, Zer, and Hammath, Rakkath, and Chinnereth, 36. And Adamah, and Ramah, and Hazor, 37. And Keled, and Edrei, and En-hazor, 38. And iron, and Migdal-el, Horem, Bethanath, and Beth-shemesh; nineteen cities with their villages. 39. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali according to their families, the cities and their villages.

Naphtali lay furthest north of all the tribes, bordering on mount Libanus. The city of Lesheem, or Luish, lay on the utmost edge of it to the north, and therefore, when the Danites had made themselves masters of it, and called it Dan, the length of Canaan from north to south was reckoned from Dan to Beer-sheba. It had Zebulun on the south, Asher on the west, and Judah upon Jordan, probably, a city of that name, and so distinguished from the tribe of Judah, on the east. It was in the lot of this tribe, near the waters of Merom, that Joshua fought and routed Jabin, ch. 11. 1. &c. In this tribe stood Capernaum and Bethsaida, on the north end of the sea of Tiberias, in which Christ did so many mighty works; and the mountain (as is supposed) on which Christ preached, Matt. 5. 1.

40. And the seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan, according to their families. 41. And the coast of their inheritance was Zorah, and Eshtaol, and Ir-shemesh, 42. And Shaalabbin, and Ajalon, and Jethlah, 43. And Elon, and Thimnahath, and Ekron, 44. And Eltekeh, and Gibbethon, and Baalath, 45. And Jehud.
and Bene-berak, and Gath-rimmon, 46. And Me-jarkon, and Rakkon, with the border before Japho. 47. And the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them; therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father. 48. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.

Dan, though commander of one of the four squadrons of the camp of Israel, in the wilderness, that which brought up the rear, yet was last provided for in Canaan, and his lot fell in the southern part of Canaan, between Judah on the east, and the land of the Philistines on the west; Ephraim on the north, and Simeon on the south. Providence ordered this numerous and powerful tribe into a post of danger, as best able to deal with those vexatious neighbours the Philistines, and so it was found in Samson. Here is,

1. An account of what fell to this tribe by lot: Zorah, and Eshtaol, and the camp of Dan thereabouts, we read of in the story of Samson. And near there was the valley of Eschol, whence the spies brought the famous bunch of grapes. Japho, or Joppa, was in this lot.

2. An account of what they got by their own industry and valour, which is mentioned here, v. 47, but related at large, Judg. 18. 7, &c.

49. When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them: 50. According to the word of the Lord, they gave him the city which he asked, even Timnath-serah in mount Ephraim: and he built the city, and dwelt therein. 51. These are the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, divided for an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the Lord, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. So they made an end of dividing the country.

Before this account of the dividing of the land is solemnly closed up, in the last verse, which intimates that the thing was done to the satisfaction of all, here is an account of the particular inheritance assigned to Joshua:

1. He was last served, though the eldest and greatest man of all Israel, and who, having commanded in the conquest of Canaan, might have demanded the first settlement in it for himself and his family. But he would make it appear that in all he did, he sought the good of his country, and not any private interest of his own. He was content to be unfixed till he saw them all placed; and herein is a great example to all in public places, to prefer the common welfare before their particular satisfaction. Let the public first be served.

2. He had his lot according unto the word of the Lord; it is probable, when God by Moses told Caleb what inheritance he should have, Josh. 14. 9, he gave the like promise to Joshua, which he had an eye to in making his election, which made his portion doubly pleasant, that he had it, not as the rest, by common providence, but by special promise.

3. He chose it in mount Ephraim, which belonged to his own tribe, with which he thereby put himself in common, when he might by prerogative have chosen his inheritance in some other tribe, as suppose that of Judah, and thereby have distinguished himself from them. Let no man's preference or honour make him ashamed of his family or country, or estrange him from it. The tabernacle was set up in the lot of Ephraim, and Joshua would foretell not to be far from that.

4. The children of Israel are said to give it him, v. 49, which bespeaks his humility, that he would not take it to himself without the people's consent and approbation, as if he would thereby own himself, though major singulis—greater than any one, yet minor universis—less than the whole assembly, and would hold even the estate of his family, under God, by the grant of the people.

5. It was a city that must be built before it was fit to be dwelt in: while others dwelt in houses which they builded not, Joshua must build for himself, that he might be a pattern of industry and contentment with mean things, such buildings as he could hastily run up, without curiosity or magnificence. Our Lord Jesus thus came and dwelt among us, not in pomp but poverty, providing rest for us, yet himself not having where to lay his head. Even Christ pleased not himself.

CHAP. XX.

This short chapter is concerning the cities of refuge, which we often read of in the writings of Moses, but this is the last time that we find mention of them, for now that matter was thoroughly settled. Here is, I. The law God gave concerning them, v. 1. 8. II. The people's designation of the particular cities for that use, v. 7. 9. And this remedial law was a figure of good things to come.

1. The Lord also spake unto Joshua saying, 2. Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: 3. That the slayer that killeth any person unwares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. 5. And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand: because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforehand.

6. And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.

Many things were by the law of Moses ordered to be done when they came to Canaan, and this
among the rest, the appointing of sanctuaries for the protection of those that were guilty of casual murder; which was a privilege to all Israel, since no man could be sure but some time or other it might be his own case; and it was for the interest of the next person whose hand only was guilty, but not his heart, should not he shed, no not by the avenger of blood: of this law God here reminds them, which was so much for their advantage, that they might remind themselves of the other laws he had given them, which concerned his honour.

1. Orders are given for the appointing of these cities, v. 2. and very seasonably at this time when the land was surveyed, and so they were enabled to divide the coasts of it into three parts, as God had directed them, in order to the more convenient situation of these cities of refuge, Deut. 19. 3. Yet, it is probable that it was not done till after the Levites had their portion assigned them in the next chapter, because the cities of refuge were all to be Levites’ cities. As soon as ever God had given them their cities of rest, he bade them appoint cities of refuge, and so by this law they might be glad to escape. Thus God provided, not only for their case at all times, but for their safety in time of danger, and such times we must expect and prepare for in this world. And it intimates what God’s spiritual Israel have, and shall have in Christ and heaven, not only to repose themselves in, but refuge to secure themselves in. And we cannot think these cities of refuge would have been so often and so much spoken of in the law of Moses, and have had so much care taken about them, (when the intention of them might have been effectually answered, as it is in our law, by authorising the courts of judgment to protect and acquit the manslayer in all those cases wherein he was to have privilege of sanctuary,) if they were not designed to typify the relief which the gospel provides for poor penitent sinners, and their protection from the curse of the law and the wrath of God, in our Lord Jesus, to whom believers flee for refuge, Heb. 6. 18. and in whom they are found, Phil. 3. 9. as in a sanctuary, where they are privileged from arrest, and there is now no condemnation to them, Rom. 8. 1.

II. Instructions are given for the using of these cities. The laws in this matter we had before, Numb. 35. 10, &c. where they were opened at large.

1. It is supposed that a man might possibly kill a person, it may be, his own child, or dearest friend, unaawares and unwittingly, v. 3. not only whom he hated not, but whom he truly loved, beforehand, v. 5, for the way of man is not in himself. What reason have we to thank God who has kept us both from slaying, and from being slain by accident! In this case, it is supposed that the relations of the person slain would demand the life of the slayer, as a satisfaction to that ancient law, that, who sheds man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.

2. It is provided, that if upon trial it appeared, that the murder was done purely by accident, and not by design, either upon an old grudge, or a sudden passion, then the slayer should be sheltered from the avenger of blood in any one of these cities, v. 4. But if the murderer was entitled to a dwelling in that city, was taken into it, and became a constant inhabitant of it, but was confined to it, as a prisoner at large; only if he survived the High Priest, then, and not till then, he might return to his own city. And the Jews say, “If he died before the High Priest in the city of his refuge and exile, and was buried there, yet at the death of the High Priest, his bones should be removed with respect to the place of his fathers sepulchres.”

7. And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kuyath-arba (which is Hebron,) in the mountain of Judah. 8. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilgal out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh. 9. These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth any person at unaawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.

We have here the nomination of the cities of refuge in the land of Canaan, which was made by the law of Moses (as the case of Joshua and the princes, v. 7, and upon occasion of the murder of the Levite,) repeated the nomination of the other three in the lot of the other two tribes and a half, which was made by Moses, Deut. 4. 43. but (as Bishop Patrick thinks) they had not the privilege till now.

1. They are said to sanctify these cities, that is the original word for appointed, v. 7. Not that any ceremony was used to signify the consecration of them, only they did by a public act of court solemnly declare them cities of refuge; and, as such, sacred to the honour of God, as the protector of exposed innocence. If they were sanctuaries, it was proper to say, they were sanctified. Christ, our Refuge, was sanctified by his Father; nay, for our sakes he sanctified himself, John 17. 19.

2. These cities (as those also on the other side Jordan) stood in the three several parts of the country, so conveniently that a man might (they say) in half a day reach some one of them from any corner of the country. Kedesh was in Naphtali, the most northern tribe, Hebron in Judah, the most southern, and Shechem in Ephraim, which lay in the middle, about equally distant from the other two. God is a refuge at hand.

3. They were all Levites’ cities, which put an honour upon God’s tribe, making them judges in those cases wherein divine providence was so nearly concerned, and protectors to oppressed innocence; it was also a kindness to the poor refugee, that when he might not go up to the house of the Lord, nor tread his courts, yet he had the servants of God’s house with him, to instruct him, and pray for him, and help to make up the want of public ordinances. If he must be confined, it shall be to a Levite-city, where he may, if he will, improve his time.

4. These cities were upon hills to be seen afar off, for a city on a hill cannot be hid; and this would both direct and encourage the poor distressed man that was making that way; and though therefore his way at last was up-hill, yet this would comfort him, that he would be in his place of safety quickly; and if he could but get into the suburbs of the city, he was well enough off.

5. Some observe a significance in the names of these cities with application to Christ our Refuge. I delight not in quibbling upon names, yet am willing to take notice of these. Kedesh signifies holy, and our refuge is the holy Jesus. Shechem, a shoulder, and the government is upon his shoulder: Hebron, felicity, and believers are called into the fellowship of Christ Jesus our Lord. Bezer, a fortification, for he is a strong-hold to all them that
trust in him. 

**Chap. XXI.**

It had been often said that the tribe of Levi should have no inheritance with their brethren, no particular part of the country assigned them, as the other tribes had, no not the country about Shiloh, which, one would have expected, should have been appropriated to them as the hands of the church; but though they were not thus cast into a country by themselves, it appears, by the provision made for them in this chapter, that they were no losers, but the rest of the tribes were very much gainers, by their being dispersed. We have here, 1. The motion they made to have their cities assigned them, according to God's appointment, v. 1. 2. The nomination of the cities accordingly, out of the several tribes, and the distribution of them to the respective families of this tribe, v. 3-8. III. A catalogue of the cities, forty-eight in all, v. 9-42. IV. A receipt entered in full of all that God had promised to his people Israel, v. 43-45.

1. THEN came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites unto Eleazar the priest, and unto Joshua the son of Nun, and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel; 2. And they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, The Lord commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle. 3. And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the Lord, these cities and their suburbs. 4. And the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites: and the children of Aaron the priest, which were of the Levites, had by lot, out of the tribe of Judah, and out of the tribe of Simeon, and out of the tribe of Benjamin, thirteen cities. 5. And the rest of the children of Kohath had by lot, out of the families of the tribe of Ephraim, and out of the tribe of Dan, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh, ten cities. 6. And the children of Gershon had by lot, out of the families of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities. 7. The children of Merari, by their families, had, out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities. 8. And the children of Israel gave by lot unto the Levites these cities with their suburbs, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses.

Here is,

1. The Levites' petition presented to this general convention of the states, now sitting at Shiloh, v. 1, 2. Observe,

1. They had not their lot assigned them till they made their claim. There is an inheritance provided for all the saints, that royal priesthood, but then they must petition for it, Ask, and it shall be given you. Joshua had quickened the rest of the tribes who were slack, to put in their claims, but the Levites, it may be supposed, knew their duty and interest better than the rest, and were therefore forward in this matter, when it came to their turn, without being called upon. They build their claim upon a very good foundation, not their own merits or works, but the divine grace and promise; "The Lord commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities, commanded you to grant them, which implied a command to us to ask them." Note, The maintenance of ministers is not an arbitrary thing, left purely to the good-will of the people, who may let them starve if they please; no, as the God of Israel commanded that the Levites should be well provided for, so has the Lord Jesus, the King of the christian church, ordained, and a perpetual ordinance, "The Lord commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities, commanded you to grant them, which implied a command to us to ask them." 2. They did not make their claim till all the rest of the tribes were provided for, and then they did it immediately. There was some reason for it: every tribe must first know their own, else they would not know what they gave the Levites, and so it could not be such a reasonable service as it ought to be. But it is also an instance of their humility, modesty, and patience, (and Levites should be examples of these and other virtues,) that they were willing to be served last, and they feared never the worse for it. Let not God's ministers complain if at any time they find themselves postponed in men's thoughts and cares, but let them make sure of the favour of God, and the honour that comes from him, and then they may well enough afford to bear the slight and neglects of men.

II. The Levites' petition granted immediately, without any dispute, the princes of Israel being perhaps ashamed that they needed to be called upon in this matter, and that the motion had not been made among themselves for the settling of the Levites. 1. The children of Israel are said to give the cities for the Levites. God had appointed how many they should have, forty-eight; it is said, that Joshua, and the princes, upon consideration of the extent and value of the lot of each tribe as it was laid before them, had appointed how many cities should be taken out of each; and then the fathers of the several tribes themselves agreed which they should be, and therefore are said to give them as an offering, to the Lord; so God had appointed, Numb. 33. 8. Every one shall give of his cities to the Levites as an offering, to the Lord, one city out of every five. And it was found to praise and honour, for it appears by the following catalogue, that the cities they gave to the Levites, were generally some of the best and most considerable in each tribe. And it is probable, that they had an eye to the situation of them, taking care they should be so dispersed, as that no part of the country should be too far distant from a Levites' city. 2. They gave them at the commandment of the Lord, that is, with an eye to the command, and in obedience to it, which was it that sanctified the grant. They gave the number that God commanded, and it was well that matter was settled, that the Levites might not ask more, nor the Israelites offer less. They gave them also with their suburbs, or glebe-lands, belonging to them, so many cubits by measure from the walls of the city, as God had
commanded, Num. 35. 4, 5, and did not go about to cut them short. 3. When the forty-eight cities were pitched upon, they were divided into four lots, as they lay next together, and then by lot were determined to the four several families of the tribe of Levi. When the Israelites had surrendered the cities into the hand of God, he would himself have the distributing of them. (3.) The same seven families of Kohath, who were the only priests, had to their share the thirteen cities that were given by the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin, v. 4. God in wisdom ordered it thus, that though Jerusalem itself was not one of their cities, it being as yet in the possession of the Jebusites, (and those generous tribes would not mock the Levites who had another warfare to mind, with a city that must be covered by the sword before it could be enjoyed,) yet the cities that fell to their lot were those which lay next to Jerusalem, because that was to be in process of time, the holy city, where their business would chiefly lie. (2.) The Kohathite Levites (among whom were the posterity of Moses, though never distinguished from them) had the cities that lay in the lot of Dan, which lay next to Judah, and in that of Ephraim, and the half tribe of Manassasse, which lay next to Benjamin. So they who descended from Aaron's father, joined nearest to Aaron's sons. (3.) Gershon was the eldest son of Levi, and therefore, though the younger house of the Kohathites was preferred before his, yet his children had the precedence of the other family of Merari, v. 6. (4.) The Merarites, the youngest house, had their lot last, and it lay furthest off, v. 7. The rest of the sons of Jacob had a lot for every tribe only, but Levi, God's tribe, had a lot for each of its families; for there is a particular providence directing and attending the removes and settlements of ministers, and appointing where they shall fix, who are to be the lights of the world.

9. And they gave out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, these cities which are here mentioned by name, 10. Which the children of Aaron, being of the families of the Kohathites, who were of the children of Levi, had: for theirs was the first lot. 11. And they gave them the city of Arba, the father of Anak, (which city is Hebron,) in the hill-country of Judah, with the suburbs thereof round about it. 12. But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, gave they to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for his possession. 13. Thus they gave to the children of Aaron the priest, Hebron with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Libnah with her suburbs, 14. And Jattir with her suburbs, and Eshtemoa with her suburbs, 15. And Holon with her suburbs, and Debir with her suburbs, 16. And Ain with her suburbs, and Juttah with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs; nine cities out of those two tribes. 17. And out of the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with her suburbs, Geba with her suburbs, 18. Anathoth with her suburbs, and Almon with her suburbs; four cities. 19. All the cities of the children of Aaron the priests, were thirteen cities with their suburbs. 20. And the families of the children of Kohath the Levites which remained of the children of Kohath, even they had the cities of their lot out of the tribe of Ephraim. 21. For they gave them Shechem with her suburbs in mount Ephraim, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Gezer with her suburbs, 22. And Kibzaim with her suburbs, and Beth-horon with her suburbs; four cities. 23. And out of the tribe of Dan, Eltekeh with her suburbs, Gibbethon with her suburbs, 24. Ajalon with her suburbs, Gath-rimon with her suburbs; four cities. 25. And out of the half tribe of Manasseh, Taanach with her suburbs, and Gath-rimon with her suburbs; two cities. 26. All the cities were ten, with their suburbs, for the families of the children of Kohath that remained. 27. And unto the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, out of the other half tribe of Manasseh, they gave Golan in Bashan with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Beesh-terah with her suburbs; two cities. 28. And out of the tribe of Issachar, Kishon with her suburbs, Dabareh with her suburbs. 29. Jarmuth with her suburbs, En-gannim with her suburbs; four cities. 30. And out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with her suburbs, Abdon with her suburbs, 31. Helkath with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs; four cities. 32. And out of the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Hammoth-dor with her suburbs, and Kartan with her suburbs; three cities. 33. All the cities of the Gershonites, according to their families, were thirteen cities with their suburbs. 34. And unto the families of the children of Merari, the rest of the Levites, out of the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with her suburbs, and Kartah with her suburbs, 35. Dimnah with her suburbs, Nahalal with her suburbs; four cities. 36. And out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer with her suburbs, and Jahazah with her suburbs. 37. Kedemoth with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs; four cities. 38. And out of the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Mahanaim with her suburbs. 39. Heshbon with her suburbs, Jazer with her suburbs; four cities in all. 40. So all the cities for the children of Merari, by their families, which were remaining of the families of the Levites, were, by their lot, twelve cities. 41. All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel were forty and eight cities.
with their suburbs. 42. These cities were every one with their suburbs round about them: thus were all these cities.

We have here a particular account of the cities which were given to the children of Levi, out of the several tribes, not only to be occupied and inhabited by them, as tenants to the several tribes in which they lay; no, their interest in them was not dependent and precarious, but to be owned and possessed by them as lords and proprietors, and as having the same title to them that the rest of the tribes had to their cities or lands, as appears by the law which preserved the houses in the Levites' cities from being alienated any longer than till the year of jubilee, Lev. 25, 32, 33. Yet it is probable, that the Levites having only the cities and suburbs, while the land about pertained to the tribes in which they lay, those of that tribe, for the convenience of occupying that land, might commonly rent houses of the Levites, as they could spare them in their cities, and so live among them as their vassals.

Several things may be observed in this account, beside what was observed in the law concerning it, Num. 35.
1. That the Levites were dispersed into all the tribes, and not suffered to live all together in any one part of the country: this would find them all with work, and employ them all for the good of others; for ministers, of all people, must neither be idle, nor live to themselves, or to one another only. Christ left his twelve disciples together in a body, but left orders that they should in due time disperse themselves, that they might preach the gospel to every creature. The mixing of the Levites thus with the other tribes, would be an obligation upon them to walk circumspectly, and as became their sacred function, and to avoid every thing that might disgrace it; had they lived all together, they would have been tempted to wink at one another's faults, and to excuse one another when they did amiss; but by this means they were made to see the eyes of all Israel upon them, and therefore saw it their concern to walk so as that their ministry might in nothing be blamed, nor their high character suffer by their ill carriage.
2. That every tribe of Israel was adorned and enriched with its share of Levites' cities, in proportion to its compass, even those that lay most remote. They were all God's people, and therefore they all had Levites among them. (1.) To show kindness to, as God appointed them, Deut. 12, 19.—14, 29. They were God's receivers, to whom the people might give their grateful acknowledgments of God's goodness, as the occasion and disp'sion were. (2.) To receive advice and instruction from; when they could not go up to the tabernacle to consult those who attended there, they might go to a Levites' city, and be taught the good knowledge of the Lord. Thus God set up a candle in every room of his house, to give light to all his family; as those that attended the altar, kept the charge of the Lord, to see that no divine appointment was neglected there; so they that were scattered in the country, had their charge too, which the temple did not oblige them to. And the Levites were introduced at a distance, and to watch for the souls of God's Israel. Thus did God graciously provide for the keeping up of religion among them, and that they might have the word nigh them; yet, blessed be God, we under the Gospel, have it yet nearer, not only Levites in every county, but Levites in every parish, whose office it is still to teach the people knowledge, and to go before them in the things of God.
3. That here were thirteen cities, and those some of the best, appointed for the priests, the sons of Aaron, v. 19. Aaron left but two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, yet his family was now so much increased, and it was foreseen that it would in process of time grow so numerous, as to replenish all these cities; though a considerable number must of necessity be resident wherever the ark and the altar were. We read in both Testaments of such numbers of priests, that we may suppose none of all the families of Israel that came out of Egypt, increased afterward so much as that of Aaron and his family. Moreover, the passage before us further shows, that the Lord would assign a part of the cities to Aaron and the Levites, as a part of the inheritance given to the Levites, v. 35. And though the Levites afterward became possessed of new cities, as a part of the inheritance, and very likely that their number of cities was increased, yet the whole number of Levites' cities is marked here.

4. That the Levites had nothing like another tribe; they had cities which were intended to be their particular portion. They were not to have them with the other tribes, as the other tribes had their cities, but as cities peculiar to them. Israel, as a whole nation, was divided into twelve tribes, and each tribe had its particular inheritance, Cities of refuge, cities of asylum, parishes, cities, and towns, each of the other tribes; and the Levites only had cities. The Levites were not to have them with the other tribes; they were to have them by themselves. The Levites were not to have them with the other tribes; but among the other tribes. The Levites were to have them, among the other tribes; and to them alone. The Levites were to have them, among the other tribes; and by themselves, Lev. 25, 32, 33. And in the second book of Moses, when the division of the land was made among the twelve tribes, to be occupied by them, concerning which, see Gene. 30, 14, 15; they were to take the land by lot, as a heritage among the other tribes, Deut. 1, 19. And when they were divided by lot, the Levites had not a portion among the other tribes, but a portion among themselves. And the Levites were not to have the land of Israel, among the other tribes, but among themselves. And the Levites were to have it among the other tribes, and not among themselves. And the Levites were to have it among the other tribes, and not among themselves, Lev. 25, 32, 33; and they were to have it, among the other tribes, and not among themselves, Deut. 1, 19, 20. And the Levites were to have it, among the other tribes, and not among themselves, Deut. 1, 19, 20.

43. And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he spake to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. 44. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he spake unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. 45. There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.

We have here the conclusion of this whole matter, the foregoing history summed up, and, to make it appear the more bright, compared with the promise, of which it was the full accomplishment. God's word and his works mutually illustrate each other. The performance makes the promise appear very true, and the promise makes the performance appear very kind.

1. God had promised to give the seed of Abraham the land of Canaan for a possession; and now at last he performed that promise. 43. thp possessed it, and dwelt therein. Though they had often forfeited the benefit of that promise, and God had long delayed the performance of it, yet, at last, all difficulties were conquered, and Canaan was their own. And the promise of the heavenly Canaan is as sure to all God's spiritual Israel, for it is the promise of him that cannot lie.

2. God had promised to give them rest in that land, and now they had rest round about. Rest from the fatigues of their travel through the wilderness, which tedious march, perhaps, was long
in their bones; rest from their wars in Canaan, and the insults which their enemies there had at first offered them. They now dwelt, not only in habitations of their own, but those, quiet and peaceable ones; though there were Canaanites that remained, yet none of that either strength or spirit to attack them, or so much as to give them an alarm. This rest continued, till they by their own sin and folly put thorns into their own beds, and their own eyes.

3. God had promised to give them victory and success in this war. The sign of this promise likewise was fulfilled, there stood not a man before them, v. 44. They had the better in every battle, and which way soever they turned their forces, they prospered. It is true, there were Canaanites now remaining in many parts of the land, and such as afterward made head against them, and became very formidable. But, (1.) As to the present remains of the Canaanites, they were no contradiction to the promise, as God had said he would not drive them out all at once, but by little and little, Exod. 23. 30. They had now as much in their full possession as they had occasion for, and as they had hands to manage; so that the Canaanites only kept possession of some of the less cultivated parts of the country against the beasts of the field, till Israel, in process of time, should become numerous enough to replenish them, [2.] As to the permanency of this possession, that was purely the effect of Israel's cowardice and slothfulness, and the punishment of their sinful inclination to the idolatries and other abominations of the heathen, which the Lord would have cast out before them, but they harboured and indulged them.

So that the foundation of God stands sure: Israel's experience of God's fidelity is here upon record, and we may account for their station in life to the hour of God, the vindication of his promise which had been so often distracted, and the encouragement of all believers to the end of the world. There failed not any good thing, no, nor aught of any good thing, (so full is it expressed,) which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel, but in due time all came to pass, v. 45. Such an acknowledgment as this, here subscribed by Joshua, in the name of all Israel, we are not without a reason to believe, that all Israel did in effect say amen to it, 1 Kings 8. 36. The inviolable truth of God's promise, and the performance of it to the utmost, is what all the saints have been ready to bear their testimony to; and if in any thing it has seemed to come short, they have been as ready to own that they themselves must bear all the blame.

CHAP. XXII.

Many particular things we have read concerning the two tribes and a half, though nothing separated them from the rest of the tribes except the river Jordan, this chapter is wholly concerning them. 1. Joshua's dismission of the militia of those tribes from the camp of Israel, in which they had served as auxiliaries during all the war of Canaan, and their return thereto upon their own country, v. 1-8. II. The altar they built on both sides of Jordan, in token of their communion with the land of Israel, v. 10. III. The offence which the rest of the tribes took at this altar, and the message they sent thereupon, v. 19-29. IV. The apology which Joshua gave to all the tribes on half made for what they had done, v. 21-29. V. The satisfaction which their apology gave to the rest of the tribes, v. 30-34. And (which is strange) whereas in most differences there is a fault on both sides, here there was fault on no side; none (for aught that appears) were to be blamed, but all to be praised.

1. THEN Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, 2. And said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you: 3. Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. 4. And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan. 5. But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul. 6. So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents. 7. Now, to the one half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given possession in Bashan; but unto the other half thereof gave Joshua among their brethren on this side Jordan westward. And when Joshua sent them away also unto their tents, then he blessed them; 8. And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raient: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren. 9. And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

The war being ended, and ended gloriously, Joshua, as a prudent general, disbands his army, who never designed to make war their trade, and sends them home to enjoy what they had conquered, and to beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; and, particularly, the forces of these separate tribes, who had received their inheritance on the other side Jordan from Moses, upon this condition, that their men of war should assist the other tribes in the conquest of Canaan, which they promised to do, Numb. 32. 32. and renewed the promise of Joshua at the opening of the campaign, Josh. 1. 16. and noted now that they had performed their bargain, Joshua publicly and solemnly in Shiloh gives them their discharge. Whether this was done, as it was placed, not till after the land was divided, as some think, or whether after the war was ended, and before the division was made, as others think, (because there was no need of their assistance in dividing the land, but only in conquering it, nor were there any of their tribes employed as commissioners in that affair; but only of the other ten, Numb. 34. 18. &c.) this is certain, it was not done till after Shiloh was made
the head-quarters, v. 2, and the land was begun to be divided before they removed from Gilgal, ch. 14, 6.

It is probable that this army of Reubenites and Gadites, which had led the van in all the wars of Canaan, had sometimes, in the intervals of action, and when the rest of the army retired into winter-quarters, some of them, at least, made a step over Jordan, for it was not far, to visit their families, and to look after their private affairs, and perhaps tar- 
died at home sent others to their own tribes, on more serviceable; but still these two tribes and a half had their quota of troops ready, forty thousand in all, which, whenever there was occasion, rendered themselves at their respective posts, and now attended in a body to receive their discharge. Though their affection to their families, and concern for their affairs, could not but make them, after so long abom 
staying at home, to turn to the staff of good soldiers, they would not move till they had orders from their general. So though our heavenly Fa- 
ther's house above be never so desirable, (it is Bishop Hall's allusion), yet must we stay on earth till our warfare be accomplished, wait for a due discharge, and not anticipate the time of our removal.

1. Joshua dismisses them to the land of their posses- 
sion, v. 4. They that were first in the assignment of the land, and that you have been the first to receive the start of their brethren in title, but their breth- 
ren were before them in full possession; so the last shall be first, and the first last, that there may be something of equality.

II. He dismisses them with their pay; for who goes a warfare at his own charge? v. 8, Return with much riches unto your tents. Though all the land they had helped to conquer, was to go to the other tribes, yet they should have their share of the plunder, and had so, and that was all the pay that any of the soldiers expected; for the wars of Canaan bore their own charges. "Go," says Joshua, "go home to your tents," that is, "your houses," which he calls tents, because they had been so much used to tents in the wilderness; and indeed the strongest and stateliest houses in this world are to be looked upon but as tents, mean and moveable in comparison of those pavement houses. They were to receive "much riches, not only cattle, the spoil of the country, but silver and gold, the plunder of the cities, and," 1. "Let your brethren whom you leave behind, have your good word, who have allowed your share in full, though the land is entirely their's, and have not offered to make any drawback. Do not say that you are losers by us." 2. Let your brethren whom you go to, who have done by the stuff of your soldiers, have some share of the spoil. Divide the spoil with your brethren, as that was divided, which was taken in the war with Midian, Numb. 31. 27. Let your brethren that have wanted you all this while, be the better for you when you come home.

III. He dismisses them with a very honourable character. Though their service was a due debt, and the performance of a promise, and they had Joshua no more than was their duty to do, they were highly commends them; not only gives them up their bonds, as it was, now that they had fulfilled the condition, but applauds their good services. Though it was by the favour of God and his power, that Israel got possession of this land, and he must have all the glory, yet Joshua thought there was a thankful acknowledgment due to their brethren who assisted them, and whose sword and bow were employed for them. God must be chiefly eyed in our praises, yet instruments must not be altogether overlooked. He here commends them. 1. For the readiness of their obedience to their commanders, v. 2. When Moses was gone, they remembered and observed the charge he had given them; and all the orders which Joshua, as general of the forces, had issued out, they had carefully obeyed, went, and came, and did, as he appointed, Matt. 8. 9. It is as much as anything the soldier's praise, to observe the word of command. 2. For the constancy of their affection, and adherence to their brethren, Ye have not left them these many days. How many days, he does not say, nor can we gather it for cer- 
tain from any other place. Calvibus and others of the best chronologers compute, that the conquering and dividing the land was the work of about six or seven years, and so long, these separate tribes atten- 
tended their camp, and did them the best service they could. Note, It will be the honour of those that have espoused the cause of God's Israel, and twisted interests with them, to adhere to them, and never to leave them till God has given them rest, and then they shall rest with them. 3. For the 
upholding of their obedience to the divine law. They had not only done their duty to Joshua and Isra- 
el, but, which was best of all, they had made conscience of their duty to God, Ye have kept the charge; or, as the word is, Ye have kept the keep- 
ing, that is, "Ye have carefully and circumspectly kept the commandment of the Lord your God; not only in this particular instance of continuing in the service of Israel to the end of the war, but, in gene-

erally, have observed their obedience to the divine law. They had not only done their duty to Joshua and Isra- 
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eria
of their possession in a body, v. 9. ferry-boats being, it is likely, provided for their repassing Jordan. Though masters of families may have occasion to be absent, long absent, from their families sometimes, yet, when their business abroad is finished, they must remember home is their place, from which they ought not to wander as a bird from her nest.

10. And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to. 11. And the children of Israel heard say, Behold, the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, have built an altar over against the land of Canaan, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel. 12. And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them. 13. And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest; 14. And with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince throughout all the tribes of Israel; and each one was a head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel. 15. And they came unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead; and they spake with them, saying, 16. Thus saith the whole congregation of the Lord, What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the Lord, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the Lord? 17. Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord, 18. But that ye must turn away this day from following the Lord? and it will be, seeing ye rebel to-day against the Lord, that to-morrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel. 19. Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the Lord, wherein the Lord's tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against the Lord, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar, besides the altar of the Lord our God. 20. Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing; and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity.

Here is,

I. The pious care of the separated tribes to keep their hold of Canaan's religion, then when they were leaving Canaan's land, that they might not be like the sons of the stranger, utterly separated from God's people, Isa. 56. 3. In order to this, they built a great altar on the borders of Jordan, to be a witness for them that they were Israelites, and as such partakers of the altar of the Lord, 1 Cor. 10. 18. When they came to Jordan, v. 10. they did not consult how to preserve the remembrance of their own exploits in the wars of Canaan, and the services they had done their brethren, by erecting a monument to the immortal honour of the two tribes and a half. But their relation to the church of God, together with their interest in the communion of saints, is that which they are solicitous to preserve and perpetuate the proofs and evidences of; and therefore, without delay, when the thing was first proposed by some among them, who, though glad to think that they were going toward home, were sorry to think that they were going from the altar of God, immediately they erected this altar, which served as a bridge to keep up their fellowship with the other tribes in the things of God. Some think they built this altar on the Canaan-side of Jordan, in the lot of Benjamin, that looking over the river, they might see the figure of the altar at Shiloh, when they could not conveniently go to it; but it is more likely that they built it on their own side of the water, for what had they to do to build upon another man's land without his consent? And it is said to be over-against the land of Canaan, nor would there have been any cause of suspecting it designed for sacrifice, if they had not built it among themselves.

This altar was very innocently and honestly designed, but it had been well, if, since it had in it an appearance of evil, and might be an occasion of offence to their brethren. And though it was inspired by the oracle of God about it before they did it; or at least acquainted their brethren with their purpose, and given them the same explication of their altar before, to prevent their jealousy, which they did after, to remove it. Their zeal was commendable, but it ought to have been guided with discretion; there was no need to hasten the building of an altar for the purpose they intended this, but they might have taken time to consider and take advice; and when their sincerity was made to appear, we do not find that they were blamed for their rashness; God does, and men should, overlook the weakness of an honest zeal.

II. The holy jealousy of the other tribes for the honour of God, and his altar at Shiloh. Notice was immediately brought to the princes of Israel of the setting up this altar, v. 11. And they, knowing how strict and severe that law was, to prevent them to offer all their sacrifices in the place which God should choose, and not elsewhere, Deut. 12. 5, 7. were soon apprehensive, that the getting up of another altar, was an affront to the choice which God had lately made of a place to put his name in, and had a direct tendency to the worship of some other God. Now, 1. Their suspicion was very excusable, for it must be confessed, the thing frima facie—at first sight, looked ill, and seemed to shadow forth a design to set up and maintain a competitor with the altar at Shiloh. It was no strained impietate, from the building an altar, to infer an intention to offer sacrifice upon it, and that might introduce idolatry, and end in a total apostasy from the faith and worship of the God of Israel. So great a matter might this fire kindle. God is jealous for his own institutions, and therefore we should be so too, and afraid of every thing that looks like, or leads to, idolatry.
2. Their zeal, upon this suspicion, was very commendable, v. 12. When they apprehended that these tribes, which by the river Jordan were separated from them, were separating themselves from God, they took it as the greatest injury that could be done to themselves, and showed a readiness, if it were necessary, to put their lives in their hands, in defence of the altar of God, and to take up arms for the chastising and reducing of these rebels, and to prevent the spreading of the infection, if no gentle methods would serve, by cutting off from their body the gangermed member. They all gathered together, and Shiloh was the place of their rendezvous, because it was in defence of the divine charter lately granted to that place, that they now appeared; their resolution was as became a kingdom of priests, who, being devoted to God and his service, did not acknowledge their brethren, nor know their own children, Deut. 33. 9. They would immediately go up to war against them, if it appeared they were revoked from God, and in rebellion against him: though they were bone of their bone, had been compassionated with them in tribulation in the wilderness, and serviceable to them in the wars of Canaan; yet if they turn to serve other gods, they will treat them as enemies, not as sons of Israel, but as children of whoredoms, for so God had appointed, Deut. 13. 12, &c. They had but lately sheathed their swords, and retired from the perils and fatigues of war to the rest God had given them, and yet they are willing to begin a new war, rather than be of the number of those who provoke God and his service, and revenge idolatry, and every step towards it. A brave resolution, and which shows them hearty for their religion, and, we hope careful and diligent in the practice of it themselves. Corruptions in religion are best dealt with at first, before they get a head, and plead prescription.

3. Their prudence in prosecution of this zealosous resolution is no less commendable, as God had appointed them in cases of this nature, to inquire and make search, Deut. 13. 14. that they might not wrong their brethren under pretence of righting their religion; accordingly, they resolve here not to send forth their armies to wage war, till they had first sent their ambassadors to inquire into the merits of the case, and these men of the first rank, one out of each tribe, and Phinehas at the head of them, to the holy person, v. 13, 14. Thus was their zeal of God tempered with prudence and justice, by the meekness of wisdom. He that knows all things, and hates all evil things, would not punish the worst of criminals, but he would first go down and see, Gen. 18. 21. Many an unhappy strife would be prevented, or soon taken up, by an impartial and favourable inquiry into that which is the matter of the offence. The rectifying of mistakes and the taking away of mistakes of mind, by strud words and actions in a true light, would be the most effectual way to accommodate both private and public quarrels, and bring them to a happy period.

4. The ambassadors' management of this matter came fully up to the sense and spirit of the congregation concerning it, and bespeaks much both of zeal and prudence, especially that they draw up against their brethren, is indeed very high, and admits no other excuse than that it was in their zeal for the honour of God, and was now intended to justify the resentment of the congregation at Shiloh, and to awaken the supposed delinquents to clear themselves, otherwise they might have suspected their judgment, or mollified it at least, and not have taken it for granted, as they do here, v. 16. that the building of this altar was a trespass against the God of Israel, and a trespass, no less heinous than the revolt of the Lord, v. 20, than their own children, Deut. 33. 9. They were to make it appear that there was a treason, not against God, but against themselves, and they did not venture to assert their innocence think it strange to be thus misrepresented and accused; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.

(2.) The aggravation of the crime charged upon their brethren, is somewhat far-fetched, v. 17. Is the iniquity of Peer too little for us? Probably, that is mentioned, because Phinehas, the first commissioner in this treaty, had signalized himself in that matter, Numb. 25. 7, and because we may suppose they were now about the very place in which that iniquity was committed on the other side Jordan. It is good to recollect and improve those instances of the wrath of God, revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, which have fallen out in our own time, and which we ourselves have been eye-witnesses of. He reminds them of the iniquity of Peer, [1.] As a very great sin, and very provoking to God. The ingrafting of this altar seemed but a small matter, but it might lead to iniquity as bad as that of Peer, and therefore must be crushed in its first rise. Note, The remembrance of great sins committed formerly, should engage us to stand upon our guard against the least occasions and beginnings of sin: for the way of sin is down hill. [2.] As a sin that the whole congregation had sanctioned; there was a plague in the congregation, and all Jordan was in confusion, v. 18, the number of the souls of Israel being not less than twenty-four thousand; was that not enough for ever to warn you against idolatry? What, will you bring upon yourselves another plague? Are you so mad upon an idolatrous altar, that you will run yourselves thus upon the sword's point of God's judgments? Does not our camp still feel from that sin, and the punishment of it? We are not cleansed from it unto this day; there are remaining sparks, First, "Of the infection of that sin; some among us so inclined to idolatry, that if you set up another altar, they will soon take occasion from that, whether you intend it or no, to worship another god." Secondly, "Of the wrath of God against us for that sin: we have reason to fear, that if we provoke God by another sin to visit, he will remember against us the iniquity of Peer, as he threatened to do that of the golden calf, Exod. 32. 34. And dare you think, in your sleepimg li ne of divine vengeance? Note, It is a foolish and dangerous thing for people to think their former sins sins little, too little for them, as those do who add sin to sin, and so treasure up wrath against the day of wrath. Let therefore the time past suffice, 1 Pet. 4. 3.

(3.) The reason they give for their concerning themselves so warmly in this matter, is very sufficient; they were obliged to it, in regard of the necessity of upholding the law of self-preservation; "for if you revolt from God to-day, who knows, but to-morrow, his judgments may break in upon the whole congregation, v. 18. as in the case of Achan, v. 20. He sinned, and we all smarted for it, by which we should receive instruction, and from what God did then, infer what we may do, and fear what he will do, if we do not witness against your sin, who do not perish thereby, and pursue the servants of the public peace are obliged, in justice to the common safety, to use their power for the restraining and so suppressing of vice and profaneness, lest, if it be connived at, the sin thereby become national, and bring God's judgments upon the community. Nay, We are all concerned therefore to reprove our neighbour when he does amiss, lest you bear sin for him, Lev. 19. 17.

(4.) The offer they make is very fair and kind, v. 19, that if they thought the land of their pos-
session unclean for want of an altar, and therefore could not be easy without one; rather than they should set up another in competition with that of Shiloh, they should be welcome to come back to the land where the Lord's tabernacle was, and settle there, and they would very willingly straiten themselves to make room for them. By this they showed a sincere and truly pious zeal against schism, that rather than their brethren should have any occasion to set up a separate altar, though their pretence for it, as here supposed, was very weak, and grounded upon a great mistake, yet they were willing to part with a considerable share of the land which God himself had by the lot assigned them, to comprehend them and take them in among them. This was the spirit of Israelites indeed.

21. Then the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, answered and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel, 22. The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord, (save us not this day,) 23. That we have built us an altar to turn from following the Lord, or if to offer thereon burnt-offering or meat-offering, or if to offer peace-offerings thereon, let the Lord himself require it; 24. And if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have you to do with the Lord God of Israel? 25. For the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you; ye children of Reuben, and children of Gad, ye have no part in the Lord: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord. 26. Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt-offering, nor for sacrifice: 27. But that it may be a witness between us and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the Lord before him with our burnt-offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace-offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the Lord. 28. Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should so say to us, or to our generations in time to come, that we may say again, Behold the pattern of the altar of the Lord, which our fathers made, not for burnt-offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between us and you. 29. God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord, and turn this day from following the Lord, to build an altar for burnt-offerings, for meat-offerings, or for sacrifices; besides the altar of the Lord our God that is before his tabernacle.

We may suppose there was a general convention called of the princes and great men of the separate tribes, to give audience to these ambassadors; or perhaps, the army, as it came home, were still encamped together in a body, and not yet dispersed; however it was, there were enough to represent the two tribes and a half, and to give their sense.

Their reply to the warm remonstrance of the ten tribes is very fair and ingenious. They do not retract their charge, upbraid them with the injustice and unkindness of their threatenings, or re-proach them for their rash and hasty ensours; but give them that soft answer which turns away wrath, avoiding all those grievous words which stir up anger; they demonstrate not by argument, nor plead that they were not accountable to them for what they had done, nor bid them mind their own business; but, by a free and open declaration of their sincere intention in what they did, free themselves from the imputation they were under, and set themselves right in the opinion of their brethren; to do which they only needed to state the case, and put the matter in a true light.

1. They solemnly protest against any design to use this altar for sacrifice or offering, and therefore were far from setting it up in competition with the altar at Shiloh, or from entertaining the least thought of despising that. They had indeed set up that which had the shape and fashion of an altar, but they had not dedicated it to a religious use, had had no solemnity of its consecration, and therefore might not be charged with a design to put it to any such use. To gain credit to this protestation, here is,

1. A solemn appeal to God concerning it, with which they begin their defence, intending thereby to give glory to God first, and then to give satisfaction to their brethren, v. 22.

(1.) A profound awe and reverence of God are expressed in the form of their appeal; The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knoweth. Or, as it might be read somewhat closer to the original, The God of gods, Jehovah, the God of gods, Jehovah, he knoweth; which bespeaks his self-existence and self-sufficiency, he is Jehovah, and has sovereignty and supremacy over all beings and powers whatsoever, even those that are called gods, or that are worshipped. This brief confession of their faith would help to obviate the charge of their brethren, and to prove their true appreciation of them, as if they intended to desert the God of Israel, and worship other gods; how could they entertain such a thought, who believed him to be God over all? Let us learn hence always to speak of God with reverence and seriousness, and to mention his name with a solemn pause. Those who make their appeals to heaven with a slight, careless, "God knows!" have reason to fear lest they take his name in vain, for it is very unlike this here.

(2.) It is a great confidence of their own integrity, which they express in the matter of their appeal. They refer the controversy to the God of gods, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth, such as the guilty have reason to dread, and the upright and pure to rejoice in; If thou art against that transgression that we have built this altar, to confront the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, to make a party, or to set up any new gods or worship;[1] [2] He knows it, v. 22. for he is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts and intents of the heart, and particularly with all inclinations to idolatry, Ps. 44. 20, 21. That is in a particular manner before him, we believe he knows it, and we cannot by any arts convert it from him. [3] [4] Let him require it, as we know he will, for he is a jealous God. Nothing but a clear conscience would have thus imprecated divine justice to averge the rebellion, if there had been any. Note, First, In every thing we do in religion, it highly concerns us to appove ourselves to God in our integrity therein, remembering that he
knows the heart. Secondly, When we fall under the censures of men, it is very comfortable to be able with a humble confidence to appeal to God concerning our cases. See 1 Cor. xiv. 4.

2. A more apology presented to their brethren. Israel, he shall know. Though the record on high, and the witness in our bosoms, are principally to be made sure for us, yet there is a satisfaction besides, which we owe to our brethren, who doubt concerning our integrity, and which we should be ready to give with meekness and fear. If our sincerity be known to God, we should study likewise to let others know it by its fruits, especially those, who, though they mistake us, yet show a zeal for the glory of God, as the ten tribes here did.

3. A serious abjuration or renunciation of the design which they were suspected to be guilty of. With this they conclude their defence, v. 29. "God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord, as we own we should, if we had set up this altar for burnt-offerings; no, we abhor the thought of it. We have as great a value and veneration for the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, as any of the tribes of Israel have, and are as firmly resolved to adhere to it, and constantly to attend it; we have the same concern that you have for the purity of God's worship, and the unity of his church; far be it, far be it from us, to think of turning away from following God."

II. They fully explain their true intent and meaning in building this altar; and we have all the reasons the world to the altar, there was a true representation of their design, and not advanced now to palliate it afterward; as we have reason to think that these same persons meant very honestly, when they petitioned to have their lot on that side Jordan, though then also it was their unhappiness to be misunderstood even by Moses himself.

In their vindication they make it out, that the building of this altar was no far from being a step towards a separation from the true church, and from the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, that, on the contrary, it was really designed for a pledge and preservative of their communion with their brethren, and with the altar of God, and a token of their resolution to do the service of the Lord before him, v. 27. and to continue to do so.

1. They gave an account of the fears they had, lest in process of time, their posterity, being seated at, the distance from the true church, should be looked upon and treated as strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, v. 24. it was for fear of this thing, and the word signifies a great perplexity and solicitude of mind which they were in, until they eased themselves by this expeditor. As they were returning home, (and we may suppose it was not thought of before, else they would have made Joshua acquainted with their purpose,) some of them divined this heart of the people, and the rest took the hint, and represented to themselves and one another, a very melancholy prospect of what might, probably, happen in after-ages, that their children would be looked upon by the other tribes as having no interest in the altar of God, and the sacrifices there offered. Now indeed they were owned as brethren, and were as welcome at the tabernacle of the true God, as children of their common father. What then of the children after them should be disowned? They by reason of their distance, and the interposition of Jordan, which it was not easy at all times to pass and repass, could not be so numerous and constant in their attendance on the three yearly feasts as the other tribes to make a continual claim to the privileges of Israelites, and would therefore be looked upon as inconsiderable members of their church, and by degrees would be rejected as not members of it at all, so shall your children, (who in their pride will be apt to monopolize the privileges of the altar,) make our children (who perhaps will not be so careful as they ought to be to keep hold of those privileges) cease from fearing the Lord. Note, (1.) They who have themselves found the comfort and benefit of God's ordinances, cannot but desire to preserve and perpetuate the entail of them upon their seed, and use all possible precautions that their children after them may not be made to cease from following the Lord, or be looked upon as having no part in him. (2.) They who have themselves found the comfort and benefit of God's ordinances, cannot but desire to preserve and perpetuate the entail of them upon their seed, and use all possible precautions that their children after them may not be made to cease from following the Lord. Therefore to secure an interest in the altar of God to those who shall come after us, and to prove their title to it, we said, Let us build an altar, to be a witness between us and you. That having this copy of the altar in their custody, it might be produced as an evidence of their right to the privileges of the original. Every one that saw this altar, and observed it was never used for sacrifice and offering, would inquire what was the meaning of it, and this answer would be given to that inquiry, that it was built by those separate tribes, in token of their common interest, with a joint interest with them in the altar of the Lord. Christ is the great Altar that sanctions every gift; the best evidence of our interest in him will be the pattern of his Spirit in our hearts, and our conformity to him: if we can produce that, it will be testimony for us, that we have a part in the Lord, and an earnest for our perseverance in following him.

30. And when Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation, and heads of the thousands of Israel which were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh, spoke, it pleased them. 31. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the Lord is among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the Lord: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord. 32. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again. 33. And the children of Israel sent and delivered the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh, unto the children of Israel, and they went out of Gilead unto the land of Canaan, and dwelt. 34. And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, called the altar Ed: for it shall be a witness between us that the Lord is God.

We have here the good issue of this controversy, which, if there had not been on both sides a disposition to peace, as there was on both sides a zeal for
God, might have been of ill consequence; for quarrels about religion, for want of wisdom and love, often prove the most fierce and most difficult to be taken up. But these contending parties, when the matter was fairly stated and argued, were so happy as to understand one another very well, and so the difference was presently compromised.

1. The ambassadors were exceedingly pleased, when the separate tribes had given in a protestation of the innocence of their intentions in building this altar. (1) The ambassadors did not call in question their sincerity in that protestation, did not say, "You tell us you design it not for sacrifice and efficacy." No, charity believes all things, hopes all things, believes and hopes the best, and is very loath to give the lie to any.

(2) They did not upbraid them with the rashness and unadvisedness of this action; did not tell them, "If you would do such a thing, and with this good intention, yet you might have had that respect for Joshua and Eleazar, to have advised them, or at least have made them acquainted with it, and so have saved the trouble and expense of this embassy." But a little want of consideration and good manners should be excused and overlooked in those who, we have reason to think, mean honestly. (3) Much less did they go about to fish for evidence to make out their charge, because they had once exhibited it, but were glad to have their mistake rectified, and were glad, v. 31. They were civil, patient, and peevish spirits, when they have past an unjust censure upon their brethren, though never so much convincing evidence be brought of the injustice of it, will stand to it, and can by no means be persuaded to retract it. These ambassadors were not so pre-judiced; their brethren's vindication pleased them, v. 30. They looked upon their innocence as a token of God's favor; they might, therefore, had they been found what was done, was so far from being an indication of their growing cool to the altar of God, that, on the contrary, it was a fruit of their zealous affection to it; Ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord, that is, "You have not, as we feared, delivered them into the hand of the Lord, or exposed them to his judgments, by the trespass we were jealous." They were abundantly satisfied, when their ambassadors reported to them their brethren's apology for what they had done. It should seem, they staid together, at least by their representatives, until they heard the issue, v. 32. And when they understood the truth of the matter, they pleased them, v. 33. and they blessed God. Note, Our brethren's constancy in religion, their zeal for the power of godliness, and their keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and the jealousies conceived of them as breaking the unity of the church, are things which we should be very glad to be satisfied of, and should make the matter both of our rejoicing and of our thanksgiving; let God have the glory of it, and let us take the comfort of it. Being thus satisfied, they laid down their arms immediately, and were so far from being angry at the particulars that they had been meditating against their brethren, that we may suppose them wishing for the next feast, when they should meet them at Shilohe.

3. The separate tribes were gratified, and since they had a mind to preserve among them this pattern of the altar of God, though there was not likely to be that occasion for it which they fancied, yet Joshua and the princes let them have their humour, and did not give orders for the demolishing of it, though there was as much reason to fear that it might in process of time be an occasion of idolatry, as there was to hope that ever it might be a preservation from idolatry. Thus did the strong hear the infirmities of the weak. Only, care was taken that they having explained the meaning of their altar, that it was intended to be no more than a testimony of their communion with the altar at Shilohe, this explanation should be recorded, which was done according to the usage of those times, by giving a name to it, signifying so much, v. 34. They called it Ed, a witness, to that and no more. A witness of the relation they stood in to God and Israel, and of their concurrence with the rest of the tribes in the same common faith, that Jehovah he is God, and he no other. It was a witness to preserve their cure to truth, their religion pure and entire to them, and would be a witness against them if ever they should forsake God, and turn from following after him.

CHAP. XXIII.

In this and the following chapter we have two farewell sermons, which Joshua preached to the people of Israel a little before his death. Had he designed to gratify the curiosity of succeeding ages, he would rather have recorded the many of Israel's settlement in their new conquests, their husbandry, manufactures, trade, customs, courts of justice, and the constitutions of their infant commonwealth, which one would wish to be informed of; but that which he intended in the registers of this book, was, to dwell on public religion and their duty to God; and therefore, overlooking these things which are the usual subjects of a common history, he here transmits to his reader the methods he took to persuade Israel, or rather to their covenant with their God, which might have a good influence on the generations to come who should read those reasonings, as we may hope they had on that generation which then heard them. In this chapter we have, 1. A convenient account of the state of the states, v. 1. 2. probably to consult about the common concerns of their land, and to set in order that which, after some years' trial, being left to their prudence, was found wanting. II. Joshua's speech to them at the opening of this chapter, the concluding of the sessions, to hear which was the principal design of their coming together. In it, 1. Joshua reminds them of what God had done for them, v. 3. 4. 9. 14. and what he was ready to do yet further, v. 5. 10. 2. He exhorts them carefully and resolutely to persevere in their duty to God, v. 6. 8. 11. III. He cautions them against all familiarity with their idolatrous neighbors, v. 7. 4. He gives them fair warning of the future danger, if they should revolt from God and turn to idolats, v. 12, 13. 15. 16. In all which he showed himself zealous for his God, and jealous over Israel with a godly jealousy.

1. And it came to pass, a long time after that the Lord had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age. 2. And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age: 3. And ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations because of you: for the Lord your God is he that hath fought for you. 4. Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward. 5. And the Lord your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the Lord your God hath promised unto you. 6. Be ye
therefore very courageous, to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left; 7. That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them: 3. But cleave unto the Lord your God, as ye have done unto this day. 9. For the Lord hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day. 10. One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.

As to the date of this edict of Joshua's,
I. No mention at all is made of the place where this general assembly was held; some think it was at Timnath-serah, Joshua's own city, where he lived, and whence, being old, he could not well remove: but it does not appear that he took so much state upon him, therefore it is more probable this meeting was at Shiloh, where the tabernacle of meeting was, and to which place, perhaps, all the males that could, were now coming to worship before the Lord, at one of the three great feasts, which Joshua took the opportunity of, for the delivering of this charge to them.

II. There is only a general mention of the time when this was done. It was long after the Lord had given them rest, but it is not said how long, v. 1. It was, 1. So long as that Israel had time to feel the comforts of their rest and possessions in Canaan, and to enjoy the advantages of that good land. 2. So long as that Joshua had time to observe which way their danger lay of being corrupt, namely, by their intimacy with the Canaanites, that remained, against which he is therefore careful to arm them.

III. The persons to whom Joshua made this speech, to all Israel, even their elders, &c. So it might be read, v. 2. they could not all come within hearing, but he called for all the elders, that is, the privy council or, which in latter times constituted the great Sanhedrim, the heads of the tribes, that is, the noblemen and gentlemen of their respective countries, the judges learned in the laws, that tried criminals and causes, and gave judgment upon them—and, lastly, the officers or sheriffs, who were intrusted with the execution of those judgments. These Joshua called together, and to them he addressed himself, 1. That they might come; but, secondly, that he might discourse with them, and communicate what lay nearest on his heart; and substance of it, to those under them in their respective countries, and so this charge might be dispersed through the whole nation. 2. Because if they would be prevailing with to serve God and cleave to him, they, by their influence on the common people, would keep them right. If great men be good men, they will help to make many good men.

IV. In the instances when he gave them this charge; he was old and stricken in age, v. 1. probably, it was in the last year of his life, and he lived to be one hundred and ten years old, ch. 24. 29. And he himself takes notice of it, in the first words of his discourse, v. 2. when he began to be old, some years ago, God reminded him of it, ch. 13. 1. Thou art old. But now that he did himself feel so much of the decays of age that he needed not to be told of it, he readily speaks of it himself, I am old and stricken in age. He uses it, 1. As an argument with himself to give them this charge, because being old he could expect to be but a little while with them to advise and instruct them, and therefore (so far as it respects, 2 Pet. 1. 12.) as long as he is in this tabernacle, he will do all possible to put them in remembrance of their duty, knowing by the increasing infirmities of age, that he must shortly put off this tabernacle, and desiring that after his decease they might continue as good as they were now. When we see death hastening towards us, that should quicken us to do the work of life with all our might. 2. As an argument with them, he was old and experienced, and therefore to be the more regarded for days should speak; he was grown old in their service, and had spent himself for their good, and therefore was to be the more regarded by them. He was old and dying, they would not have him long to preach to them, therefore let them observe what he said now, and lay it up in store for the time to come.

V. This discourse itself, the scope of which is to engage them, if possible, them, and their seed after them, to persevere in the true faith and worship of the Lord of Israel.
1. He puts them in mind of the great things God had done for them, now in his days, and under his administration, for here he goes no further back. And for the proof of this, he appeals to their own eyes, v. 3. Ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done, not what I have done, or what you have done, we were only instruments in God's hand, but what God himself has done by me, and for you. (1.) "Many great and mighty nations (as the rate of nations then went) were driven out from as fine a country as any was at that time upon the face of the earth, to make room for Israel." (2.) "You see what he has done to these nations who were his creatures, the work of his hands, and whom he could have made new creatures, and fit for his service; yet see what destruction he has made of them because of you, v. 3. how he has driven them out from before you, v. 9. if as they were of no account with him, though great and strong in comparison with you."
(2.) They were not only driven out, (that they might have been, and yet sent to some other country less rich, to begin a new plantation there, suppose to that wilderness in which Israel had wandered so long, and so they had only exchanged seats with them,) but they were "driven after them;" though they held out against them with the greatest obstinacy that could be, yet they were subdued before them, which made the possessing of their land so much the more glorious to Israel, and so much the more illustrious an instance of the power and goodness of the God of Israel, v. 3. The Lord your God has not only led you, and fed you, and kept company with you as a man would," by which title he was known among them when he first brought them out of Egypt, Exod. 15. 3. So clear and cheap were all their victories during the course of this long war, that no man had been able to stand before them, v. 9. that is, to make head against them, so as either to put them in fear, create them any difficulty, or give any check to the progress of their victorious arms. It is evident they carried the day, and in every siege they carried the city; their loss before Ai was upon a particular occasion, was inconsiderable, and only served to show them on what terms they stood with God; but otherwise, never was army crowned with such a constant uninterrupted series of successes, as the armies of Israel were in the wars of Canaan. (3.) They had not only conquered the Canaanites, but were put in full possession of their land, v. 4. "I have divided to you by lot these na
2. He assures them of God's readiness to carry on, and complete, this glorious work in due time. It is true, some of the Canaanites did yet remain, and in some places were strong and daring; but that should not disappoint their expectations; when Israel was so multiplied as to be able to replenish this land, God would expel the Canaanites to the last man, provided Israel would pursue their advantages, and carry on the war against them with vigour, v. 5. "The Lord your God will drive them from out of your sight, so that there shall not be a Canaanite to be seen in the land; and even that part of all the land which is yet in their hands, shall possess." If it were objected, that the men of war of the several tribes being dispersed to their respective countries, and the army disbanded, it would be difficult to get them together when there was occasion to renew the war upon the remainder of the Canaanites; in answer to that, he tells them what little need they had to be in care about the numbers of their forces, v. 10. One man of you shall be as strong as ten men. No one man is the match of ten; so you must not compare your little forces against theirs, but look to the Lord, who is able to make them as strong as ten, even in the battle, as he had made them in the time of their victory over them, v. 13. "Each tribe may venture for itself, and for the recovery of its own lot, without fearing disadvantage by the disproportion of numbers; for the Lord your God, whose all power is, both to inspire and to dispirit, and who has all creatures at his beck, he it is, that fighteth for you; and how many do you reckon him for?"

3. He hereupon most expressly charges them to adhere to their duty, to go on and persevere in the good ways of the Lord wherein they were so well set out. He exhorts them,

(1.) To be very courageous, v. 6. "God fighteth for you against your enemies, do you therefore behave yourselves valiantly for him. Keep and do with a firm resolution all that is written in the book of the law." He presses upon them no more than what they are already bound to. "Keep with care, do with diligence, and eye what is written with sincerity."

(2.) To be very cautious. "Take heed of missing it, either on the right hand, or on the left, for there are errors and extremes on both hands. Take heed of running either into a profane neglect of any of God's institutions, or into a superstitious addition of any of your own inventions. They must especially take care of going toward Jericho, and to which they were first inclined, and would be most tempted, v. 7. [1.] They must not acquaint themselves with idolaters, nor come among them to visit them, or be present at any of their feasts or entertainments, for they could not contract any intimacy, or keep up any conversation with them, without danger of infection. [2.] They must not show the least respect to any idol, nor mention the name of their gods, but endeavour to bury the remembrance of them in perpetual oblivion, that the worship of them may never be revived; let the very name of them be forgotten. "Look upon idols as filthy detestable things, to be named without the utmost loathing and detestation." The Jews would not suffer their children to name swine's flesh, because it was forbidden, lest the naming of it should occasion their desiring of it; but if they had occasion to speak of it, they must call it, that strange thing. It is pitty, that among Christians the names of the heathen gods are so commonly used, and made so familiar as they are, especially in plays and poems: Let these names which have been set up in rivalry with God, be for ever loathed and lost. [3.] They must not contemn others in showing respect to them. They must not only not swear by them themselves, but they must not cause others to swear by them, which supposes that they must not make any covenants with idolaters, because they, in the confirming of their covenants, would swear by their idols; never let Israelites admit such an oath. [4.] They must take heed of these occasions of idolatry, lest by degrees they should arrive at the highest step of it, which was serving false gods, and bowing down to them, against the letter of the second commandment.

4. To be very constant, v. 8. "Cleave unto the Lord your God, that is, 'delight in him, depend upon him, devote yourselves to his glory, and continue to do so to the end, as you have done unto this day, ever since you came to Canaan;' for, being willing to make the best of them, he looks not so far back as the iniquity of Peor. There might be many things amiss among them, but they had not forsaken the Lord their God, and it is in order to insinuate his exhortation to perseverance with the more pleasing power, that he praises them. "Go on and prosper, for the Lord is with you while you are with him." Those that command, should commend; the way to make people better, is, to make the best of them. "You have cleared the Lord unto this day, therefore go on to do so, else you lose the praise and recompense of what you have wrought. Your righteousness will not be mentioned unto you, if you turn from it."

11. Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God. 12. Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: 13. Know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourgings in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land, which the Lord your God hath given you. 14. And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof. 15. Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you. 16. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you. Here,
I. Joshua directs them what to do, that they might preserve every religion. v. 11. Would we avoid the wrath of the Lord, and not forsake him, 1. We must always stand upon our guard, for many a precious soul is lost and ruined through carelessness; "Take heed therefore, take good heed to yourselves, to your souls, (so the word is,) that the inward man be kept clean from the pollutions of sin, and closely employed in the service of God. God has given us precious souls, with this charge, "Take good heed to them, keep them, with all diligence, above all keepings." 2. What we do in religion, we must do from a principal of love, not by constraint or from a slavish fear of God, but of choice and with delight. "Love the Lord your God, and you will not leave him." II. He urges God's fidelity to them as an argument why they should be faithful to him, v. 14. "I am going the way of all the earth, I am old and dying," to die, is to go a journey, a journey to our long home; it is the way of all the earth, the way that all mankind must go, sooner or later. Joshua himself, though so great and good a man, and one that could so ill be spared, cannot be exempted from this common lot. He takes notice of it here, that they might look upon these as his dying words, and regard them accordingly. Or thus, "I am dying, and leaving you, me ye have not always, but if you cleave to the Lord, he will never leave you." (Cf. Deut. 4. 37.) Even if I am near my end, its proper to look back upon the years that are past; and in the review, I find, and ye yourselves know it in all your hearts, and in all your souls, by a full conviction on the clearest evidence, and the thing has made an impression upon you," (that knowledge does us good, which is seated, not in the head only, but in the heart and soul, and with which we are duly affected, being made a discovery to us, and knew it to be the true good and the evil things which the Lord spake concerning you," (and he speaks a great many;) see ch. 21. 45. God had promised them victory, rest, plenty, his tabernacle among them, &c., and not one thing had failed of all he had promised. "Now," said he, "has God been truly just to you? Be not you false to him." It is the apostle's argument for perseverance, Heb. 10. 23. "He is faithful that has promised." He gives them fair warning, what would be the fatal consequences of apostasy, v. 12, 13, 15, 16. "If you go back, know for a certainty it will be your ruin." Observe, 1. How he describes the apostasy which he warns them against. The steps of it would be, v. 12. growing intimate with idolaters, who would candidly wheedle them, and insinuate themselves into their acquaintance, now that they were come lords of the country, to serve their own ends. The next step would be intermarrying with them, drawn to it by their artifices, who would be glad to bestow their children upon these wealthy Israelites. And the consequence of that would be, v. 16. serving their gods, (which were pretended to be the ancient deities of the country,) and bowing down to them. Thus the way of sin is down-hill, and those who have had the benefit of education with sinners, cannot avoid having fellowship with sin. This he represents, (1.) As a base and shameful desertion; "it is going back from what you have so well begun," v. 12. (2.) As a most pernicious breach of promise, v. 16. "It is a transgression of the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and which you yourselves set your hand to." Other sins were transgressions of the law God commanded them, but this was a transgression of the covenant that he commanded them, and amounted to a breach of the relation between God and them, and a forfeititure of all the benefits of the covenant.

2. How he describes the destruction which he warns them of. He tells them, (1.) That these remainders of the Canaanites, if they should harbour them, and indulge them, and join in affinity with them, would be snares and traps to them, both to draw them to sin, (not only to idolatry, but to all immoralities, which would be the ruin, not only of their virtue, but of their wisdom and sense, their spirit and honour,) and also to draw them into foolish bargains, unprofitable projects, and all manner of inconveniences. (2.) That by underhand practices they decoyed them into one mischief or other, so as to gain advantages against them, they would then act more openly, and be scourges in their sides, and thorns in their eyes, would perhaps kill or drive away their cattle, burn or steal their corn, alarm or plunder their houses, and would by all ways possible vexations to them: for, whatever pretences of friendship they might make, a Canaanite, unless proselyted to the faith and worship of the true God, would in every age hate the very name and sight of an Israelite. See how the punishment would be made to answer the sin, nay, how the sin itself would be the punishment. (2.) That the anger of the Lord would be kindled against them. Their making leagues with the Canaanites, would not only give them the opportunity of doing them a mischief, and be the fostering of snakes in their way, but God would make them to become their enemy, and would kindle the fire of his displeasure against them. (3.) That all the threatenings of the word would be fulfilled, as the promises had, for the God of eternal truth is faithful to both, v. 15. "As all good things have come upon you according to the promise, so long as you have kept close to God, so all evil things will come upon you according to the threatening, if you forsake him." They would not only have experienced the good, and were now in the enjoyment of it, and the evil would as certainly come, if they were disobedient. As God's promises are not a fool's paradise, so his threatenings are not bogeys. (4.) That it would end in the utter ruin of their church and nation, as Moses had foretold. This is three times mentioned here. Your enemies will vex you until ye perish from off this good land, v. 3. "God will make you to perish from off this good land, which he destroyed you from off this good land," v. 15. Heaven and earth will concur to root you out. So that, v. 16, ye shall perish from off the good land." It will aggravate their perdition, that the land from which they shall perish, is a good land, and a land which God himself had given them, and which therefore he would have secured to them, if they by their wickedness had not thrown themselves out of it. Thus the goodness of the heavenly Canaan, and the free and future grant God has made of it, will aggravate the misery of those that shall for ever be shut out and perish from it. Nothing will make them see how wretched they are, so much as to see how happy they might have been. Joshua thus sets before them the fatal consequences of their apostasy, that, knowing the terror of the Lord, they might be persuaded with forfeiture of heart to cleave to him.

CHAP. XXIV.

This chapter concludes the life and reign of Joshua, in which we have, 1. The great care and pains he took to confirm the people of Israel in the true faith and worship of God, that they might, after his death, persevere therein. In order to this, he called an other general assembly of the heads of the congregation of Israel, v. 1. and dealt with them, 1. By way of narrative, recounting the great things God had done for them and their fathers, v. 2. - 18. 2. By way of charge to them, in consideration thereof, to serve God, v. 14. 3. By way of treaty with them, wherein he aims to bring them, (1.) To make rebi
AND Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for theirjudges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Caannah, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac. And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau; and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it: but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt. I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out. And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and you came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red Sea. And when they cried unto the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them: and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season. And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land; and I destroyed them from before you. Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you: but I would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand. And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand. And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow. And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not, do ye eat. 14. Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.

Joshua thought he had taken his last farewell of Israel, in the solemn charge he gave them in the foregoing chapter, when he said, I go the way of all the earth; but God graciously continuing his fellowship longer than he expected, and renewing his strength, he was desirous to prove it for the good of Israel: he did not say, I have taken my leave, as once, and let that serve; but, having yet a longer space given him, he summons them together again, that he might try what more he could do to engage them for God. Note, We must never think our work for God done, till our life is done; and if he lengthen out our days beyond what we thought, we must conclude it is because he has some further service for us to perform.

The assembly is the same with that in the foregoing chapter, the elders, heads, judges and officers of Israel, v. 1. But it is here made something more solemn than it was there.

I. The place appointed for their meeting is Shechem, not only because that lay nearer to Joshua than Shiloh, and therefore more convenient now that he was infant, and unfit for travelling, but because it was the place where Abraham, the first trustee of God's covenant with this people, settled at his coming to Canaan, and where God appeared to him, Gen. 12. 6, 7. and near which stood mount Gerizim and Ebal, where the people had renewed their covenant with God at their first coming into Canaan, Josh. 8. 30. Of the promises God had made to their fathers, and of the promises they themselves had made to God, this place might serve to put them in mind.

II. They presented themselves, not only before Joshua, but before God, in this assembly; that is, they came together in a solemn religious manner, as into the special presence of God, and with an eye to him speaking to them by Joshua; and, it is probable, the service began with prayer. It is the conjecture of interpreters, that upon this great occasion, Joshua ordered the ark of God to be brought by the priests to Shechem, which, they say, was but about ten miles from Shiloh, and to be set down in the place of their meeting, which is therefore called, v. 26, the sanctuary of the Lord, the presence of the ark making it so at that time; and this was done to grace the solemnity, and to strike an awe upon the people that attended. We have not any such sensible tokens of the divine presence, but are to believe that wherever three are gathered together in Christ's name, he is as really in the midst of them, as God was where the ark was, and they are indeed presenting themselves before him.

III. Joshua spake to them in God's name, and as from him, in the language of a prophet, v. 2. "Thus saith the Lord, Jehovah, the great God, and the God of Israel, your God, to Jericho, whom therefore you are bound to hear and give heed."

Note, The word of God is to be received by us as his, whoever is the messenger that brings it, whose greatness cannot add to it, nor his meanness diminish from it.

His sermon consists of doctrine and application. I. The doctrinal part is a history of the great things God had done for his people, and for their
fathers before them. God by Joshua recounts the marvels of old, "I did so and so." They must know and consider, not only that such and such things were done, but that God did them. It is a series of wonders that is here recorded, and perhaps man was not meant to understand, which for beauty's sake are here omitted. See what God had wrought; (1.) He brought Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, v. 2, 3. He and his ancestors had served other gods there, for it was the country in which, though celebrated for learning, idolatry, as some think, had its rise; there the world by wisdom knew not God. Abraham, who afterward was the friend of God, and the great favourite of heaven, was born by and by bound by a holy vow, till God by his grace snatched him as a brand out of that burning. Let them remember that rock out of which they were hewn, and not relapse into that sin from which their fathers by a miracle of free grace were delivered. "I took him," says God, "else he had never come out of that sinful state."

Hence Abraham's justification is made by the apostle to be an instance of God's justifying the ungodly, Rom. 4. 5. (2.) He brought his family, led him through the land to Shechem, where they now were, multiplied his seed by Ishmael, who begat twelve princes, but at last gave him Isaac the promised son, and in him multiplied his seed. When Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau, God provided an inheritance for Esau elsewhere in Mount Seir, tht the land of Canaan might be reserved entire for the seed of Jacob, and the poverty of Esau might never pretend to a share in it. (3.) He delivered the seed of Jacob out of Egypt with a high hand, v. 5, 6, and rescued them out of the hands of Pharaoh and his host at the Red-sea, v. 6, 7. The same waters were the Israelites' guard, and the Egyptians' grave; and this in answer to prayer; for though we find in the story, that they in that distress murmured against God, Exod. 14. 11, 12. notice is here taken of their crying to God; he graciously accepted those that prayed to him, and overlooked the folly of those that quarrelled with him. (4.) He protected them in the wilderness, where they are here said, not to wander, but to dwell for a long season, v. 7. So wisely were all their motions directed, and so safely were they kept, that even there they had as certain a dwelling place as if they had been in a walled city. (5.) He gave them the land of the Amorites, on the other side Jordan, v. 8. and there defeated the plot of Balak and Balaam against them, so that Balaam could not curse them, as he desired, and therefore Balak durst not fight them, as he designed, and, because he designed it, is here said to do it. The turning of Balaam's tongue to bless Israel, when he intended to curse them, is often mentioned as an instance of the divine power put forth in Israel's favour, as remarkable as any other, because in it God proved (and does still, more than we are aware of) his dominion over men, the power of darkness, and over the spirits of men. (6.) He brought them safely and triumphantly into Canaan, delivered the Canaanites into their hand, v. 11, sent hornets before them, when they were actually engaged in battle with the enemy, which with their wings tormented them, and with their noise terrified them, so that they became a very easy prey to Israel. These dreadful swarmers were the two kings of the Amorites, and afterwards in their other battles, v. 12. God had promised to do this for them, Exod. 23. 27, 28. Deut. 7. 20. These hornets, it should seem, annoyed the enemy more than all the artillery of Israel, therefore he adds, not with thy sword nor bow. It was purely the Lord's doing. Lastly, They were now in the peaceable possession of a good land, and lived comfortably upon the fruit of other people's labour, v. 13.

2. The application of this history of God's mercies to them, is by way of exhortation, to fear and serve God, in gratitude for his favour, and that it might be continued to them, v. 14. Now therefore, in consideration of all this, (1.) "Fear the Lord, the Lord and his goodness, Hos. 3. 5. Reversion of a God of such infinite power, fear to offend him, and to forfeit his goodness. Keep up an awe of his majesty, a deference to his authority, a dread of his displeasure, and a continual regard to his all-seeing eye upon you." (2.) "Let your practice be consonant to this principle, and serve him, both by the outward acts of religious worship, and every instance of obedience in your whole conversation, and this, in sincerity and truth, with a single eye and an upright heart, and inward impressions, answerable to outward expressions." That is the truth in the inward part, which God requires, Ps. 51. 6. For what good will it do us to assemble with a God that searches the heart? (5.) Put away the strange gods, both Chaldean and Egyptian idols, for these they were most in danger of revolting to. It should seem by this charge, which is repeated, v. 23. that there were some among them that privately kept in their closets the images or pictures of these dunghill-deities, which came to their hands from their ancestors, as heir-looms of their families, though it may be, they did not worship them; these Joshua earnestly urges them to throw away. Do face them, destroy them, lest you be tempted to serve them." Jacob pressed his household to do this, and at this very place; for when they gave him up the little images they had, he buried them under the oak that grows by Shechem, Gen. 33. 2, 4. Perhaps the oak mentioned here, v. 26. was the same oak, or another in the same place, which might be well called the oak of reformation, as there were idolatrous oaks.

15. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. 16. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; 17. For the Lord our God, he is that brought us up, and our fathers, out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed: 18. And the Lord drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the Lord; for he is our God. 19. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. 20. If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good. 21. And the people said unto Joshua:
ing in a state of probation, it is fit there should be some difficulties in the way, else there were no trial. [3.] He refers it to themselves, "Choose you whom ye will serve, choose this day, now that the matter is laid thus plainly before you, speedily bring it to a head, and do not stand hesitating." Elijah, long after this, referred the decision of the matter to them, in opposition to Jehovah and Baal, to the conscience of those of whom we read, 1 Kings 18. 21. Joshua's putting off the matter here to this plain, intimately two things, First, That it is the will of God we should every one of us make religion our serious and deliberate choice. Let us state the matter impartially to ourselves, weigh things in an even balance, and then determine for that which we find to be really true and good. Let us resolve on God's service, and we do not lightly because we know no other way, but because ready, upon search, we find no better. Secondly, That religion has so much self-evident reason and righteousness on its side, that it may safely be referred to every man that allows himself a free thought, either to choose or refuse it; for the merits of the case are so plain, that no considerate man can do otherwise but choose it. The case is so clear that it determines itself. Perhaps Joshua detained by putting them to their choice, thus to try if there were any among them, who, upon so fair an occasion given, would show a coolness and indifference toward the service of God; whether they would desire time to consider and consult their friends, before they gave in an answer; that if any such should appear, they might set a mark upon them, and warn the rest to avoid them. [4.] He directs their choice in this matter, by an open declaration of his own resolutions. "But as for me and my house, whatsoever you do, we will serve the Lord, and I hope you will all be of the same mind." Here he resolves, First, For himself; As for me, I will serve the Lord. Note, The service of God is nothing below the greatest of men; it is so far from being a diminution and disparagement to princes and those of the first rank to be religious, that it is their greatest honour, and adds the brightest glory of all to them. Observe how positive he is, "I will serve God." It is no abridgment of our liberty to bind ourselves with a bond to God." Secondly, For his house, that is, his family, his children, and servants, such as were immediately under his eye and care, his inspection and influence. Joshua was a ruler, a judge in Israel, yet he will not make his necessary application to public affairs an excuse for the neglect of family-religion. Those that have the charge of many families, as magistrates and ministers, must take special care of their own, 1 Tim. 3, 4, 5. I and my house will serve God.

1. "Not my house, without me." He would not engage them to that work, which he would not set his own hand to. As some who would have their children and servants, not be so themselves; that is, they would have them go before, but intend to go to hell themselves. 2. "Not I, without my house." He supposes he might be forsaken by his people, but in his house, where his authority was greater, and more immediate, there he would overrule. Note, When we cannot bring as many as we would to the service of God, we must bring as many as we can, and extend our endeavours to the people to be instructed and trained up, and cannot reform the land, let us put away iniquity far from our own tabernacle. 3. "First, I, and then my house." Note, Those that lead and rule in other things, should be first in the service of God, and go before in the best things. Lastly, He resolves to do this, whatever others did. Though all the families of Israel should revolt from God, and serve idols, yet Joshua and his family will steadfastly ad
here to the God of Israel. Note, Those that resolve to serve God, must not mind being singular in it, nor be drawn by the crowd to forsake his service. Those that are bound for heaven, must be willing to stand against the stream, and must not do as the most do, but as the best do.

(2.) The matter being thus put to their choice, they immediately determine it by a free, rational, and intelligent, declaration, for the God of Israel, against all competitors whatsoever, v. 16-18.

Here, [1.] They concur with Joshua in this resolution, being influenced by the example of so great a man, whom they had been so great a blessing to. v. 18. We also will serve the Lord. See how much good great men might do, if they were but zealous in religion, by their influence on their inferiors. [2.] They startle at the thought of apostatising from God, v. 16. God forbid! the word intimates the greatest dread and detestation imaginable; "Far be it, far be it from us, that we or our's should ever forsake the Lord to serve other gods."

We must be lost to all sense of justice, gratitude, and honour, ere we can harbour the least thought of such a thing." Thus must our hearts rise against all temptations to desert the service of God: Get thee behind me, Satan. [3.] They give very substantial reasons for their choice, to show that they did not make it purely in compliance to Joshua, but from a full conviction of the reasonable-ness and equity of it. They make this choice for another reason. First, they knew, that of every kind things God had done for them, bringing them out of Egypt through the wilderness into Canaan, v. 17, 18. Thus they repeat to themselves Joshua's sermon, and then express their sincere compliance with the intentions of it. Secondly, Of the relation they stood in to God, and his covenant with them, "We will serve the Lord, v. 18, for he is our God, who has graciously engaged himself by promise to the covenant, from which we have by solemn vow engaged ourselves."

2. He brings them to embrace their religion resolutely, and to express a full purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. Now that he has them in a good mind, he follows his blow, and drives the nail to the head, that it might, if possible, be a nail in a sure place. Fast bind, fast find.

(1.) In order to this he sets before them the difficul-ties of religion, and the correction of religious stumbling, v. 19, 20. Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God, or as it is in the Hebrew, he is the holy Gods, intimating the mystery of the Trinity, three in one; holy, holy, holy, holy Father, holy Son, holy Spirit. He will not forgive. And if ye forsake him, he will do you hurt. Certainly Joshua does not intend hereby to deter them from the service of God as impracticable and dangerous. [1.] Perhaps he perhaps to repel the suggestions of seducers, who tempted Israel from their God, and from the service of him, with such insinuations as these, that he was a hard master, his work impossible to be done, and he not to be pleased, and if displeased, implacable and revengeful; that he would confine他们的 respects to himself only, and would not suffer them to show the least kind of affection to any other. They were very unlike the gods of the nations, which were easy, and neither holy nor jealous. It is probable that this was then commonly objected against the Jewish religion, as it has all along been the artifice of Satan ever since he tempted our first parents, thus to misrepresent God and his laws, as harsh and severe; and Joshua by his tone and manner of speaking might make them perceive he intended it as an objection, and would put it to them how they would keep their ground against the force of it. Or, [2.] He thus expresses his godly jealousy over them, and his fear concerning them, that, notwithstanding the professions they now made of zeal for God and his service, they would afterward draw from their great and holy God, and would find him just and jealous to avenge it. Or, [3.] He resolves to let them know the worst of it, and what strict terms they must expect to stand upon with God, that they might sit down and count the cost. "Ye cannot serve the Lord, except you put away all other gods, for he is holy and jealous, and will by no means admit a rival, and therefore you must be very watchful and careful, for it is at your peril, if you desire his service; better you had never known it." Thus though our Master has assured us that his yoke is easy, yet lest, upon the presumption of that, we should grow remiss and careless, he has also told us that the gate is straight, and the way narrow, that leads to life, that we may therefore strive to enter, and not seek only. "You cannot serve God and mammon; therefore if you resolve to serve God, you must renounce all competitions with him. You cannot serve God in your own strength, nor will he forgive your transgressions for any righteousness of your own; but all the seed of Israel must be justified and must glory in the Lord alone, as their righteous-ness and strength, Isa. 45. 24, 25. They must therefore come off from all confidence in their own sufficiency, else their purposes would be to no purpose. Or, [4.] Joshua thus urges upon them the seeming discouragements which lay in their way, and the difficulty of what they undertook, and his thoughts of their choice would make them draw from them a promise yet more expressive and solemn, that they would continue faithful to God and their religion. He draws it from them that they might catch at it the more earnestly, and hold it the faster.

(2.) Notwithstanding this statement of the difficulties of religion, they declared a firm and fixed resolution to continue and proceed in the service of the Lord, we will serve the Lord, we will serve the Lord, we will serve the Lord. This resolution they repeat with an explication, v. 24. "The Lord our God will we serve, not only be called his servants, and wear his livery, but our religion shall rule us in every thing, and his voice will we obey." And in vain do we call him Master and Lord, if we do not the things which he saith, Luke 6. 46. This last promise they make, in answer to the charge Joshua gave them, v. 23. that, in order to their perseverance, they should, [1.] Put away the images and relics of the strange gods, and not keep any of the tokens of those other lovers in their custody, if they resolved their Maker should be their Husband; they promise in this to obey his voice. [2.] That they should incline their hearts to the God of Israel, use their authority over their own hearts to engage for him, and not suffer the least thing to hinder their service for him, but to settle them so. These terms they agreed to, and thus, as Joshua explains the bargain, they strike it, The Lord our God will we serve.

II. The service of God being thus made their deliberate choice, Joshua binds them to it by a solemn covenant, v. 25. Moses had twice publicly ratified this covenant between God and Israel, at Mount Sinai, Exod. 24. and in the plains of Moab, Deut. 29. 1. Joshua had likewise done it once, ch. 8. 31, &c. and now the second time. It is here called a
statute and an ordinance, because of the strength and perpetuity of its obligation; and because even this covenant bound them to no more than what they were antecedently bound to by the divine command.

1. Here is Joseph buried, v. 32. He died about two hundred years before in Egypt, but gave commandment concerning his bones, that they should not rest in their grave until Israel had rest in the land of promise; now therefore, the children of Israel, who had brought this coffin full of bones with them out of Egypt, carried it along with them in all their marches through the wilderness; as of Ephraim and Manasseh, it is probable, taking particular care of it,) and kept it in their camp till Canaan was perfectly reduced, now at last they deposited it in that piece of ground which his father gave him near Shechem, Gen. 48. 22. Probably it was upon this occasion that Joshua called out for all Israel to meet him at Shechem, (v. 1.) to attend Joseph's coffin to the grave there; so that the sermon in this chapter served both for Joseph's funeral sermon, and his own farewell sermon; and if it was, as is supposed, in the last year of his life, the occasion might very well remind him of his own death being at hand, for he was now just at the same age that his illustrious ancestor Joseph was arrived at when he died, one hundred and ten years old; compare v. 29, with Gen. 50. 26.

JOSHUA, XXIV.

2. He put it in writing, and inserted it, as we find it here, in the sacred canon; he wrote it in the book of the law, v. 26. in that original which was laid up in the side of the ark, and from thence, probably, it was transcribed into the several copies which the princes had for the use of each tribe. There it was written, that their obligation to religion by the divine precept, and that to their own promise, might remain on record together.

2. He erected a memorandum of it, for the benefit of those who perhaps were not conversant with writing, v. 26, 27. He set up a great stone under an oak, as a monument of this covenant, and perhaps wrote an inscription upon it, (by which stones are made to speak,) signifying the intention of it. When he says, It had heard what was past, he tacitly upbraids the people with the hardness of their hearts, as if this stone had heard to as good purpose as some of them; and if they should forget what was now done, this stone would so far preserve the remembrance of it, as to reprove them for their stupidity and carelessness, and be a witness against them.

The matter being thus settled, Joshua dismissed this assembly of the grandees of Israel, v. 28. and took his last leave of them, well satisfied in having done his part, by which he had delivered his soul; if they perished, their blood would be upon their own heads.

29. And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old. 30. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash. 31. And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel. 32. And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for a hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph. 33. And Eleazar, the son of Aaron, died; and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim.

This book, which began with triumphs, here ends with funerals, by which all the glory of man is stained.
temporaries died, it went to decay, so much often
times does one head hold up: how well is it for the
gospel church, that Christ, our Joshua, is still with

it, by his Spirit, and will be always, even unto the
end of the world!

AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

UPON THE BOOK OF

JUDGES.

This is called in the Hebrew Sherpher Shophhtim, the Book of Judges, which the Syriac and Arabic ver-
sions enlarge upon, and call it, The Book of the Judges of the children of Israel; the judgments of that
nation being peculiar, so were their judges, whose office differed vastly from that of the Judges of our
nations. The LXX entitle it only Κρατος, Judges. It is the history of the commonwealth of Israel,
during the government of the Judges from Othniel to Eli; so much of it as God saw fit to transmit to
us. It contains the history (according to Dr. Lightfoot's computation) of two hundred and ninety-nine
years; reckoning to Othniel of Judah, forty years; to Ehud of Benjamin, eighty years; to Barak of
Naphtali, forty years; to Gideon of Manasseh, forty years; to Abimelech his son, three years; to Tola
of Issachar, twenty-three; to Jair of Manasseh, twenty-two; to Jephthah of Manasseh, six; to Ibzan of
Judah, seven; to Elon of Zebulon, ten; to Abdon of Ephraim, eight; to Samson of Dan, twenty; in all
two hundred and ninety-nine. As for the years of their servitude, as where Eglon is said to oppress
them eighteen years, and Jabin twenty years, and so some others, those must be reckoned to fall in
with some or other of the years of the Judges. The judges here appear to have been of eight several
tribes; that honour was thus diffused, until at last it centered in Judah. Eli and Samuel, the two Judges
that fell not within this book, were of Levi. It seems, there was no Judge of Reuben or Simeon, Gad or
Asher. The history of these Judges in their order we have in this book, to the end of ch. 16. And then
in the five last chapters we have an account of some particular memorable events which happened, as
the story of Ruth did, (Ruth 1.1.) in the days when the Judges ruled, but it is not certain in which
Judge's days; but they are put together at the end of the book, that the thread of the general history
might not be interrupted. Now as to the state of the commonwealth of Israel during this period.

I. They do not appear here either so great or so good as one might have expected the character of such
a peculiar people should have been; that were governed by such laws, and enriched by such promises.
We find them wretchedly corrupted and wretchedly oppressed, by their neighbours about them, and
no where in all the book, either in war or council, do they make any figure proportionable to their
honourable entry into Canaan. What shall we say to it? God would hereby show us the lamentable im-
perfection of all persons and things under the sun, that we may look for complete holiness and hap-
piness in the other world, and not in this. Yet,

II. We may hope that though the historian in this book enlarges most upon their provocations and griev-
ances, yet there was a face of religion upon the land; and however there were those among them, that
were drawn aside to idolatry, yet the tabernacle-service, according to the law of Moses, was kept up,
and there were many that attended it. Historians record not the common course of justice and com-
merce in a nation, taking that for granted, but only the wars and disturbances that happen; but the
reader must consider the other, to balance the blackness of them.

II. It should seem that in these times each tribe had very much its government in ordinary within it-
self, and acted separately, without one common head, or council, which occasioned many differences
among themselves, and kept them from being or doing anything considerable.

IV. The government of the Judges was not constant, but occasional, when it is said that after Ehud's
victory the land rested eighty years, and after Barak's forty, it is not certain that they lived, much less
that they governed, so long; but they and the rest were raised up and animated by the spirit of God to
do particular service to the public when there was occasion, to avenge Israel of their enemies, and to
purge Israel of their idolatries, which are the two things principally meant by their judging Israel. Ye
Deborah, as a prophetess, was attended for judgment by all Israel, before there was occasion for her
agency in war, ch. 4. 4.
V. During the government of the Judges, God was in a more especial manner Israel's king, so Samuel tells them when they were resolved to throw off this form of government, 1 Sam. 12. 12. God would try what his own law and the constitutions of that would do to keep them in order, and it proved that when there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes; he therefore, toward the latter end of this time, made the government of the judges more constant and universal than it was at first, and at length gave them David, a king after his own heart; then, and not till then, Israel began to flourish; which should make us very thankful for magistrates both supreme and subordinate, for they are ministers of God unto us for good. Four of the Judges of Israel are here canonized, Heb. 11. 32. Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah. The learned Bishop Patrick thinks the prophet Samuel was the penman of this Book.

JUDGES, 1.

CHAP. 1.

This chapter gives us a particular account of what sort of progress the several tribes of Israel made in the reducing of Canaan after the death of Joshua. He did (as we say) break the neck of that great work, and put it into such a posture, that they might easily have perfected it in due time, if they had not been wanting to themselves; what they did in order hereunto, and wherein they come short, we are here told. 1. The united tribes of Judah and Simeon did bravely. 1. God appointed Judah to begin, 

v. 1. 2. Judah took Simeon to act in conjunction with him, v. 3. 3. They succeeded in their enterprises against Bezek, (v. 4. 7.) Jerusalem, (v. 8.) Hebron and Debir, (v. 9. 15.) Hormah, Gaza, and other places, v. 17. 18. 4. Yet where there were chariots of iron, their hearts failed them, v. 19. Mention is made of the Kenites settling among them, v. 16. II. The other tribes, in comparison with these, acted a cowardly part. 1. Benjamin failed, v. 21. 2. The house of Joseph did well against Bethel, (v. 22. 26.) but in other places did not improve their advantages, nor Manasseh, (v. 27. 28.) nor Ephraim, v. 29. 3. Zebulun spared the Canaanites, v. 30. 4. Ashur truckled worse than any of them to the Canaanites, v. 31. 32. 5. Naphtali was kept out of the full possession of several of his cities, v. 33. 6. Dan was straitened by the Amorites, v. 34. No account is given of Issachar, nor of the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan.

1. NOW, after the death of Joshua, it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them ? 2. And the Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. 3. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go up with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him. 4. And Judah went up; and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men. 5. And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek; and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites. 6. But Adoni-bezek fled: and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. 7. And Adoni-bezek said, three-score and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath required me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died. 8. Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.

Here, I. The children of Israel consult the oracle of God for direction, which of all the tribes should first attempt to clear their country of the Canaanites, and to animate and encourage the rest. It was after the death of Joshua: while he lived, he directed them, and all the tribes were obedient to him; but when he died, he left no successor in the same authority that he had had: but the people must consult the breast-plate of judgment, and thence receive the word of command; for God himself, as he was their King, gave them their Laws, and directed them in all their actions. The question they ask is, Who shall go up first ? 1. By this time, we may suppose, they were so multiplied, that the places they were in possession of, began to be too strait for them, and they must thrust out the enemy to make room: now they inquire, who should first take up arms. Whether each tribe was ambitious of being first, and so strive for the honour of it, or whether each was afraid of being first, and so strive to decline it, does not appear; but by common consent the matter was referred to God himself, who is the fittest both to dispose of honours, and to cut out work. 2. God appointed that Judah should go up first, and promised him success; (v. 2.) "I have delivered the land into his hand to be possessed, and therefore will deliver the enemy into his hand, that keeps him out of possession, to be destroyed." And why must Judah be first in this undertaking? 1. Judah was the most numerous and powerful tribe, and therefore let Judah venture first. Note, God appoints service according to the strength he has given. These that are most able, from them most work is expected. 2. Judah was first in dignity, and therefore must be first in duty. He it is, whom his brethren must praise, and therefore he it is, who must lead in perilous services. Let the burden of honour and the burden of work go together. 3. Judah was first served; the lot came up for Judah first, and therefore Judah must first fight. 4. Judah was the tribe out of which our Lord was to spring: so that in Judah, Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, went before them. Christ engaged the powers of darkness first, and foiled them, which animates us for our conflicts; and it is in him that we are more than conquerors. Observe, The service and the success are put together: "Judah shall go up, let him do his part, and then he shall find, I have delivered the land into his hand." His service will not avail unless God give the success: but God will not give the success, unless he vigorously apply himself to the service.

III. Judah hereupon prepares to go up, but courts his brother and neighbour the tribe of Simeon (the rest of which tribe fell within that of Judah, and was assigned out of it) to join forces with him, v. 3. Ob.
serve here, 1. That the strongest should not despise, but desire the assistance even of those that are weaker. Judah was the most considerable of all the tribes, and Simeon the least considerable, and yet Judah begs Simeon's friendship, and prays an aid from him; the head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee, for we are members one of another. 2. Those that crave assistance, must be ready to give assistance; Come with me into my tent, and then I will go with thee into thine. It becomes forces to aid another in danger against Canaanites and all Christians, even those of different tribes, to strengthen one another's hands against the common interests of Satan's kingdom. Those who thus help one another in love, have reason to hope that God will graciously help them both.

IV. The confederate forces of Judah and Simeon take the field. Judah went up, (v. 4.) and Simeon with him, v. 5. Caleb, it is probable, was commandant of the chief expedition; for who could it be but he who had both an old man's head and a young man's hand; the experience of age and the vigour of youth! Josh. 14. 10, 11. It should seem too, by what follows, that he (v. 10, 11.) was not yet in possession of his own allotment. It was happy for them that they had such a general, as, according to his name, was all heart. Some think that the Canaanites were got together into a body, a formidable body, when Israel consulted who should go fight against them, that they might be afraid, and they heard of the death of Joshua, whose name had been so dreadful to them; but, if so, it proved they did but meddle to their own hurt.

V. God gave them great success. Whether they invaded the enemy, or the enemy first gave them the alarm, The Lord delivered them into their hand, v. 4. Though the army of Judah was strong and bold, yet the victory is attributed to God! he delivered the Canaanites into their hands; having given them authority, he here gives them ability to destroy them—put it in their power, and so tried their obedience to his command, which was utterly to cut them off. Bishop Patrick observes upon this, that we meet not with such religious expressions in the heathen writers, concerning the success of their arms, as we have here and elsewhere in this sacred history. I wish such pious acknowledgments of the Divine Providence were not grown into disuse at this day, and that they should continue as ours.

Now, 1. We are told how the army of the Canaanites was routed in the field, in or near Bezek, the place where they drew up, which afterward Saul made the place of a general rendezvous; (1 Sam. 11. 8.) they slew ten thousand men, which blow, if followed, could not but be a very great weakening to those that were brought already so very few. 2. How their king was taken and mortified. His name was Adoni-bezek, which signifies, lord of Bezek. There have been those that called their lands by their own names, (Ps. 49. 11.) but here was one (and there has been many another) that called himself by his land's name. He was taken prisoner after the battle, and we are here told how they used him; they cut off his thumbs, to disfigure him for fighting, and his great toes, that he might not be able to run away, v. 6. It had been barbarous thus to treat a sovereign, it was mere mischief, and he had no mercy, but that he was a devoted Canaanite, and one that had in like manner abused others, which, probably, they had heard of. Josephus says, "They cut off his hands and his feet," probably supposing those more likely to be mortal wounds, than only the cutting off his thumbs and his great toes. But this indignity which they did him, extorted from him an acknowledgment of the righteousness of God. v. 7. Where observe, (1.) What a grudging man this Adoni-bezek had been; how great in the field, where armies fled before him, how great at home, where kings were run with the dogs of his flock; and yet now himself a captive, and reduced to the extremity of meanness and disgrace. See how changeable this world is, and how slippery its high places are. Let not the highest be proud, nor the strongest secure, for they know not how low they may be brought before they die. (2.) What desolation he had made among his neighbours, he had wholly subdued seventy kings, to that degree so as to have them his prisoners; he that was the chief person in a city, was then called a king, and his greatness of their title did but aggravate their disgrace, and fired the pride of him that insulted over them. We cannot suppose that Adoni-bezek had seventy of these petty princes at once his slaves, but first and last, in the course of his reign, he had thus deposed and abused so many, who perhaps were many of them kings of the same cities that successively opposed him, and whom he thus treated to plesse his own imperious barbarous fancy, and for a terror to others. It seems, the Canaanites had been wasted by civil wars, and those bloody ones, among themselves, which would very much facilitate the conquest of them by Israel. "Judah," says Dr. Lightfoot, "in conquering Adoni-bezek, did, in effect, conquer seventy kings." (3.) How justly he was treated as he had treated others. Thus the righteous God sometimes, in his providence, makes the punishment to be just in proportion to the crime, and shows an equality in his judgments; the spoiler should be spoiled, and the treacherous dealer dealt treacherously with, Isa. 33. 1. And they that showed no mercy, shall have no mercy shown them, Jam. 2. 13. See Rev. 13. 10.—18. 6. (4.) How honestly he owned the righteousness of God herein. As I have done, so God has required me. See the power of conscience, when God by his judgments awakens it, how it brings sin to remembrance, and subscribes to the justice of God. He that in his pride had set God at defiance, now yields to him, and reflects with as much regret upon the kings under his table, as ever he had looked upon them with pleasure when he had them there. He seems to own that he was better dealt with than he had dealt with his prisoners; for though the Israelites maimed him, (according to the law of retaliation, an eye for an eye, so a thumb for a thumb,) yet he did not break his neck, nor put his head on the crumbs there; because, though the other might well be looked upon as an act of justice, that would have savoured more of pride and haughtiness that did become an Israelite.

VI. Particular notice is taken of the conquest of Jerusalem, v. 8. Our translators judge it spoken of here, as done formerly in Joshua's time, and only repeated on occasion of Adoni-bezek's dying there, and therefore read it, "they had fought against Jerusalem," and put this verse in a parenthesis; but the original speaks of it as a thing now done; and that seems most probable, because it is said to be done by the children of Judah in particular, not by all Israel in general, whom Joshua commanded. Joshua indeed conquered and slew Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, Josh. 10. but we read not there of his taking the city; probably, while he was purifying his city, he had lain asleep in the harbour, and his neighbouring prince, got possession of it, whom, having conquered in the field, the city fell into their hands, and they slew the inhabitants, except those who retreated into the castle, and held out there till David's time, and they set the city on fire, in token of their devastation of the idolatry with which it had been deeply infected, yet, probably, not so utterly to consume it, but to leave convenient habitations for as many as they had to put into the possession of it.
9. And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley. 10. And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron, (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba,) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai. 11. And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir; (and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher:) 12. And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. 13. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. 14. And it came to pass, when she came to him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou? 15. And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south land, give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs. 16. And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm-trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad: and they went and dwelt among the people. 17. And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it: (And the name of the city was called Hormah.) 18. Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Ashkelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof. 19. And the Lord was with Judah, and he drew out the inhabitants of the mountain, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron. 20. And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

We have here a further account of that glorious and successful campaign which Judah and Simeon made.

1. The lot of Judah was pretty well cleared of the Canaanites, yet not thoroughly. Those that dwelt in the mountain (the mountains that were round about Jerusalem) were driven out, (v. 9, 19,) but those in the valley kept their ground against them, having chariots of iron, such as we read of, Josh. 17, 16. Here the men of Judah failed, and thereby spoiled the influence, which otherwise their example hitherto might have had on the rest of the tribes, who followed them in this instance of their cowardice, rather than in all the other instances of their courage. They had iron chariots, and therefore it was thought not safe to attack them; but had not Israel God on their side, whose chariots are thousands of angels, (Ps. 68, 17,) before whom these iron chariots would be but as stubble to the fire? Had not God expressly promised by the oracle, (v. 2,) to give them success against the Canaanites in this very expedition, without excepting those that had iron chariots? Yet they suffered their fears to prevail against their faith, they could not trust God under any disadvantages, and therefore durst not face their iron chariots, but meekly withdrew their forces, then when with one bold stroke they might have completed their victories; and it proved of pernicious consequence. They did run well, what hindered them? Gal. 5, 7.

2. Caleb was put in possession of Hebron, which, though given him by Joshua ten or twelve years ago, (as Dr. Lightfoot computes,) yet being employed in public service, for the settling of the tribes, which was determined before the expiry of forty years, it seems he did not till now make himself master of; so well content was that good man to serve others, while he left himself to be served last; few men are like-minded, for all seek their own, Phil. 2, 23, 21. Yet now the men of Judah all came in to his assistance for the reducing of Hebron, (v. 10,) slew the sons of Anak, and put him in possession of it, v. 20. They gave Hebron unto Caleb. And now Caleb, that he might return the kindness of his countrymen, is impatient to see Debir reduced, and put into the hands of the men of Judah, to expedite which, he proffers his daughter to the person that will undertake to command in the siege of that important place, v. 11, 12. Othniel bravely undertakes it, and wins the town and the lady; (v. 13,) and by his wife's interest and management with her father, gains a city. But afterward they returned himself and family, v. 14, 15. We had this passage before, Josh. 15, 16-19, where it was largely explained and improved.

3. Simeon got ground of the Canaanites in his border, v. 17, 18. In the eastern part of Simeon's lot, they destroyed the Canaanites in Zephath, and called it Hormah, destruction; adding this to some other devoted cities not far off, which they had some time ago, with that reason, called by that name, Numb. 21, 2, 3. And this perhaps was the complete performance of the vow they then made, that they would utterly destroy these cities of the Canaanites in the south. In the western part they took Gaza, Askalon, and Ekron, cities of the Philistines; they gained present possession of the cities, but not destroying the inhabitants, the Philistines retreated in process of time recovered the cities, and proved inveterate enemies to the Israel of God, and no better could come of doing their work by the halves.

4. The Kenites gained a settlement in the tribe of Judah, choosing it there, rather than in any other tribe, because it was the strongest, and there they hoped to be safe and quiet, v. 16. These were the posterity of Jethro, who either went with Israel when Moses invited them, (Num. 10, 29,) or met them about the same place, when they came up from their wanderings in the wilderness thirty-eight years after, and went with them then to Canaan, Moses having promised them that they should fare as Israel fared, Numb. 10, 32. They had at first seated themselves in the city of palm trees, that is, Jericho, a city which never was to be rebuilt, and therefore the fitter for them who dwelt in tents, and did not need public buildings; and they were removed into the wilderness of Judah, either out of their affection to that tribe, which perhaps had been in a particular manner kind to them. Yet we find the tent of Jael, who was of that family, far north, in the lot of Naphtali, when Sisera took shelter there, ch. 4, 17. This respect Israel showed them to let them fix where they pleased, being a quiet people, who, wherever they were, were content with a little. They that molested none, were molested by none. Blessed are the meek, for thus they shall inherit the earth.
21. And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day. 22. And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Beth-el: and the LORD was with them. 23. And the house of Joseph sent to descry Beth-el: (Now the name of the city before was Luz.) 24. And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city; and they said unto him, Show us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will show thee mercy. 25. And when he showed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all his family. 26. And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which is the name thereof unto this day. 27. Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites dwelt in that land. 28. And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out. 29. Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them. 30. Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries. 31. Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Acco, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Aklab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob: 32. But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out. 33. Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became tributaries unto them. 34. And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley: 35. But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Ajalon, and in Shaalbim; yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries. 36. And the coast of the Amorites was from the going up to Akkrabbim, from the rock, and upward.

We are here told upon what terms the rest of the tribes stood with the Canaanites that remained.

I. Benjamin neglected to drive the Jebusites out of that part of the city of Jerusalem which fell to their lot, v. 21. Judah had set them a good example, and gained them great advantages by what they did, (v. 9.) but they did not follow the bow for want of resolution.

II. The house of Joseph bestirred themselves a little to get possession of Beth-el, v. 22. That this city is mentioned in the tribe of Benjamin, Josh. 18. 22. Yet it is spoken of there, (v. 13.) as a city in the borders of that tribe, and it should seem, the line went through it, so that one half of it only belonged to Ephraim, the other half to Benjamin; perhaps the activity of the Ephraimites at this time, to recover it from the Canaanites, secured it entirely to them from henceforward, or at least the greatest part of it, for afterward we find it so much under the power of the ten tribes, (and Benjamin was none of them,) that Jeroboam set up one of his calves in it. In this account of the expedition of the Ephraimites against Beth-el, observe, 1. Their interest in the divine favour. The Lord was with them, and would give them the victory; 2. The tribes of the north asserted their strength. The Chaldee reads it here, as in many other places, The word of the Lord was their Helper, namely, Christ himself, the Captain of the Lord's host, now that they acted separately, as well as when they were all in one body. 2. The prudent measures they took to gain the city. They sent spies to observe what part of the city was weakest, or which way they might make their attack with most advantage, v. 23. These spies got very good information from a man they providentially met with, who showed them a private way into the town, which was therefore left unguarded, because, being not generally known, no danger was suspected on that side. And here, (1.) He is not to be blamed for giving them this intelligence, if he did it from a conviction that the Lord was with them, and that by his donation the land was theirs of right, any more than Rahab was for entertaining those whom she knew to be enemies of her country, but friends of God. Nor, (2.) Are they to be blamed who showed him mercy, gave him and his family not only their lives, but liberty to go wherever they pleased: for one good turn requires another. But, it seems, he would not join himself to the people of Israel, he feared them rather than loved them, and therefore he removed after a colony of the Hittites, which, it should seem, he sent into Arabia, and settled there upon Joshua's invasion of the country; with them this man chose to dwell, and among them he built a city, a small one, we may suppose, such as planters used to build, and in the name of it preserved the ancient name of his native city, Luz, an almond tree, preferring that before its new name which carried religion in it, Beth-el, the house of God. 3. Their success; the spies brought back good news of it, and the men of the army, which improved their advantages, surprised the city, and put them all to the sword, v. 25. But beside this achievement, it seems, the children of Joseph did nothing remarkable. (1.) Manasseh failed to drive out the Canaanites from several very considerable cities in their lot, and did not make any attempt upon them, v. 27. But the Canaanites being in possession, were resisted. (2.) Ephraim, though they were strong, and Manasseh had not resolution enough to offer to dispossess them; as if there were no meddling with them, unless they were willing to resign, which it was not to be expected they ever would be. Only as Israel got strength, they got ground, and served themselves, both by their contributions, and by their personal services, v. 28, 35. (2.) Ephraim likewise, though a powerful tribe neglected Gezer.
a considerable city, and suffered the Canaanites to dwell among them, (v. 29.) which some think, intimates their allowing them a quiet settlement, and indulging them the privileges of an unconquered people, not so much as making them their tributaries.

III. Zebulun, perhaps inclining to the sea-trade, for it was foretold that it should be a haven for ships, neglected to reduce Kitron and Nahalol, (v. 30.) and only made the inhabitants of those places tributaries to them.

IV. Asher quitted itself worse than any of the tribes, (v. 31, 32.) not only in leaving more towns than any of them to the hands of the Canaanites, but in submitting to the Canaanites, instead of making them tributaries; for so the manner of expression intimates, that the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, as if the Canaanites were the more numerous, and the more powerful, would still be lords of the country, and the Israelites must be only upon sufferance among them.

V. Naphtali, also permitted the Canaanites to live among them, (v. 33.) only by degrees they got them so far under as to exact contributions from them.

VI. Dan was so far from extending his conquests there where his lot lay, that, wanting spirit to make head against the Amorites, he was forced by them to retire into the mountains and inhabit the cities there, but durst not venture into the valley, where, it is probable, the chariots of iron were, v. 34. Nay, and some of the cities in the mountains were kept against them, v. 35. Thus were they straitened in their possessions, and forced to seek for more room at Laish, a great way off, ch. 18. 1, 26. In Jacob's blessing, Judah is compared to a lion, Dan to a serpent; now observe how Judah with his lion-like courage prospered and prevailed, but Dan with all his serpentine subtilty could get no ground; craft and artful management do not always effect the wonders they pretend to. What Dan came short of doing, it seems his neighbours the Ephraimites in part did for him; they put the Amorites under tribute, v. 35.

Upon the whole matter, it appears that the people of Israel were generally very careless both of their duty and interest in this thing; they did not what they might have done to expel the Canaanites and make room for themselves. A sin owing to their slothfulness and cowardice; they would not be at the pains to complete their conquests; like the sluggard, that dreamed of a lion in the way, a lion in the streets, they fancied insuperable difficulties, and frightened themselves with winds and clouds from sowing and reaping. 2. It was owing to their covetousness; the Canaanites' labour and money would do them more good (they thought) than their blood, and therefore they were willing to let them live among them, that they might make a hand of them. 3. They had not that dread and detestation of idolatry, which they ought to have had; they thought it pity to put these Canaanites to the sword, though the measure of their iniquity was full; thought it would be no harm to let them live among them, and that they should be in no danger from them. 4. The same thing that kept their fathers forty years out of Canaan, kept them now out of the full possession of it, and that was, unbelief. Distrust of the power and promise of God lost them their advantages, and ran them into a thousand mischifes.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, we have, I. A particular message which God sent to Israel by an angel, and the impression it made upon them, v. 1. - 3. II. A general idea of the state of Israel during the government of the Judges. In which observe, 1. Their adherence to God while Joshua and the elders lived, v. 6. - 10. 2. Their revolt afterward to idolatry, v. 11. - 13. 3. God's displeasure against them, and his judgment upon them for it, v. 14. - 15. 4. His pity toward them, showed in raising them up deliverers, v. 16, 18. 5. Their relapse into idolatry after the judgment was over, v. 17, 19. 6. The full stop God in anger put to their success, v. 20. - 23. These are the contents, not only of this chapter, but of the whole book.

1. AND an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. 2. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? 3. Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and your gods shall be a snare unto you. 4. And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. 5. And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the Lord.

It was the privilege of Israel, that they had not only a law in general sent them from heaven, once for all, to direct them into, and keep them in, the way to happiness, but that they had particular messages sent them from heaven, as there was occasion, i.e. reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, when at any time they turned aside out of that way. Beside the written word which they had before them to read, they often heard a word behind them, saying, This is the way, Isa. 30. 21. Here begins that way of God's dealing with them. When they would not hear Moses, let it be tried whether they will hear the prophets. In these verses we have a very awakening sermon that was preached to them when they began to cool in their religion.

I. The preacher was an angel of the Lord, (v. 1.) not a prophet, not Phinehas, as the Jews conject; gospel ministers are indeed called angels of the churches, but the Old Testament prophets are never called angels of the Lord; no doubt, this was a messenger from heaven. Such extraordinary messengers we sometimes find in this book, employed in the raised up of the Judges that delivered Israel, as Gideon and Samson, and now, to show how various the good offices are they do for God's Israel, here is one sent to preach to them, to prevent their falling into sin and trouble. This extraordinary messenger was sent to command, if possible, their great regard to the message, and to affect the minds of a people, whom nothing seemed to affect but what was sensible. The learned Bishop Patrick is clearly of opinion, that this was not a created angel, but the angel of the covenant; the same that appeared to Joshua as Captain of the Hosts of the Lord, who was God himself. Christ himself, says Dr. Lightfoot; who but God and Christ could say, I made you to go up out of Egypt? Joshua had lately admonished them to take heed of entangling themselves with the Canaanites, but they regarded not the words of a dying man; the same warning therefore is here brought them by the living God himself, the Son of God appearing as an angel. If they slight his servants, surely they
will reverence his Son. This angel of the Lord is said to come up from Gilgal, perhaps not walking on the earth, but flying swiftly, as the angel Gabriel did to Daniel, in the form of a man, yet very, but whether walking or flying, he seemed to come from Gilgal, for a particular reason; Gilgal was long their head quarters after they came into Canaan, many signal favours they had there received from God, and there the covenant of circumcision was renewed, (Mic. 6. 5.) of which it was designed they should be reminded by his coming from Gilgal. The remembrance of what we have received and heard, will prepare us for a warning to hold fast, Rev. 3. 2, 3. 

II. The persons to whom this sermon was preached, were {all the children of Israel, v. 4.} A great congregation for a great preacher! They were assembled either for war, each tribe sending in its forces for some great expedition, or rather for worship, and then the place of their meeting must be Shiloh, where the tabernacle was, at which they were all to come together, three times a year. When we attend upon God in instituted ordinances, we may expect to hear from him, and to receive his gifts at his own gates. The place is called Bechim, (v. 1.) because it gained that name upon this occasion. All Israel need the reproof and warning here given, and therefore it is spoken to them all. 

III. The sermon itself is short, but very close. God here tells them plainly, 1. What had done for them, v. 1. He had brought them out of Egypt, a land of slavery and toil, into Canaan, a land of rest, liberty, and plenty. The miseries of the one served as a foil to the felicities of the other. God had here been kind to them, true to the oath sworn to their fathers, had given such proofs of his power as left them insensible if they distrusted it, and such engagement to his service, as left them, insensible if they deserted it. 2. What he had promised, I will never break covenant with you. When he took them to be his peculiar people, it was not with any design to cast them off again, or to change them for another people at his pleasure; let them but be faithful to him, and they should find him unchangeably constant to them. He told them plainly that the covenant he entered into with them should never break, unless it broke on their side. 3. What were his just and received and heard. The reason why he had entered into covenant with God, they should make no league with the Canaanites, who were both his enemies and theirs. That having set up his altar, they should throw down their altars, lest they should be a temptation to them to serve their gods. Could any thing be demanded more easy? 4. How they had in this very thing, which he had most insisted on, disobeyed him. "But ye have not in all the land of Canaan obeyed my voice in contempt of their covenant with God, and their confedency with each other in that covenant, they made leagues of friendship with the idolatrous devoted Canaanites, and connived at their altars, though they stood in competition with God's: "Why have ye done this? What account can you give of this perverseness of your's at the bar of right reason? How can you make us believe for yourselves, or what excuse can you offer?" They that throw off their communion with God, and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, know not what they do now, and will have nothing to say for themselves in the day of account shortly. 5. How they must expect to smart by and by for this their folly, v. 3. Their tolerating of the Canaanites among them would, (1. Put a period to their victories: "You will not drive them out," says God, "and therefore I will not:" thus their sin was made their punishment. Thus they who indulge their lusts and corruptions, which they should mortify, forfeit the grace of God, and it is justly withdrawn from them. If we will not resist evil, God will not resist us. (2.) It would involve them in continual troubles. "They shall be thorns in your sides to grieve you, which way soever you turn, always doing you one mischief or other." Those deceive themselves, who expect advantage by friendship with those that are enemies to God. (3.) It would (which was worst of all) expose them to constant temptation, and draw them to sin. "Their "shelves, (their altars, so the Chaldee) will be a snare to you, you will find yourselves wretchedly entangled in an affection to them, and it will be your ruin;" so some read it. Those that approach sin, are justly left to themselves to fall into sin, and to perish in it. God often makes men sin, their punishment; and thorns and snares are in the way of the froward, who will walk contrary to God.

IV. The good success of this sermon is very remarkable—the people lifted up their voice and wept, v. 4. 1. The angel had told them of their sins, which they thus expressed their sorrow for; they lifted up their voice in confession of sin, crying out against their own folly and ingratidity, and wept, as those that were both ashamed of themselves, and angry at themselves, as having acted so directly contrary both to their reason and to their interest. 2. The angel had threatened, and now met with the judgment of God, which they thus expressed their dread of; they lifted up their voice in prayer to God to turn away his wrath from them, and wept for fear of that wrath. They relented upon this alarm, and their hearts melted within them, and trembled at the word, and not without cause. This was good, and a sign that the word they heard, made an impression upon them; it is certain sinners can ever read their Bibles with dry eyes: but this was not enough; they wept, but we do not find that they reformed, that they went home and destroyed all the remains of idolatry and idolaters among them. Many are melted under the word, that harden again, before they are cast into a new mould. However, this general weeping, (1.) Gave a new name to the place, (v. 5.) they called it Bochim, Weepers, a good name to the place: for they, having kept close to God and their duty, no voice but that of singing had been heard in their congregation; but by their sin and folly they had made other work for themselves, and now nothing is to be heard but the voice of weeping. (2.) It gave occasion for a solemn sacrifice; they sacrificed there unto the Lord, being (as is supposed) met at Shiloh, where God's altar was. They offered sacrifice to turn away God's wrath, and to obtain his favour, and in token of their dedication of themselves to him, and to him only, making a covenant by this sacrifice. The disease being thus taken in time, and the physic administered working so well, one would have hoped a cure might have been effected. But by the sequel of the story, it appears to have been too deeply rooted to be wept out. 

6. And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. 7. And the people served the Lord all the days of Josua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Josua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel. 8. And Josua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being
a hundred and ten year; old. 9. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. 10. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. 11. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: 12. And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. 13. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashhtaroth. 14. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. 15. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

16. Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. 17. And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord; but they did not so. 18. And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the Lord because of their groanings, by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. 19. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them: they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way. 20. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice, 21. I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died; 22. That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord, to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. 23. Therefore the Lord left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

The beginning of this paragraph is only a repetition of what account we had before of the people's good character, during the government of Joshua, and of his death and burial, Josh. 24. 29, 30. Which comes in here again, only to make way for the following account, with this chapter, of their degeneracy and apostasy. The angel had foretold that the Canaanites and their idols would be a snare to Israel: now the historian undertakes to show that they were so, and that they may appear the more clear, he looks back a little, and takes notice, 1. Of their happy settlement in the land of Canaan. Joshua, having distributed this land among them, dismissed them to the out and comfortable possession of it, v. 6. He sent them away, not only every tribe, but every man to his inheritance, no doubt, giving them his blessing. 2. Of their continuance in the faith and fear of God's holy name as long as Joshua lived, v. 7. As they went to their possessions with good resolutions to serve God, so they persisted for some time in these good resolutions, as long as they had good rulers that set them good examples, gave them patterns, and reproved and restrained the corruptions that crept in among them; and as long as they had in remembrance the great things God did for them when he brought them into Canaan: they that had seen these wonders, had so much sense as to believe their own eyes, and so much reason as to serve that God who had appeared so gloriously on their behalf; but they that followed, because they had not seen and believed the great works of God, and the evidence of the hand of Joshua, which gave a fatal stroke to the interests of religion among the people, v. 8, 9. Yet so much sense they had of their obligations to him, that they did him honour at his death, and buried him in Timnath-heres; so it is called here, not, as in Joshua, Timnath-serah. Heres signifies the sun; a representation of which, some think, was set upon his sepulchre, and gave name to it, in remembrance of the sun's standing still at his word. So divers of the Jewish writers say; but I much question whether an image of the sun would be allowed to the honour of Joshua, at that time, when, by reason of men's general proneness to worship the sun, it would be in danger of being abused to the dishonour of God. 4. Of the rising of a new generation, v. 10. All that generation in a few years wore off, their good instructions and examples died, and were buried with them, and there arose another generation of Israelites who had so little sense of religion, and were in so little care about it, that notwithstanding all the advantages of their education, one might truly say, that they knew not the Lord, knew him not at all, knew him not as he had revealed himself, else they would not have forsaken him. They were so entirely devoted to the world, so intent upon the business of this world, and so indulgent of the flesh in case and luxury, that they never minded the true God and his holy religion, and so were easily drawn aside to false gods and their abominable superstitions.

And so he comes to give us a general idea of the series of things in Israel, during the time of the Judges; the same repeated in the same order.

The people of Israel forsook the God of Israel, and gave that worship and honour to the deities of the Canaanites, which was due to him alone, Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and wonder, O earth! Hath a nation, such a nation, so well fed, so well taught, changed its God, such a God,
God of infinite power, unpolluted purity, inexhaustible goodness, and so very jealous of a competitor, for stocks and stones that could do neither good nor evil? Jer. 2. 11, 12. Never was there such an instance of folksy, ingratitude, and perfidiousness. Observe how it is described here, v. 11, 15. In general, they did evil, nothing could be more evil, than this, God was their God, and they turned against his worship. They forsook the Lord; Jer. 19. 4. They forsook the worship of the Lord, so the Ch. tell: for they that forsoke the worship of God, do in effect forsoke himself. It aggravated this, that he was the God of their fathers, so that they were born in his house, and therefore bound to serve him; and that he brought them out of the land of Egypt, he loosed their bonds, and upon that account also they were obliged to serve him. 2. When they forsook God, they were so fully persuaded, not nor were they such fools as to say, There is no God; but they followed other gods: so much remained of pure nature as to own a God, yet so much appeared of corrupt nature as to multiply gods, and to take up with any, and to follow the fashion, not the rule, in religious worship. Israel had the honour of being a peculiar people, and dignified above all others, and yet so false were they to their own privileges, that they were fond of the gods of the heathen that were round about them. Baal and Ashtaroth, he-gods and she-gods; they made their court to sun, and moon, Jupiter and Juno. Baalim signifies lords, and Ashtaroth, blessed ones, both plural, for when they forsook Jehovah, whom is one, they had gods many, and lords many, as a luxuriant fancy pleased to multiply them. Whatever they took for their gods, they served them, and bowed down to them, gave honour to them, and begged favours from them.

II. The God of Israel was hereby provoked to anger, and delivered them up into the hand of their enemies, v. 14, 15. He was wrath with them, for he is a jealous God, and true to the honour of his own name; and the way he took to punish them for their apostasy, was, to make those their tormentors whom they yielded to as their temple. They made them the moan and panting of forsaking God, as they would have been great and happy if they had continued faithful to him. 1. The scale of victory turned against them. After they forsook God, whenever they took the sword in hand, they were as sure to be beaten as before they had been sure to conquer. Formerly, their enemies could not stand before them, but wherever they went, the hand of Jehovah was on them; but now that their fall was not so in the religious, God suspended his favour, stopped the progress of their successors, and would not drive out their enemies any more, (v. 3.) only suffered them to keep their ground: but now, when they were quite revoluted to idolatry, the war turned directly against them, and they could not any longer stand before their enemies. God would rather give the success to those that had never known nor observed the truth, than to those that had seen it and despised it. When they came to see that he himself was turned to be their enemy, and fought against them, Isa. 63. 10. 2. The balance of power then turned against them of course. Whoever would, might spoil them; whoever would, might oppress them; God sold them into the hands of their enemies; not only he deliver ed them up freely, as we do that which we have sold, but he did it upon a valuable consideration, that he might get himself honour as a jealous God, who would not spare even his own peculiar people when they provoked him. He sold them as insol vent debtors are sold, (Matth. 18. 23.) by their sufferings to make some sort of reparation to his glory for the injury it sustained by their apostasy. Observe how their punishment, (1.) Answered what they had done; they suffered more, provoked the nations that were round about them, even the meanest, and God made them serve the princes of the nations that were round about them, even the meanest.

He that is company for every fool, is justly made a fool of by every company. (2.) How it answered what God had spoken. The hand of heaven was thus turned against them, as the Lord had said, and so the Lord was with them, (v. 15.) referring to the curse and death set before them in the covenant, with the blessing and life. Those that have found God true to his promises, may from thence infer that he will be as true to his threatenings.

III. The God of infinite mercy took pity on them, in their distresses, though they had brought themselves into their own sin and folly, and wrought deliverance for them. Nevertheless, they had not turned from the worship of the name of God, and the accomplishment of God's word, yet they were in process of time saved out of their troubles, v. 16-18. Where observe, 1. The inducement of their deliverance. It came purely from God's pity and tender compassion, the reason was fetched from within himself. It is not said, It repented him because of their iniquities, (for it appears, v. 17. that many of them continued unreformed,) but, It repented the Lord because of their groanings; though it is not so much the burden of sin, as the burden of affliction, that they are said to groan under. It was true, they desired to perish for ever under his curse, yet this being the day of his patience and our probation, he does not stir up all his wrath. He might in justice have abandoned them, but he could not for pity do it. 2. The instruments of their deliverance; God did not send angels from heaven to do it, or bring in any foreign power for their rescue, but raised up judges from among themselves, as there was occasion, men to whom God gave extraordinary qualifications for, and calls to, that special service for which they were designed, which was to reform and deliver Israel, and whose great attempts he crowned with wonderful success; the Lord was with the judges when he raised them up; and they became famous. Observe, (1.) In the days of great degeneracy and distress of the church, there shall be some whom God will either find or make fit to redress its grievances, and set things to rights. (2.) God must be acknowledged in the seasonable rising up of useful men for public service. He endues men with wisdom and courage, gives them hearts to act and venture. All that are in any way saved from sin and destruction are the instruments as the gifts of God. (3.) Whom God calls, he will own, and give them his presence; whom he raises up, he will be with. (4.) The judges of a land are its saviours.

IV. The degenerate Israelites were not effectually and thoroughly reformed, no not by their judges, v. 17-19. I. Even while their judges were with them, and active in their work, there were those that would not hearken to their judges, but at that very time went a whoring after other gods; so mad were they upon their idols, and so obstinately bent to backslide. They had been espoused to God, but broke the marriage-covenant, and went a whoring after false gods. Idolatry is spiritual adultery; so vile and base and pernicious a thing is it, and so hardly are those reclaimed, that are addicted to it. 2. Those that in the times of revers-
In this chapter. 1. A general account of Israel's enemies is premised, and of the mischief they did them, v. 1-7. II. A particular account of the brave exploits done by the three first of the judges. 1. Othniel, whom God raised up to fight Israel's battles, and plead their cause against the king of Mesopotamia, v. 8-11. 2. Ehud, who was employed in rescuing Israel out of the hands of the Moabites, and did it by stabbing the king of Moab, v. 12-30. 3. Shamgar, who signalized himself in an encounter with the Philistines, v. 31.

1. NOW these are the nations which the Lord left, to prove Israel by them, (even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan;) 2. Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing (thereof;) 3. Namely, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hitites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath. 4. And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. 5. And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hitites, and Jebusites: 6. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods. 7. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves.

We are here told what remained of the old inhabitants of Canaan. 1. There were some of them that kept together in united bodies, unbroken; (v. 3.) The five lords of the Philistines, namely, Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron, 1 Sam. 6. 17. Three of these cities had been in part reduced, (ch. 1. 18.) yet it seems, the Philistines (probably with the help of the other two, which strengthened their confederacy with each other from thenceforward) recovered the possession of them. These gave the greatest disturbance to Israel of any of the natives, especially in the latter times of the Judges, and they were never quite reduced until David did it. There was a particular nation called Canaanites, that kept their ground with the Sidonians, upon the coast of the great sea; And in the north the Hitivites held much of mount Lebanon, it being a remote corner, in which perhaps they were supported by some of the neighbouring states. But beside these, 2. There were everywhere in all parts of the country some scatterings of the nations; (v. 5.) Hittites, Amorites, &c. which by Israel's foolish connivance and indulgence, were so set on foot, and so increased, that the children of Israel are said to dwell among them, as if the right had still remained in the Canaanites, and the Israelites had been taken in by their permission, and only as tenants at will.

Now concerning these remnants of the natives, observe,

1. How wisely God permitted them to remain. It had been mentioned in the close of the foregoing chapter, as an act of God's justice, that he let them remain for Israel's correction. But here another
conclusion is put upon it, and it appears to have been an act of God's wisdom, that he let them remain for Israel's real advantage, that those who had not known the wars of Canaan, might learn war, v. 1. 2. It was the will of God that the people of Israel should be inured to war, 1. Because their country was exceeding rich and fruitful, and abounded with dainties of all sorts, which, if they were not sometimes made to know hardship, would be in danger of sinking them into the utmost degree of luxury and effeminacy. They must sometimes wade in blood, and not always in milk and honey, lest even their men of war, by the long disuse of arms, should become as soft and nice as the tender and delicate woman, that would not set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy; a temper as destructive to everything that is good, as it is to everything that is great, and them least to be carefully watched by all God's Israel. 2. Because their country lay very much in the midst of enemies, by whom they must expect to be insulted; for God's heritage was as a speckled bird, the birds round about were against her, Jer. 12. 9. It was therefore necessary they should be well disciplined, that they might defend their coasts when invaded, and might hereafter enlarge their coast as God had promised them. They must learn by experience, which not only acquaints men with martial discipline, but (which is no less necessary) inspires them with a martial disposition. It was for the interest of Israel to breed soldiers, as it is the interest of an island to breed seamen, and therefore God left Canaanites among them, that, by the lesser difficulties and hardships they met with in encountering them, they might be prepared for greater; and, by prudent Bishop Patrick offers an another sense of ch. 2, that they might know to teach them war, that is, they shall know what it is to be left to themselves. Their fathers fought by a divine power, God taught their hands to war and their fingers to fight; but now that they have forfeited his favour, let them learn what it is to fight like other men.

II. How wickedly Israel mingled themselves with those that did remain. One thing God intended among them, was to prepare Israel, (v. 4,) that those who were faithful to the God of Israel, might have the honour of resisting the Canaanites' allurements to idolatry, and that those who were false and insincere, might be discovered, and might fall under the shame of yielding to these allurements. Thus in the christian churches there must needs be heresies, that they which are perfect may be made manifest, 1 Cor. 11. 19. Israel, up to that, proved bad. 1. They joined in marriage with the Canaanites, (v. 6,) though they could not advance either their honour or estate by marrying with them. They would mar their blood instead of mending it, and sink their estates instead of raising them, by such marriages. 2. Thus they were brought to join in worship with them; they served their gods, (v. 6.) Baalim and the groves; (v. 7.) that is, the images that were worshiped in groves of the high places, in a sort of noctrine temples. In such unequal matches there is more reason to fear that the bad will corrupt the good, than to hope that the good will reform the bad; as it is in laying two pears together, the one rotten, and the other sound. When they inclined to worship other gods, they forgot the Lord their God. In complaisance to their new relations, they talked of nothing but Baalim and the groves; so that by degrees they lost the remembrance of the true God, and forgot there was such a Being, and what obligations they lay under to him. In nothing is the corrupt memory of man more treacherous than in this, that it is apt to forget the instance, out of sight, but out of mind; and here begins all the wickedness that is in the world; they have perverted their way, for they have forgotten the Lord their God.

8. Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years. 9. And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. 10. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war; and the Lord delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim. 11. And the land had rest forty years: and Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

We now come to the records of the government of the particular judges, the first of which was Othniel, in whom the story of this book is knit to that of Joshua, for even in Joshua's time, Othniel began to be famous; by which it appears that it was not long after Israel's settlement in Canaan, before their purity began to be corrupted, and their peace (by consequence) disturbed. And these who have had much to do in the sacred chronology, are generally agreed, that the Danites' idolatry and the war with the Benjamites for abusing the Levite's concubine, though related in the latter end of this book, happened about this time, under or before Othniel's government, who, though a judge, was not such a king in Israel, as would keep men from doing what was right in their own eyes.

In this short narrative of Othniel's government, we have,

I. The distress that Israel was brought into for their sin, v. 8. God, being justly displeased with them for plucking up the hedge of their peculiarity, and laying themselves in common with the nations, plucked up the hedge of their protection, and laid them open to the nations; set them to sale as goods he would part with, and the first that laid hands on them was Chushan-rishathaim, king of that Syria which lay between the two great rivers of Tigris and Euphrates, thence called Mesopotamia; which signifies the midst of rivers. It is probable that this was a warlike prince, and, aiming to enlarge his dominions, invaded the two tribes first on the other side Jordan that lay next him, and afterward, perhaps by degrees, penetrated in the heart of the country, and, as far as he went, put them under contribution, exacting it with rigour, and perhaps even robbing upon them. Laban was of this country, who oppressed Jacob with a hard service; but it lay at such a distance, that one could not but have thought Israel's trouble should have come from such a far country, which shows so much the more of the hand of God in it.
II. Their return to God in this distress. When he slew them, then they sought him whom before they had slighted. The children of Israel, even the generality of them, cried unto the Lord, v. 9. At first, they made light of their trouble, and thought they could easily shake off the yoke of a prince at such a distance; but when it continued eight years, they began to feel the smart of it, and then they cried under it, who before had laughed at it. They who in the day of their mirth had cried to Baalim and Ashtaroth, that they were in trouble, cry to the Lord from whom they had revolted, whose justice brought them into this trouble, and whose power and favour alone could help them out of it. Affliction makes those cry to God with importunity, who before would scarcely speak to him.

III. God's return in mercy to them for their deliverance. Though need drove them to him, he did not give them, though peradventure he might have, as it were, a deliverer, or saviour, as the word is. Observe, 1. Who the deliverer was; it was Othniel, who married Caleb's daughter; one of the old stock that had seen the works of the Lord, and had himself, no question, kept his integrity, and secretly lamented the apostasy of his people, but waited for a divine call to appear publicly for the redress of their grievances. He was now, we may suppose, far advanced in years, when God raised him up to his office of an apostle to them. 

1. The Spirit of prophecy remained on him. 3. What method he took; he first judged Israel, reproved them, called them to an account for their sins, and reformed them, and then went out to war; that was the right method. Let sin at home be conquered, that worst of enemies, and then enemies abroad will be more easily dealt with. Thus let Christ be our Judge and Law-giver, and then he will save us and on no other terms, Isa. 33. 22. 4. What good success he had. He prevailed to break the yoke of the oppression, and, as it should seem, to break the neck of the oppressor; for it is said, The Lord delivered Chushan-rishathaim into his hands. Now was Judah, of which tribe Othniel was, as a lion's whelp gone up from the cubs. 5. The happy consequence of Othniel's good services. The land, though getting ground, yet had rest, and some fruits of the reformation, forty years; and it had been perpetual, if they had kept close to God and their duty.

12. And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord. 13. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm-trees. 14. So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. 15. But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.

16. But Ehud made him a dagger, which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh. 17. And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab; and Eglon was a very fat man. 18. And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present. 19. But he himself turned again from the quaries that were by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king; who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him. 20. And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself, alone: and Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat. 21. And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly. 22. And the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out. 23. Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them. 24. When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlour were locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber. 25. And they tarried till they were ashamed; and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour: therefore they took a key and opened them: and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth. 26. And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quaries, and escaped unto Seirath. 27. And it came to pass, when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and be before them. 28. And he said unto them, Follow after me; for the Lord hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the lords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over. 29. And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valour; and there escaped not a man. 30. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years.

Ehud is the next of the judges whose achievements are related in this history, and here is an account of his actions.

1. When Israel sins again, God raises up a new oppressor, v. 12...14. It was an aggravation of their wickedness, that they did evil again, after they had smarted so long for their former iniquities, promised so fair when Othniel judged them,
and received so much mercy from God in their deliv-
erance. What, and after all this, again to break his commandments? Was the disease obstinate to all the methods of cure, both corrosive and salutary? It seems it was. Perhaps they thought they might make the more bold with their own sins, because they saw themselves in no danger from their old oppressor, the powers of that kingdom were weakened and brought low; but God made them know that he had a variety of rods wherewith to chastise them, he strengthened Eglon king of Moab against the former, the former, and therefore would be the more mischievous to them; God's judgments thus approached them gradually, to bring them to repentance. When Israel dwelt in tents, but kept their integrity, Balaam, king of Moab, that would have strengthened himself against them, was baffled; but now that they had forsaken God, and worshipped the gods of the nations round about them, (and perhaps those of the Moabites among the rest,) here was another king of Moab whom God strengthened against them, put power into his hands, though a wicked man, that he might be a scourge of Israel; the staff in his hand, with which he beat Israel, was, God's indignation; howbeit he meant not so, neither did his heart think so, Isa. 10. 6. 7. Israelites did ill, and, we may suppose, Moabites did worse; yet because God punishes the sins of his people, but will not destroy them all at once, (Deut. 28. 59.) this king, Eglon, on the death of the former, the former, and the Moabites being destroyed, the spirit may be saved, Israel is weakened, and Moab strengthened against them. God would not suffer the Israelites, when they were the stronger, to distress the Moabites, nor give them any disturbance though they were idolaters; (Deut. 2. 8.) yet now he suffered the Moabites to distress Israel, and strengthened them on purpose that they might: Thy judgments, O God, are a great sea, (Psa. 119. 99.) to his assistance the Ammonites and Amalekites, (v. 13.) and that strengthened him; and we are here told how they prevailed.

1. They hem them in the field, they went and smote Israel, (v. 13.) not only these tribes that lay next them on the other side of Jordan, who, though first settled, being frontier-tribes, were most disturbed; but those also who, their hands being full in the city of palm-trees, which, it is probable, was a strong-hold erected near the place where Jericho had stood, for that was so called. (Deut. 34. 3.) into which the Moabites put a garrison, to be a bridle upon Israel, and to secure the passes of Jordan, for the preservation of the communication with their own country. It was well for the Kenites that they had left this city, (ch. 1. 16.) before it fell into the hands of the ene-
my, in order to the safety of the Israelites. (v. 17.) They quickly lost that by their own sin, which they had gained by miracles of divine mercy.

2. They made them to serve, (v. 14.) that is, exacted tribute from them, either the fruits of the earth in kind, or money in lieu of them. They neglected the service of God, and did not pay him his tribute; thus therefore did God recover from them that which he had bestowed on them, and reduce them to the same poverty and misery as they were reduced for Baal, Hos. 2. 8. What should have been paid to the divine grace, and was not, was distrained for, and paid to the divine justice. The former servitude (v. 8.) lasted but eight years, this eighteen; for if lesser troubles do not do the work, God will send greater.

11. When Israel prays again, God raises up a new deliverer, (v. 15.) his name Ehud. We are here told, 1. It was Benjamite. The city of palm-
trees lay within the lot of this tribe, by which, it is probable, they suffered the most, and therefore stirred first to shake off the yoke. It is supposed by

the chronolger, that the Israelites' war with Ben-
jamin for the wickedness of Gibeah, by which that city was polluted, was reduced to six hundred years, for it had been so long, at a period when the wars of ancient monuments had been hushed, or so far changed, that the events of this period were not remembered, (ch. 15. 8.) and thereby was left in suspense before this, so that we may well think that tribe to be now the weakest of all the tribes; yet out of it God raised up this deliverer, in token of his being perfectly reconciled to them, to manifest his own power in ordaining strength out of weakness, and that he might bestow more abundant honor upon that part which lacked, 1 Cor. 12. 24. 2. That he was left-handed, as it seems, many of that kind have been, was no hindrance to his being fitted for the service. It is probable, they were fitted for the hand, and yet multitudes of them were left-handed; for men's natures do not always answer their names. The LXX. say, he was an ambidex-
ter, one that could use both hands alike, supposing that this was an advantage to him in the action he was called to; but the Hebrew phrase, that he was shut of his right hand, intimates that either through disease or disuse, he made little or no use of that, of his left hand only: and so was the less fit for war, because he must needs handle his sword but awkwardly; yet God chose this left-handed man to be the man of his right hand, whom he would make strong for himself, Ps. 80. 17. It was God's right hand that gained Israel the victory, (Ps. 44. 3.) not the right of the instruments he employed.

We are here told what Ehud did for the deli-

cence of Israel out of the hands of the Moabites. He saved the king, he that was delivering the oppre-
sors, when the measure of their iniquity was full, and the set time to favour Israel was come.

1. He put to death Eglon the king of Moab; I say, put him to death; not he murdered or assassi-
nated him, but, as a judge, or minister of divine jus-
tice, executed the judgments of God upon him, as an implacable enemy to God and Israel. This story is particularly remarkable in the authenticity of the facts.

[1.] He had a fair occasion of access to him; be-
ing an ingenious active man, and fit to stand before kings, his people chose him to carry a present in the name of all Israel, over and above their tribute, to their great lord the king of Moab, that they might find favour in his eyes, v. 15. The present is called mincha in the original, which is the word used in the law for the offerings that were present-
ted to God. It would seem, that the Moabites generally, or all Israel had not offered in their season, to the God that loved them; and now, to punish them for their neglect, they are laid under a necessity of bringing their offerings to a heathen prince that hated them. Ehud went in his errand to Eglon, offered his pres-
ent with the usual ceremony, and expressions of dutiful respect, the better to colour what he intend-
ed, and to prevent suspicion.

[2.] It should seem, from the first, he designed to be the death of him, God putting it into his heart, and letting him know also that the motion was from himself, by the Spirit that came upon him, the impulses of which carried with them their own evi-
dence, and so gave him full satisfaction both as to the lawfulness and the success of this daring at-
tempt, of both which he would have had reason to doubt. If he be supposed to have advised the king to do it, he is sure both that he may do it, and that he shall do it; for a command from God is sufficient to bear us out, and bring us off, both against our con-
science, and against all the world. That he com-
passed and imagined the death of this tyrant, ap-
pears by the preparation he made of a weapon for the purpose; a short dagger, but half a yard long, like a bayonet, which might easily be concealed under his clothes, (v. 16.) perhaps, because they were suffered to come near the king with their swords by their sides. This he wore on his right thigh, that it might be the more ready to his left hand, and might be the less suspected.
[3.] He contrived how to be alone with him; which he might the more easily be, now that he had not only made himself known to him, but ingratiated himself by the present, and the compliments, which, perhaps, on that occasion, he had passed upon him. Observe how he laid his plot. First, He concealed his design even from his own attendants; brought them part of the way, and then told them of it, and distracted him towards his goal, while he himself, as if he had forgot something behind him, went back to the king of Moab’s court, v. 18. There needed but one hand to do the execution; had more been engaged they could not so safely have kept counsel, nor so easily have made an escape. Secondly, He returned from the quarries by Gilgil (v. 16.) from the groved images (so it is in the margin) which were, and what he disdained to the Moabites with the twelve stones which Joshua had set up there. Some suggest that the sight of these idols stirred up in him such an indignation against the king of Moab, as put him upon the execution of that design, which otherwise he had thought to have let fall for the present. Or, perhaps, he came so far as to these images, that telling from what place he returned, the king of Moab might, by the tidings, still in some measure become known to God. Thirdly, He begged a private audience, and obtained it in a withdrawing room, here called a summer parlour. He told the king he had a secret errand to him, who, thereupon, ordered all his attendants to withdraw, v. 19. Whether he expected to receive some private instructions from an oracle, or some private information concerning the present state of Israel, as if Ehud would betray his country, or do that most offensive thing for him, he did it alone with a stranger, and whom he had reason to look upon as an enemy; but those that are marked for ruin, are infuriated, and their hearts hid from understanding; God deprives them of discretion.

[4.] When he had him alone, he soon despatched him. His summer parlour, where he used to indulge himself in ease and luxury, was the place of his execution. First, Ehud demands his attention to his presence; it is God, (v. 20.) and that against your will, you have been a betrayer of God. Thus, a dagger; God sends to us by the judgment of his hand, as well as by the judgment of his mouth. Secondly, Ehud pays respect to a message from God. Though a king; though a heathen king; though rich and powerful; though now tyrannizing over the people of God; though a fat uncleanly man, that could not easily rise, nor stand long, though drowsy, hoarse, little, short of breath; yet, when he expected to receive orders from heaven, he rose out of his seat; whether it was low and easy, or whether it was high and stately, he quitted it, and stood up when God was about to speak to him, thereby owning God his Superior. This shames the irreverence of many who are called Christians, and yet when a message from God is delivered to them, study to show, by all the means of commerce, how little they regard it. Ehud, in calling what he had to do, a message from God, plainly avouches a divine commission for it; and God’s inclining Ehud to stand up to it, did both confirm the commission, and facilitate the execution. Thirdly, The message was delivered, not to his ear, but immediately, and literally, to his heart, into which the fatal knife was thrust, and was left there. This instant execution, made him unable to resist, or to help himself; but by the force of his luxury and excess; and when the fat closed up the blade, God would by that circumstance show how those that tamper the body, do but prepare for their own misery. However, it was an emblem of his carnal security and senselessness. His heart was as fat as greasewood, and in that he thought himself enclosed. See Ps. 119. 70—17. 10. Ehud signifies a calf, and he felt like a fattened calf, by the knife, an acceptable sacrifice to divine justice. Notice is taken of the coming out of the dirt or dung, that the death of this proud tyrant may appear the more ignominious and shameful. He that had been so very nice and curious about his own body, to keep it easy and clean, shall now be found wallowing in his own blood and excrement. Thus does God prove tender towards us enemies. Now this act of Ehud’s, 1. May justify itself, because he had special direction from God to do it, and it was agreeable to the usual method, which, under that dispensation, God took to avenge his people of their enemies, and to manifest to the world his own justice. But, 2. It will by no means justify any now in doing the like. No such commissions are now length, opened the door and found their master in deep sleep indeed his long sleep, v. 25. The horror of this tragical spectacle, and the confusion it must needs put them into, to reflect upon their own inconsideration in not opening the door sooner, quite put by the thoughts of sending pursuers after him that had done it, whom now they despaired of over-taking. Lastly, Ehud by this means made his escape to Sichem, a thick wood; so some, v. 26. It is not said anywhere in this story, what was the place in which Ehud lived now; but there being no mention of Ehud’s passing and repassing Jordan, I am inclined to think that Ehud had left his own country of Moab, on the other side Jordan, and made his principal residence at this time in the city of palm-trees, within the land of Canaan, a richer country than his own, and that there he was slain, and then the quarries by Gilgal were not far off from him. There he sat down by himself, and thought he had sufficiently fortified himself to lord it over the people of God, there he was cut off, and proved to be fed for the slaughter like a lamb in a larger place. 2.) Ehud having slain the king of Moab, gave a total rout to the forces of the Moabites that were among them, and so effectually shook off the yoke.
of their oppression. [1.] He raised an army immediately in mount Ephraim, at some distance from the head-quarters of the Moabites, and headed them himself, v. 27. The trumpet he blew was indeed a jubilee-trumpet, proclaiming liberty, and a joyful sound it was to the oppressed Israelites, who for a long time had been afraid and expected that some of their enemies. [2.] Like a pious man, and as one that did all this in faith, he took encouragement himself, and gave encouragement to his soldiers, from the power of God engaged for them; (v. 28.) "Follow me, for the Lord hath delivered your enemies into your hands; we are sure to have God with us, and therefore may go boldly, and shall go on triumphantly." [3.] Like a politic general, he first secured the fords of Jordan, set strong guards upon all those passes, to cut off communications between the Moabites that were in the land of Israel, (for upon them only his design was,) and their own country on the other side Jordan; that if, upon the alarm given them, they resolved to fly, they might not escape thither, and if they resolved to fight, they might not have assistance thence. Thus he shut them up in that land as their prison, in which they were, laying them themselves as their palace and paradise. [4.] He then fell upon them, and put them all to the sword, ten thousand of them, which, it seems, was the number appointed to keep Israel in subjection; (v. 29.) There escaped not a man of them. And they were the best and choicest of all the king of Moab's forces; all lusty men of bulk and stature, and not only able bodied, but high spirited too, and men of valour, v. 29. But neither their strength nor their courage stood them in any stead, when the set time was come for God to deliver them into the hand of Israel. [5.] The consequence of this victory was, that the power of the Moabites was wholly broken in the land of Israel; the country was cleared of these oppressors, and the land had rest eighty years, v. 30. We may hope that there was likewise a formation among them, and a check given to idolatry, by the influence of Ehud, which continued a good part of this time. It was a great while for the land to rest, fourscore years; yet what is that to the saints' everlasting rest in the heavenly Canaan? 31. And after him was Shamgar, the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox-goad: and he also delivered Israel.

When it was said the land had rest eighty years, some think it is meant chiefly of that part of the land which lay eastward on the banks of Jordan, which had been oppressed by the Moabites; but it seems, by this passage here, that the other side of the country which lay south-west, was in that time infested by the Philistines, against whom Shamgar made head. 1. It seems Israel needed deliverance, for he delivered Israel; how great the distress was, Deborah afterward related in her song, (ch. 5, 6.) that in the days of Shamgar the highways were unoccupied, &c. That part of the country which lay next to the Philistines was so infested with plunderers, that the people could not travel the roads in safety, but were in danger, both by sea and by land; nor was such safety preserved to those who dwelt in the unguarded villages, but were forced to take shelter in the fortified cities.

2. God raised him up to deliver them, as it should seem, while Ehud was yet living, but superannuated. So incomparable were the enemies for number, that it seems the killing of six hundred of them amounted to a deliverance of Israel, and so many he slew with an ox-goad, or, as some read it, a flough-share. It is probable that he was himself following the plough, when the Philistines made an inroad upon the country to ravage it, and God put into his heart to oppose them: the impulse being sudden and strong, and having neither sword nor spear to do execution with, he was the instrument that was next at hand, some of the tools of his plough, and with that killed so many hundred men, and came off unharmed. See here (1.) That God can make those eminently serviceable to his glory and his church's good, whose extraction, education, and employment, are very mean and obscur. He that has the residue of the Spirit, could, when he pleased, make ploughmen judges and generals, and fishermen apostles. (2.) It is no matter how weak the weapon is, if God direct and strengthen the arm. An ox-goad, when God pleases, shall do more than Goliath's sword. And sometimes he chooses to work by such unlikely means, that the excellency of the power may appear to be of God.

CHAP. IV.

The method of the history of Deborah and Barak, (he hero's in this chapter,) is the same with that before. Here is, 1. Israel revolted from God, v. 1. II. Israel oppressed by Jabin, v. 2, 3. III. Israel judged by Deborah, v. 4, 5. IV. Israel rescued out of the hands of Jabin. 1. Their design was concerted between Deborah and Barak, v. 6, 7, 8. It is accomplished by their joint agency. Barak takes the field; (v. 10.) Sisera, Jabin's general, meets him; (v. 12, 13.) Deborah encourages him, (v. 14.) and God gives him a complete victory. The army routed, v. 15, 16. The general forced to fly; (v. 17.) and there where he expected shelter, had his life stolen from him by Jael while he was asleep, (v. 18, 21.) which completes Barak's triumph, (v. 22.) and Israel's deliverance, v. 23, 24.

1. And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, when Ehud was dead. 2. And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Haroshet of the Gentiles. 3. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron: and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

Here is,

I. Israel backsliding from God; They again did evil in his sight, forsook his service, and worshiped idols; for that was the sin which now most easily beset them, v. 1. See in this, 1. The strange strength of corruption, which hurries men into sin, notwithstanding the most frequent instances of its fatal consequences. The bent to backslide is very hardly restrained. 2. The common ill effects of a long period of land and rest eighty years, which they should have confirmed them in their religion; but, on the contrary, it made them secure and wanton, and indulgent of those lusts which the worship of the false gods was calculated for the gratification of. Thus the prosperity of fools destroys them. Jeshurun waxeth fat and kicketh. 3. The great loss which the people sustain by the death of good governors, They did evil, because Ehud was dead. 4. He kept the strong, restrained and punished every thing that looked towards idolatry, and kept them close to God's service. But when he was gone, they revolted, fearing him more than God.

II. Israel oppressed by their enemies. When they forsook God, he forsook them; and then they became an easy prey to every spoiler. They alienated themselves from God, as if he were none of their's; and then God alienated them as none of his.
They that threw themselves out of God's service, threw themselves out of his protection. What has my beloved do in my house, when she has thus played the harlot? Jer. 11. 15. He told them unto the hands of Jabin, v. 2. This Jabin reigned in Hazor, as another of the same name, and perhaps his ancestor, had done before him, whom Joshua routed, slew, and burnt his city, Josh. 11. 1, 10. But it seems, in process of time, the city was rebuilt, the power regained, the loss retrieved, and by degrees, the king of Hazor becomes able to tyrannize over Israel, who by sin had lost all their advantage against the Canaanites. This servitude was lighter than either of that former, and much more grievous. Jabin, and his general Sisera, did mightily oppress Israel. That which aggravated the oppression was, 1. That this enemy was nearer them than any of the former, in their borders, in their bowels; and by that means, had the more opportunity to do them a mischief. 2. That they were the natives of the country, who bore an incalculable enmity to them, for invading and dispossessing them; and when they had them in their power, would be so much the more cruel and mischievous toward them in revenge of the old quarrel. 3. That these Canaanites had, when time was, been conquered and subdued by Israel, were of old sentenced to be their servants, (Gen. 9. 23.) and might now have been under their feet, and utterly incapable of giving them any disturbance, if their slothfulness, cowardice, and unbelief, had not suffered them thus to get head. To be oppressed by those whom their fathers had conquered, and whom they themselves had foolishly spared, could not but be very grievous. 

III. Israel returning to their God; They cried unto the Lord, when distress drove them to him; and they saw no other way of relief. Those that slight God in their prosperity, will find themselves under a necessity of seeking him when they are in trouble. 

4. And Deborah a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. 5. And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el in mount Ephraim; and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. 6. And she sent and called Barak, the son of Abinoam, out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, saying, Go, and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? 7. And I will draw unto thee, to the river Kishon, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand. 8. And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. 9. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh. 

The year of the redeemed is at length come, when Israel was to be delivered out of the hands of Jabin, and restored again to their liberty; which, we may suppose, the northern tribes, that lay nearest the oppressor, and felt most the distress, did cry to God for. For the oppression of the poor, and the sighing of the needy, now will God arise. Now here we have, 

I. The preparation of the people for their deliverance, by the prophetic conduct and government of Deborah, v. 4, 5. Her name signifies a bee; and she answered her name by her industry, sagacity, and great usefulness to the public, her sweetness to her friends, and a particular manner how. It is said to be the wife of Lapidoth: the termination is not commonly found in the name of a man; therefore some make it the name of a place, she was a woman of Lapidoth. Others take it apppellatively; Lapidoth signifies lamps. The rabbins say, she had employed herself in making wicks for the lamps of the tabernacle; and having stooped to that mean office for God, she was afterwards thus preferred. Or, she was a woman of illuminations, or of splendors: one that was extraordinary knowing and wise, and so came to be very eminent and illustrious. Concerning her we are here told, 1. That she was intimately acquainted with God: she was a prophetess; one that was instructed in divine knowledge by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God, and had gifts of wisdom, which she attained to not in an ordinary way; she had the word of God, that is, commands, revelations, or judgments of the Almighty. 2. That she was entirely devoted to the services of Israel. She judged Israel at the time that Jabin oppressed them; and perhaps, for being a woman, she was the more easily permitted by the oppressor to do it. She judged, not as a princess, by any civil authority conferred upon her, but as a prophetess, and as God's mouth to them, in directing subduing, and restraining the nations, especially those which related to the worship of God. The children of Israel came up to her from all parts for judgment, not so much for the deciding of controversies between man and man, as for advice in the reformation of what was amiss in things pertaining to God. Those among them, who before had secretly lamented the impieties and idolatries of their neighbours, but knew not where to apply themselves, and did the utmost to comfort themselves, now told their complaints to Deborah; who, by the sword of the Spirit, showing them the judgment of God, reduced and reclaimed many, and excited and animated the magistrates in their respective districts to put the laws in execution. It is said she dwelt, or, as some read it, sat under a palm-tree, called ever after, from her, the palm-tree of Deborah. Either she had her house under a tree, a mean habitation which would cover under a tree; or she had her judgment-seat in the open air, under the shadow of that tree; which was an emblem of the justice she sat there to administer, which will thrive and grow against opposition, as palms under pressure. Josephus says, that the children of Israel came to Deborah to desire her to pray to God for them, that they might be delivered out of the hand of Jabin: and Samuel is said at one particular time, when he judged Israel in Mizpeh, that is, to bring them back again to God, when they made the same address to him upon a like occasion, 1 Sam. 7. 6, 8. 

II. The project laid for their deliverance. When the children of Israel came to her for judgment, with her they found salvation. So they that seek to God for grace, shall have grace and peace; grace and comfort, grace and glory. She was not herself to come, in person, being a woman, but she nomination one that was fit, Barak of Naphtali, who, it is probable, had already signalized himself in some encounters with the forces of the oppressor, living near him, (for Hazor and Harosheth
lay within the lot of that tribe;) and thereby had gained a reputation and interest among his people. Some struggles, we may suppose, that brave man had used toward the shaking off of the yoke, but could not effect it till he had his commission and in strength from Deborah. He could do nothing without her head, nor she without his hands; but both together made a complete deliverer, and effected a complete deliverance. The greatest and best army in the world, in one situation, but nothing, but nothing, but nothing. By God's direction, she orders Barak to raise an army, and engage Jabin's forces, that were under Sisera's command, v. 6, 7. Barak, it may be, had been meditating some great attempt against the common enemy; a spark of generous fire was glowing in his breast, and fan he would do something to the purpose for his people, and for the cities of his God. But two things discouraged him: (1.) He wanted a commission to levy forces; therefore Deborah here gives him under the broad seal of heaven; which, as a prophetess, she had a warrant to affix to it. "Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded it? Yes, cert inly he has, take my word for it." Some think she intends this as an appeal to Barak's own heart: "Has not God, by a secret whisper to thyself, given thee some intimation of his purpose, to make use of thee as an instrument in his hand to save Israel? Hath thou for some reason kept it back and upon thyself?" If so, the spirit of prophecy in Deborah confirms the spirit of a soldier in Barak; Go and draw toward mount Tabor. [1.] She directs him what number of men to raise, ten thousand; and let him not fear that those will be too few, when God hath said, he will by them save Israel. [2.] Whence he should raise them: only out of his own tribe, and that of Zebulun, next adjoining; those two counties shared the privilege of yielding an army to God, I and they had not to stay to go further. And, lastly, She orders him where to make his rendezvous; at mount Tabor, in his own neighbourhood. [2.] When he had an army raised, he knew not how he should have an opportunity of engaging the enemy, who, perhaps, declined fighting, having heard that Israel, if they had but courage enough to make head against the enemy, seldom failed of success. Well, says Deborah to him, "Be not afraid, the Lord will give Sisera and his army into thy hand." She assures him that the matter should be determined by one pitched battle, and should not be long in the doing. [1.] In mentioning the power of the enemy, Sisera, a celebrated General, bold and experienced, his chariots, his iron chariots, and his multitude of soldiers, she obliges Barak to fortify himself with the utmost degree of resolution; for the enemy he was to engage was a very formidable one. It is good to know the worst, that we may provide accordingly. But, [2.] In fixing the very place to which Sisera would draw his army, she gave him a sign, which might help to confirm his faith when he came to engage. It was a contingent thing, and depended upon Sisera's own will: but when afterward he should see that falling out just as Deborah had foretold, he might thence infer, that certainly in the rest she said she spoke under a divine direction, which would be a great encouragement to him, especially because with this, [3.] She gave him an express promise of success: I will (that is, God will, in whose name I speak) deliver them into thy hand. So when he saw them draw up against him, according to Deborah's word, he might be confident, that, according to her word, he should soon see them fallen before him. Observe, God draws them to him only that he might deliver them into his hand. When Sisera drew his forces together, he designed the destruction of Israel; but God gathered them as sheaves into the floor, for their own destruction, Mic. 4. 11, 12. Assemble yourselves, and ye shall be broken to pieces, Isa. 8. 9. See Rev. 19. 17, 18.

2. At Barak's request, she promises to go along with him to the field of battle. (1.) Barak insists much upon the necessity of her presence, which would be better to him than a concert of war; (v. 6.) "If thou wilt go with me to direct and advise me, and in every difficult case to let me know God's mind, then I will go with all my heart, and not fear the chariots of iron: neither will I be afraid." So admirably does this to be the language of a weak faith; he could not take her word, unless he had her with him in pawn, as it were, for performance. It seems rather to arise from a conviction of the necessity of God's presence and continual conduct, a pledge and earnest of which he would reckon Deborah's presence to be; and therefore begged thus earnestly for it. "If thou go not with me, in token of God's going with me, I will not go up hence." Nothing would be a greater satisfaction to him, than to have the prophetess with him to animate the soldiers, and to be consulted as an oracle upon all occasions. (2.) Deborah promised to go with him, v. 9. No toil nor peril shall discourage her from doing the utmost that becomes her to do for the service of her country. She would not send him where she would not go herself. Those that in God's name call others to their duty, should be very ready to assist them in it. Deborah was the weaker vessel, yet had the stronger faith. But though she agrees to go with Barak, if he insist upon it, she gives him a hint proper enough to move a soldier not to insist upon it. The journey thou undertakest (so confident was she of the success, that she calls his engaging in war but the undertaking of a journey) shall not be for thine honour; not so much for thine honour as if thou hadst gone alone, and without her; she would tell him, thou shalt not go further. And, lastly, She orders him where to make his rendezvous; at mount Tabor, in his own neighbourhood. (2.) When he had an army raised, he knew not how he should have an opportunity of engaging the enemy, who, perhaps, declined fighting, having heard that Israel, if they had but courage enough to make head against the enemy, seldom failed of success. Well, says Deborah, Be not afraid, the Lord will give Sisera and his army into thy hand." She assures him that the matter should be determined by one pitched battle, and should not be long in the doing. [1.] In mentioning the power of the enemy, Sisera, a celebrated General, bold and experienced, his chariots, his iron chariots, and his multitude of soldiers, she obliges Barak to fortify himself with the utmost degree of resolution; for the enemy he was to engage was a very formidable one. It is good to know the worst, that we may provide accordingly. But, [2.] In fixing the very place to which Sisera would draw his army, she gave him a sign, which might help to confirm his faith when he came to engage. It was a contingent thing, and depended upon Sisera's own will: but when afterward he should see that falling out just as Deborah had foretold, he might thence infer, that certainly in the rest she said she spoke under a divine direction, which would be a great encouragement to him, especially because with this, [3.] She gave him an express promise of success: I will (that is, God will, in whose name I speak) deliver them into thy hand. So when he saw them draw up against him, according to Deborah's word, he might be confident, that, according to her word, he should soon see them fallen before him. Observe, God draws them to him only that he might deliver them into his hand. When Sisera drew his forces together, he designed the destruction of Israel; but God gathered them as sheaves into the floor, for their own de-

10. And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him. 11. Now Heber the Kenite, which was of the children of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, which is by Kedesh. 12. And they showed Sisera that Barak, the son of Abinoam, was gone up to mount Tabor. 13. And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon. 14. And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee? So Barak
went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. 15. And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword, before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet. 16. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; and there was not a man left.

Here,

1. Barak beats up for volunteers, and soon has his quota of men ready, v. 10. Deborah had appointed him to raise an army of ten thousand men, (v. 6.) and so many he has presently at his feet, following him, and subject to his command. God is said to call us to his feet, (Isa. 41. 2.) that is into obedience to him. Some think it intimates that they were all footmen, and so the armies of the Jews generally were; which made the disproportion of strength between them and the enemy (who had horses and chariots) very great, and the victory still more illustrious; but the presence of God and his prophetess was abundantly sufficient to balance that disproportion. Barak had his men at his feet, which intimates their cheerfulness, and readiness to attend him, whithersoever he went, Rev. 14. 4. Though the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were chiefly depended on, yet it appears, by Deborah's song, that there were some come in to him from other tribes, Manasseh and Issachar; and deserters expected that came not, from Reuben, Dan, and Asher, ch. 5. 14. 17. But these are overlooked here: and we are only told, that to make his ten thousand effective men indeed, Deborah went up with him. The 11th verse, concerning the remove of Heber, one of the families of the Kenites, out of the wilderness of Judah, in the south, where those families had fixed themselves, (ch. 1. 16.) into the northern country, comes in for the sake of what was to follow concerning the exploit of Jael, a wife of that family.

II. Sisera, upon the notice of Barak's motions, takes the field with a very numerous and powerful army, v. 12. 13. They showed Sisera, that is, it was showed him. Yet some think it refers to the Kenites, mentioned immediately before, v. 11. They gave Sisera notice of Barak's rendezvous, there being peace at this time between Jabin and that family, v. 17. Whether they intended it as a kindness to him or no, it served to accomplish what God had said by Deborah, (v. 7.) I will draw unto thee Sisera. Sisera's confidence was chiefly in his chariots; therefore particular notice is taken of them, nine hundred chariots of iron, which, with the scythes fastened to their axle-axes, when they were driven into an army of footmen, did terrible execution. So ingenious have men been in inventing methods of destroying one another, to gratify those lusts from which come wars and fightings.

III. Deborah gives orders to engage the enemy, v. 14. Josephus says, that when Barak saw Sisa-ra's army drawn up, and attempting to surround the mountain, on the top of which he and his forces lay encamped, his heart quite failed him, and he determined to retire to a place of greater safety; but Deborah animated him to maintain his ground, assuring him that this was the day marked out in the divine counsels for his defeat. Now they appear most threatening, they are ripe for ruin. The thing is as sure to be done, as if it were done already: The Lord hath delivered Sisera into thy hand. See how the work and honour of this great action are divided between Deborah and Barak; she, as the head, gives the word, he, as the hand, does the work. Thus doth God dispense his gifts variously, 1 Cor. 12. 4, &c. But though ordinarily the head of the woman is the man, (1 Cor. 11. 2.) he that has the residue of the Spirit was pleased to cross hands, and to put the head upon the woman's shoulders, choosing to withdraw the things of the world to shame the mighty, that no flesh might glory in his presence. It was well for Barak that he had Deborah with him; for she made up what was defective, 1. In his conduct, by telling him, This is the day. 2. In his courage, by assuring him of God's presence; Is not the Lord gone out before thee? Darest not thou follow, when thou hast God himself for thy Leader? Note, (1.) In every undertaking it is good to be sensible that God goes before us, that we are in the way of our duty, and in his direction. (2.) If we have ground to hope that God goes before us, we ought to go on with courage and cheerfulness. Be not dismayed at the difficulties thou meetest with in resisting Satan, in serving God, or suffering for him; for is not the Lord gone out before thee? Follow him fully then.

IV. God himself routs the enemy's army, v. 15. Barak, in obedience to Deborah's orders, went down into the valley, though there upon their way the iron chariots would have so much the more advantage against him, quitting his fastness upon the mountain in dependence upon the divine power: for in vain is salvation hoped for from hills and mountains; in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people, Jer. 3. 23. And he was not deceived in his confidence; The Lord discomfited Sisera. It was not so much the bold and surprising alarm which Barak gave their camp, that dispirited and dispersed them, but God's terror seized their spirits, and put them into an unaccountable confusion. The stars, it seems, fought against them, ch. 5. 20. Josephus says, that a violent storm of hail, which beat in their faces, gave them this rout, disabled them and drove them back; so that they became a very easy prey to the army of Israel: and Deborah's words were made good; "The Lord has delivered them into thy hand; it is now in thy power to do what thou wilt with them."

V. Barak bravely improves his advantage, follows the blow with an undaunted resolution and an unwearied diligence, prosecutes the victory, and pursues the scattered forces, even to their general's head quarters at Harosheth, (v. 16.) and spares none whom God had delivered into his hand to be destroyed; There was not a more left. When God goes before us in our spiritual conflicts we must be stir ourselves; and when by his grace he gives us some success against the enemies of our souls, we must improve it by watchfulness and resolution, and carry on the holy war with vigour.

17. Howbeit, Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in my lord, turn in to me; fear not: and when he had turned in unto her the tent, she covered him with a mantle. 19. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty: and she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him. 20. Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent; and it
shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here that thou shalt say, No. 21. Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground; (for he was fast asleep, and weary:) so he died. 22. And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples. 23. So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel. 24. And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

We have seen the army of the Canaanites totally routed. It is said, Ps. 83. 9, 10. (where the defeat of this army is pleaded as a precedent for God's doing the like in aftertimes,) that they became as dung for the earth. Now here we have,

1. The fall of their general, Sisera, captain of the host, in whom it is likely, Jabin their king put an entire confidence, and therefore was not himself present in the action. Let us trace the steps of this mighty man's fall.

1. He quitted his chariot, and took to his feet, v. 15, 17. His chariots had been his pride and his confidence; and we may suppose he had therefore left them in the charge of the soldiers, because they were all on foot, and had neither chariot nor horse, as he had; justly therefore is he thus made ashamed of his confidence, and forced to quit it, and thinks himself then most safe and easy, when he is got clear of his chariot, though we may well suppose it the best made, and best drawn, of any of them. Thus are they disappointed who rest on the creature; like a broken reed, it not only breaks under them, but runs into their hand, and pierces them more than before. The idol may quickly become a burthen; (Isa. 46. 1.) and what we were for God, can make us sick of. How sneakingly doth Sisera look, now he is dismayed. It is hard to say whether he blusters or trembles more. Put not your trust in princes, if they may so soon be brought to this; if he who but lately trusted to his arms with so much assurance, must now trust to his heels only with so little.

2. He fled for shelter in the tents of the Kenites, having no strong hold, nor any place of his own in reach to retire to. The mean and solitary way of the Kenites' living perhaps, he had formerly despised and ridiculed, and the more, because religion was kept up among them; yet now he is glad to put himself under the protection of one of these tents: well he chooses the wife's tent or apartment, either because his fear and distress occasioned it, or because it happened to be next to him, and the first he came to, v. 17. And that which encouraged him to go thither, was, that at this time there was peace between his master and the house of Heber: not that there was any league offensive and defensive between them, only at present there was no indications of hostility. Jabin did them no harm, did not oppress them as he did the Israelites; their plain, quiet harmless way of living, making them not suspected or feared: and perhaps God so ordering it, as a recompense for their constant adherence to the true religion. Sisera thought he might therefore be safe among them; not considering, that though they themselves suffered not by Jabin's power, they heartily sympathized with the Israel of God that did.

3. Jael invited him in, and bid him very welcome. Probably she stood at the tent door, to inquire what news from the army, and what the success of the battle was, which was fought not far off. (1.) She invited him in. Perhaps she stood waiting for an opportunity to show kindness to any distressed Israelites, since there should have been occasion for it; but seeing Sisera come in great haste, panting and out of breath, she invited him to come and repose himself in her tent; in which, while she seemed to design the relieving of his fatigue, perhaps she really intended the retarding of his flight that he might fall into the hands of Barak, who was now in a hot haste of him; (v. 18.) and it may well be questioned, whether she had at first any thought of taking away his life, but rather God afterwards put it into her heart. (2.) She made very much of him, and seemed mighty careful to have him easy, as her invited guest. Was he weary? she finds him a very convenient place to repose himself in, and recruit his strength. Was he thirsty? well he might. Did he want a little water to cool his tongue? the best liquors the tent afforded was at his service, and that was milk, (v. 18.) which we may suppose, he drank heartily of, with his repose, because he was now so far better disposed to sleep. Was he cold or afraid of catching cold; or did he desire to be hid from the pursuers, if they should search that tent? she covered him with a mantle, v. 18. * All expressions of care for his safety. Only, when he desired her to tell a lie for him, and to say he was not there, she declined making any such promise, v. 20. We must not sin against God, no not to oblige those we would save. We may have another interest, but we must not prostitute our friendship. We must suppose she kept her tent as quiet as she could, and free from noise, that he might sleep the sooner and the faster. And how was Sisera least safe, when he was most secure. How uncertain and precarious is human life! and what assurance can we have of it, when it may so easily be betrayed by those with whom it is trusted; and they may prove its destroyers, who we hoped would have been its protectors! It is best making God our Friend, for he will not sell out on us.

4. When he lay fast asleep, she drove a long nail through his temple; so fastened his head to the ground, and killed him, v. 21. And though this was enough to do his business, yet to make sure work, (if we translate it right, ch. 5. 26.) she cut off his head, and left it nailed there. Whether she designed this or no when she invited him into her tent, does not appear; probably the thought was darted into her mind when she saw him lie so fair to receive such a fatal blow; and, doubtless, the thought brought with it evidence sufficient that it came not from Satan, as a murderer and destroyer, but from God, as righteous Judge and Avenger; so much of brightness and heavenly light did she perceive in the inducements to it that offered themselves, the honour of God, and the deliverance of Israel, and nothing more to her weakness, or her moral reverses. (1.) It was a divine power that enabled her to do it, and inspired her with a more than manly courage. What if her hand should shake, and she should miss her blow? What if he should awake when she was attempting it? Or suppose some of his own attendants should follow him, and surprise her in the fact, how dearly would she and all her's be made to pay for it. Yet, obtaining help of God, she does it effectually. [2.] It was a divine warrant that justified her in the doing of it; and therefore, since no such extraordinary commissions...
can now be pretended, it ought not in any case to be imitated. The laws of friendship and hospitality must be religiously observed, and we must abhor the thought of betraying any where we have invited and encouraged to put a confidence in us. And as to this act of Jael's, (like that of Ehud's in the chapter before,) we have reason to think she was conscious of such a divine impulse upon her spirit to do it, as did abundantly satisfy herself (and it ought therefore to satisfy us) that it was well done. God's judgments are a great deep. The instrument of this execution was a nail of the tent, that is, one of the great pins with which the tent, or the stakes of it, were fastened. They often removed their tents; she had been used to drive these nails, and therefore knew how to do it the more dexterously on this great occasion. He that had thought to have destroyed Israel with his many iron chariots, is himself destroyed with one iron nail. Thus do the weak things of the world confound the mighty. See in the glory of Orr, and Sisera's shame. The great commander dies, (1.) In his sleep, fast asleep, and weary. It comes in as a reason why he stirred not to make any resistance. So fettered was he in the chains of sleep, that he could not find his hands. Thus the stout-hearted are spoiled at thy rebuke, O God of Jacob; they are cast into a deep sleep, and so are made to sleep their last, Ps. 76. 5, 6. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength; for when he sleepeth, how shall he think? It is weak, a child may insult him then, and steal his life from him; and yet if he sleep not, he is soon spent and weary, and can do nothing neither. These words which we here put in a parenthesis, (for he was weary,) all the ancient versions read otherwise: he struggled, (or started as we say,) and died; so the Syriac and Arabic Exiguntius seen mortua mentem et dedit; Herodotus. He was darkened and died; so the LXX. Cono- ciana morte soforem, so the vulgar Latin, joining sleep and death together, seeing they are so near akin. He fainted and died. He dies, [2.] With his head nailed to the ground, an emblem of his earthly-mindedness. O curve in terram animae! His car (says Bishop Hall) was fastened so close to the earth, as if his body had been listening what was bowing his head. His voice heeds not the laments of a woman. This added to the shame of his defeat before men; and had he but known it as Abimelech did, (ch. 9. 54.) we may well imagine how much it would have added to the vexation of his own heart.

II. Here is the glory and joy of Israel hereupon.

1. Barak their leader finds his enemy dead; (v. 22.) and very well pleased, no doubt, he was to find his work done so well to his hand, and so much to the glory of Orr, and the confusion of his enemies. Had he stood too nice upon a point of honour, he would have resented it as an affront to have the general slain by any hand but his; but now he remembered, that this diminution of his honour he was sentenced to undergo, for insisting on Debo- rah's going with them; The Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman; though then it was little thought the prediction would have been fulfilled in such a way as this.

2. Israel is completely delivered out of the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, v. 23, 24. They not only shook off his yoke by this day's victory, but they afterward prosecuted the war against him, till they had destroyed him, he and his nation being by divine appointment devoted to ruin, and not to be spared. The Israelites having soundly smitten for their sin, and doing it as far as it was in their power, to indulge them no longer, but to make a thorough riddance of them, as a people to whom to show mercy was as contrary to their own interest as it was to God's command; and prob-
composing the song; and the strain throughout is very fine and lofty, the images lively, the expressions elegant, and an admirable spirit of seriousness and majesty. No poetry is comparable to the sacred poetry. And we may suppose she used her power as a princess, in obliging the conquering army of Israel to learn and sing this song. She expects not that they should, by their poems, celebrate her praises, and magnify her; but requires, that in that poem they should join with her in celebrating God's praises, and magnifying him. She had been the first wheel in the action, and now is so in the thanksgiving.

II. It was sung on that day, not the very day that the fight was, but on that occasion, and soon after, as soon as a thanksgiving day could conveniently be appointed. When we have received mercy from God, we ought to be speedily in our returns of praise, while the impressions of the mercy are fresh. It is rent to be paid at the day.

1. She begins with a general Hallelujah: Praise (or bless, for that is the word) ye the Lord, v. 2. The design of the song is to give glory to God; that therefore is put first, to explain and direct all that follows, like the first petition of the Lord's prayer, Hallowed be thy name. Two things God is here praised for; (1.) The vengeance he took on Israel's enemies, for the avenging of Israel upon their proud and cruel oppressors, recompensing to the good men injuries they had done to his people. The Lord is known as a righteous God, and the God to whom vengeance belongs, by the judgments which he executeth. (2.) The grace he gave to Israel's friends; when the people willingly offered themselves to serve in this war. God is to have the glory of all the good offices that are at any time done us; and the more willingly they are done, the more is to be observed of that grace, which will be the most effectual. For the things she resolves to leave this song upon record, to the honour of the everlasting God; (v. 3.) I even I will sing unto the Lord, Jehovah, that God of uncontestable sovereignty and irresistible power, even to the Lord God of Israel, who governs all for the good of the church.

2. She calls to the great ones of the world, that sit at the upper end of its table, to attend to her song, and hear her subject: Hear O ye kings, give ear, O ye princes. (1.) She would have them know, that as great and as high as they were, there is One above them with whom it is folly to contend, and to whom it is their interest to submit; that horses and chariots are vain things for safety. (2.) She would have them to join with her in praising the God of Israel, and no longer to praise their counterfeit deities, vs Belshazzar did; (Dan. 5. 4.) He praised the gods of gold and silver. She be-speaks them as the psalmist, (Ps. 2. 10, 11.) Be wise now therefore, O ye kings, serve the Lord with fear. (3.) She would have them take warning by Sisera's fate, and not dare to offer any injury to the people of God, whose cause, sooner or later, God will plead with jealousy.

3. She looks back upon God's former appearances, and compares this with them, the more to magnify the present mercy of God. Author of this great salvation. What God is doing, should bring to our mind what he has done; for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; (v. 4.) Lord when thou wentest out of Seir. This may be understood, either, (1.) Of the appearances of God's power and justice against the enemies of Israel to subdue and conquer them; and so Hab. 3. 3, 4, &c. is parallel to it, where the destruction of the church's enemies is thus described. When God had led his people Israel from the country of Edom, he brought down under their feet Sihon and Og, striking them and their armies with such terror and amazement, that they seemed apprehensive that heaven and earth were coming together. Their hearts melted, as if all the world had been melting round about them. Or it denotes the glorious displays of the Divine Majesty, and the surprising efforts of the divine power, enough to make the earth tremble, the heavens drop like snow before the sun, and the mountains to melt. Compare Ps. 18. 7. God's counsels are so far from being hindered by any creature, that when the time of their accomplishment comes, that which seemed to stand in their way will not only yield before them, but be made to serve them. See Is. 64. 1, 2. Or, (2.) It is meant of the appearances of God's glory and majesty in Israel, when he gave them his law at mount Sinai. It was then literally true, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, &c. Compare Dext. 33. 2. Ps. 68. 7, 8. Let all the kings and princes know that this is the God whom Deborah praises, and not such mean and inpotent deities as they paid their homage to. The Chaldee par. phrase applies it to the giving of the law, but has a strange descent on these words, The mountains melted. Tabor, Heron, and Carmel, contended among themselves: one said, Let the divine majesty dwell upon me; the other said, Let it dwell upon me; but God made it to dwell upon mount Sinai, the meanest and least of all the mountains. I suppose it means the least valuable, because barren and rocky.

6. In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways. 7. The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel. 8. They chose new gods; then was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel? 9. My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the Lord. 10. Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way. 11. They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates.

Here,

I. Deborah describes the distressed state of Israel under the tyranny of Jabin, that the greatness of their trouble might make their salvation appear the more illustrious, and the more gracious, v. 6. "From the days of Shamgar, who did nothing toward the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines, to the days of Jael, the present day, in which Jael has so signalized herself, the country has been in a manner desolate." 1. No trade. For want of soldiers to protect men of business in their business from the incursions of the enemy, and for want of magistrates to restrain and punish thieves and robbers among them, (men of broken fortunes and desperate spirits, that, having no employment, took to the high-road,) all commerce ceased, and the highways were unoccupied; no caravans of merchants, as formerly. 2. No travelling. Where in times when there was some order and govern
ment, the travellers might be safe in the open roads, and the robbers were forced to lurk in the by-ways; now, on the contrary, the robbers insulted on the open road without check, and the honest travellers were obliged to sculk, and walk through by-ways, in continual frights. 3. No tillage. The fields must needs be laid waste and unoccupied, when the inhabitants of the villages, the country-farmers, ceased from their employment, quitted their houses which were continually alarmed and plundered, and were obliged to take shelter for themselves and their families in walled and fenced cities. 4. No administration of justice. These was war in the gates where their courts were kept, v. 8. So that it was not till this salvation was wrought, that the people of the Lord durst go down to the gates, v. 11. The continual incursions of the enemy deprived the magistrates of the dignity, and the people of the benefit, of their government. 5. No peace to him that went out, or to him that came in. The gates through which they passed and repassed, were infested by the enemy, so that the places of drawing water were alarmed by the archers—a mighty achievement for terrifying the drawers of water. 6. Neither arms nor spirit to help themselves with, but a shield nor spear among forty thousand, v. 8. Either they were disarmed by their oppressors, or they themselves neglected the art of war; so that though they had spears and shields, they were not to be seen, but when they were enured to the necessity of self-reliance, lost all skill and capacity to use them.

II. She shows in one word what it was that brought all this misery upon them; They chose new gods, v. 8. It was their idolatry that provoked God to give them up thus into the hands of their enemies. The Lord their God was one Lord, but that would not content them, they must have more, many more, still more. Their God was the God of our fathers, in these olden days, still the same, and therefore they grew weary of him, and must needs have new gods, which they were fond of as children of new clothes; names newly invented, heroes newly canonized. Their fathers, when put to their choice, chose the Lord for their God, (Josh. 24. 21.) but they would not abide by that choice, they must have gods of their own choosing.

III. She takes notice of God's great goodness to Israel, in raising up such as should redress their grievances. Herself first; (v. 7.) Till that I Debo-arah arose, to restrain and punish those who disturbed the public peace, and protect men in their business; and then the face of things was changed for the better quickly; those beasts of prey retired upon the breaking forth of this joyful light, and man went forth again to his work and labour, Ps. 104. 22, 23. Thus she became a mother in Israel, and no doubt exerted the utmost influence she could to her people, and such the care and pains she took for the public welfare. Under her there were other governors of Israel, (v. 9.) who, like her, had done their part as governors to reform the people, and then, like her, offered themselves willingly to serve in the war, not insisting upon the exemption which their dignity and office entitled them to; nor seeking to appear as men from another class, appearing in their country's cause; and, no doubt, the example of the governors influenced the people in like manner, willing to offer themselves, v. 2. Of these governors she says, My heart is toward them; that is, 'I truly love and honour them, they have won my heart for ever, I shall never forget them. Note, Those are worthy of double honour, that receive voluntarily from the demands of their honour to serve God and his church.

IV. She calls upon those who had a particular share in the advantages of this great salvation, to offer up particular thanks to God for it, v. 10, 11. Let every man speak as he found the goodness of God in this happy change of the posture of public affairs. 1. Ye that ride on white asses, that is, the nobility and gentry. Horses were little used in that country, they had, it is probable, a much better breed of asses than we have; but persons of quality, it seems, were distinguished by the colour of the asses they rode on, the white being more rare, were therefore more valued. Notice is taken of Abdon's sons and grandsons riding on ass-carts, as indicating them to be men of distinction, ch. 12. 2. Let such as arc by this salvation restored, not only to their liberty as other, but to their dignity, speak God's praises. 2. Let them that sit in judgment be sensible of it, and thankful for it as a very great mercy, that they may sit safely there; that the sword of justice is not struck out of their hand by the sword of war. 3. Let them that walk by the way, and meet with none there to make them afraid, speak to themselves in pious meditations, and to their fellow-travellers in religious discourses of the goodness of God in ridding the roads of these banditti that had so long infested them. 4. Let them that draw water in peace and have not their well taken from them, or stopped up, nor are in danger of being caught by the enemy when they go forth to draw there where they find themselves so much more safe and easy than they have been, therefore let them set the example of peace to all those Abdon's acts, or Barak's, but the Lord's, taking notice of his hand making peace in our borders, and creating a defence upon all the glory. This is the Lord's doing. Observe in these acts of his, (1.) Justice executed on his daring enemies. They are the righteous acts of the Lord. See him pleading a righteous cause, and in the throne judging aright, and give him glory as the Judge of all the earth. (2.) Kindness showed to his trembling people; the inhabitants of the villages, who lay most open to the enemy, had suffered most, and were in most danger, Ezek. 38. 11. It is the glory of God to protect those that are most exposed, and to help the weakest. Let us all take notice of the share we in particular have in the public peace and tranquillity, the inhabitants of the villages especially, and give God the praise of it.

12. Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake; utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

13. Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty. 14. Out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people: out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handled the pen of the writer. 15. And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. 16. Why abdost thou among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. 17. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea-shore, and abode in his breaches. 18. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people
that jeopardized their lives unto the death in the high places of the field. 19. The kings came and fought; then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money. 20. They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. 21. The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength. 22. Then were the horse-hoofs broken by the means of the prancings, the prancings of their mighty ones. 23. Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. 

Here, I. Deborah stirs up herself and Barak to celebrate this victory in the most solemn manner, to the glory of God and the honour of Israel, for the crown, and in-crease of his kingdom, and the utter destruction of their enemies. v. 12. Deborah, as a prophetess, must do it by a song, to compose and sing which, she excites herself, Awake, awake; and again, Awake, awake. Which intimates the sense she had of the excellency and difficulty of the work: it needed and well deserved the utmost liveliness and vigour of soul in the performance of it; all the powers and faculties of the soul in their closest attention and application ought to be employed in it. Thus too she expresses the sense she had of her own infirmity, and aptness to flag, and renit in her zeal in this work. Note, Praising God is work that we should awake to, and awake ourselves to, Ps. 108. 2. 2. Barak, as a general, must do it by a triumph; Lead thy captivity captive. Though the army of Sisera was cut off in the field, and no quarter given, yet we may suppose in the prosecution of the victory, when the war was carried into the enemy's country, many not found in arms were seized and made prisoners of war; these she would have led in chains after Barak, when he made his public entry into his own city to grace his triumphs; not as if it should be any pleasure to him to trample upon his fellow-creatures, but thus he must give glory to God, and serve that good purpose of his government, which is to look upon those that are proud, and to abase them. II. She gives good reason for this praise and triumph, v. 13. This glorious victory had made the remnant of Israel, and Deborah in particular, look very great; a circumstance which they owed entirely to God. 1. The Israelites became few and inconsiderable, and yet to them God gave dominion over nobles. Many of them were cut off by the enemy, many died of grief, and perhaps some had removed their families and effects into foreign parts; yet those few that remained, by divine assistance, with one brave and generous effort, not only shook off the yoke of oppression from their own neck, but got power over their oppressors. As long as any of God's Israel remain, (and a remnant God will have in the worst of times,) there is hope, be it ever so small a remnant, for God can make him that remains, though it should be but one single person, triumph over the most proud and potent. 2. Deborah was herself of the weaker sex, and the sex that from the fall had been sentenced to subjection, and yet the Lord that is himself higher than the highest, authorized her to rule over the mighty men of Israel, who willingly submitted to her conduct: and enabled her to triumph over the mighty men of Canaan, who fell before the army she commanded; so wonderfully did he advance the low estate of his handmaid, "The Lord made me, a woman, have dominion over mighty men." A despised stone is made head of the 12. Israel had no king, their enemies had many, whose power and influence, especially acting in confederacy, made them very formidable; and yet Israel, having the Lord for their Kings, was too hard for them all. It is said of these Kings, They took no gain of money; they were not necessary troops hired into the service of Jabin, (such often fail in an extremity,) but they were all volunteers, and hearty in the cause against Israel: they desired the spoils of victory, and were satisfied with the sinner's satisfaction of helping to ruin Israel. Acting upon this principle, they were the more formidable, and would be the more cruel. 2. Who fought for them. The several tribes that assisted in this great exploit, here are spoken of with honour; for though God is chiefly to be glorified, instruments must have their due praise, for the encouragement of others: but, after all, it was heaven that turned the scale. (1.) Ephraim and Benjamin, those tribes among whom Deborah herself lived, bestowed themselves, and did bravely, by her influence upon them; for her palm-tree was in the tribe of Ephraim, and very near to that of Benjamin, v. 14. Out of Ephraim, was there a root, and life in the root, against Amalek. There was in Ephraim a mountain called the mount of Amalek, (mentioned, ch. 12. 13.) and some think this is here meant, and the Chaldee is done in appearing for the common cause. If we be not so bold as to lead, yet we must not be so proud and sullen as not to follow even our inferiors in a good work. Ephraim was at a distance from the place of action, and therefore could not send forth many of its boughs to the service; but Deborah, who was
one of them, knew there was a root of them, that they were hearty well-wishers to the cause. Dr. Lightfoot gives quite another sense of this; Joshua of Ephraim, had been a root of such victories against Amalek, (Exod. 17.) and Ehud of Benjamin lately against Amalek and Moab.

(2.) The ice being broken by Ephraim and Benjamin, Machir (the half tribe of Manasseh beyond Jordan) and Zebulun sent in men that were very serviceable to this great design. When an army is to be raised, especially under such disadvantages as were occasioned by the long absence of arms, and the dispiritedness of the people, it is of great consequence to be furnished, [1.] With men of courage for officers, and such the family of Machir furnished them with; for thence came down governors. The children of Machir were particularly famous for their valour in Moses's time, (Numb. 32. 89.) and, it seems, it continued in their family, the more because they were sent in the forefront. [2.] With men of learning and ingenuity to serve as secretaries of war, and with such they were supplied out of Zebulun; thence came men that handle the pen of the writer, clerks that issued out orders, wrote circular letters, drew commissions, mustered their men, and kept their accounts. Thus must every man, according as he has received the gift, minister the same, for the public good, 1 Pet. 4. 10. The eyes see, and the mouth delivereth him his food. He that is generally understood of the forwardness even of the scholars of this tribe, who studied the law and expounded it, to take up arms in this cause, though they were better skilful in books than in the art of war, so Sir Richard Blackmore paraphrases it,

The scribes of Zebulun and learned men, To wield the sword, laid down the pen.

(3.) Issachar did good service too; though he saw that rest was good, and therefore bowed his shoulder to bear, which is the character of that tribe, (Gen. 49. 15.) yet they disdained to bear the yoke of Jabin's tribute, and now preferred the generous toils of war a servile rest. Though it should seem there were no armies, yet they came out upon occasion, and the princes of Issachar were with Deborah and Barak, (v. 15.) probably, as a great council of war to advise upon emergencies. And it should seem, these princes of Issachar did in person accompany Barak into the field of battle. Did he go on foot? They footed it with him, not consulting their honour or ease. Did he go into the valley, the place of most danger? They exposed themselves with him, and were still at his right hand to advise him; for the men of Issachar were men that had understanding of the times, 1 Chron. 12. 32.

(4.) Zebulun and Naphtali were the most bold and active of all the tribes, not only out of a particular affection to Barak, their countryman, but because they lying nearest to Jabin, the yoke of oppression lay heavier on their necks than on any other tribe. But in the event of the campaign, therefore in a pious zeal for God and their country, they jeopardized their lives unto the death in the high places of the field, v. 18. With what heroic bravery did they charge and push on, even upon the chariots of iron, despising danger, and setting death itself at defiance in so good a cause.

(5.) The stars from heaven appeared, or acted as leaders, on Israel's side; (v. 20.) The stars in their courses, according to the order and direction of him who is the great Lord of their hosts, fought against Sisera, by their malignant influences; or by causing the storms of hail and thunder, which contributed so much to the rout of Sisera's army. The Chaldees reads it, From heaven, from the place where the stars go forth, war was waged against Sisera; that is, the power of the God of heaven was engaged against him, making use of the ministration of the angels of heaven. Some way or other, the heavenly bodies (not arrested, as when the sun stood still at Joshua's word, but going on in their courses) fought against Sisera. Those whom God is an enemy to, the whole creation is at war with. Perhaps the flashes of lightening by which the stars fought, was that which struck and vanquished Sisera, as that they pranced till their very hors were broken; (v. 22.) and, probably, overturned the chariots of iron which they drew, or turned them back upon their owners.

(6.) The river of Kishon fought against their enemies. It swept them away, and abundance of them that hoped to make their escape through it, v. 21. Ordinarily, it was but a shallow river, but being in their own country, we may suppose they well knew its fors and safest passages, and yet, now, probably by the great rain that fell, it was so swollen, and the stream so deep and strong, that those that attempted to pass it, were drowned, being feeble and faint, and unable to make their way through it. And then were the horse hoofs broken by means of the pittugings. So it is in the margin, v. 22. The river of Kishon fought against Sisera, was described or celebrated by ancient historians or poets; or rather, because it was designed of old, in the council of God, to serve his purposes against Sisera at this time, and did so, as if it had been made on purpose; thus the water of the old pool, God is said to have fashioned long ago, for that use to which it was put, Isa. 22. 11.

(7.) Deborah's own soul fought against them; she speaks of it down, however, not as a sign of weakness, (v. 22.) Say, thou hast trodden down strength. She did it by exciting others to do it, and assisting them, which she did with all her heart; also by her prayers. As Moses conquered Amalek by lifting up his hand, so Deborah vanquished Sisera by lifting up her heart. And when the soul is employed in holy exercises, and heart-work is made of them, through the grace of God, the strength of our spiritual enemies will be broken, v. 32. 3. In this great engagement, she observes who stood neuter, and did not side with Israel, as might have been expected. It is strange to find how many, even of those who were called Israelites, basely deserted this glorious cause, and declined to appear. No mention is made of Judah or Simeon among the tribes concerned, because they lying so very remote from the scene of action, had not an opportunity, therefore it was not expected from them; but for those that lay near, and yet would not venture, indelible marks of disgrace are here put upon them, and they deserved it.

(1.) Reuben basely declined the service, v. 15. 16. Justly had he long ago been deprived of the privileges of the birth-right, and still does his dying father's doom stick by him, unstable as water, he shall not exalt himself; (v. 16.) Two things hindered them from entering in: [1.] Their divisions. This jarring-string she twice strikes upon to their shame. For the divisions of Reuben (or in these divisions) there were great thoughts, impressions, and searchings of heart. Not only for their division from Canaan by the river Jordan, that needed not have hindered them, had they been hearty in the cause; for Gilead abode beyond Jordan, and yet from Machir of Gilgal they came, without the least difficulty. Yet this means, either that they were divided among themselves, could not agree who should go, or who should lead; each striving to gain the post of honour, and shun that of danger; some unhappy contests in their tribe kept them from uniting together, and with their brethren.
This city of Meroz seems to have been at this time a considerable place, since something great was expected from it; but, probably, after the Angel of the Lord had pronounced this curse upon it, it dwindled, and like the fig-tree which Christ cursed, withered away, so that we never read of it after this in the scripture.

24. Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent. 25. He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. 26. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera; she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. 27. At her feet he bowed, he fell; he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead. 28. The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots? 29. Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself, Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a daughter of two to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needle-work, of divers colours of needle-work on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil? 30. So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.

Deborah here concludes this triumphant song.

I. With the praise of Jael, her sister- heroine, whose valiant act had completed and crowned the victory. She had mentioned her before, (v. 6,) as one that would have served her country if it had been in her power; now she applauds her as one that did serve it admirably well when it was in her power.

Her poetry is finest and most florid here in the latter end of the song. How honorably does she speak of Jael, (v. 24,) who preferred her peace with the God of Israel, before her peace with the king of Canaan; and though not a native of Israel, (for aught that appears,) yet heartily espoused the cause of Israel in this critical juncture, jeopardized her life as truly as if she had been in the high places of the field, and bravely fought for those whom she saw God fought for! 24. Blessed shall she be above women in the tent. Note, Those whose lot is cast in the tent, in a very low and narrow sphere of activity, if they serve God in that according to their capacity, shall in no wise lose their reward. Jael in the tent wins as rich a blessing as Barak in the field.

Nothing is more confounding, grievous, and shameful, than disappointment; and Deborah here does most elegantly describe two great disappointments, the shame of which was typical of sinners' everlasting shame.

1. Sisera found a fatal enemy, where he expected a fast and faithful friend. (1.) Jael showed him the kindness of a friend, and perhaps at that time intended no other than kindness, until God, by an immediate impulse upon her mind, (which impulses then
were to be regarded, and carried so much of their own evidence with them, that they might have been relied upon, but cannot now be pretended to,) directed her to do otherwise, v. 25. He asked only for fair water to quench his thirst, but she, not only to show her housewifery and good housekeeping, but to express her regard to him, brought forth butter, and milk, (say some interpreters,) milk which had the butter taken from it; we call it butter-milk. No, (say others,) it was milk that had the butter still in it; we call it cream: whichever it was, it was, probably, the best her house afforded; and, to set it off, she brought it in a lordly dish, such as she called so, the finest she had, and better than she ordinarily used at her own table. This confirmed Sisera's opinion of her friendship, and made him sleep the faster and the more secure. But (2.) She proved her mortal enemy; gave him his death's stroke; it is curiously described, v. 26, 27. [1.] How great does Jacl look hammering Sisera, as it is in the margin, railing that proud man, that had been so long the terror of the mighty, and sending him down slain to the pit with his iniquities upon his bones! Ezek. 32. 27. Sisera, not upon his table, with all the motion of his concern, than if she had been going to nail one of the boards or bars of her tent, so confident was she of divine aid and protection. We read it, she smote off his head, probably with his own sword, which, now that his head was nailed through, she durst take from his side, but not before, for fear of waking him. But because there was no occasion for cutting off his head, nor was it mentioned in the history, many think it should be read, She struck through his head. That head which had been proudly lifted up against God and Israel, and in which had been forged bloody designs for the destruction of God's people, Jacl finds a soft place in and into that with a good will strikes her nail. [2.] How mean does Sisera look, fallen at Jacl's feet? v. 27. At the feet of this female executioner, he bowed, he fell; all his struggles for life availed not; she followed her blow until he fell down dead. There lies extended the deserted carcass of that proud man, not in the bed of honour, not in the high places of the field, not having any glorious wound to show from a glittering sword, or a bow of steel, but in a corner of a tent, at the feet of a woman with a disgraceful wound by a sorrow nail stuck through his head. Thus is shame the fate of proud men. And it is a very lively representation of the ruin of those sinners whose prosperity slavish them, it flatters and caresses them with milk and butter in a lordly dish, as if it would make them easy and happy, but it nails their heads and hearts to the ground in earthy-mindedness, and pierces them through with many sorrows; its flatteries are fatal, and sinks them at last into destruction and perdition, 1 Tim. 6. 9, 10.

2. Sisera's mother and the tidings brought her of her son's fall and ruin, then when she was big with expectation of his glorious and triumphant return, n. 28...30. where we have, (1.) Her fond desire to see her son come back in triumph. Why is his chariot so long in coming? She speaks this, not so much out of a concern for his safety, or any jealousy of his having miscarried, (she had no fear of that, so confident was she of his success,) but out of a longing for his glory, which with a feminine weakness she expresses not only by a desire, but by an exclamation, the lingering chariot, and expostulating concerning the delays of it, little thinking that her unhappy son had been, before this, forced to quit that chariot which they were so proud of, and which she thought came so slowly. The chariots of his glory were now become the shame of his house, Isa. 22. 18. Let us take heed of indulging such desires as these toward any temporal good thing, particularly toward that which cherishes vain glory, for that was it she here doted on. Eagerness and impatience in our desires do us a great deal of prejudice, and make it intolerable to us to be crossed. But toward the spiritual blessings of which we are here shown, the day of our deliverance, and our happiness, our concern should be, not to hasten the day, but to make it stand a little affected: Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; for here we cannot be disappointed. (2.) Her foolish hope and confidence that he would come at last in so much the greater pomp. Her wise ladies answered her, and thought they gave a very good account of the delay; yea, she (in her wisdom, says the Chaldee) tammingly made answer to herself, "Have they not seed? No doubt they have, (in the sense of John 3. 16,) and that delays them is that they are dividing the prey; which is so much, that it is a work of time to make a distribution of it." In the spoil they please themselves with the thought of, observe, [1.] How impudently, and to the reproach and scandal of their sex, these ladies boast of the multitude of damsels which the soldiers would have the abusing of. [2.] How childishly they please themselves with the hope of seeing Sisera, and making his spoil a thing of ridicule, how charmingly would it look! of divers colours of needle-work, plundered out of the wardrobe of some Israelish lady: it is repeated again, as that which pleased their fancy above any thing, of divers colours of needle-work on both sides, and therefore very rich; such pieces of embroidery they hoped Sisera would have to present his mother and the ladies with. Thus apt are we to deceive ourselves with great expectations, and confident hopes of honor and pleasure, and wealth in this world, by which we prepare for ourselves the shame and grief of a disappointment. And thus does God often bring ruin on his enemies when they are most elevated.

II. She concludes all with a prayer to God, 1. For the destruction of all his foes: "So, so shamefully, so miserably, let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; let all that hope to triumph in Israel's ruin, be thus disappointed and triumphed over; Do to them all as unto Sisera," Ps. 83. 9. Though our enemies are to be prayed for, God's enemies, as such, are to be prayed against; and when we see some of God's enemies remarkably humbled and brought down, that is an encouragement to us to pray for the downfall of all the rest. Deborah was a prophetess, and this prayer was a prediction that in due time all God's enemies shall perish, Ps. 92. 9. None ever hardened his heart and prospered. 2. For the exaltation and comfort of all his friends. "But let them that love him, and, heartily wish well to his kingdom among men, be as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength; let them shine so bright, appear so glorious in the eye of the world, cast such benign influences, be as much out of the reach of their enemies, who curse the rising sun because it scorches them; let them rejoice as a strong man to run a race," Ps. 19. 5. Let them, as burning and shining lights in their places, dispel the mists of darkness, and shine with more and more lustre and power unto the perfect day," Prov. 4. 18. Such shall be the honour, and such the joy, of all that love God in sincerity, and for ever they shall shine as the sun in the firmament of our Father.

The victory here celebrated with this song, was of such happy consequence to Israel, that for the best part of the next century they enjoyed the peace where it opened the way; The land had rest forty years; that is, so long it was from this victory to the raising up of Gideon. And well had it been, if, when the churches and the tribes had rest, they had been edified, and had walked in the fear of the Lord.
CHAP. VI.

Nothing that occurred in the quiet and peacable times of Israel is recorded: the forty years' rest after the conquest of Jabin is passed over in silence, and here begins the story of another distress, and another deliverance by God, of the children of the judges. Here is, 1. The lamentable condition of Israel, by the inroads of the Midianites, v. 1–6. 2. The message God sent them by a prophet, to prepare them for deliverance, v. 7–10. 3. The raising up of Gideon to be their deliverer. 4. A commission which God sent him by the hand of an angel, and confirmed by a sign, v. 11–24. 2. The first-fruits of his government in the reform of his father's house, v. 25–32. 3. The preparations he made for a war with the Midianites and the encouragement given him by a sign, v. 33–40.

1. AND the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. 2. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. 3. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; 4. And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza; and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. 5. For they came up with their cattle, and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude: for both they and their camels were without number; and they entered into the land to destroy it. 6. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.

We have here,
I. Israel's sin renewed; They did evil in the sight of the Lord, v. 1. The burnt child dreads the fire; yet this perversive unthinking people, that had so often smarled solely for their idolatry, upon a little respite of God's judgments, return to it again. This people hath a revolting, rebellious heart, not kept in by the terror of God's judgments, not engaged in honour and gratitude by the great things he had done for them, to keep themselves in his love. The providence of God will not change the hearts and lives of sinners.
II. Israel's troubles repeated. This would follow of course; let all that sin expect to suffer; with the froward God will show himself froward, (Ps. 18. 26.) and will walk contrary to these that walk contrary to him, Lev. 26. 21, 24. Now as to this trouble,
1. It arose from a very despicable enemy. God delivered them into the hand of Midian; (v. 1.) not Midian in the south where Jethro lived, but Midian in the east that joined to Moab, Numb. 22. 4. A people that all men despised as uncultivated, and unheeded; hence we read not here of any king, lord, general, that they had but the force with which they destroyed Israel, was an undisciplined mob; and, which made it the more grievous, they were a people that Israel had formerly subdued, and in a manner destroyed; (see Numb. 31. 7.) and yet by this time, (near two hundred years after,)
the poor remain of them were so multiplied, and so magnified, that they were capable of being made a very severe scourge to Israel. Thus God had them to jealousy with those which were not a people, even a foolish nation, Deut. 32. 21. The meanest creature will serve to chastise those that have made the great Creator their enemy. And when those we are authorised to rule prove rebellious and disobedient to us, it concerns us to inquire whether we have not been so to our sovereign Ruler.
2. It proved to a very formidable height. (v. 2.) The hand of Midian prevailed, purely by their multitude. God had promised to increase Israel as the sand on the sea-shore; but their sin stopped their growth and diminished them, and then their enemies, though otherwise every way inferior to them, overpowered them with numbers. They came upon them as grasshoppers for multitude: (v. 5.) not in a regular army to engage them in the field, but in a confused swarm, to plunder the country, quarter themselves upon it, and enrich themselves with its spoils. Bands of robbers, and no better. And sinful Israel, being separated by sin from God, had not spirit to make head against them. Observe the wrethet havoc that these Midianites made with their bands of plunderers in Israel. Here is,
1. The Israelites imprisoned, or rather imprisoning themselves, in dens and caves, v. 2. This was owing purely to their own timorousness and faint-heartedness, that they would rather fly than fight; it was the effect of a guilty conscience which made them tremble at the shaking of a leaf, and the just punishment of their apostasy from the God who thus fought against them with those very terrors with which he would otherwise have fought for them; had it not been for this, we cannot but think the Israelites would have matched the foe, and been enough to make head against them: but the heart that departs from God is lost, not only to that which is good but to that which is great. Sin dispirits men, and makes them sneak into dens and caves. The day will come when chief captains and mighty men will call in vain to rocks and mountains to hide them.
2. The Israelites impoverished, greatly impoverished, (v. 6.) The Midianites and the other children of the east, that joined with them to live by spoil and rapine, as long as the Sabeans and Chaldeans did that plundered Job, free-booters, these made frequent incursions into the land of Canaan; that fruitful land was a great temptation to them; and that sloth and luxury into which the Israelites were sunk by forty years' rest, made them and their substance an easy prey to them. They came up against them, (v. 3.) pitched their camps among them, (v. 4.) and brought their cattle with them, particularly camels innumerable; (v. 5.) not a flying party, to make a sally upon them, and be gone presently, but they resolved to force their way, and penetrated through the heart of the country as far as Gaza, on the western side: (v. 4.) they let the Israelites alone to saw their ground, but toward harvest they came and seized all, and ate up and destroyed it, both grass and corn; and when they went away, took with them the sheep and oxen; so that, in short, they left no sustenance for Israel, except what was privately taken by the rightful owners into the dens and caves. Now here we may see, [1.] The justice of God in the punishment of their sin. They had neglected to honour God with their substance in tithes, and offerings, and had prepared the way for this evil. But now the grudge is served, and now God justly sends an enemy to take it away in the season thereof, Hos. 2. 8, 9. [2.] The consequence of God's departure from the people; when he goes, all good goes, and all mis-
chiefs break in. When Israel kept in with God, they reaped what others sowed; (Jos. 24. 13. Ps. 105. 44.) but now that God had forsaken them, others reaped what they sowed. Let us take occasion from this, to bless God for our national peace and tranquility, that we eat the labour of our hands.

III. Israel's sense of God's hand revived at last. Seven years, a year after year, did the Midianites make these inroads upon them, each, we may suppose, worse than the other, (v. 1.) until, at last, all other succours failing, Israel cried unto the Lord; (v. 6.) for crying to Baal ruined them, and would not help them. When God judges he will overcome; and sinners shall be made either to bend or break before him.

7. And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, 8. That the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; 9. And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land: 10. And I said unto you, I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.

Observe here, 1. The cognizance God took of the cries of Israel, when at length they were directed toward him. Though in their prosperity they had neglected him, and made court to his rivals, and though they never looked toward him till they were driven to it by extremity, yet, upon their complaint and prayer, he intended relief for them. Thus would he show how ready he is to forgive, how swift he is to show mercy, and how inclinable to hear prayer, that sinners may be encouraged to return and repent, Ps. 103. 4.

II. The method God took of working deliverance for them. Before he sent an angel to raise them up a saviour, he sent a prophet to reprove them for sin, and to bring them to repentance, v. 8. This prophet is not named, but he was a man, a prophet, not an angel, as ch. 2 1. Whether this prophet took an opportunity of delivering his message to the children of Israel, when they were met together in a general assembly, at some solemn feast, or other great occasion, or whether he went from city to city, and from tribe to tribe, preaching to this purpose, is not certain; but his errand was to convince them of sin, that in their crying to the Lord they might confess that with sorrow and shame, and not spend their breath only in complaining of their trouble. They cried to God for a deliverer, and God caused a prophet to instruct them, and to make them ready for deliverance. Not without reason have reason to hope God is designing mercy for us, if we find he is by his grace preparing us for it. If to those that are sick he sends a messenger, an interpreter, by whom he shows unto man his righteousness, then is he gracious, and grants a recovery, Job 33. 23, 24. 2. The sending of prophets to a people, and the furnishing a land with faithful ministers, is a token for good, and an evidence that God has mercy in store for them. He thus turns to us him, and then causes his face to shine, Ps. 80. 19.

We have here the heads of the message which this prophet delivered in to Israel, in the name of the Lord.

(1.) He set before them the great things God had done for them; (v. 8, 9.) Thus saith the Lord God of Israel. They had worshipped the gods of the nations, as if they had no God of their own to worship, and therefore might choose whom they pleased; but they are here reminded of one whom they had forgotten, who was known by the title of the God of Israel, and to him they must return. They had turned to other gods, as if their own had been either incapable or unwilling to protect them, and therefore they are told what he did for their fathers, in whose loins they were, the benefit of which descended and still remained to this their ungrateful seed. [1.] He brought them out of Egypt, where otherwise they would have continued in perpetual poverty and slavery. [2.] He delivered them out of the hands of all that oppressed them; this is mentioned to intimate that the reason why they were not now delivered out of the hands of the oppressing Midianites, was, not for want of any power or good will in God, but because by their iniquity they had sold themselves, and God would not redeem them till they had repented and turned again. [3.] He put them in quiet possession of this good land; this not only aggravated their sin, and affixed the brand of base ingratitude to it, but it justified God, and cleared him from the blame upon the account of the trouble they were now in: they could not say he was unkind, for he had given all possible proofs of his design good for them; if ill befall them notwithstanding, they must thank themselves.

(2.) He shows the easiness and equity of God's demands and expectations from them; (v. 10.) "I am the Lord your God, to whom you lie under the highest obligations; fear not the gods of the Amorites;" that is, "do not worship them, nor show any respect to them; do not worship them for fear of their doing you any hurt, for what hurt can they do you while I am your God? Fear God, and you need not fear them." (3.) He charges them with rebellion against God, who had laid this injunction upon them; But ye have not obeyed my voice. The charge is short, but very comprehensive; this was the malignity of all their sin, it was disobedience to God; and therefore it was that brought these calamities upon them, under which they were now groaning, pursuant to the threatenings annexed to these commands. He intends hereby to bring them to repentance; and our repentance is then right and genuine, when the sinfulness of sin, as disobedience to God, is that in it, which we chiefly lament.

11. And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites. 12. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. 13. And Gideon said unto him, Oh, my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. 14. And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might,
and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? 15. And he said unto him, Oh, my Lord, where-\thwithstanding shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. 16. And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. 17. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me. 18. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again. 19. And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it. 20. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. 21. Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. 22. And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face. 23. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die. 24. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jnhovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

It is not said what effect the prophet's sermon had upon the people; but we may hope it had a good effect, and that some of them at least repented and reformed upon it; for here, immediately after, we have the dawning of the day of their deliverance, by the effectual calling of Gideon to take upon him the command of their forces against the Midianites.

I. The person to be commissioned for this service, was Gideon, the son of Joash, v. 11. The father was now living, but he was passed by, and this honour put upon the son; for the father kept up in his own family the worship of Baal, (v. 25.) which we may suppose this son, as far as was in his power, to have resisted. He was of the half tribe of Manasseh that lay in Gilead, of the family of Abiezr; the eldest house of that tribe, Jos. 17. 2. Hither the judges were raised up out of that tribe which suffered most by the oppression, and, probably, it was so here.

II. The person that gave him the commission, was an angel of the Lord: it should seem not a created angel, but the Son of God himself, the eternal Word, the Lord of the angels, who then appeared upon some great occasion in human shape, as a prelude (says the learned Bishop Patrick) to what he intended in the fulness of time, when he would take our nature upon him, as we say, for good and all. This angel is here called Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God, (v. 14, 16.) and he said I am the Lord. This divine person appeared here to Gideon, and it is observable how he found him, 1. Retired; all alone. God often manifests himself to his people, when they are out of the noise and hurry of this world. Silence and solitude befriended our communion with God. 2. Employed in threshing wheat, with a staff or rod, (so the word signifies,) such as they used in beating out fitches and cummin, (Isa. 28. 27.) but now used for another purpose; when he had but a little to thresh, he needed not the oxen to tread it out. It was not then looked upon as any diminution to him, though he was a person of some account, and a mighty man of valour, to lay his hand to the business of the husbandman. He had many servants, (v. 27.) and yet would not himself live in idleness. We put ourselves in the way of divine visits, when we employ ourselves in honest business. Tidings of Christ's birth were brought to the shepherds, when they were keeping their flocks. The work he was about, was an emblem of that greater work to which he was now to be called, as the disciples' fishing was. From threshing corn he is fetched to thresh the Midianites, Isa. 41. 15. 3. Distressed; he was threshing his wheat, not in the threshing-floor, the proper place, but by the wine-press, in some private unsuspected corner, for fear of the Midianites. God himself shared in the common calamity, and now the angel came to animate him against Midian, when he himself could speak so feelingly of the heaviness of their yoke. The day of the greatest distress is God's time to appear for his people's relief. Let us now see what passed between the angel and Gideon, who knew not for certain, till after he was gone, that he was an angel, but supposed he was a prophet.

1. The angel accosted him with respect, and assured him of the presence of God with him, v. 12. He calls him a mighty man of valour, perhaps because he observed how he threshed his corn with all his might: and seest thou a man diligent in his business?—whatever his business is, he shall stand before kings. He that is faithful in a few things, shall be ruler over many. Gideon was a man of brave active spirit, and yet buried in obscurity, through the iniquity of the times; but he is here animated to undertake something great, like himself, with that word, The Lord is with thee; or, as the Chaldee reads it, The Word of the Lord is thy help. It was very sure the Lord was with him, when this angel was with him. By this word, [1.] He gives him his commission. If we have God's presence with us, that will justify us, and bear us out in our undertakings. [2.] He inspires him with all necessary qualifications for the execution of his commission. "The Lord is with thee to guide and strengthen thee, to animate and support thee." [3.] He assures him of success; for if God be for us, who can prevail against us? If he be with us, nothing can be wanting to us. The presence of God with us is all in all to our prosperity, whatever be the form of it, the appearance of the figure of valour, and yet he could bring nothing to pass without the presence of God, and that presence is enough to make any man mighty in valour, and to give a man courage at any time.

2. Gideon gave a very melanchooly answer to this joyful salutation; (v. 13.) "O my Lord, if the Lord be with us," (which the Chaldee reads, Is the Shechinnah of the Lord our help? making that the same with the Word of the Lord,) "why then is all
made, which he gave him no direct answer to, but girded and clothed him with such power as would shortly enable him to answer them himself, and make him ashamed that ever he had made them. It was a speaking look, like Christ's upon Peter; (Luke 22. 61.) a powerful look, that strangely darted new light and life into Gideon's breast, and inspired him with a generous heat, far above what he felt before. [2.] But there was much more in what he said to him. First, He commissioned him to go and act on his assurance, and to do it. Such a one, the few thinking people in the nation, and among the rest, were now expecting to be raised up, according to God's former method, in answer to the cries of oppressed Israel; and now Gideon is told, "Thou art the man: Go in this thy might, this might, wherewith thou art now threshing wheat; go and employ it to a nobler purpose, I will make thee a thresher of men." Or rather, "this might wherewith thou art now or rather, this look." God gave him his commission, by giving him all the qualifications that were necessary for the execution of it, which is more than the mightiest prince and potentate on earth can do for those to whom he gives commissions. God's fitting men for work, is a sure and constant evidence of his calling them to it. "Go, not in thy might, that which is mine, and of thyself; depend not on thine own valour: but go in the might which thou hast now received; go in the strength of the Lord God, that is the strength with which thou must strengthen thyself." Secondly, He assured him of success; this was enough to put courage into him, he might be confident he should not mis carry in the attempt; it should not turn either to his own disgrace, or the damage of his people, (speak, and do,) but to his honour and their happiness; "The Lord shall deliver Israel from the hand of the Midianites, and so shall not only be an eye-witness, but a glorious instrument, of such wonders as thy fathers told thee of." Gideon, we may suppose, looked as one astonished at this strange and surprising power conferred upon him, and questions whether he may depend upon what he hears; the angel ratifies his commission and makes it good: "I am the Lord, and there needeth no more. "Have not I come and told thee? I that have all power in heaven and earth, and particular authority here as Israel's King, giving commissions immediately, I who am that I am, the same that sent Moses," Exod. 3. 14. (4.) Gideon made a very modest objection against this commission; (v. 15.) "O my Lord, wherewith shall I have a Israel?" This question bespeaks him either, [1.] Distruist of God, and his poet: as if though God should be with him, yet it were impossible for him to save Israel. True faith is often weak, yet it shall not be rejected, but encouraged and strengthened. Or, [2.] Inquisitive concerning the method he must take; "Lord, I labour under all imaginable disadvantages for it; if I must do it, thou must put me in the way." Note, Those who receive commissions from God, must expect and seek for instructions from him. Or, rather, [3.] Humble, self-diffident, and self-denying. The angel had honoured him, but see how meekly he speaks of himself; "My family is comparatively poor in Manasseh," (impoverished, it may be, more than other families, by the Midianites,) "and I am the least, that have the least honour and interest, in my father's house; what can I pretend to do? I am utterly unfit for the service, and unworthy of this honour." Note, God often chooses to do great things by those that are little, especially that are so in their own eyes. God delights to advance the humble. (5.) This objection was soon answered by repe-
necessary he should give proofs of before he took
the field, to give proofs of his valour there. [2.] That
some steps might hereby be taken towards
Israel's reformation, which must prepare the way
for their deliverance. Sin, the cause, must be
taken away, else should the trouble come to an
end, which was but the effect? And it might be
hoped that this example of Gideon's, who was now
shortly to appear so great a man, would be followed
by the rest of the cities and tribes, and the destruc-
tion of this one altar of Baal, would be the destruc-
tion of many.

II. Gideon was obedient to the heavenly vision, v. 27.
He that was to command the Israel of God,
must be subject to the God of Israel, without dis-
puting; and, as a type of Christ, must first save his
people from their sin, and then save them from
their enemies. 1. He had servants of his own, whom
he could confide in, who, we may suppose,
like him, had kept their integrity, and had not
bowed the knee to Baal, and therefore were forward
to assist him in destroying the altar of Baal. 2. He
did not scruple taking his father's bullock, and
offering it to God without his father's consent, be-
cause God, who expressly commanded him to do so,
had already made it his own. This was the greatest
real kindness he could do his father, to prevent his
sin. 3. He expected to incur the displeasure of his father's household by it, and the ill-will of his neighbours; yet he did it, re-
membering how much it was Levi's praise, that, in
the cause of God, he said unto his father and mo-
ther, I have not seen him, Deut. 35. 9. And while
he was sure of the favour of God, he feared not the
anger of men; he that bade him do it would bear
him out. Yet, 4. Though he feared not their re-
sentments when it was done, to prevent their re-
sistance in the doing of it, he prudently chose to do
it by night, that he might not be disturbed in these
sacred actions. And some think it was the same
night in which God spake to him to do it; and that
as soon as ever he had received the orders, he im-
mediately applied himself to the execution of them,
and finished before morning.

III. He was brought into peril of his life for
doing of it, v. 28, 31. 1. It was soon discovered
what was done. Gideon, when he had gone
through with the business, did not desire the con-
cealment of it, nor could it be hid, for the men of
the city rose early in the morning, as it should seem,
to say their matins at Baal's altar, and so to begin the
day with their God in the same way as he was;
so a strife and tumult was made thereby the true
God, and yet, in the morning, direct no prayer to
him, nor look up. 2. It was soon discovered who
had done it. Strict inquiry was made; Gideon was
known to be disaffected to the worship of Baal,
which brought him into suspicion, and positive
proof immediately came against him; "Gideon, no
doubt, has done this thing." 3. Being found guilty
of it, he was guiltily punished; the degenerate
Israelites, arrived, that they take it for law he must die for the same; and require his own
father (who, by patronizing their idolatry, had
given them too much cause to expect he would
comply with them herein) to deliver him up. Bring
out thy son, that he may die. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and tremble, O earth! By the
law, the worshippers of Baal were to die, but these
wicked men impiously turn the penalty
upon the worshippers of the God of Israel.

IV. He was rescued out of the hands of his perpe-
cutors by his own father, v. 31. 1. There were
those that stood against Gideon, that not only
appeared at the first to make a demand, but insist-
ed on it, and would have put him to death. Not-
withstanding the heavy judgments they were at
this time under for their idolatry, yet they hated to
be reformed, and walked contrary to God then and
everafter. 2. Then Joash stood for him; he was one of the chief
men of the city. Those that have power, may do
a great deal for the protection of an honest man and
an honest cause, and when they use their power,
they are ministers of God for good. This Joash
had patronised Baal's altar, yet now protects him
that had destroyed it; either, (1.) Out of natural af-
fec tion to his son, and perhaps a particular esteem
for him, as a virtuous, valiant, valuable young
man, and never the worse for not joining with him in
the worship of Baal. Many that have not courage
enough to keep their integrity themselves, yet have
so much conscience left, as makes them love and
esteem those that do. If Joash had a kindness for
Baal, yet he had a greater kindness for his son. Or,
(2.) Out of a care for the public peace. The
worse sort would have provok'd him to more
and more, and therefore, as some think, he bestowed
himself to repress the tumult; "Let it be left to the
judges, it is not for you to pass sentence upon any
man; he that offers it, let him be put to death;" he
means, not as an idolater, but as a disturber of the
peace, and a mover of sedition. Under this same
colour, Paul was rescued at Ephesus, from those
that were as zealous for Diana as these here for
Baal, Acts 19. 40. Or, (3.) Out of a conviction
that Gideon had done well. His son, perhaps, had
reasoned with him, or God, who has all hearts in
his hands, had secretly and effectually influenced
him to appear thus against the advocates of Baal,
though he had complied with them formerly in the
worship of Baal. Note, It is good to appear for
God when we are called to it, though there be few
or none to second us, because God can incline the
hearts of those to stand by us, from whom we little
expect it. Let us do our duty, and then trust God
with our safety.

Two things Joash urges; [1.] That it was an
sured for them to plead for Baal. "Will you that
are Israelites, the worshippers of the one only living and
ttrue God, plead for Baal, a false god? Will you be
so soft-souled, so senseless? They whose father's god
was this Baal, would have had his cause pleaded in
an excusable manner for him than you are, that are
in covenant with Jehovah, and have been trained up
in the knowledge of him. You that have smelt
so much for worshipping Baal, and have brought all
this mischief and calamity upon yourselves by it,
will you yet plead for Baal?" Note, It is bad to
commit sin, but it is a great wickedness indeed to
plead for it, especially to plead for Baal, that idol,
which was the most idolatrous of them all. In
your heart which God should have. [2.] That it was
needless for them to plead for Baal; If he were not
a god, as was pretended, they could have nothing
to say for him; if he were, he was able to plead for
himself, as the God of Israel had often done, by fire
from heaven, or some other judgment against those
who put contempt upon him. Here is a fair chal-
cenge to you, warriors of the cross and conquerors of
disobedience, who have been so weak and silly as
to yield to the current of Baal's worship. Let your
 Souls be convinced his worshippers of their folly, in
praying to one to help them, that could not avenge
himself; after this, Gideon remarkably prospered,
and thereby it appeared how unable Baal was to
maintain his own cause. Lastly, Gideon's father
hereupon gave him a new name; (v. 32.) he called
him Jerubbaal; "Let Baal plead, let him plead against him if he can; if he have any thing to say for

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himself against his destroyer, let him say it." This name was a standing defiance to Baal; now that Gideon was taking up arms against the Midianites that worshipped Baal, let him defend his worshippers if he can; it likewise gave honour to Gideon, (a sworn enemy to that great usurper, and that had carried the day against him,) and encouragement to his soldiers, that they fought under one that fought for God, against that great competitor with him for the throne. It is the probable conjecture of the learned, that that Jerombalus, whom Sanchonialatus (one of the most ancient of all the heathen writers) speaks of as a priest of the god Jao, (a corruption of the name Jehovah,) and one that had he was indebted for a great deal of knowledge, was this Jerubaal. He is called Jerubbaseth, 2Sam. 11. 21. Baal, a lord, being fitly turned into Be'esheth, shame.

33. Then all the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and the children of the cast, were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. 34. But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him. 35. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them. 36. And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, 37. Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth besides, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. 38. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl-full of water. 39. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: Let me prove, I pray thee, this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. 40. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

Here we have,

I. The descent which the enemies of Israel made upon them, v. 33. A vast number of Midianites, Amalekites, and Arabians, got together, and came over Jordan, none either caring, or daring to guard that important and advantageous pass, against them; and they made their head-quarters in the valley of Jezreel, in the heart of Manasseh's tribe, not far from Gideon's city. Some think that the notice they had of Gideon's destroying Baal's altar, brought them over, and that they came to plead for Baal, and to make that a pretence for quarrelling with Israel; but it is more likely that it was now harvest-times when they had been wont each year to make them such a visit as this, (v. 3.) and were expected when Gideon was threatening, v. 11. God raised up Gideon to be ready against this terrible blow came. Their success so many years in these incursions, the little opposition they had met with, and the great booty they had carried off, made them now both very eager and very confident; but it proved the measure of their iniquity was full; for the year of recompense was come; they must now make an end to spoil, and must be spoiled, and they are gathered as sheaves to the floor, (Mic. 4. 12, 13.) for Gideon to thresh.

II. The preparation which Gideon makes to attack them in their camp, v. 34, 43. 1. God by his Spirit put life into Gideon; The Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon, so the word is; clothed him as a robe to put honour upon him, clothed him as a coat of mail, to put defence upon him. These are well clad, that are thus clothed, A spirit of fortitude from before the Lord clothed Gideon; so the Chaldee renders it, He was made so strong himself a man of horror, yet personal strength and courage, though vigorously exerted, would not suffice for this great action; he must have the armour of God upon him, and that is it that he must depend upon; the Spirit of the Lord clothed him in an extraordinary manner; whom God calls to his work, he will qualify and animate for it. Gideon with his trumpet put life into his neighbours, God working with him; he blew a trumpet to call in volunteers, and more came in than perhaps he expected. (1.) The men of Abiezer, though lately enraged against him for throwing down the altar of Baal, and though they had condemned him to death as a criminal, were now convinced of their error, bravely came in to his assistance, and submitted to him as their general; Abiezer was gathered after him, v. 34. So suddenly can God turn the hearts, even of idolaters and persecutors. (2.) Distant tribes, even Asher and Naphtali, which lay most remote, though strangers to him, obeyed his summons, and sent him in the best of their forces, v. 35. Though they lay the farthest from the danger, yet, considering that if their neighbours were over run by the Midianites, their own turn would be next, they were forward to join against a common enemy.

III. The signs which God gratified him with, for the confirming both of his own faith and that of his followers; and perhaps it was more for their sakes than for his own that he desired them. Or, perhaps he desired by these to be satisfied, whether this was the time of his conquering the Midianites, or whether he was to wait for some other opportunity. Observe, 1. His request for a sign; (v. 36, 37.) Let me see one miracle that thou wilt save Israel by my hand; let a fleece of wool, spread in the open air, be wet with the dew, and let the ground about it be dry. The purport of this is, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief. He found his own faith weak and wavering, and therefore begged of God by this sign to perfect what was lacking in it. We may suppose God, who intended to give these signs, for the glorifying of his own power and goodness; put it into his heart to ask them. Yet, when he repeated his request for a second sign, the reverse of the former, he did it with a very humble apology, deprecating God's displeasure, because it looked so like a peevish humoursome distrust of God, and dissatisfaction with the many assurances he had already given him; (v. 38.) Let not thine anger be hot against me. Though he took the boldness, to ask a second sign, yet, when he was denied the first, he was afraid and trembling, as showed that the familiarity God had graciously admitted him to, did not breed any contempt of God's glory, or presumption on God's goodness. Abraham had given him an example of this, when God gave him leave to be very free with him; (Gen. 18. 30, 32.) O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. God's favour must be esteemed a blessing, if God's will be done. It is a distinction, and a religious fear of his wrath. 2. God's gracious grant of his request. See how tender God is of true believers though they be weak, and how
ready to condescend to their infirmities, that the
bruised reed may not be broken, nor the smoking
flax consumed: 16. He giveth a faithful soul... 17. Shew
men... 18. He... 19. He... 20. Then Jerubbaal (who is Gideon)
and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the
well of Harod so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them,
by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. 2. And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people
that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest
Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. 3. Now,
therefore, go to proclaim in the ears of the
people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and
afraid, let him return, and depart early from
mount Gilead: and there returned of the
people twenty and two thousand, and there
remained ten thousand. 4. And the Lord
said unto Gideon, The people are yet too
many; bring them down unto the water,
and I will try them for thee there: and it
shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This
shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee;
and of whomsoever I say unto thee. This
shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.
5. So he brought down the people unto the water:
and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lapeth of the water
with his tongue, as a dog lapeth, him shalt
thou set by himself; likewise every one that
boweth down upon his knees to drink. 6.
And the number of them that lapped, putting
their hand to their mouth, were three
hundred men: but all the rest of the people
bowed down upon their knees to drink water.
7. And the Lord said unto Gideon by the three hundred men that lapped will I
save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine
hand: and let all the other people go
every man unto his place. 8. So the people
took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets:
and he sent all the rest of Israel, every
man unto his tent, and retained those three
hundred men. And the host of Midian was
beneath him in the valley.

Here,
I. Gideon applies himself with all possible care
and industry to do the part of a good general, in
leading on the hosts of Israel against the Midianites.
He rose up early, (v. 1.) and one whose heart was
upon his business, and who was afraid of losing
time. Now that he is sure God is with him, he
is impatient of delay. He pitched near a famous well,
that his army might not be distressed for want of
water, and gained the higher ground, which, possibly,
might be some advantage to him, for the Midianites
were beneath him in the valley. Note, Faith in
God's promises must not slacken, but rather
quicken our endeavours. When we are sure God
goes before us, then we must bestir ourselves, 2
Sam. 5. 24.

II. God provides that the praise of the intended
victory may be reserved wholly to himself, by
appointing three hundred men only to be employed in
this service. The army consisted of thirty-two
thousand men; a small army, in comparison with
what Israel might have raised upon so great an
occasion, and a very small one in comparison with
which the Midianites had now brought into the field;
Gideon was ready to think them too few, but God
comes to him, and tells him they were too many,
v. 2. Not but that they did well, who offered them-

selves willingly to this expedition, but God saw fit
to make use of all that came. We often find
God bringing great things to pass by a few hands,
but this was the only time that he purposely made
them fewer. Had Deborah lately blamed those
who came not to the help of the Lord, and yet in the
next great action must they be turned off that do
come? Yes; 1. God would hereby show, that when
he employed likely instruments in his service, he did not need them, but could do his work without them; so that he was not indebted to them for their service, but they to him for employing them. 2. He worked as they saw the way, and saw the manner of their conference, who had tamely submitted to the Midianites, and durst not make head against them, because of the disproportion of their numbers. They now saw, if they had but made sure of the favour of God, one of them might have chased a thousand. 3. He would hereby silence and exclude boasting: that is the reason here given by him who knows the pride that is in men’s hearts, lest Israel should think that all might have been done by their own hand, when they denied the honour of the service who would not give God the honour of the success. Mine own hand hath saved me, is a word that must never come out of the mouth of such as shall be saved. He that glories must glory in the Lord, and all flesh must be silent before him.

Two ways God took to lessen their numbers.

(1.) He ordered all that would own themselves timorous and faint-hearted to be dismissed, v. 3. He was now encamped on a mountain close to the enemy, called mount Gilead, from Gilead, the common ancestors of these families of Manas-sesh, which were seated on this side Jordan, Num. 26. 30. And from thence they might see perhaps the vast numbers of the enemy; those therefore who were disheartened at the sight, were left to take care of the welfare of the rest, and thereby was a law for making such a proclamation as this, Deut. 20. 8. But Gideon perhaps thought that concerned only those wars which were undertaken for the enlarging of their coast, not, as this, for their necessary defence against an invader; therefore Gideon had not proclaimed this, if God had not commanded him, who knew how his forces would hereby be diminished. Cowards would be as like-ly as any, after the victory, to take the honour of it from God, and therefore God would not do them the honour to employ them in it. One would have thought there had been scarcely one Israelite to be found, that against such an enemy as the Midianites, and under such a leader as Gideon, would have owned himself fearful; yet above two parts of three took advantage of this proclamation, and fled. God made the hardness of heart, and their own weakness, not considering the assurances of the divine presence which their general had received of the Lord, and, it is likely, delivered unto them. Some think the oppression they had been under so long, had broken their spirits, others, more probably, that consciousness of their own guilt had deprived them of their courage. So stared them in the face, and therefore they durst not die. In the face. Note, Fearful and faint-hearted people, are not fit to be employed for God; and among those that are listed under the banner of Christ, there are more such than we think there are.

(2.) He directed the cashiering of all that remained, but three hundred men; and he did it by a sign. The people were yet too many for me to manage, he said. God said, There are too many; and when diminished to a third part, there are yet many; which may help us to understand those providences which sometimes seem to weaken the church and its interests; its friends are too many, too mighty, too wise, for God to work deliverance by; God is taking a course to lessen them, that he may be exalted in his own strength.

Gideon is ordered to bring his soldiers to the watering place, probably, the wells of Haddas, (v. 1.) and the stream that ran from it; he, or some appointed by him, must observe how they drank. We must suppose they were all thirsty, and were inclined to drink; it is likely he told them they must prepare to enter upon action immediately, and therefore must refresh themselves accordingly, not expecting, after this, to drink any thing else but the blood of their enemies. Now, [1.] Some, and no doubt the most, would first quench their thirst, and put their mouths to the water as horses do, and so they might get their full draught. [2.] Others, it may be, would not make such a formal business of it, but as a dog laps with his tongue, so they would hastily take up a little water in their hands, and cool their mouths with that, and be gone. Three hundred and no more were of this latter sort, that drank in haste, and by those God tells Gideon he would rout the Midianites, v. 7. By the former distinction, none were retained but hearty men, that were resolved to do their utmost for retrieving the liberties of Israel; but by this further distinction it was provided that none should be made use of, but, First, Men that were hardy; that could endure long fatigue, without complaining of thirst or weariness; that had not in them any weakness or fear. It is, therefore, the done that were hasty; that thought it long until they were engaged with the enemy, preferring the service of God and their country before their necessary refreshments: such as these God chooses to employ, that are not only well affected, but zealously affected in a good thing: and also because these were the smaller number, and therefore the least likely to effect what they all of them designed for, God would by them save Israel. It was a great trial to the faith and courage of Gideon, when God bid him let all the rest of the people, but these three hundred go every man to his place; that is, go where they pleased out of his call, and from under his command: yet we may suppose those that were hearty in the cause, though now set aside, did not go far out of hearing, but that they were ready to help when the three hundred had made the assault; though that does not appear. Thus strangely was Gideon’s army purged and modelled, and reduced, instead of being recruited, as one would think in so great an action it both needed and deserved to be. Now let us see how this little despicable regiment, on which the stress of the action must be, was accoutred and fitted out. Had these three hundred been double-manned servants and attendants, and double-armed with swords and spears, we should have thought them the more likely to bring something to pass. But instead of making them more serviceable by their equipment, they are made less so; for, 1. Every soldier turns sutler; they took victuals in their hands, (v. 6.) left their baggage behind, and every man burdened himself with his own provision; which all the lbabies, that they might not be too burdened for, they could trust God when they had no more provisions with them than they could carry, and a trial of their diligence, whether they would carry as much as they had occasion for. This was indeed living from hand to mouth. 2. Every soldier turns trumpeter. The regiments that were cashiered left their trumpets behind them for the use of these three hundred men, who were furnished with those instead of weapons of war, as if they had been going rather to a game than to a battle. 9. And it came to pass the same night,
that the Lord said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand. 10. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host: 11. And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. 12. And the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and all the children of the east, lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea-side for multitude. 13. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley-bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. 14. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host. 15. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

Gideon's army being diminished, as we have found it was, he must either fight by faith or not at all; God therefore here provides recruits for his fight, by ordering his fellow to tell his dream.

I. He furnishes him with a good foundation to build his faith upon; nothing but a word from God will be footing for faith. He has that as full and express as he can desire, v. 9. A word of command to warrant the action, which otherwise seemed rash and indiscreet, and unbecoming a wise general; "Arise, get thee down with this handful of men unto the host;" and a word of promise to assure him of the success, which otherwise seemed very improbable; "I have delivered it into thine hand, it is all thine own." This word of the Lord came to him the same night, when he was (may we suppose) full of care how he should come off; in the multitude of his thoughts within him these comforts did delight his soul. Divine consolations are given in to believers, not only strongly, but seasonably.

II. He furnishes him with a good prop to support his faith with. 1. He orders him to be his own spy, and now in the dead of the night to go down privately into the host of Midian and see what intelligence he could gain. "If thou fear to go down to fight, go first only with thine own servant, (v. 16.) and hear what they say; (v. 11.) and it is intimated to him he should hear that which would greatly strengthen his faith. God knows the infirmities of his people, and what great encouragement they may sometimes take from a small matter: and therefore knowing beforehand what would occur to Gideon, in that very part of the camp to which he would go down, he orders him to go down and hearken to what they said; that he might the more firmly believe what God said. He must take with him Phurah his servant, one that he could confide in; probably, one of the ten that had helped him to break down the altar of Baal; he must take him and no one else with him, must take him, that he be a witness of what he should hear the Midianites say, that out of the mouth of these two witnesses, when the matter came to be reported to Israel, the word might be established. He must go by himself, for he thought it better than one, and a little help better than none. 2. Being so, he orders him the sight of something that was discouraging. (1.) It was enough to frighten him, to discern, perhaps by moonlight, the vast numbers of the enemy; (v. 12.) the men like grasshoppers for multitude, and they proved no better than grasshoppers for strength and courage; the camels one could not count, any more than the sand. But, (2.) It is probable he was to a him a very good omen; and which when he had heard, he went back again immediately, supposing he now had what he was sent thither for. He overheard two soldiers of the enemy, that were, comrades, talking; probably, they were in bed together, waking in the night. [1.] One of them tells his dream, and (as our dreams generally are bad, and therefore not worthy telling again) it is a broken, fumbling dream. He dreams that a barley-cake come rolling down the hill into the camp of the Midianites, and "methought," says he, (for so we used to tell our dreams,) "this cake struck one of our tents," (perhaps one of the chief of their tents,) "and with such violence, that (would you think?) it overturned the tent, forced down the stakes, and broke the cords at one blow, so that the tent lay along, and buried its inhabitants," v. 13. In multitudinous, that is over thither, and as Gideon interpreted the dream, says Solomon, Eccl. 5. 7. One would wonder what odd incoherent things are often put together by a ludicrous fancy in our dreams. [2.] The other, it may be, between sleeping and waking, undertakes to interpret this dream, and the interpretation is very far fetched: "This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, v. 14." Our expositors now can tell us how apt the resemblance was; that those who had made cakes for his friend, and made cakes for his friend, made cakes for his friend, they may, as it were, as a barley-cake, hastily got together, as a cake suddenly baked upon the coals, and as unlikely to conquer the great army, as a cake to overthrow a tent. But, after all, do not interpret this, says Gideon, He.) Fit into the heart of the one to dream, and into the mouth of the other to give the sense of it. If Gideon had heard the dream only, and he and his servant had been to interpret it themselves, it had so little significancy in it, that it would have done him little service; but having the interpretation from the mouth of an enemy, it not only appeared to come from God, who has all men's hearts and tongues in his hand, but it was highly, at that very time, to hear this quite dispirited, and that the name of Gideon was become so formidable to them, that it disturbed their sleep. The victory would easily be won, which was already so tamely yielded; into his hand hath God delivered Midian. Those were not like-ly to fight, who saw God fighting against them. Gideon, observing the finger of God pointing to that likely to fight, who saw God fighting against them. Gideon, observing the finger of God pointing to that
15. First, how he gave God the glory of it; he worshipped immediately, bowed his head, or, it may be, lifted up his eyes and hands, and in a short ejaculation thanked God for the victory he was now sure of, and for this encouragement to expect it. Wherever we are, we may speak to God, and worship him, and find a way open heavenward. God must have the praise of that which is encouraging in our faith. And his providence must be acknowledged in those events, which, though minute and seemingly accidental, prove serviceable to us. Secondly, how he gave his friends a share in the encouragement he had received; “Arise, prepare to march presently; the Lord has delivered Midian into your hand.”

16. And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man’s hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. 17. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be, that as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. 19. So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp, in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal; and they cried, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. 21. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man’s sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbashath.

Here is, 1. The alarm which Gideon gave to the hosts of Midian in the dead time of the night; for it was intended that they who had so long been a terror to Israel, and had so often frightened them, should themselves be routed and ruined purely by terror. The attack here made was, in many circumstances, like that which Abraham made upon the army that had taken Lot captive; the number of men much the same, Abraham had three hundred and eighteen, Gideon three hundred; they both divided their forces, both made their attack by night, and were both victorious under great disadvantages, (Gen. 14. 14, 15.) and Gideon is not only a son of Abraham, (so were the Midianites by Keturah,) but an heir of his faith. Gideon, 1. Divided his army, small as it was, into three battalions (v. 16.) one of which he himself commanded, (v. 19.) because great armies (and such a one he would make a show of) were usually divided into the right wing, and left wing, and the body of the army. 2. He ordered them all to do as he did, v. 17. He told them now, it was very likely, what they must do, else the thing was so strange, they would scarcely have done it of a sudden, but he would, by doing it first, give notice to them when to do it, as officers exercise their soldiers with the word of command, or beat of drum, Look on me, and do likewise; such is the word of command our Lord Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, gives his soldiers, for he has left us an example, with a charge to follow it, As I do, so shall ye do. 22. And in this night, when they were secure, and least expected it, which would put them into great consternation; and when the smallness of his army would not be discovered. In the night, all frights are most frightful; especially in the dead of the night, as this was, a little after midnight, when the middle watch began, and the alarm would wake them out of their sleep. We read of terror by night, as very terrible, (Ps. 91, 5.) and fear in the night, Cant. 3. 8. 4. That Gideon aimed at, was, to frighten this huge host; to give them not only a fatal rout, but a very shameful one. He accounted his army with every man a trumpet in his right hand, and an earthen pitcher, with a torch in it, in his left; and he himself thought it no disparagement to him, to march before them thus armed. He would make but jest of conquering the enemy, and go out against them rather as against a company of children. The Midianites, The virgin, the daughter of Zuren, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn, Isa. 37. 22. The fewness of his men favoured his design, for being so few, they marched to the camp with the greater secrecy and expedition; so that they were not discovered till they were close by the camp; and he contrived to give the alarm when they had just mounted their pitchers, (v. 16.) that when men, being then wakeful, might the sooner disperse the alarm through the camp, which was the best service they could do him.

Three ways Gideon contrived to strike a terror upon this army, and put them into confusion. (1.) With a great noise; every man must blow his trumpet in the most terrible manner he could, and scatter an earthen pitcher to pieces at the same time, probably, and dash his head against the next man’s, and so they were broken both together, which would not only make a great crash, but was a figure of what would be the effects of the fight, even the Midianites’ killing one another. (2.) With a great blaze; the lighted torches were hid in the pitchers, like a candle under a bushel, until they came to the camp, and then being taken out all together, a glorious show, and run through the camp like a flash of lightning. Perhaps with these they set some of the tents on the outside of the camp on fire, which would very much increase the confusion. (3.) With a great shout; every man must cry, For the Lord and for Gideon; so some think it should be read, v. 18. for there the sword is not in the original, but it is, v. 19. the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. It should seem, he heard the word from the Midianite’s dream, (v. 14.) it is the sword of Gideon: finding his name was a terror to them, he thus improves it against them; but prefixes the name of Jehovah, as the figure, without which his own was but an insignificant cipher. This would put life into his own men, who might well take courage, when they had such a God as Jehovah, and such a man as Gideon, both to fight, and to fight for them; well might they follow, who had such leaders. It would likewise put their enemies into a fright, who had of old heard of Jehovah’s great name, and of late of Gideon’s. The sword of the
Lord is all in all to the success of the sword of Gideon, yet the sword of Gideon must be employed. Men the instruments, and God the principal Agent, must both be considered in their places; but more may be required of us, as well as him. Gideon was not only made to save, but to save by a demonstration of God's power. This army was to be defeated purely by terrors, and those are especially the sword of the Lord. These soldiers, if they had swords by their sides, that was all, they had none in their hands; but they gained the victory by shouting "The Sword." So the church's enemies are routed by a sword out of the mouth, Rev. 19. 21.

Now this method here taken of defeating the Midianites, may be alluded to also (see 11. 13) As typifying the destruction of the Devil's kingdom in the world, by the preaching of the everlasting gospel, the sounding of that trumpet, and the holding forth of that light out of earthen vessels, for such the ministers of the gospel are, in whom the treasure of that light is deposited, 2 Cor. 4. 6, 7. Thus God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, a barley-cake to overthrow the tents of Midian, that the excellency of the power might be of God only; the gospel is a sword, not in the hand, but in the mouth, the sword of the Lord and of Gideon; of God and Jesus Christ, him that sits on the throne, and the Lamb. [2.] As representing the terrors of the great day. So the excellent Bishop Hall applies it; if these pitchers, trumpets, and fire-brands, did so daunt and dismay the proud troops of Midian and Amalek, who should be able to stand before the last terror, when the trumpet of the archangel shall sound, the elements shall be on a flame, the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the Lord himself shall descend with a shout! If the wonderful success of this alarm. The Midianites were shot out of their lives, as the walls of Jericho were shot down, that Gideon might see what he lately despaired of ever seeing, the wonders that their fathers told them of. Gideon was now come, even their destruction stood plain in his place round about the camp, (v. 21.) sounding his trumpet to excite them to fight one another, and holding out his torch to light them to their ruin. They did not rush into the host of Midian, as greedy either of blood or spoil, but patiently stood still to see the salvation of the Lord, a salvation purely of his own working. Observe how the design took effect.

They feared the Israelites; all the host immediately took the alarm; it flew like lightning through all the lines, and they ran, and cried, and fled, v. 21. There was something natural in this fright; we may suppose they had not had intelligence of the great diminution of Gideon's army, but rather concluded that since their last advices, it had been growing greater and greater; and therefore had reason to suspect, knowing how odious and grievous they had made themselves, and how bold steps had been taken toward the throwing off of their yoke, that it was a very great army which was to be ushered in with all those trumpeters and torch-bearers: but there was more of a supernatural power impressing this terror upon them; God himself gave it the setting on, to show how that promise should have been fulfilled if they had not forfeited it, One chose a terror here, as he did on Mount Sinai, and in the pillars of cloud and fire. See there the power of imagination, and how much it may become a terror at some times, as at other times it is a pleasure.

2. They fell foul upon one another; (v. 22.) The Lord set every man's hand against his fellow. In this confusion, observing the trumpeters and torch-bearers to stand still without their camp, they concluded the body of the army had already entered, and therefore every one ran at the next he met, though a friend, supposing him an enemy; and one such mistake as that, would occasion many, for then he that slew him would certainly be taken for an enemy, and would be despatched immediately. It is our interest to preserve such a command of our own spirits, as never to be afraid of any amazement. For we cannot conceive what mischiefs we thereby plunge ourselves in. See also how God often makes the enemies of his church instruments to destroy one another; it is pity the church's friend should ever be thus infatuated.

3. They fled for their lives. Perhaps when day-light came, they were sensible of their mistake in fighting with one another, and concluded that by this fatal error they had so weakened themselves, that now it was impossible to make any head against Israel, and therefore made no doubt of going out of their way toward their own country, though, for aught that appears, the three hundred men kept their ground. The wicked flees when none pursues, Prov. 28. 1. Terrors make him afraid on every side, and drive him to his feet, Job. 18. 11.

23. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites. 24. And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. 25. And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the wine-press of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

We have here the prosecution of this glorious victory.

1. Gideon's soldiers that had been dismissed, and perhaps had begun to disperse themselves, upon notice of the enemies' flight, got together again, and vigorously pursued them whom they had once caught by the face.

2. The men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan.

3. They were not such as now came from those distant countries, but the same that had enlisted themselves, (ch. 6. 35.) but had been cashiered. They who were fearful and afraid to fight, (v. 3.) now took heart, when the worst was over, and were ready enough to divide the spoil, though backward to make the onset. They also that might not fight, though they had a mind to it, and were disbanding by order from God, did not (as those, 2 Chron. 25. 10. 13.) return in great anger, but waited for an opportunity of doing service in pursuing the victory, though they were denied the honour of helping to force the lines.

2. The Ephraimites, upon a summons from Gideon, came in unanimously, and secured the passes over Jordan, by the several fords, to cut off the enemy's retreat on one side and the other. See there the power of imagination, and how much it may become a terror at some times, as at other times it is a pleasure.

3. Of the chief commanders of the host of Midian were taken and slain by the Ephraimites on
this side Jordan, v. 23. Their names perhaps sig-
nified their nature, *Oreb* signifies a raven, and *Zeeb* a wolf (*Corvinus* and *Lynxus*). These in their flight had taken shelter, one in a rock; (Isa. 2. 21. Rev. 6. 15.) the other, as Gideon for fear of them had lately hid his corn by a wine-
press, ch. 5. 11. But the places of their shelter were made the places of their slaughter, and the memory of it preserved to posterity in the names of the places, to their perpetual infamy; *Here fell the princes of Midian.*

**CHAP. VIII.**

This chapter gives us a further account of Gideon's victory over the Midianites, with the residue of their enemies, and their government. I. Gideon prudently pacifies the offending Ephraimites, v. 1.-3. II. He bravely pursues the flying Midianites, v. 4.-10. III. He justly chastises the insolence of the man of Succoth and Penuel, who basely abused him, v. 5.-9. and were reckoned with for it, v. 13.-17. IV. He honourably slays the two kings of Midian, v. 18. -21. V. After all this, he modestly declines the government of Israel, v. 22, 23. VI. He foolishly gratified the superstitious humour of his people, by setting up an ephod in his own city, which proves a great snare, v. 24.—27. VII. He kept the country quiet forty years, v. 28. VIII. He died in honour, and left a numerous family behind him, v. 29. IX. Both he and his God were soon forgotten by ungrateful Israel, v. 33.-36.

I. AND the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou serviced us thus, that thou calledst us not when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? and they did chide with him sharply. 2. And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? 3. God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

No sooner were the Midianites, the common ene-
yes, subdued, than through the violence of some hot spirits, the children of Israel are ready to quarrel among themselves; an unhappy spark was struck, which if Gideon had not with a great deal of wis-
dom and grace extinguished immediately, might have broken out into a flame of fatal consequence. The Ephraimites, when they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon as general, instead of congratulating his successes, and addressing him with thanks for his great services, as they ought to have done, picked a quarrel with him, and grew very hot upon it.

I. Their accusation was very peevish and unrea-
sensible; **Why didst thou not call us when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites?** v. 1. Ephraim was brother to Manasseh, Gideon's tribe, and had the pre-eminence in Jacob's blessing, and in Moses's, and therefore was very jealous of Manasseh, less jealous. (2.) It was a very bad manner of their's. Hence we find Manasseh against Ephraim, and Ephraim against Manasseh, Is. 9. 21. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are as the bars of a castle, Prov. 18. 19. But how unjust was their quarrel with Gideon! They were angry he did not send for them to begin the attack upon Midian, as well as to follow the honor. Why may other men not lead the van? The post of honour, they thought, belonged to them. But, 1. Gideon was called of God, and must act as he directed; he neither took the honour to himself, nor did he dispose of honours himself, but left it to God to do all. So that the Ephraimites in this quarrel reflected upon the di-
vine conduct; and what was Gideon that they mur-
dered against him? 2. Why did not the Ephra-
mites offer themselves willingly to the service? They knew the enemy was in their country, and had heard of the forces that were raising to oppose them, to which they ought to have joined themselves, in zeal for the common cause, though they had not a formal invitation. These seek themselves more than God, that stand upon a point of honour to ex-
cuse themselves from doing real service to God and their generation. (1.) **The root of Ephraim, ch. 5. 14. Why did not that appear now?** The case itself called them; they need-
ed not wait for a call from Gideon. 3. Gideon had saved their credit in not calling them; if he had sent for them, no doubt, many of them would have gone back with the faint-hearted, or been dismissed with the lazy, slothful, and intemperate; so that by not calling them, he prevented the putting of those slurs upon them. Cowards will seem valiant when the danger is over, but these consult their reputa-
tion, who try their courage when danger is near.

II. Gideon's answer was very calm and peace-
able, and was intended not so much to justify him-
self, as to please and pacify them, v. 2, 3. He an-
swers them, 1. With a great deal of meekness and temper: he did not resent the affront, nor answer them with raging impatience. 2. With a great deal of modesty and humility, magnifying their perfor-
mances above his own. *(Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim, who picked up the stragglers of the enemy, and cut off those of them that escaped, better than the vintage of Abiezer?—great-
er honour to them, and better service to the country than the first attack Gideon made upon them? The destruction of the church's enemies is com-
pared to a vintage, Rev. 14. 18. In this he owns their gleanings better than his gatherings. The improving of a victory is often more honourable, and of greater consequence, than the winning of it; in this they had signalized themselves, and their own courage and conduct. God hath dignified them; for though, to magnify their achievements, he is willing to diminish his own performances, yet he will not take any flowers from God's crown to adorn their's; God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, and a great slaughter has been made of the enemy by your numerous hosts, and what was I able to do with three hun-
dred men, in comparison of you and your brave ex-
perts?* Gideon stands here a very great example of self-denial, and this instance shows us, (1.) That envy is best removed by humility. It is true, even right works are often envi'd, Eccl. 4. 4. Yet they are not so apt to be so, when those who do them, appear not to be proud of them. They are malignant indeed, who seek to cast those down from their excellency, that humble and abuse them-
selves. (2.) It is likely the surest method of end-
ning strife, for only by pride comes contention, Prov. 13. 10. (3.) Humility is most amiable and admirable in the midst of great attainments and ad-
vancements. Gideon's conquests did greatly set off his condensations. (4.) It is the proper act of hu-
mility to esteem others better than ourselves, and in honour to prefer one another.

What was the controversy? The Ephraimites had chidden with him sharply, (v. 1.) forgetting the respect owing to their general, and one whom God had honoured, and giving vent to
their passion in a very indecent liberty of speech, a
well-timed answer turned away their wrath, Prov.
15. 1. Their anger was abated toward him, (v. 3.)
It is intimated, that they retained him some resen-
tment, but he prudently overlooked it, and let it
cool by degrees. Very great and good men must
expect to have their patience tried, by the unkind-
nesses and follies even of those they serve, and must
not think it strange.

4. And Gideon came to Jordan, and pass-
ed over, he and the three hundred men that
were with him, faint, yet pursuing them. 5.
And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give,
I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people
that follow me; for they be faint, and I am
pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of
Midian. 6. And the princes of Succoth said,
Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna
now in thine hands, that we should give
bread unto thine army? 7. And Gideon
said, Therefore, when the Lord hath de-
ivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand,
then I will tear your flesh with the thorns
of the wilderness and with briers.
8. And he went up thence to Penuel, and
spake unto them likewise: and the men of
Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him. 9. And he spake
also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When
I come again in peace, I will break down
this tower. 10. Now Zebah and Zalmun-
na were in Karkor, and their hosts with
them, about fifteen thousand men, all that
were left of all the hosts of the children of
the east: for there fell a hundred and twenty
thousand men that drew sword. 11. And
Gideon went up by the way of them that
dwelt in tents, on the east of Nobah and
Jobbeah, and smote the host: for the host
was secure. 12. And when Zebah and
Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and
took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and
Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host.
13. And Gideon, the son of Joash, returned
from battle before the sun was up. 14. And
caught a young man of the men of Succoth,
and inquired of him: and he described unto
him the princes of Succoth, and the elders
thereof, even three score and seventeen men.
15. And he came unto the men of Succoth,
and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna,
with whom ye did upbraided me, saying, Are
the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in
thine hand, that we should give bread unto
thy men that are weary? 16. And he took
the elders of the city, and thorns of the wil-
derness and briers, and with them he taught
the men of Succoth. 17. And he beat down
the tower of Penuel: and slew the men of
the city.

In these verses, we have,
1. Gideon, as a valiant general, pursuing the
remaining Midianites, and bravely following his blow.
A very great slaughter was made of the enemy at first, and of
hundred and twenty thousand men that drew the sword, v. 10.
Such a terrible execution did they make among themselves, and so easily
a prey were they to Israel: but, it seems, the two
kings of Midian, being better provided than the rest
for an escape, with fifteen thousand men, got over
Jordan before the passes could be secured by the
Ephraimites, and made toward their own country:
Gideon does not execute his commission to save Israel, if he let them
escape. He is not content to chase them out of the country, but
he will chase them out of the world, Job 18. 18.
This resolution is here pushed on with great firm-
ness, and crowned with great success.

1. His firmness was very exemplary; he effect-
ded his purpose under the greatest disadvantages and
discouragements that could be. (1.) He took none
with him, but his three hundred men, who now laid
aside their trumpets and torches, and betook them-
themselves to their swords and spears. God had said,
By these three hundred men will I save you; (ch.
7. 7.) and confirming in that promise, Gideon kept
them to only, v. 4. He expected more from three
hundred men, supported by a particular promise,
than from so many thousands, supported only by
their own valor. (2.) They were faint and yet
proved victorious; and, though they were
exhausted, yet eager to do more against the enemies of
their country. Our spiritual warfare must thus be
prosecuted with what strength we have, though we
have but little; it is many a time the true Christ-
ian's case, fainting, and yet pursuing. (3.) Though
he met with discouragement from those of his own
people, was jeered for what he was doing, as going
about what he could never accomplish, yet he went
on (v. 11.) if those that should be our helper and
the way of our duty, prove hindrances to us, let
not that drive us off from it. Those know not how
to value God's acceptance, that know not how to
despise the reproaches, and contempts of men. (4.)
He made a very long march by the way of them
dwelt in tents, v. 11. Either because he hoped
to find them Kinder to him than the men of Succ-
oth, Penuel, than Nobah, and Karkor, (sometimes there is more generosity and charity
found in country tents than in city palaces;) or,
because that was a road in which he would be least
expected, and therefore that way it would be the
greater surprise to them. It is evident, he spared
no pains to complete his victory. Now he found it
an advantage to have his three hundred men, such
as could bear hunger, and thirst, and toil. It should
only, he set upon them by night, as he had done
before, for the host was secure. The security of
sinners often proves their ruin, and dangers are
most fatal when least feared.

2. His success was very encouraging to resolu-
tion and industry in a good cause. He routed the
army, (v. 11.) and took the two kings prisoners, v. 12.
Note, The fear of the wicked shall come upon him.
They that think to run, and run full on to the Lord
and of Gideon, do but run upon it. If he flee
from the iron weapon, yet the bow of steel shall strike him
through; for evil pursueth sinners.

II. Here is Gideon, as a righteous judge, chas-
tising the insolvency of the disaffected Israelites,
the men of Succoth, and the men of Penuel, both in
the time of God, on the other side Jordan.

1. The crime was great. Gideon, with a handful
of faithful men, was pursuing a common enemy,
to complete the deliverance of Israel; his way leads
him through the city of Succoth first, and after-
ward of Penuel; he expects not that the magistrates
should meet him in their formalities, congratulate his victory, present him with the keys of their city, give him a treat, much less that they should send forces in to his assistance, though he was entitled to it all; but he only begs some necessary food for his followers that were ready to faint, and it do he it very humbly and importantly. Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me, v. 5. The request had been reasonable if they had been but poor travellers in distress; but considering that they were soldiers, called and chosen, and faithful, (Rev. 17. 14.) men whom God had greatly honoured, and whom Israel was highly obliged to, who had done great service, and were come no more; that they were conquerors, and had power to put them under contribution; that they were fighting God's battles and Israel's; nothing could be more just than that they should furnish them with the best provisions their city afforded. But the princes of Succoth neither feared God, nor regarded man! For, (1.) In contempt of God, they refused to answer the just demands of him whom God had raised up to save them, affronted him, bantered him, despised the success he had already been honoured with, despaired of success of his present undertaking, did what they could to discourage him in prosecuting the war, and were very willing to believe that the remaining forces of Midian, which they had now seen march through their country, would be too hard for him. Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna, of which thou speakest, stronger, or wiser, or better furnished, or able to do more, than thine, or better able to dispose of numbers? (2.) The bows of their confusion were shut up against their brethren; they were as destitute of love as they were of faith; would not give morsels of bread (as some read it) to them that were ready to perish. Were these princes? Were these Israelites? Unworthy either title; base and degenerate men. Surely they were worshippers of Baal, or in the interests of Midian. The meanest Peniel gave the same answer to the same request, defying the sword of the Lord and of Gideon, v. 8. 2. The warning he gave them of the punishment of their crime, was very fair. (1.) He did not punish it immediately, because he would not lose so much time from the pursuit of the enemy that were flying from him, because he would not seem to put it in a heart of passage, and because he did not wish to precipitate their crime and confusion, when he had completed his undertaking which they thought impracticable. But, (2.) He told them how he would punish it, (v. 7, 9.) to show the confidence he had of success in the strength of God, and that if they had the least grain of grace and consideration left, they might, upon second thoughts, repent of their folly, humble themselves, and contrive how to satisfy him. And he now gave him access to their supplies, which if they had done, no doubt, Gideon would have pardoned them. God gives notice of danger, and space to repent, that sinners may flee from the wrath to come. 3. The warning being slighted, the punishment, though very severe, was really very just. (1.) The princes of Succoth were first made examples; Gideon got intelligence of their number, seventy princes; the safest abodes which were described in writing to him, v. 14. And to their great surprise, when they thought he had scarce overtake the Midianites, he was returned a conqueror; his three hundred men were now the ministers of his justice; they secured all these princes, and brought them before Gideon, who showed them his royal capvies in chains, "These are the men you thought me an unequal match for, and would give me no assistance in the pursuit of," v. 15. And he punished them with thorns and briers, but it should seem, not unto death. With these, (1.) He tormented their bodies, either by scourging, or rolling them in the thorns and briers; some way or other he tore their flesh, v. 7. These shall have judgment without mercy, that have showed no mercy. (2.) He observed to be soft and delicate men, who despised him and his company for their roughness and harshness, and therefore Gideon thus mortified them for their effeminacy. (2.) He instructed their minds; with these he taught the men of Succoth, v. 16. The correction he gave them, was intended, not for destruction, but wholesome discipline, to make them wiser and better for the future. He made them know, (so the word is,) made them know themselves and their folly, God and their duty; made them know who Gideon was, since they would not know by the success wherewith he had crowned them. Note, Many are taught with the briers and thorns of affliction, that would not learn otherwise. God gives wisdom by the rod and reproof, chastens and teaches, and by correction opens the ear of discipline. Our blessed Saviour, though he were a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered, Heb. 5. 8. Let every pricking brier, and grievous thorn, especially when it become a thorn in the flesh, be thus interpreted, thus improved, "By this God designs to teach me; what good lessons shall I learn?" (2.) Peniel's doom comes next, and it should seem he used them more severely than the other; for good reason, no doubt, v. 17. [1.] He made them know, that they had trusted, perhaps scornfully advising Gideon and his men rather to secure themselves in that, than to pursue the Midianites. What men make their pride, the ruin of it is justly made their shame. [2.] He slew the men of the city, not at all, perhaps not the elders or princes, but those that had affronted him, and those only. He slew some of the men of the city that were most insolent and abusive, for terror to the rest, and so he taught the men of Peniel. 18. Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king. 19. And he said, They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother: as the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you. 20. And he said unto Jether his first-born, Up, and slay them: but the youth drew not his sword; for he feared, because he was yet a youth. 21. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks. Judgment began at the house of God, in the just correction of the men of Succoth and Peniel, who were Israelites, but it did not end there. The kings of Midian, when they had served to demonstrate Gideon's victories, and grace his triumphs, must now be reckoned with. 1. They are indicted for the murder of Gideon's brethren some time ago at mount Tabor. When the children of Israel, for fear of the Midianites, made them dens in the mountains, v. 17. (2.) these young men, it is likely, took shelter in that mountain, where they were found by these two kings, and most basely and barbarously slain in cold
blood. When he asks them what manner of men they were, (v. 18.) it is not because he was uncertain of the punishment of them, but what he has not so little concerned for his brethren’s blood, as not to inquire it out before now, nor were these proud tyrants solicitious to conceal it; but he puts that question to them, that by their acknowledgment of the more than ordinary comeliness of the persons they slew, their crimes might appear the more heinous, and consequently their punishment the more just. They could not but own, that though they were found in no object condemned, yet they had an unusual greatness and majesty in their countenances not unlike Gideon himself at this time; they resembled the children of a king, born for something great. 

2. Being found guilty of this murder by their own confession, Gideon, though he might have put them to death as Israel’s judge, for the injuries done to that people in general, as Oreb and Zeeb, (ch. 7. 25.) yet he chooses rather to put on the character of an avenger of blood, as next of kin to the persons slain. They were my brethren, v. 19. The other crimes might have been forgiven, at least Gideon would not have slain them himself, let them have answered it to the people; but the voice of his brethren’s blood cries, cries to him, now it is in his power to avenge it, and therefore there is no remedy, by him must their blood be shed, though they were kings. Little did they think to have heard of this so long after; but murder seldom goes unpunished in this life.

3. The execution is done by Gideon himself with his own hand, because he was the avenger of blood; he bade his son slay them, for he was a near relation to the persons murdered, and fittest to be his father’s substitute and representative; and he would thus train him up to the rule of justice, and boldness, v. 20. But, (1.) The young man himself desired to be excused; he feared, though they were bound and could make no resistance, because he was yet a youth, and not used to such work: courage does not always run in the blood. (2.) The prisoners themselves desired that Gideon would excuse it; (v. 21.) begged, if they must die, to die by his own hand, it would be somewhat more honourable to them, and more easy, for by his great strength they would sooner be despatched and rid out of their pain. As the man, so is his strength. Either they mean it of themselves, they were men of such strength as called for a better hand than that young man’s to overpower quickly; or of Gideon. Thou art at thy full strength, he is not yet come to it, therefore be thou the executioner.” From these words it is evident that Gideon was of the opinion that the two kings, and that of the two princes, (ch. 7. 25.) is long after pleaded as a precedent in prayer for the ruin of others of the church’s enemies; (Ps. 83. 11.) Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, and all their princes as Zelah and Zalmona; let them all be cut off in like manner.

22. Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou and thy son, and thy son’s son also; for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.

23. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you. 

24. And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the ear-rings of his prey: (for they had golden ear-rings, because they were Ishmaelites.) 25. And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the ear-rings of his prey. 

26. And the weight of the golden ear-rings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold, besides ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that were about their camels’ necks. 

27. And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it; which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house. 28. Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more: and the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.

Here is, 

1. Gideon’s laudable modesty after his great victory, in refusing the government which the people offered him. It was honest in him to offer; (v. 22.) Rule thou over us, for thou hast delivered us. They thought it very reasonable that he who had gone through the toils and perils of their deliverance, should enjoy the honour and power of commanding them ever after; and very desirable that he who in this great and critical juncture had such manifest tokens of God’s presence with him, should ever after preside in their affairs. Let us apply it to the Lord Jesus, he hath delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, our spiritual enemies, the worst and most dangerous, and therefore it is fit he should rule over us; for how can we be better ruled than by one that appears to have so great an interest in heaven, and so great a kindness for this earth? We are delivered, that we may serve him without fear, Luke 1. 74, 75. 2. It was honourable in him to refuse it; (v. 23.) I will not rule over you. What he did, was his design to serve them, not to rule them; to make them safe, easy, and happy, not to make himself great or honourable. And as he was not ambitious of grandeur himself, so he did not covet to entail it upon his family, “ My son shall not rule over you, either while I live, or when I am gone, but the Lord shall rule over you, and constitute your judges by the special designation of his own Spirit, as he has done.” This intimates, (1.) His modesty, and the mean opinion he had of himself and his own merits. He thought the honour of doing good was recompense enough for all his services, which needed not to be rewarded with honour of bearing sway; He that is greatest, let him be your minister. (2.) His piety, and the great opinion he had of God’s government. Perhaps he discerned in the people a dislike of theocracy, or divine government, a desire of a king like the nations; and his merits might have supplied a colourable pretence to move for this change of government. But Gideon would-
by no means admit it. No good man can be pleased with any honor done to himself, which ought to be peculiar to God. Were ye baptized in the name of Paul? 1 Cor. 1. 13.

1. Gideon's zeal for the kings, the entertainment they gave him, and his zeal for the golden calf, Exod. 32. 2. These Gideon begged, v. 24. And he had reason enough to think that they offered him a crown, when he declined it, would not deny him their ear-rings, when he begged them, nor did they, v. 25. 2. He himself added the spoil he took from the kings of Midian, which, it should seem, had fallen to his share, v. 26. The plunder he had of that part of the prey which was most splendid, the prey of divers colours, ch. 5. 30. 3. Of this he made an ephod, v. 27. It was plausible enough, and might be well intended to preserve a memorial of so divine a victory in the judge's own city. But it was a very unadvised thing to make that memorial to be an ephod, a sacred garment. I would gladly put the best construction that can be upon the actions of good men, and suppose such a Gideon as this, and yet we have reason to suspect that this ephod had, as usual, a teraphim annexed to it, (Hos. 3. 4.) and that, having an altar already built by divine appointment, (ch. 6. 26.) which he erroneously imagined he might still use for sacrifice, he intended this for an oracle, to be consulted in doubtful cases. So the learned Dr. Spencer supposes. Each tribe having now very much its government, and in it their own hands, and no longer being all under one religious head, they could not get their religion among themselves. We read very little of Shiloh and the ark there, in all the story of the Judges. Sometimes by divine dispensation, and much oftener by the transgression of men, that law which obliged them to worship only at that one altar, seems not to have been so religiously observed as one would have expected, no more than afterward, when, in the reign of good kings, they were taken away from which we may infer, that that law had a further reach as a type of Christ, by whose mediation alone all our services are accepted. Gideon, therefore, through ignorance or inconsideration, sinned in making this ephod, though he had a good intention in it. Shiloh, it is true, was not far off, but it was in Ephraim, and that tribe had lately disinherited him, (v. 1.) which made him perhaps not care to go so often among them, as his occasions would lead him, to consult the oracle, and therefore he would have one nearer home. However this might be honestly intended, and at first did little hurt, yet in process of time, (1.) Israel went a whoring after it; that is, they deserted God's altar and priesthood, being fond of change, and prone to idolatry, and having some excuse for paying respect to this ephod, because so good a man as Gideon had set it up, and by degrees their respects to it grew more and more superstitions. Note, Many are led into false ways, by one false step of a good man. The beginning of sin, particularly of idolatry and will-worship, is as the setting forth of water, so it has been found in the fatal corruptions of the church of Rome, therefore leave it off before it be meddled with. (2.) It became a snare to himself, abating his zeal for the house of God in his old age, and much more to his house, who were drawn by it into sin, and it proved the ruin of the family.

III. Gideon's happy agency for the repose of Israel, v. 28. The Midianites that had been a vexation, gave them no more disturbance; Gideon, though he would not assume the honour and power of a king, governed as a judge, and did all the good offices he could for his people; so that the country was in quietness forty years. Hitherto the times of Israel had been reckoned by fifties; Othniel judged forty years, Ehud eighty—just two fifties, Barak forty, and now Gideon forty. Providence so ordering it, to bring in the mind the forty years of their wandering in the wilderness; Forty years more was I served with this generation. And see Ezek. 4. 6. After these Eli lived a long time, (1 Sam. 4. 18.) Samuel and Saul forty, (Acts 13. 21.) David forty, and Solomon forty. Forty years is about an age.

29. And Jerubbaal the son of Joash, went and dwelt in his own house. 30. And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives. 31. And his concubine, that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech. 32. And Gideon, the son of Joash, died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. 33. And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god. 34. And the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side: 35. Neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had showed unto Israel.

We have here the conclusion of the story of Gideon.

1. He lived privately; (v. 29.) he was not puffed up with his great honours, did not court a palace or castle to dwell in, but retired to the house he had lived in before his elevation. Thus that brave Roman who was called from the plough upon a sudden occasion to command the army, when the action was over, returned to his plough again.

2. His family was multiplied. He had many wives; (therein he transgressed the law;) by them he had seventy sons, (v. 30.) but one by a concubine, whom he named Abimelech, which signifies my father a king, that proved the ruin of his family, v. 31.

3. He died in honour, in a good old age, when he had lived as long as he was capable of serving God and his country; and who would desire to live any longer? And he was buried in the sepulchre of his fathers.

4. After his death, the people corrupted themselves, and went all to naught. As soon as ever Gideon was dead, who had kept them close to the worship of the God of Israel, they found themselves under no restraint, and then they went a whoring after Baalim, v. 33. They went a whoring, first after another ephod, (v. 27.) for which irregularity Gideon had himself given them too much occasion, and now they went a whoring after another god. False worship made way for false deities. They now chose a new god, (ch. 5. 8.)
god of a new name, Baal-berith; a goddess, say some. Berith, some think, was Berytus, the place where the Phoenicians worshipped this idol. The Lord of a covenant, so it signifies, perhaps because his worshippers joined themselves by covenant to him, in imitation of Israel's covenanting with God, for the Devil is God's ape. In this revolt of Israel to idolatry, they showed, (1.) Great ingratitude to God; (2.) Great ingratitude to the Lord, not only who had delivered them into the hands of their enemies, to punish them for their idolatry, but who had also delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, to invite them back again into his service: both the judgments and the mercies were forgotten, and the impression of them lost. (2.) Great ingratitude to Gideon, v. 35. A great deal of goodness he had showed unto Israel, as a father to his country, for which they ought to have been kind to his family when he was gone, for that is one way by which we ought to show ourselves grateful to our friends and benefactors, and may be returning their kindness when they are in their graves. But Israel showed not this kindness to Gideon's family, as we shall find in the next chapter. No wonder if those who forget their God, forget their friends.

CHAP. IX.

The apostasy of Israel after the death of Gideon, is punished, not as the former apostasies, by a foreign invasion, or the oppressions of any neighbouring power, but by internal strifes and revolts among themselves, which to this chapter we have the story of; and it is hard to say whether their sin or their misery appears most in it. It is an account of the usurpation and tyranny of Abimelech, who was base son to Gideon; so we must call him, and not more modestly, his natural son, he was so unlike us. We are here told, 1. How he thrust himself into the government at Shechem, his own city, by subtlety, and particularly by the murder of all his brethren, v. 1-5. 2. How his doughty men of Shechem, Gideon's youngest sons, v. 7-21. III. What strife there were between Abimelech and his friends the Shechemites, v. 22-41. IV. How this ended in the ruin of the Shechemites, v. 42-49., and of Abimelech himself, v. 50-57. Of this meteor, this ignis fatuus of a prince, that was not protector, but a plague to his country, we may say, as once was said of a great tyrant, that he came in like a fox, ruled like a lion, and died like a dog. For the transgression of a land such are the princes thereof.

1. AND Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal, went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, 2. Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I am your bone and your flesh. And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother. And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baal-berith; wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him. And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren, the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone; notwithstanding, yet Jotham, the youngest son of Jerubbaal, was left: for he hid himself. 6. And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem.

We are here told by what arts Abimelech got into authority, and made himself great. His mother's brethren thought it a good way to get into power for good, and not to do fearfully. But with what success? 1. What he did, to get him into power. He hired a great number of vain and light persons, who were the instrument of his advancement. 2. For what purpose he hired them. He hired them to follow him, to be his army. 3. And what success he had by the use of them. He had them gathered together, ready to fight for him, and they actually delivered him. 4. And what purpose he intended them for. It was to make him king. 5. And what success he had in it. He succeeded, and was made king. 6. And what place he chose for his residence. It was Shechem, the ancient metropolis of Israel.
scum and scoundrels of the country, men of broken fortunes, giddy heads, and profligate lives; none but such would own him, and they were fittest to serve his purpose. Like leader, like followers.

II. How cruelly he got his father's sons out of the way. The first thing he did with the ruddle he headed, was, to kill all his brethren at once, publicly, and in cold blood, threescore and ten men, one only escaping, all slain upon one stone. See in this bloody tragedy, 1. The power of ambition, what beast it will turn men into, how it will break through all the ties of natural affection and natural concern; how it makes the brave man a dastard, and the dastard brave, and variable, to its designs. Strange that ever it should enter into the heart of a man to be so barbarous! 2. The peril of honour and high birth. Their being the sons of so great a man as Gideon, exposed them thus, and made Abimelech jealous of them. We find just the same number of Abahb's sons slain together at Samaria, 2 Kings 10. 1, 7. The Grand Seigniors have seldom thought themselves safe while any of their brethren have been unstrangled. Let none envy those of high extraction, or complain of their own meanness and obscurity. The lower, the safer.

Way being thus made for Abimelech's election, the men of Shechem proceeded to choose him king, v. 6. God was not consulted whether they should have any king at all, much less who it should be; here is no advising with the priest, or with their brethren of any other city or tribe, though it was designed he should reign over Israel, v. 22. But, (1.) The Shechemites, as if they were the people, and wisdom must die with them, do all; they aided and abetted him in the murder of his brethren, (v. 24.) and then they made him king. The men of Shechem, that is, the great men, the chief magistrates of the city, and the house of Millo, that is, the common council, the full-house, or house of fullness, as the word signifies, those that met in the Guild-hall; (we read often of the house of Milo, or state-house in Jerusalem, or the city of David, 2 Sam. 9. 2. 12 Kings 12.) these gathered together, not to prosecute and punish Abimelech for this barbarous murder, as they ought to have done, he being one of their citizens, but to make him king.

For the wickedness of the wicked was rewarded with a diadem. What could they promise themselves from a king that laid the foundation of his kingdom in blood? (2.) The rest of the Israelites were so very sottish as to sit by unconcerned; they took no care to give check to this usurpation, to protect the sons of Gideon, or to avenge their death, but tamely submitted to the bloody tyrant, as men, who with their religion had lost their reason, and all sense of honour and liberty, justice and gratitude. How vigorously had their fathers appeared to avenge the death of the Levite's concubine, and yet so wretchedly degenerate are they now, as not to attempt the avenging of the death of Gideon's sons; it is for this that they are charged with ingratitude; (ch. 8. 35.) Neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal.

7. And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. 8. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them: and they said unto the olive-tree, Reign thou over us. 9. But the olive-tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? 10. And the trees said to the fig-tree, Come thou, and reign over us. 11. But the fig-tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? 12. Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. 13. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? 14. Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. 15. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon. 16. Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands; 17. (For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian;) and ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maid-servant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother.) 18. If ye have then dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you; 20. But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech. 21. And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

We have here the only testimony that appears to have been borne against the wicked confederacy of Abimelech, and the men of Shechem. It was a sign they had provoked God to depart from them, that neither any prophet was sent, nor any remarkable judgment, to awaken this stupid people, and to stop the progress of this threatening mischief. Only Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon, by a special providence escaped the common ruin of his family, (v. 5.) dealt plainly with the Shechemites, and his speech, which is here recorded, shows him to be a man of such great ingenuity and wisdom, and really such an accomplished gentleman, that we cannot but the more lament the fall of Gideon's sons. Jotham did not go about to raise an army out of the other cities of Israel, (in which, one would think, he might have made a good interest, for his father's sake,) to avenge his brethren's death, much less to set up himself in competition with Abimelech, so groundless was the usurper's suggestion, that the sons of Gideon aimed at domin
ion; (v. 2.) but he contented himself with giving a faithful reproach to the Shechemites, and fair warning of the fatal consequences. He got an opportunity of speaking to them from the top of mount Gerizim, the mount of blessings, at the foot of which, probably, the Shechemites were, upon some occasion or other, gathered together, Josephus says, solemnizing a festival, and it seems they were willing to hear what he had to say.

I. His preface is very serious; (v. 7.) "Heerken nu toe, men van de Schechina, dat God may hearen unto you. As ever you hope to obtain God's favour, and to be accepted of him, give me a patient and impartial hearing." Note, Those who expect God to hear their prayers, must be willing to hear reason, to hear a faithful reproof, and to hear the complaints and appeals of wronged innocency. If we turn away our ear from hearing the their prayers will be an abomination. Prov. 28.9. II. His parable is very ingenious—that when the trees were disposed to choose a king, the government was offered to those valuable trees, the olive, the fig-tree, and the vine; but they refused it, choosing rather to serve than rule, to do good than bear away. But the same tender being made to the bramble, he accepted it with vain-glorious exultation. The way of instruction by parables, is an ancient way, and very useful, especially to give reproaches by.

1. He hereby applauds the generous modesty of Gideon, and the other judges who were before him, and perhaps of the sons of Gideon, who had declined accepting the state and power of kings when they might have had it. And likewise shows that it is in general the temper of all wise and good men to decline preferment, and to choose rather to be useful to their country, than to live a life of ease and luxury.

(1.) There was no occasion at all for the trees to choose a king; they are all the tree of the Lord which he has planted, (Ps. 104. 16.) and which therefore he will protect. Nor was there any occasion for Israel to talk of setting a king over them, for the Lord was their king.

(2.) When they had it in their thoughts to choose a king, they did not offer the government to the stately oak, or the lofty pine, which are one for show and shade, and not otherwise useful till they are cut down, but to the fruit-trees, the vine, and the olive. Those that bear fruit for the public good, are justly respected and honoured by all that are wise, more than they that affect to make a figure. For a good useful man some would even dare to die.

(2.) The reason which all these fruit-trees gave for their refusal was much the same. The olive pleads, (v. 9.) Should I leave my fatness? And the vine, (v. 13.) Should I leave my wine, wherewith both God and man are served and honoured? For oil and wine were used both at God's altars, and men's tables; and shall I leave my sweetness, with the fig-tree, and my good fruit, (v. 11.) and go to be promoted over the trees? Or, as the margin reads it, go up and down for the trees? It is intimated, That government involves not only a great deal of toil and care; he that is promoted over the trees, must go up and down for them, and make himself a perfect drudge to business. [2] That those who are preferred to places of public trust and power, must resolve to forego all their private interests and advantages, and sacrifice them to the good of the community. The fig-tree must lose its sweetness, its sweet retirement, sweet repose, and sweet conversation and contemplation, if it go to be promoted over the trees, and must undergo a constant fatigue. [3] That those who are advanced to honour and dignity, are in great danger of losing their fatness and fruitfulness. Preferment is apt to make men proud and slothful; and that spoils their usefulness, with which, in a lower sphere, they honour God and man. For which reason, they that desire to do good, are afraid of being too great.

2. He hereby exposes the ridiculous ambition of Abimelech, whom he compares to the bramble or thistle, v. 14. He supposes the trees to make their court to him, Come thou, and reign over us; perhaps, because he knew not that the first motion of Abimelech's preference came from himself, as we found, (v. 2.) but thought the Shechemites had imposed it to him: however, suppose it so, his folly in accepting it deserved to be punished. The bramble, a worthless plant, not to be numbered among the trees, useless and fruitless, nay, hurtful and vexations, scratching and tearing, and doing mischief, it began with the curse, and its end is to be burned. Such a one was Abimelech, and yet chosen to the government by the trees, by all the trees: this election seems to have been more unimportant than the other; for he served God, as he tells his people, to be a faithful fire come out of the bramble; a very unlikely thing to emit fire, and devour the cedars of Lebanon! more likely to catch fire and be itself devoured.

III. His application is very close and plain. In it, 1. He reminds them of the many good services his father had done for them, v. 17. He fought their battles, at the hazard of his own life, and to their unspeakable advantage. It was a shame that they should set up a king. He reproved them for it, v. 2. He攻克 their inclination, and then proceeds to show him the wickedness of his father's sons. He had left them, that was the blemish of his name and family, for he was the son of his maid-servant, whom all that had any respect to Gideon's honour, would endeavour to conceal, yet him they made their king. In both, they put the utmost contempt imaginable upon Gideon. 3. He leaves it to the event to determine whether they had done well, whereby he lodges the appeal with the divine providence; (1.) If they prospered long in this villainy, he would give them leave to say they had done well, v. 19. "If your conduct toward the house of Gideon be such as can be justified at any bar of justice, honour or conscience, much good may it do you with your new king." But, (2.) If they had, as he was sure they had, dealt basely and wickedly in this matter, let them never expect to prosper, v. 20. Abimelech and the Shechemites, that they had strengthened one another's hands in this villainy, would certainly be a plague and ruin one to another. Let none expect to do ill, and fare well.

Jotham, having given them this admonition, made a shift to escape with his life; (v. 21.) "other ther
When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel, 23. Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech: 24. That the cruelty done to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them; and upon the men of Shechem, which aided him in the killing of his brethren. 25. And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him in the top of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them: and it was told Abimelech. 26. And Gaal, the son of Ebed, came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem: and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him. 27. And they went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trode the grapes, and made merry, and went into the house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech. 28. And Gaal, the son of Ebed, said, Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? Is not he the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? Serve the men of Hamor, the father of Shechem; for why should we serve him? 29. And would to God this people were under my hand! then would I remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out. 30. And when Zebul, the ruler of the city, heard the words of Gaal, the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled. 31. And he sent messengers unto Abimelech privily, saying, Behold, Gaal, the son of Ebed, and his brethren, be come to Shechem; and, behold, they fortify the city against thee. 32. Now, therefore, up by night, thou and the people that is with thee, and lie in wait in the field: 33. And it shall be, that in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city: and, behold, when he and the people that is with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion. 34. And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that were with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies. 35. And Gaal, the son of Ebed, went out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and Abimelech rose up, and the people that were with him, from lying in wait. 36. And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as if they were men. 37. And Gaal spake again, and said, See, there come people down by the middle of the land, and another company come along by the plain of Meonemim. 38. Then said Zebul unto him, Where is now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him? Is not this the people that thou hast despised! go out, I pray now, and fight with them. 39. And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. 40. And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him; and many were overthrown and wounded, even unto the entering of the gate. 41. And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah; and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren, that they should not dwell in Shechem. 42. And it came to pass on the morrow that the people went out into the field; and they told Abimelech. 43. And he took the people, and divided them into three companies, and laid wait in the field, and looked, and, behold, the people were come forth out of the city; and he rose up against them, and smote them. 44. And Abimelech, and the company that was with him, rushed forward, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and the two other companies ran upon all the people that were in the fields, and slew them. 45. And Abimelech fought against the city all that day: and he took the city, and slew the people that was therein, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt. 46. And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard that, they entered into a hold of the house of the god Beth. 47. And it was told Abimelech that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. 48. And Abimelech got him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that were with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid it on his shoulder, and said unto the people that were with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste, and do as I have done. 49. And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put them to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them; so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women.

Three years Abimelech reigned, after a sort, without any disturbance; it is not said, He judged Israel, or did any service at all to his country, but,
So long, he enjoyed the title and dignity of a king; and not only the Shechemites, but many other places, paid him respect. They must have been fond of a king, that could please themselves with such a one as this.

But the triumphing of the wicked is short. Within three years, as the years of a hireling, all this glory shall be contremued, and laid in the dust, (Judg. iv. 6.) the ruin of these confederates in wickedness was from the righteous hand of the God to whom vengeance belongs. He sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the Shechemites; (v. 23.) that is, they grew jealous one of another, and ill-affected one to another. He slighted them that set him up, and countenanced, perhaps more than their's, other cities which now began to come into his interests; and then they grew uneasy at his government, blasphemed his conduct, and quarrelled at his impositions. This was from God. He permitted the Devil, that great mischief-maker, to sow discord between them, and he is an evil spirit, whom God not only keeps under his check, but sometimes serves his own purposes by. Their own lusts were evil spirits, they are devils in men's own hearts, from them come wars and fightings. These God gave to Abimelech, and so might be said to send the evil spirits between them. When men's sin is made their punishment, though God is not the Author of the sin, yet the punishment is from him. The quarrel God had with Abimelech and the Shechemites, was for the murder of the sons of Gideon; (v. 24.) That the cruelty done to them might come, and their blood be shed as a burden upon Abimelech that slew them, and the men of Shechem that helped him. Not 1. Sooner or later. God will make inquirers know, and will avow the fact by making him king after he had done it, must fall with him, fall by him, and fall first. 2. Those that combine together to do wickedly, are justly dashed to pieces one against another. Blood cannot be a lasting cement to any interest.

1. The Shechemites began to affront Abimelech; perhaps they scarcely knew why, or wherefore, but they were given to change. 1. They dealt treacherously with him, v. 23. It is not said, They repented the wrong committed by him; but that it had been laudable to disown him; but they did it only upon some particular pique, conceived against him by their pride or envy. They that set him up, were the first that deserted him, and endeavoured to dethrone him. It is not strange that those who were ungrateful to Gideon, were unfaithful to Abimelech; for what will hold these that will not hold that? Note, It is just with God, that those who tempt others to be once perfidious, shall afterward be themselves betrayed by those whom they have taught to be perjurious. 2. They aimed to seize him when he was at Arumah, (v. 41.) his country-seat; expecting him to come to town, they set traps in wait for him, (v. 25.) who should make him their prisoner. This they hastily made their project. Those who were thus posted, he not coming, took the opportunity of robbing travellers, which would help to make the people more and more uneasy under Abimelech, when they saw he could not, or would not, protect them from highwaymen. 3. They entreated one Gaal, and set him up as their head in opposition to Abimelech, v. 26. This Gaal is said to be the son of Ebed, which signifies a servant, perhaps denoting the meanness of his extraction; as Abimelech was by the mother's side, so he by the father's, the son of a servant; here was one brimful contesting with another. We have reason to suspect that this Gaal was a native Canaanite, because he courts the Shechemites into subjection to the men of Hamor, who was the ancestor lord of this city in Jacob's time. He was a bold ambitious man, served their purpose admirably well, when they were disposed to quarrel with Abimelech, and they also served his purpose; so he went over to them to blow the coals, and they put their confidence in him. 4. They did all the despite they could to Abimelech's name, v. 27. They made themselves very merry in his absence, as those who were glad he was out of the way, and who, now that they had another to head them, were in hopes to get clear of him; now they went into the house of their god, to solemnise their festival-gathering, and there they did eat, and drink, and cursed Abimelech; not only said all the ill they could of him in their table-talk and the song of their drunkards, but wished all the ill they could to him over their sacrifices, praying to their idol to destroy him. They drank healths to his confusion, and with as loud huzzas as ever they had drunk them to his destruction. That very temple whence they had fetched money to set him up with, did they now meet in to curse him, and contrive his ruin. Had they deserted their idol-god with their image-less, they might have hoped to prosper; but while they still cleave to the former, the latter shall cleave to them their ruin. How should Satan cast out Satan? 5. They pleased themselves with Gaal's defying of Abimelech, v. 28, 29. They loved to hear his insolent speech, and the independent upstart speak scornfully. (1.) Of Abimelech; though calling him in disdain Shechem, or a Shechemite, he reflected upon their own city. (2.) Of his good father likewise, Gideon; Is not he the son of Jerubbaal? So he calls him, perhaps in an impious indignation at his name and memory, for throwing down the altar of Baal; turning that to his reproach which was his praise. (3.) Of his prime minister of state, Zebul his officer, and ruler of the city. "We may well be ashamed to serve them, and need not be afraid to oppose them." Men of turbulent ambitious spirits, thus despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Gaal aimed not to recover Shechem's liberty, only to change their tyrant, "O that this people were under my hand, what I would do! I would challenge Abimelech to try titles for the crown;" and it should seem the more to his purpose, they did not mean to be ready to dispute it with him, whenever he pleased; "Increase thine army and come out. Do thy worst; let the point be determined by the sword." This pleased the Shechemites, who were now as sick of Abimelech as ever they had been fond of him. Men of no conscience will be men of no constancy.

II. Abimelech turned all his force upon them, and, in a little time, quite ruined them. Observe the steps of it.

1. The Shechemites' counsels were betrayed to Abimelech by Zebul his confidant, the ruler of the city, who continued hearty for him. His anger was kindled, (v. 30.) and the more, because Gaal had spoken slightly of him; (v. 28.) for perhaps if he had complained of him, he might have propos'd his case to the Shechemites, and perhaps they were in this ferment, he might have gained him to his interest; but he, being disabused, sends notice to Abimelech of all that was said and done in Shechem against him, v. 31. Betrayers are often betrayed by some among themselves, and the cursing of the king is sometimes strangely carried by a bird of the air. He prudently advises him to come against the city immediately, and lose no time, v. 32, 33. He thinks it best that he should march his
forces by night into the neighbourhood, surprise the city in the morning, and then make the best of his advantages. How could the Shechemites hope to speed in their attempt, when the ruler of their city was in the interests of their enemy? They knew it, and yet took no care to secure him.

2. Gaal, that headed their faction, having been betrayed by Zebul, Abimelech's confidant, was most wretchedly bantered by him. Abimelech, according to Zebul's advice, had drawn all his forces down upon Shechem by night, v. 54. Gaal, in the morning, went out to the gate, (v. 55.) to see what posture things were in, and to inquire, What new? Zebul, as a ruler of the city, met him there as a friend. Abimelech and his forces beginning to move toward the city, Gaal discovers them; (v. 56.) takes notice of their approach to Zebul that it was standing with him, little thinking that he had sent for them, and was now expecting them. "Look," says he, "not I see a body of men coming down from the mountain towards us. Yonder they are," pointing to the place; "No, no," says Zebul, "thine eye-sight deceives thee, it is but the shadow of the mountains which thou takest to be an army." By this he intended, (1.) To ridicule him as a man of no sense or spirit, and therefore unfit for what he pretended to; as none might easily be imposed upon, and managed to believe any, and least of all, a traitor so cowardly, that he apprehended danger where there was none, and was ready to fight with a shadow. (2.) To detain him, and hold him in talk, while the forces of Abimelech were coming up, that thereby they might gain advantage. But when Gaal, being content to believe those that he now saw, to be but the shadow of the mountains, (perhaps lying close by the city,) was undeceived by the discovery of two other companies that marched space toward the city, then Zebul took another way to flatter him, upbraiding him with what he had said but a day or two before, in contempt of Abimelech; (v. 58.) "Where is now thy mouth, that foul mouth of thine, wherewith thou saidst, Who is Abimelech?" Note, Proud and haughty people are often made, in the meantime, to fall below themselves, and to despise those whom they had most despised. Gaal had, in a bravado, challenged Abimelech to increase his army and come out; but now Zebul, in Abimelech's name, challenges him: "Go out, and fight with them, if thou darest." Justly are the insolent thus insulted over.

3. Abimelech routed Gaal's forces that sallied out of the town, v. 59, 60. Gaal, disheartened, no longer feared Zebul's enticings and perceiving his interest weaker than he thought it was, though he marched out against Abimelech with what little force he had, was soon put to the worst, and obliged to retire into the city with great precipitation. In this action the Shechemites' loss was considerable, many were overthrown and wounded; the common effect of popular tumults, in which the inconsiderate multitude are often drawn into fatal snares by those that promise them their success.

4. Zebul, that night, expelled Gaal, and the party he had brought with him into Shechem, out of the city, (v. 41.) sending him to the place whence he came. For though the generality of the city continued still averse to Abimelech, as appears by the sequel of the story, yet they were willing to part with Gaal, and did not oppose his expulsion, because, though he had talked big, both his conduct and courage had failed him when there was occasion for them. Most people judge of men's fitness for business by their success, and he that does not speed well, is concluded not to do well. Well, Gaal's interest in Shechem is soon at an end, and he that had talked of removing Abimelech, is himself self removed, nor do we ever hear of him any more.

5. Abimelech, the next day, set upon the city, and quite destroyed it, for their treacherous dealings with him. Perhaps Abimelech had notice of their expelling Gaal, who had headed the faction, with which they thought he would have been satisfied, but the crime was too deep to be thus atoned for, and his resentments too keen to be pacified by so small an instance of submission, because it was more Zebul's act than their's; by it their hands were weakened, and therefore he resolved to follow his blow, and effectually to chastise their treachery. (1.) He had intelligence brought him that the people of Shechem were come out into the field; (v. 42.) some think, into the field of business, to plough and sow, (having lately gathered in their harvest,) or to perfect their harvest, for it was only their change to plough them in an end; (v. 47.) and then it intimates that they were secure. And because Abimelech was retired, (v. 41.) they thought themselves in no danger from him, and then the issue of it is an instance of sudden destruction coming upon those that cry, Peace and safety. Others think they went out into the field of battle; though Gaal was driven out, they would not lay down their arms, but put themselves into a better engagement with Abimelech, in which they hoped to retrieve what they had lost before. (2.) He himself, with a strong detachment, cut off the communication between them and the city; stood in the entering of the gate, (v. 44.) that they might neither make their retreat into the city, nor receive any succours from the city, and then sent two companies of his men, who were too strong for them, and they put themselves to the sword, and destroyed all the Shechemites in the fields and slain them. When we go out about our business, we are not sure that we shall come home again; there are deaths both in the city and in the field. (3.) He then fell upon the city itself, and with a rage reaching up to heaven, though it was the place of his nativity, laid it in ruins, slew all the people, beat down all the buildings, and, in token of his desire that it might be a perpetual desolation, he set fire to the castle, leaving it burning as a monument of the punishment of perfidiousness. Yet Abimelech prevailed not to make its desolations perpetual, for it was afterward rebuilt, and became so considerable a place, that all Israel came thither to make Rehoboam king, 1 Kings 12. 1. And the place proved an ill omen. Abimelech intended hereby to punish the Shechemites for their slighting him now, but God intended to punish them for reviving of him formerly in the murder of Gideon's sons. Thus when God makes use of men as instruments in his hand to do his work, he means one thing, and they another, Is. 10. 6, 7. They design to maintain their honour, but God to maintain his.

6. Those that retired into a strong-hold of their idol-temple, were all destroyed there. These are called the men of the tower, Prov. 18. 10. (v. 43.) Some castles that belonged to that city, but lay at some distance from it; they, hearing of the desolation of the city, withdrew into a hold of the temple, trusting, it is likely, not so much to its strength, as to its sanctity: they put themselves under the protection of their idol; for thus all people will walk in the name of their god, and shall not we then choose to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life? For in the time of trouble he will hide us in his pavilion, Ps. 27. 5. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, Prov. 18. 10. But that which they hoped would have been for their welfare, proved to them a snare and a trap, as those will certainly find, that run to idols for shelter; it will prove a refuge of lies. When Abimelech had them altogether
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penned up in that hold, he desired no more. That barbarous project immediately came into his head, of setting fire to the strong-hold, and, so to speak, burning all the birds together in the nest. He kept the design to himself, but set all his men on work to expel the execution of it, v. 48, 49. He ordered them all to follow him, and do as he did: as his father had said to his men, (ch. 7. 17.) "Look on me, and do likewise;" so said he to his, as becomes a general that will not be wanting to give both the plainest direction, and the highest encouragement that can be, to his soldiers, What ye have seen me do, make haste to do as I have done. Not Ite illic—Go thither, but Venite hic—Come hither. The officers in Christ's army should thus teach by their example, Phil. 4. 9. He and they fetched each of them a bough from a wood, not far off, laid all their boughs together under the wall of this tower, which, it is probable, was of wood, set fire to their boughs, and so burnt down their hold, and all that were in it, who were either burnt or stifled with the smoke. What inventions men have to destroy one another! Whence come these cruel wars and fightings, but from their lusts? Some think that the men of the tower of Shechem were the same with the house of Millo, and then Jotham's just imprecation was answered in the letter, Let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour not in general the men of Shechem, but in particular the house of Millo, v. 20. About one thousand men and women perished in these flames, many of whom, it is probable, were no way concerned in the quarrel between Abimelech and the Shechemites, nor marked of either side, yet, in this civil war, came to this miserable end; for men of factious turbulent spirits, perish not alone in their iniquity, but involve many more, that follow them in their simplicity, in the same calamity with them.

50. Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it. 51. But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut it to them, and set them up to the top of the tower. 52. And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire. 53. And a certain woman cast a piece of a mill-stone upon Abimelech's head, and all to break his scull. 54. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armour-bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died. 55. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place. 56. Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren. 57. And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

We have seen the ruin of the Shechemites completed by the hand of Abimelech; and now it comes to his turn to be reckoned with, who was their leader in villany. Thebez was a small city, probably not far from Shechem, dependent upon it, and in confederacy with it. Now,

1. Abimelech attempted the destruction of this city, (v. 50.) drove all the inhabitants of the town into the castle, or citadel, v. 51. When he had him thus in his power, he did not but he should do the same execution here that he had lately done at the strong-hold of the temple of Baal-berith, not considering that the tower of an idol-temple lay more exposed to divine vengeance than any other tower. He attempted to set fire to this tower, at least, to burn down the door, and so force an entrance, v. 52. Those who have escaped and succeeded well in one desperate attempt, are apt to think the like attempt impossible to another. This instance was long after quoted, to show how dangerous it is to come near the wall of a besieged city, 2 Sam. 11. 20, &c. But God infatuates those whom he will ruin.

II. In the attempt, he was himself destroyed, having his brains knocked out with a piece of a millstone, v. 58. No doubt this man was a murderer, whom, though he had escaped the dangers of the war with Shechem, he should have had vengeance sufficient to bring him to life, Acts 28. 4. Evil pursueth sinners, and sometimes overtakes them then when they are not only secure, but triumphant. Thebez, we may suppose, was a weak inconsiderable place, conquered with Shechem. Abimelech, having conquered the bigger, makes no doubt of being master of the less without any difficulty, especially when he had taken the city, and had one to witness, yet he laid not much stress upon that, and there is all his honour buried. Thus are the mighty things of the world often confounded by the weakest, and those things that are most made light of. See here what rebukes these are justly put under many times by the divine providence, that are unreasonable in their demands of satisfaction for injuries received. Abimelech had some reason to chastise the Shechemites, and he had done: but a witness, and a man will carry his revenge further, and nothing will serve but that Thebez also must be sacrificed to his rage, he is not only disappointed there, but destroyed, for verily there is a God that judges in the earth.

Three circumstances are observed in the death of Abimelech.

1. That he was slain with a stone, as he had slain his brethren, v. 50. 2. That he had his skull broken; vengeance aimed at that guilty head which had worn the usurped crown. 3. That the stone was cast upon him by a woman, v. 53. He saw the stone come, it was therefore strange he did not avoid it; but, no doubt, it made it so much the greater mortification to him, to see from what hand it came. Sisera died by a woman's hand, and knew it not; Abimelech knew it, and when he felt his head Already to be let, vengeance troubled him so much as this, that it should be said, A woman slew him. See, (1.) His foolish pride, in laying so much to heart this little circumstance of his disgrace. Here was no care taken about his precious soul, no concern what would become of that, no prayer to God for his mercy; but very solicitous he is to patch up his shattered credit, when there is no patching of his shattered skull. O let it never be said such a mighty man as Abimelech was killed by a woman! The man was dying, but his pride was alive and strong, and the same vain-glory humour that had governed him all along, appears now at last. Qualis vita, finis ita—As was his life, such was his death. As God punished his cruelty by the manner of his death, so he punished his pride by the instrument of it. (2.) His foolish project to avoid this disgrace nothing could be more ridiculous; his own servant must run
him through, not to rid him the sooner out of his pain, but that men say not, A woman slew him. Could he think that this would conceal what the woman had done, and not rather proclaim it the more? Nay, it added to the infamy of his death, for hereby he becomes a self-murderer. Better have it said, A woman slew him, than that it should be said, His servant slew him by his own order; yet now both have been said of him to his everlasting reproach. And it is observable, that this very thing which Abimelech was in such care to conceal, appears to have been more particularly remembered by posterity, than most passages of this history; for Joab speaks of it, as that which he expected David would reproach him with, for coming so nigh the wall, 2 Sam. 11. 21. The ignominy we seek to avoid by sin, we do but perpetuate the remembrance of.

Now the issue of all, is, that Abimelech being slain, [1.] Israel's peace was restored, and an end was put to this civil war, for they that followed him, departed every man unto his place, v. 55. [2.] God's justice was glorified, v. 56, 57. Thus God punished the wickedness of Abimelech, and of the men of Shechem, and performed Jotham's curse, for it was not a curse causeless. Thus he preserved the honor of his government, and gave a warning to all ages to expect blood for blood. The Lord is known by these judgments which he executes, when the wicked is snared in the works of his own hands. Though wickedness may prosper awhile, it will not prosper always.

CHAP. X.

In this chapter we have, I. The peaceable times Israel enjoyed under the government of two judges, Tola and Jair, v. 1-5. The troubles that ensued, v. 6-9. III. Their repentance and humiliation for sin, their prayers and reformation; and the mercy they found with God thereupon, v. 10-16. IV. Preparations made for their deliverance out of the hand of their oppressors, v. 17, 18.

1. AND after Abimelech there arose, to defend Israel, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim. 2. And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir. 3. And after him arose Jair a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years. 4. And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass-colls, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havoth-jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead. 5. And Jair died, and was buried in Camon.

Quiet and peaceable reigns, though the best to live in, are the worst to write of, as yielding least variety of matter for the historian to entertain his reader with; such were the reigns of these two judges, Tola and Jair, who make but a small figure, and take up but a very little room in this history. But, no doubt, they were both raised up of God to serve his country in the quality of judges, not pretending, as Abimelech had done, to the grandeur of kings, nor, like him, taking the honour they had to themselves, they were called of God to it.

1. Concerning Tola, it is said, that he arose after Abimelech to defend Israel, v. 1. After Abimelech had debauched Israel by his wickedness, disquieted and disturbed them by his restless ambition, and, by the miscarries he brought on them, exposed them to enemies from abroad, God appointed this good man to appear for the reforming of abuses, the putting down of idolatry, the appeasing of tumults, and the healing of the wounds given to the state by Abimelech's usurpation. Thus he saved them from themselves, and guarded them against their enemies. He was of the tribe of Issachar, a tribe disposed to serve, for he bowed his shoulder: v. 2, (Gen. 49. 14, 15.) and one of that tribe, there raised up to rule: for these that humble themselves, shall be exalted. He bore the name of him that was ancestor to the first family of that tribe; of the sons of Issachar, Tola was the first, Gen. 46. 13. Numb. 26. 23. It signifies a worm, yet being the name of his ancestor, he was not ashamed of it. Though he was of Issachar, yet, when he was raised up to the government, he came and dwelt in mount Ephraim, which was more in the heart of the country, that the people might the more conveniently resort to him for judgment. He judged Israel twenty-three years; (v. 2.) kept things in good order, but did not any thing very memorable.

2. Jair was a Gileadite, so was his next successor Jephthah, both of that half tribe of the tribe of Manasseh, which lay on the other side Jordan; through they seemed separated from their brethren, yet God took care, while the honour of the government was shifted from tribe to tribe, and before it settled in Judah, that they who lay remote, should sometimes share in it, putting more abundant honour on that part which lacked. Jair bore the name of a very famous man of the same tribe, who in Moses' time was very active in reducing this country, Numb. 22. 41. Josh. 13. 30. That which is chiefly remarkable concerning this Jair, is, the increase and honour of his family, he had thirty sons, v. 4. And, (1.) They had good preemptions, for they rode on thirty ass-colls; that is, they were judges itinerant, who, as deputies to their father, rode from place to place in their several circuits to administer justice. We find afterward that Samuel made his sons judges, though he could not make them good ones, 1 Sam. 8. 1-3. (2.) They had good possessions; every one a city, out of those that were called, from their ancestor, of the same name with their father, Havoth-jair; the villages of Jair; yet they are called cities, either because those young gentlemen to whom they were assigned, enlarged and fortified them, and so improved them into cities; or because they were as well pleased with their lot in those country towns, as if they had been cities compact together, and fenced with gates and bars. Villages are cities to a contented mind.

6. And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the Lord, and served not him. 7. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon. 8. And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel eighteen years, all the children of Israel that were on the other side Jordan, in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead: 9. (Moreover, the children of Ammon pass-
ed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim;) so that Israel was sore distressed.

While those two judges, Tola and Jair, preside in the affairs of Israel, things went well, but afterward,

1. Israel returned to their idolatry, that sin which did most easily beset them; (v. 6.) *they did evil again in the sight of the Lord from whom they were unaccountably taken backside, as a foolish people and worse.*

1. They worshipped many gods; not only their old demons Baalim and Ashtaroth, which the Canaanites had worshipped, but, as if they would proclaim their folly to all their neighbours, they served the gods of Syria, Zidon, Moab, Ammon, and the Philistines. It looks as if the chief trade of Israel were to import deities from all countries. It is hard to say, whether it was more impious or impotic to do this. By introducing these foreign deities, they rendered themselves mean and despicable, for no nation that had any sense of honour, changed their gods. Much of the wealth of Israel, we may suppose, was carried out, in offerings to the temples of the deities in the several countries, when they came, on which, as their mother-churches, their temples in Israel were expected to own dependence; the priests and ministers of those sorry deities would follow their gods, no doubt, in crowds into the land of Israel, and if they could not live in their own country, would take root there, and so "strangers would devour their strength." If they did it in compliment to the neighbouring nations, and to ingratiate themselves with them, justly were they disappointed; for those nations which by their wicked arts they sought to make their friends, by the righteous judgments of God became their enemies and oppressors. *In quo quia fœcax, in eo fœnitra—Wherewith a person offends, therein he shall be punished.*

2. They did not so much as admit the God of Israel to be one of these many deities they worshipped, but quite cast him off; they *forsook the Lord, and served not him at all.* Those that think to serve both God and mammon, will soon come entirely to forsake God, and to serve mammon only. If God have not all the heart, he will soon have none of it.

II. God renewed his judgments upon them, bringing them under the power of oppressing enemies. Had they *fallen into the hands of the Lord immediately,* they might have found that his mercies were great; but God let them fall into the hand of man, whose tender mercies are cruel; he sold them into the hand of the Philistines, that lay south-west of Canaan, and of the Ammonites that lay north-east, both at the same time; so that between these two millstones they were miserably crushed, as the original word is, (v. 8.) for *oppreßed.* God has appointed that if any of the cities of Israel should revolt to Jabesh, the rest should make war upon them, and cut them off; Deut. 13. 12. &c. They had been addicted to the wars of the Philistines that lay south-west of Canaan, and of the Ammonites that lay north-east, both at the same time; so that between these two millstones they were miserably crushed, as the original word is, (v. 8.) for *oppressed.*

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18. They were grown very bad, that when one city was infected with idolatry, the next took the infection, and instead of punishing it, imitated and outdid it; and therefore since they that should have been revengers to execute wrath on them that did this evil, were themselves guilty, or bore the sword in vain, God brought the neighbouring nations upon them to chastise them for their apostasy.

The oppression of Israel by the Ammonites, the posterity of Lot, was, 1. Very long; it continued eighteen years. Some make these years to be part of the judgeship of Jair, who could not prevail to reform and deliver Israel as he would. Others make them to commence at the death of Jair, which seems the more probable, because that part of Israel which was most infested by the Ammonites, was Gilead, Jair's own country, which we can not suppose to have suffered so much while he was living; and part at least would be reformed and protected. 2. Very grievous; they vexed them and oppressed them. It was a great vexation to be oppressed by such a despicable people as the children of Ammon were. They began with those tribes that lay next to them on the other side Jordan, here called the land of the Amorites, (v. 8.) because the Israelites were so wretchedly degenerated, and had made themselves so like the heathen, that they were become, in a manner, perfect Amorites, Ezek. 16. 3. Or, because by their sin they forfeited their title to this land, so that it might justly be looked upon as the land of the Amorites again, from whom they took it. But by degrees they pushed forward, came over Jordan, and invaded Judah, and Benjamin, and Ephraim, (v. 9.) three of the most famous tribes of Israel; yet thus insulted by them, when they had forsaken God, and proved how much they needed him. Now the threatening was fulfilled, that they should be slain before their enemies, and should have no power to stand before them, Lev. 26. 17, 37. Their ways and their doings procure this to themselves; they are sadly degenerated, and so they come to be sorely distressed.

10. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim. 11. And the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? 12. The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Moabites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. 13. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. 14. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. 15. And the children of Israel said unto the Lord, We have sinned, do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day. 16. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel. 17. Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead: and the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh. 18. And the people and princes of Gilead said one to another, What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

Here is, 1. An humble confession which Israel makes to
God in their distress, v. 10. Now they own themselves guilty, like a malefactor upon the rack, and promise reformation, like a child under the rod. They did not only complain of the distress, but acknowledged it was their own sin that had brought them into the distress; therefore God was righteous, and they had no reason to repine. They confess their omissions, for in them their sin began, "We have forsaken our God;" and their commissions, and what they had served Baal, and beloved the idolatrously, did foolishly, treating God wickedly.

II. An humbling message which God thereupon sends to Israel; whether, by an angel, (as ch. 2. 1.) or by a prophet, (as ch. 6. 8.) not certain. It was kind that God took notice of their cry, and did not turn a deaf ear to it, and send them no answer at all; it was kind likewise that when they began to repent, he sent them such a message as was proper to further and promote their repentance, that they might be qualified and prepared for deliverance. Now in this message, 1. He upbraids them with their great ingratitude, reminds them of the great things he had done for them, delivering them from such and such enemies; the Egyptians first, out of whose land they were rescued; the Amorites whom they conquered, and into whose land they entered; and let their inheritance not be here. The Amorites had joined with the Moabites to oppress them, (ch. 3. 13.) when the Philistines were vexatious in the days of Shangr, and afterward other enemies had given them trouble; upon the petition, God had wrought many a great salvation for them, v. 11, 12. Of their being oppressed by the Zidonians and the Maonites we read not elsewhere; God had in justice corrected them, and in mercy delivered them, and therefore might have been charged that either through fear or through love they would have adhered to him and his service; well therefore might the word cut them to the heart, (v. 13.) yet ye have forsaken me that have brought you out of your troubles, and served other gods that brought you into your troubles. Thus did they forsake their own mercies for their own delusions. 2. He shows them how justly he might now abandon them to ruin, by abandoning them to the gods that they had served. To awaken them to a thorough repentance and reformation, he lets them see, (1.) Their folly in serving Baalim; they had been at a vast expense to obtain the favour of such gods as could not help them, then when they had most need of their help. "Go, and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen," (v. 14.) try what they can do for you now; you have worshipped them as gods, try if they have now either a divine power, or a divine goodness, to be employed for you; you paid your homage to them as your kings and Lords, try if they will now protect you; you brought your sacrifices of praise to their altars as your benefactors, imagining that they gave you corn, and wine, and oil; but a friend indeed will be a friend in need. The plea of their favour stand you in now." Note, It is necessary every nation should consider, that there be a full conviction of the utter insufficiency of all these things to help us and do us any kindness, which we have idolized and set upon the throne in our hearts in competition with God. We must be convinced that the pleasures of sense on which we have doted, cannot be our satisfaction, nor the wealth of the world which we have coveted, sure we were never happy in any where but in God. (2.) Their misery and danger in forsaking God. "See what a pass you have brought yourselves to; now you can expect no other than that I should say, I will deliver you no more; and what will become of you then?" v. 13.

This he tells them, not only as what he might do, but as what he would do, if they rested in a confidence of what they had done amiss, and did not put away their idols, and amend for the future.

III. An humble submission which Israel hereupon made to God's justice, with an humble application to his mercy; (v. 15.) The children of Israel met together, it is probable, in a solemn assembly at the door of the tabernacle; received the impressions of the message God had sent them; were not driven by it to despair, though it was very threatening; but resolved to lie at the Lord's feet, and if they perish, they will perish there. They did not only repent, but confessed, We have sinned; but, 1. They surrender themselves to God's justice, Do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Hereby they own that they deserved the severest tokens of God's displeasure, and were sure he could do them no wrong, whatever he laid upon them; they humbled themselves under his mighty and heavy hand, and acknowledged the punishment of their iniquity, which Moses had made the condition of God's return in mercy to them, Lev. 26. 40. Note, True penitents dare and will refer themselves to God to correct them as he thinks fit, knowing that their sin is highly malignant in its deserts, and that God is not rigorous or extreme in his demands. 2. They supplicate for God's mercy, and implore that, Deliver us, and we will again serve thee, and do this enemy. They acknowledge that they deserved, yet pray to God not to deal with them according to their deserts. Note, We must submit to God's justice, with a hope in his mercy.

IV. A blessed reformation set on foot hereupon. They brought forth fruits meet for repentance; (v. 16.) they put away the gods of strangers, (as the word is,) strange gods, and worshipped by these nations, that were enemies to the commonwealth of Israel, and to the covenant of promise; and they served the Lord. Need drove them to him. They knew it was to no purpose to go to the gods whom they had served, and therefore return to the God whom they had slighted. This is true repentance, not only for sin, but from sin.

V. God's gracious return in mercy to them, which is expressed here very tenderly; (v. 16.) His soul was grievous for the misery of his people; and therefore there is any grief in God, he has infinite joy and happiness in himself, which cannot be broken in upon by either the sins or the miseries of his creatures; not that there is any change in God, he is in one mind, and who can turn him? But his goodness is his glory; by it he proclaims his name, and magnifies it above all his name; and as he is pleased to put himself into the relation of a father to his people that are in covenant with him, so he is pleased to represent his goodness to them, by the compassions of a father toward his children; for as he is the Father of lights, so he is the Father of mercies; as the disobedience and misery of a child are a grief to a tender father, and make him feel very sensibly from his natural affection, so the provocations of God's people make him sensible of his being father to those he is joined with their yıkish heart: (Ezek. 6. 3.) which all these troubles also are a grief to him; so he is pleased to speak when he is pleased to appear for the deliverance of his people; changing his way and method of proceeding, as tender parents, when they begin to relent toward their children with whom they have been displeased. Such are the tender mercies of our God, and so far is he from having any pleasure in the destruction of sinners.

VI. Things are now working toward their deliverance from the Ammonites' oppression, v. 17, 18. God had said, "I will deliver you no more;" but now they are not what they were, they are other men, they are new men, and now he will deliver them. That threatening was denounced, to convince and humble them; and now that it had taken
its desired effect, it is revoked, in order to their deliverance. 1. The Ammonites are hardened to their own ruin; they gathered together in one body, that they might be destroyed at one blow, Rev. 16. 16. 2. The Israelites are animated to their own rescue. They assembled likewise, v. 17. During their eighteen years' oppression, as in their former servitudes, they were run down by their enemies, because they would not incorporate; each family, city, or tribe, would stand by itself, and act independently, and so they all became an easy prey to the oppressors, for want of a due sense of a common interest to cement them; but whenever they got together, they did well; so they did here. When God's Israel became as one man to advance a common good, and oppose a common enemy, what difficulty had they before them? The people and princes of Gilead being met, consult first about a general that should command in chief against the Ammonites. Hitherto most of the deliverers of Israel had an extraordinary call to the office, as Ehud, Barak, Gideon; but the next is to be called in a more common way, by a convention of the states, who inquired out a fit man to command their army, found one admirably well qualified for the purpose, and God owned their choice by putting his Spirit upon him, ch. 11. 29. So that this instance is of use for direction and encouragement in after ages, when extraordinary calls are no longer to be expected. Let such be impartially chosen to public trust and power, whom God has qualified, and then God will graciously own those who are thus chosen.

CHAP. XI.

This chapter gives us the history of Jephthah, another of Israel's judges, and numbered among the worthies of the Old Testament, chap. 11. 32. though he had not such an extraordinary call as the rest there mentioned had. Here is, I. The disadvantages of his rise and original, v. 1. 3. II. The Gileadites' choice of him to be commander in chief against the Ammonites, and the terms he made with them, v. 4. 11. III. His treaty with the king of Ammon about the rights of the two nations, that the matter might be determined, if possible, without bloodshed, v. 12. 28. IV. His war with the Ammonites, which he entered upon with a small force, v. 29. 31. he prosecutes with bravery, v. 32. and ends with a glorious victory, v. 33. V. The straits he was brought into at his return to his own house, by the vow he had made, v. 34. 40.

1. NOW Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of a harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. 2. And Gilead's wife bare him sons: and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman. 3. Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob; and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him.

The princes and people of Gilead we left in the close of the foregoing chapter, consulting about the choice of a general, being come to this resolve, that whoever would undertake to lead their forces against the children of Ammon, should by common consent be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. The enterprise was difficult, and it was fit that so great an encouragement as this should be proposed to him that would undertake it. Now all agreed that Jephthah, the Gileadite, was a mighty man of valour, and very fit for that purpose; none so fit as he; but he lay under three disadvantages:

1. He was the son of a harlot, (v. 1.) of a strange woman, (v. 2.) one that was neither a wife nor a concubine; some think his mother was a Gentile; so Josephus, who calls him a stranger by the mother's side. An Ishmaelite, say the Jews. If his mother was a harlot, that was not his fault, however it was his disgrace. Men ought not to be reproached with any of the infelicities of their parentage or extraction, so long as they are endeavouring by their personal merits to roll away the reproach. The son of a harlot, if born again, born from above, shall be accepted of God, and be as welcome as any other to the glorious liberties of his children. Jephthah could not read in the law the brand there put on the Ammonites, the enemies he was to grapple with, that they should not enter into the congregation of the Lord, but in the same paragraph he met with that which looked back upon himself, that a bastard should be in like manner excluded, Deut. 23. 2, 3. But if that law means, as most probably it does, only those that are born of incest, not of fornication, he was not within the reach of it.

2. He had been driven from his country by his brethren. His father's legitimate children, insisting upon the rigour of the law, thrust him out of having any inheritance with them, without any consideration had of his extraordinary qualifications, which merited a dispensation, and would have made him a mighty strength and ornament of their family, if they had overlooked his being illegitimate, and admitted him to a child's part. v. 2. One would not have thought this abandoned youth was intended to be Israel's deliverer and judge, but God often humbles those whom he designs to exalt, and makes that stone the head of the corner which the builders refused; so Joseph, Moses, and David, the three most eminent of the shepherds of Israel, were all thrust out by men, before they were called of God to their great offices.

3. He had, in his exile, headed a rabble, v. 3. Being driven out by his brethren, his great soul would not suffer him either to dig, or beg, but by his sword he must live; and being soon noted for his bravery, those that were reduced to such straits and animated by such a spirit, enlisted themselves under him. Vain men they are here called, that is, men that had run through their estates and were to seek for a livelihood, those that went out with him, not to rob or plunder, but to hunt wild beasts, and perhaps to make incursions upon these countries which Israel was entitled to, but were not as yet come to the possession of, or were some way or other injured by.

This is the man that must save Israel. That people had by their idolatry made themselves children of whoresoms, and aliens from God and his covenant, and therefore, though God upon their repentance will deliver them, yet, to modify them and remind them of their sin, he chooses to do it by a bastard and an exile.

4. And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. 5. And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob: 6. And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon. 7. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate
me, and expel me out of my father's house? And why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress? 

8. And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. 

9. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the Lord deliver them before me, shall I be your head? 

10. And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The Lord be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words. 

11. Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh. 

Here is, 

I. The distress which the children of Israel were in upon the Ammonites' invasion of their country, v. 4. Probably this was the same invasion with that mentioned, ch. 10. 17, when the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in or against Gilead. And those words, in process of time, refer to what goes immediately before the expulsion of Jephthah: many days after he had been thus thrust out in disgrace, was he fetched back again with honour. 

II. The court which the elders made to Jephthah hereupon to come and help them. They did not write or send a messenger to him, but went themselves to fetch him, resolving to have no denial, and the exigence of the case was such as would admit no delay. Their errand to him was, (v. 6.) Come, and be our captain. They knew none among themselves that was able to undertake that great trust, but do in effect confess themselves unfit for it; they knew him to be a stout man, and incensed to the sword, and therefore he must be the man. See how God prepares men for the service he designs them for, and makes their troubles work for their advancement. If Jephthah had not been put to his shifts, by his brethren's unkindness, he had not had such an occasion as that gave him, to exercise and improve his martial genius, and so to signalize himself and become famous; Out of the eater comes forth meat. The children of Israel were assembled and encamped, ch. 10. 17. But an army without a general, is like a body without a head, therefore, Come, say they, and be our captain, that we may fight. See the necessity of government; though they were hearty enough in all, yet they did not fight without a captain to command them. So necessary is it to all societies, that there be a prince pretern, and a prince subditus, some to rule, and others to obey, and that a community should humbly beg the favour of being commanded, rather than that every man should be his own master. Blessed be God for government, for a good government! 

III. The objections Jephthah made against accepting their offer; (v. 7.) Did ye not hate me, and expel me? It should seem that his brethren were some of these elders; or these elders, by suffering his brethren to abuse him, and not righting him as they ought to have done, (for their business is to defend the poor and fatherless, Ps. 82. 3, 4;) had made themselves guilty of this expulsion, and he might justly charge them with it. Magistrates that have power to protect those that are injured, if they do not do them right, really do them wrong. "You hated me and expelled me, and therefore how can I believe that you are sincere in your proposal? And how can you expect that I should do you any service? Not but that Jephthah was very willing to serve his country, but he thought fit to give them a hint of their former misconduct, that they might repent of their sin in using him so ill, and might for the future be the more sensible of their obligations. Thus Joseph humbled his brethren before he made himself known to them. The particular case between the Gileadites and Jephthah, was a resemblance of the general state of the case between Israel and God at this time: they rebelled against their God, by rejecting the blessing which they had, and in their distress they begged his help; he told them a how justly he might have rejected them, and yet graciously delivered them. So did Jephthah. Many sight God and good men, till they come to be in distress, and then they are desirous of God's mercy and good men's prayers. 

IV. Their urgency with him to accept the government they offered him, v. 8. Therefore because we forsook thee, didst thou think that we would do thee no good? for we repent of it, and would gladly stone for it, we turn again to thee now, to put such an honour upon thee as shall balance that indignity. Let this instance be, 1. A caution to us not to despise or trample upon any because they are mean, or to be injurious to any that we have advantage against, because, whatever we think of them now, the time may come when we may have need of them, and would be glad to be beholden to them. It is our wisdom to make no man our enemy, because we know not how soon our distresses may be such, as that we may be highly concerned to make him our friend. 

2. An encouragement to men of worth that are slighted and ill treated; let them bear it with meekness and cheerfulness, and leave it to God to make their light shine out of obscurity. Fuller's remark on this story in his Psalms-Sight, is this; Virtue once in an age will work our own advancement, and when such as hate it chance to need it, they will be forced to prefer it, and then the honour will appear the brighter. 

V. The bargain he makes with them. He had mentioned the injuries they had formerly done him, but perceiving their repentance, his spirit was too great and generous to mention them any more. God had forgiven Israel the affronts they had done him, (ch. 10. 18;) and therefore Jephthah will forgo give. Only he thinks it prudent to make his bargain wisely for the future, since he deals with men that he had reason to distrust. 1. He puts to them a fair question, v. 9. He speaks not with too much confidence of his success, knowing how justly God might suffer the Ammonites to prevail for the further punishment of Israel; but puts an if upon it. Nor does he speak with any confidence at all in himself; if he had not such an assurance as that gave him, to exercise and improve his martial genius, and so to signalize himself and become famous; Out of the eater comes forth meat. The children of Israel were assembled and encamped, ch. 10. 17. But an army without a general, is like a body without a head, therefore, Come, say they, and be our captain, that we may fight. See the necessity of government; though they were hearty enough in all, yet they did not fight without a captain to command them. So necessary is it to all societies, that there be a prince pretern, and a prince subditus, some to rule, and others to obey, and that a community should humbly beg the favour of being commanded, rather than that every man should be his own master. Blessed be God for government, for a good government! 

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plain to need a debate, and the necessity too press

ing to admit a delay; they knew they had power to
conclude a treaty for those whom they represented,
and therefore found it with an oath, The Lord be
witness between us. They appeal to God's omni-
science as the judge of their present sincerity, and
to his justice as an avenger, if afterward they should
prove false. The Lord be a hearer, so the word is.
Whatever we speak, it concerns us to remember that
God is a witness to speak accordingly. Thus
was the original contract ratified between Jephthah
and the Gileadites, which all Israel, it should seem,
agreed to afterward, for it is said, (ch. 12. 7.) he
judged Israel. He hereupon went with them (v.
11.) to the place where they were all assembled,
(ch. 10. 17.) and there, by common consent, they
made him head and captain, and so ratified the bar-
gain their representatives had made with him, that
he should be not only captain now, but head fore
Jephthah, to obtain this little honour, was willing to
expose his life for them; (ch. 12. 3.) and shall we be
discouraged in our christian warfare by any of the
difficulties we may meet with in it, when Christ himself
has promised a crown of life to him that overcometh?
VI. Jephthah's pious acknowledgment of God
in this great affair, (v. 11.) he uttered all his words
before the Lord in Michtem. That is, upon his ele-
cvation, he immediately retired to his devotions, and
in prayer spread the whole matter before God.
both his choice to the office, and his execution of
the office, as one that had his eye ever toward the
Lord, and would do nothing without him, that lean-
ed not to his own understanding or courage, but de-
pended on God and his favour. He utters before
God all his thoughts and cares in this matter, for
he gives us leave to be free with him. 1. "Lord,
the people have made me their head; will thou
confirm the choice they have made of me? Thus
head under thee, and for thee?" God justly com-
plaints of Israel, (Hos. 8. 4.) they have set up kings,
but not by me; "Lord," said Jephthah, "I will
be no head of their making without thee. I will
not accept the government unless thou give me
leave." Had Abimelech done this, he might have
prosper'd. 2. "Lord, they have made me their
captain, to go before them in this war with the Am-
monites. How shall I prevent the reproach that will
be before me? If not carry me not up hence. Lord,
satisfy me in the justice of the cause. Assure me of
success in the enterprise. " This is a rare example,
to be imitated by all, particularly by great ones; in
all our ways let us acknowledge God, seek his favour,
ask counsel at his mouth, and take him along with
us; so shall we make our way prosperous. Thus
Jephthah opened the campaign with prayer. That
was likely to end gloriously, which began piously.

12. And Jephthah sent messengers unto the
king of the children of Ammon, saying,
What hast thou to do with me, that thou
art come against me to fight in my land?
13. And the king of the children of Ammon
answered unto the messengers of Jephthah,
Because Israel took away my land when
they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon
even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now,
therefore, restore those lands again peace-
ably. 14. And Jephthah sent messengers
again unto the king of the children of
Ammon, 15. And said unto him, Thus saith
Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of
Moab, nor the land of the children of Am-
mon: 16. But when Israel came up from
Egypt, and walked through the wilderness
unto the Red Sea, and came to Kadesh;
17. Then Israel sent messengers unto the
king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee,
pass through thy land: but the king of
Edom would not hearken thereunto. And in
like manner they sent unto the king of
Moab; but he would not consent: and Is-
rael abode in Kadesh. 18. Then they
went along through the wilderness, and
compassed the land of Edom and the land of
Moab, and came by the east side of the
land of Moab, and pitched on the other side
of Arnon, but came not within the border
of Moab: for Arnon was the border of
Moab. 19. And Israel sent messengers
unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the king
of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him,
Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land
unto my place. 20. But Sihon trusted not
Israel to pass through his coast: but Sihon
gathered all his people together, and pitched
in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. 21.
And the Lord God of Israel delivered Si-
hon and all his people into the hand of Is-
rael, and they smote them: so Israel pos-
sessed all the land of the Amorites, the in-
habitors of that country. 22. And they pos-
sessed all the coasts of the Amorites,
from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from
the wilderness even unto Jordan. 23. So
now the Lord God of Israel hath dispo-
sessed the Amorites from before his people
Israel, and shouldest thou possess it? 24.
Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh
thy god giveth thee to possess? So whom-
soever the Lord our God shall drive out
from before us, them will we possess. 25.
And now, art thou any thing better than
Balak the son of Zippar, king of Moab? did
he ever strive against Israel, or did he
ever fight against them, 26. While Israel
dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in
Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities
that be along by the coasts of Arnon, three
hundred years? why therefore did ye not
recover them within that time? 27. Where-
fore I have not sinned against thee, but thou
doest me wrong to war against me: the
Lord the Judge be judge this day between
the children of Israel and the children of
Ammon. 28. Howbeit the king of the chil-
dren of Ammon hearkened not unto the
words of Jephthah which he sent him.

We have here the treaty between Jephthah, now
judge of Israel, and the king of the Ammonites,
who is not named; that the controversy between
the two nations might, if possible, be accommodat-
ed without the effusion of blood.

1. Jephthah, as one having authority, sent to the
king of Ammon, who in this war was the aggressor,
to demand his reasons for invading the land of Israel; (v. 12.) *Why art thou come to fight against me in my land?* Had I come first into thy land to destroy any person in the land, that had been reason enough for fighting against me, for how must I be repelled but by force? But what hast thou to do to come thus in a hostile manner into my land?* So he calls it, in the name both of God and Israel. Now this fair demand shows, 1. That Jephthah did not delight in war, though he was a mighty man of valour, but was willing to prevent it by a peaceable accommodation. If he could by reason persuade the invaders to retire, he would not compel them to do it by the sword. War should be the last remedy, not to be used till all other methods of ending matters in variance have been tried in vain. *Ratio ultima regimen—The last resource of kings.* This rule should be observed in going to law. The sword of justice, as the sword of war, must not be appealed to till the contending parties have first endeavoured by gentler means to understand one another, and to accommodate matters in variance, 1 Cor. 6, 1, 2. That Jephthah did delight in equity, and designed no other than to do justice. If the children of Ammon could convince him that Israel had done them wrong, he was ready to restore the rights of the Ammonites. If not, it was plain by their invasion that they did Israel wrong, and he was ready to maintain the rights of the Israelites. A sense of justice should guide and govern us in all our proceedings.

II. The king of the Ammonites now gives in his demand, which he should have published before he had invaded Israel, v. 13. His pretence is, *Israel took away my lands long since, now therefore restore these lands.* We have reason to think the Ammonites, when they made this descent upon Israel, meant no other than to spoil and plunder the country, and enrich themselves with the prey, as the Amorites done. *Ego desideravi.* But when no such demand as this was made, though the matter was then fresh; but when Jephthah demanded the cause of their quarrel, and they could not for shame own what was their true intent and meaning, some old forgotten records were searched, or some ancient traditions inquired into, and from them this reason is drawn to serve the present turn, for a colourable pretence of equity in the invasion. We've in that description of the Ammonites, and their conduct, a such conviction in their consciences of justice, that they would seem to do right. *Restore those lands.* See upon what uncertain terms we hold our worldly possessions; what we think we have the surest hold of, may be challenged from us, and wrested out of our hands. Those that are got to the heavenly Canaan, need not fear having their titles questioned.

Jephthah gives in a very full and satisfactory answer to this demand, showing it to be altogether unjust and unreasonable, and that the Ammonites had no title to this country that lay between the rivers Arnon and Jabbok, now in the possession of the tribes of Reuben and Gad. As one very well versed in the history of his country, he shows,

1. That Israel never took any land away, either from the Moabites or Ammonites; he puts them together as brethren, the children of Lot, near neighbourhood of one another, having the same god, Chemosh, and perhaps sometimes the same king. The lands in question Israel took away; nor from the Moabites or Ammonites, they had particular orders from God not to meddle with them, or any thing they had, (Deut. 2, 9, 19.) and religiously observed their orders; but they found them in the possession of Sihon, King of the Amorites, and out of his hand they took them justly and honourably, as he will show afterward. If the Amorites, before Israel came into that country, had taken these lands from the Moabites or Ammonites, as it should seem they had, (Numb. 21. 26. Josh. 13. 23.) Israel was not concerned to inquire into that, or answer for it. If the Amorites had lost these lands and their title to them, the children of Israel were under no obligation to recover the possession for them. Their business was to conquer for themselves, not for other people. This is the first plea, *Not guilty of the trespass.*

2. That they were so far from invading the property of any other nations than those of the devoted posterity of accursed Canaan, (one of the branches of which the Amorites were, Gen. 10. 16.) that they would not so much as force a passage through the country, either through Edom, the seed of Esau, or of the Moabites, the seed of Lot, after a very tedious march through the wilderness, with which they were so badly tired, (v. 16.) when the king of Edom first, and afterward the king of Moab, denied them the courtesy of a way through their country, (v. 17.) rather than give them any offence or annoyance, weary as they were, they put themselves to the further labour of compassing both the land of Edom and that of Moab, and came not within the border of either, v. 18. Note, Those that conduct themselves insensibly, may take the comfort of it, and plead it against those that charge them with injustice and wrong doing. *Our righteousness will answer for us in time to come,* (Gen. 30. 33.) and will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, 1 Pet. 2. 15.

3. That in that war in which they took this land out of the hands of Sihon, king of the Amorites, he was the aggressor, and not they, v. 12. 20. They sent a humble petition to him, for leave to go through his land, willing to give him any security for their good behaviour in their march; *Let us pass (say they) unto my place, that is, to the land of Canaan; that is the only place we call ours, and to which we are pressing forward, not designing a settlement here.* But Sihon not only denied them this courtesy, as Edom and Moab had done, (had he only done so, who knows but Israel might have gone about some other way?) but he mustered all his forces, and fought against Israel; (v. 20.) not only shut them out of his own land, but would have cut them off from the face of the earth; (Numb. 21. 23, 24.) aimed at nothing less than their ruin, v. 20. Israel therefore, in their war with him, stood in their own just and necessary defence, and therefore, had an heart mightily to cut the edge, in further revenge of the injury, seize the country as forfeited; so Israel came to the possession of this country, and doubted not to make good their title to it; and it is very unreasonable for the Ammonites to question their title, for the Amorites were the inhabitants of that country, and it was purely their land and their coasts that the Israelites then made themselves masters of, v. 21.

4. He pleads a grant from the crown, and claims under that, v. 23, 24. It was not Israel, they were fatigued with their long march, and were not fit for action so soon; but it was the Lord God of Israel, who is King of nations, whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, he it was, that dispossessed the Amorites, and planted Israel in their room. God gave it them by an express and particular conveyance, such as he did the title in them, in which they might make good against all the world, (Deut. 2. 24.) *I have given into thy hand, Sihon and his land:* he gave it them, by giving them, a complete victory over the present occupants, notwithstanding the great disadvantages they were under: *Can you think that God gave it us in such an extraordinary manner, with design that we should return it to the Moabites or Ammonites again? No, we put a higher value upon God's favours, than to part with...*
them so easily." To corroborate this plea, he urges
him with an argument ad hominem—directed to the
one who knew whether the nations by which they
were surrounded were good or bad? He not only appeals
to the common resolutions of men, to hold their own against
all the world, but to the common religion of the na-
tions, which, they thought, obliged them to make
much of that which their gods gave them. Not
that Jephthah thought Chemosh a god, only he is
thy god; and the worshippers even of those dung-
ful-deities that could do neither good nor evil, yet
thought themselves beheld to them, and would have,
(Hos. 2. 12, These are my rewards which my
lovers have given me: and see Judg. 16. 24.) and
make this a reason why they would hold it fast,
that their gods gave it them. "This thou thinkst
a good title, and shall not we?" The Ammonites
had dispossessed those that dwelt in their land be-
fore they; they thought they did it by the help of
Chemosh their god, but really it was Jehovah the
God of Israel, that did it for them, as is expressly
said, Deut. 2. 19, 21. "Now," says Jephthah,
"we have as good a title to our country as you have
to yours." Note, One instance of the honour and
respect we owe to God, as our God, is, rightly to pos-
sess that which he gives us to possess, receive it from
him, use it for him, keep it for his sake, and part
with it when he calls for it. He has given us to pos-
sess, not to enjoy. He himself only must be enjoyed.
He keeps the title, and we enjoy the possession. Their
right title had not been disputed when they first entered upon it,
v. 25. "Barak, who was then king of Moab, from
whom the greatest part of these lands had been
taken by the Ammonites, and who was most concern-
ed and best able to oppose us, if he only had had
any thing to object against our settlement there, yet
sat still, and never offered to strive against Israel."
He knew that for his own part he had fairly lost it to
the conquerors. A true ruler would not use the
right that he could not but acknowledge that Israel had fairly
won it of the Ammonites, and therefore all his care
was to secure what was left, he never pretended a
title to what was lost. See Numb. 21. 2, 3.
"He then acquiesced in God's way of disposing
kings, and wilt not thou now?" (2.) Their
possession had never been disturbed, v. 26. He
pleads that they had kept this country as their own,
now about three hundred years, in all that time had never attempted to take it from them,
no, not when they had it in their power to op-
press them, ch. 3. 12, 13. So that, supposing their
title had not been clear at the first, (which yet he had
proved it was,) yet no continual claim being made by so
many descents, the entry of the children of Am-
mon, without doubt, was barred for ever. A title so
long unquestioned, shall be presumed unquestionable.
6. By these arguments Jephthah justifies himself
and his own cause; (v. 27.) "I have not sinned
against thee in taking or keeping what I have no
right to, if I had, I would instantly make restitu-
tion," and condemns the Ammonites, "Thou dost
me wrong to war against me, and must expect
to speed accordingly." It seems to me an evidence
that the children of Israel, in the days of their
prosperity and power, (for some such days they had in the
time of their own judges,) had conducted themselves
very offensively to all their neighbours, and had
not been vexatious, or opposing to them, (either
by way of reprisal, or under colour of propagating
their religion, that the king of the Ammonites,
when he would seek an occasion of quarrelling with
them, was forced to look three hundred years back
for a pretence. It becomes the people of God thus
to be blameless and harmless, and without rebuke.
7. For the deciding of the controversy, he puts
himself upon God and his sword, and the king of
Ammon joined issue with him; (v. 27, 28.) The
Lord the Judge be Judge this day. With this so
lem reference of the matter to the Judge of heaven
and earth, Jephthah (which means He that is secu-
ites from proceeding, and oblige them to retire,
when they saw the right of the cause was against
them, or to justify himself in subduing them, if they
should go on. Note, War is an appeal to heaven,
to God the Judge of all, to whom the issues of it
belong. If doubtful rights be disputed, he is th.e only
by requested to determine them: if manifest rights
be invaded or denied, he is thereby applied to for
the vindication of them; to settle all controversies
of wrong. As the sword of justice was made for
lawless and disobedient persons, (1 Tim. 1. 9.) so
was the sword of war made for lawless and disobe-
dient princes and nations. In war therefore the
eye must be ever up to God, and it must always be
thought a dangerous thing to desire or expect that
God should patronise unrighteousness.
Neither Jephthah's apology, nor his appeal,
worthed upon the king of the children of Ammon;
they had found the secrets of the spoil of Israel, in
the eighteen years wherein they had oppressed them,
(ch. 10. 8.) and hoped now to make them
selves masters of the tree which they had so often enriched themselves with the fruit of. He
heartened not to the words of Jephthah, his heart being
hardened to his destruction.
29. Then the Spirit of the Lord came
upon Jephthah; and he passed over Gilead
and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpah
Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he passed
over unto the children of Ammon. 30. And
Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord,
and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver
the children of Ammon into mine hands,
31. Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh
forth of the doors of my house to meet me,
when I return in peace from the children
of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and
I will offer it up for a burnt-offering. 32. So
Jephthah passed over unto the children
of Ammon, to fight against them; and the
Lord delivered them into his hands. 33. And
he smote them from Aroer, even till
thou come to Minuth. even twenty
cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with
a very great slaughter. Thus the children
of Ammon were subdued before the children
of Israel. 34. And Jephthah came to Mizpah
unto his house, and behold, his daughter
came out to meet him with timbrels and
with dances; and she was his only child:
besides her he had neither son nor daughter.
35. And it came to pass, when he saw her,
that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my
daughter! thou hast brought me very low,
and thou art one of them that trouble me:
for I have opened my mouth unto the
Lord, and I cannot go back. 36. And she
said unto him, My father, if thou hast op-
ened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me
according to that which hath proceeded out
thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath
taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies,
even of the children of Ammon. 37. And
she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: Let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my maidens. 38. And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months; and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. 39. And it came to pass, at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, 40. That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

We have here Jephthah triumphing in a glorious victory, but, as an allay to his joy, troubled and distressed by an unavoidable vow.

I. Jephthah’s victory was clear, and shines very bright, both to his honour, and to the honour of God, his in pleading, and God’s in owning, a righteous cause.

1. God gave him an excellent spirit, and he used it bravely, v. 39. Then when it appeared by the people’s unanimous choice of him for their leader, that he had so clear a call from God confirmed in him his office, and assured him of success in his undertaking. Thus animated, he loses no time, but with an undaunted resolution takes the field. Particular notice is taken of the way by which he advanced towards the enemies’ camp, probably, because the choice of it was an instance of that extraordinary direction with which the Spirit of the Lord had furnished him; for those who sincerely walk after the spirit, shall be led forth the right way.

2. God gave him eminent success, and he bravely improved that too; (v. 32.) The Lord delivered the Ammonites into his hand, and gave judgment upon the appeal in favour of the righteous cause, and made these feel the force of war, that would not yield to the force of reason, for he sits in the throne, judging right. Jephthah lost not the advantages given him, but pursued and completed his victory, and having routed their forces in the field, he pursued them to their cities, where he put to the sword all he found in arms, so as utterly to disable them to give Israel any molestation, v. 33. But it does not appear that he utterly destroyed the people, as Joshua had done those of the devoted nations, or that he offered to make himself master of the country, though their pretensions to the land of Israel’s inheritance routed their forces in the field, he took care that they should be brought into subjection. Though others’ attempting wrong to us, will justify us in the defence of our own right, yet it will not authorize us to do them wrong.

II. Jephthah’s vow is dark, and much in the clouds. When he was going out from his own house, upon this hazardous undertaking, in prayer to God for his presence with him, he makes a secret but solemn vow, or religious promise to God, that if God would graciously bring him back a conqueror, whosoever, or whatevsoever, should first come out of his house to meet him, it should be devoted to God, and offered up for a burnt-offering; at his return, tidings of his victory coming home before him, his own and only daughter meets him with the seasonable tidings of his triumphs; but Jephthah had reason enough to be confident of success, especially when he found the Spirit of the Lord come upon him; and yet now that it came to the setting, he seems to hesitate; (v. 30.) If thou shalt without fail deliver them into my hand, then I will do so and so. And perhaps the snare into which his vow brought him, was designed to correct the weakness of his faith; and a fond conceit he had, that he could not promise himself a victory, unless he promised something considerable to be given to God in lieu of it. (2.) That yet it is very good, when we are in the pursuit or expectation of any mercy, to make vows to God of some instance of acceptable service to him, not as a purchase of the favour we desire, but as an expression of our gratitude to him, and the deep sense we have of our obligations to render according to the benefit done to us. The matter of such a singular vow (Lev. 27. 2.) must be something that has a plain and direct tendency, either to the advancement of God’s glory, and the interests of his kingdom among men, or to the furtherance of himself in his service, and in that which is antecedently our duty. (3.) That we have great need to be very cautious, and well advised, in the making of such vows, lest, by indulging a present emotion even of pious zeal, we entangle our own consciences, involve ourselves in perplexities, and are forced at last to say before the angel that it was an error, Eccl. 5. 2-6. It is a snare to a man, hastily to devour that which is holy, without due consideration, (quid valeant humeri, quid ferre recusen—what we are able to effect,) and without inserting the needful provisos and limitations which might prevent the entanglement, and then after vows to make the inquiry which should have been made before, Lev. 26. 27. Let God be our warning in this matter. See Deut. 29. 22. (4.) That what we have solemnly vowed to God, we must conscientiously perform, if it be possible and lawful, though it be ever so difficult and grievous to us. Jephthah’s sense of the powerful obligation of his vow must always be our’s (v. 35.) I have opened my mouth unto the Lord in a solemn vow, and I cannot go back; that is, “I cannot recall the vow I have made to myself, or to any other in the earth, and dispense with it, or give me up my bond. The thing was mine own, and in mine own power, (Acts 5. 4.) but now it is not.” Vow and pay, Ps. 76. 11. We deceive ourselves, if we think to mock God. If we apply this to the consent we have solemnly given in our sacramental vows to the covenant of grace, made with poor sinners in Christ, what a powerful argument will it be against the sins we have vowed, and against our own revolt from, and what a strong inducement to the duties we have thereby bound ourselves up to, and what a ready answer to every temptation! “I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back; I must therefore go forward: I have sworn, and I must, I will, perform it. Let me not dare to play fast and loose with God.” (5.) That it well becomes children, obediently and cheerfully to submit to their parents in the Lord, and particularly
to comply with their pious resolutions for the honour of God, and the keeping up of religion in their fami-
lies, though they be harsh and severe, as Rechab-ites, who for many generations religiously observed
the commands of Jonadab their father in forbearing
wine, and Jephthah's daughter here, who, for
the satisfying of her father's conscience, and for
the honour of God and her country, yielded herself
as one devoted; (v. 36.) *Do to me according to
that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; I know
I am dear to thee, but am well content that God
should be dearer.* The father might not disallow and
venerate the daughter, (v. 36.) but the daughter
could not disallow or disannul, no, not such a vow as this, made by the father. This
magnifies the law of the fifth commandment. (6.)
That our friends' grievances should be our griefs.
Where she went to bewail her hard fate, the vir-
gins, her companions, joined with her in her lamenta-
tions, v. 38. With those of her own sex and age
she used to associate, who, no doubt, now that her
father was of a sudden grown so great, expected,
shortly after his return, to dance at her wedding,
but were heavily disappointed, when they were
called to retire to the mountains with her and share in her griefs. Those are unworthy of the
name of friends, that will only rejoice with us, and
not weep with us. (7.) That heroic zeal for the
honour of God and Israel, though alloyed with infirmi-
ty of body, and want of years, was not in perpetu-
al remembrance. It well became the daughters of
Israel, by an annual solemnity to preserve the
honourable memory of Jephthah's daughter, who
made light even of her own life, like a noble hero-
ine, when God had taken vengeance of Israel's ene-
 mies, v. 36. Such a rare instance of one that pre-
ferred the public interest before life itself, was
never to be forgotten. Her sex forbid her to fol-
low the example of Jephthah's daughter in her
honour to die, not as a sacrifice of atonement for
the people's sins, (that honour was reserved for Christ
only,) but as a sacrifice of acknowledgment for
the people's mercies. (8.) From Jephthah's concern
on this occasion, we must learn not to think it
strange if the day of our triumphs in this world
proves upon some account or other the day of our
griefs, and therefore must rejoice with trembling!
we hope for a day of triumph hereafter which will
have no allay. 2. Yet there are some difficult questions that do
arise upon this story, which have very much em-
ployed the pens of learned men; I will say but little
to them, because Mr. Poole has discussed them very
fully in his English annotations.
(1.) It is hard to say, what Jephthah did to his
daughter when he offered up this vow. [1.] Some
think he only shut her up for a nun, and that it be-
ing unlawful, according to one part of his vow, (for
they make it disjunctive,) to offer her up for a
burnt-offering, he thus, according to the other part,
engaged her to be the Lord's, that is, totally to
sequester herself from all the affairs of this life, and
consequently from marriage, and to employ herself
wholly in the acts of devotion all her days. This
which counterposes this opinion, is, that she is said
to bewail her virginity, (v. 37, 33.) and that she
knew no man, v. 39. But if he sacrificed her, it
was proper enough for her to bewail, not her death,
because that was intended to be for the honour of
God, and she would undergo it cheerfully, but that
unhappy circumstance of it, which made it more
great to her than to any other, because she was
the father's only child, in whom he hoped his name and
family would have been built up; that she was un-
married, and so left no issue to inherit her father's
honour and estate; therefore that is it that is par-
ticularly taken notice of, (v. 34.) that beside her he
had neither son nor daughter. But that which
makes me think Jephthah did not go about thus to
save his vow or event it rather, is, that we do not
find any law, usage, or custom, but his the Old
Testament, which does in the least intimate that
a single life was any branch or article of religion, or
that any person, man or woman, was looked upon
as the more holy, more the Lord's, or devoted to
him, for living unmarried; it was no part of the law,
either of the priests, or of the Nazarites, Deborah
and Huldah, both prophetesses, are both of them
particularly taken notice of to be married women.
Besides, had she only been confined to a single life,
she needed not to have desired these two months
bewayl it in; she had her whole life before her to do
that, if she saw cause. Nor needed she to take such
a bad leave of her companions; for they that are
of that opinion, understand what is said, (v. 40.) of
their coming to talk with her, as our margin reads
it, four days in the year. Therefore, (2.) It seems
reasonable to think, that this was the day of her
vow, according to the letter of his vow, misunderstanding
that law which spoke of persons devoted to the
cause of God, as if it were to be applied as such
were devoted by men's vows; (Lev. 27, 29.) None
devoted shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put
to death: and wanting to be better informed of the
power the law gave him in this case to redeem her.
Abraham's attempt to offer up Isaac, perhaps, to the
cause of God, was neither lawful nor proper, yet
he would not accept this sacrifice which he had vowed,
he would send an angel to stay his hand, as he did
Abraham's; if she came out designedly to be made
a sacrifice, as who knows but she might, perhaps
he thought that would make the case the plainer;
Volenti non sit injuria—An injury cannot be done to
a person when he himself consents to it. He imagined,
it may be, that where there was neither anger nor
delinquency, he might offer her up, as he had been
honoured to die, not as a sacrifice of atonement for
the people's sins, (that honour was reserved for Christ
only,) but as a sacrifice of acknowledgment for
the people's mercies. (8.) From Jephthah's concern
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to bewail her virginity, (v. 37, 33.) and that she
knew no man, v. 39. But if he sacrificed her, it
was proper enough for her to bewail, not her death,
bound by his vow, to that which God had forbidden by the letter of the sixth commandment, Thou shalt not kill. God had forbidden human sacrifices, so that it was (says Dr. Lightfoot) in effect a sacrifice to Moloch. And, probably, the reason why it is left dubious by the inspired penman, whether he sacrificed her or no, was that they who did afterwards offer their children, might not take any encouragement from this instance. Concerning this, and some other such passages in the sacred story, which learned men are in the dark, divided, and in doubt about, we need not much amuse ourselves; what is necessary to our salvation, thanks be to God, is plain enough.

CHAP. XII.

In this chapter, we have, 1. Jephthah's rencounter with the Ephraimites, and the bloodshed on that unhappy occasion, (v. 1. 6.) and the conclusion of Jephthah's life and government, v. 7. 11. A short account of three other of the judges of Israel; Ibzon, (v. 8. 10.) Elon, (v. 11. 12.) and Abdon, v. 13. 15.

1. And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedest thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire. 2. And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands. 3. And when I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the Lord delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day to fight against me? 4. Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites. 5. And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped, said, Let me go over, that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; 6. Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth; and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan; and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand. 7. And Jephthah judged Israel six years: then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

Here is, 1. The unreasonable displeasure of the men of Ephraim against Jephthah, because he had not called them in to his assistance against the Ammonites, that they might have shared in the triumphs and spoils, v. 1. Pride was at the bottom of the quarrel; only by that comes contention. Proud men think all the honours lost, that go beside themselves, and then who can stand before envy? The Ephraimites had the same quarrel with Gideon, (ch. 8. 1.) and the same enmity against Jephthah was of Manasseh on the other side Jordan. Jephthah was of Manasseh on the other side Jordan. Ephraim and Manasseh were nearer akin than any other of the tribes, being both the sons of Joseph, and yet they were more jealous one of another than any other of the tribes. Jacob having crossed hands, and given Ephraim the preference, looking as far forward as the kingdom of the ten tribes, which Ephraim was the head of, after the revolt from the house of David, that tribe, not content with that honour in the promise, was displeased if Manasseh had any honour done it in the mean time. It is pity that kindred and relations, which should be an inducement to love and peace, should ever be an occasion (as it often proves) of strife and discord. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and their contentions are as the bars of a castle. The anger of the Ephraimites at Jephthah was, 1. Causeless and unjust. Why didn't thou call us to go with thee? For a good reason, because they were the men of Gilead that had made him their captain, not the men of Ephraim, so that he had no authority to call them. Had his attempt miscarried for want of their help, they might justly have blamed him for not desiring it. But when the work was done, and done effectually, the Ammonites subdued, and Israel delivered, there was no harm done, though their own countrymen were invaded: and it was cruel and outrageous. They got together in a tumultuous manner, went over Jordan as far as Mizpeh in Gilead, where Jephthah lived, and no less will satisfy their fury, but they will burn his house, and him in it. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce. Those resentments that have the least reason for them, have commonly the most rage in them. Jephthah was now the captain of the common counsels of Israel, and they should have come to congratulate him, and return him the thanks of their tribe for the good services he had done; but we must not think it strange if we receive ill from those from whom we deserve well. Jephthah was now a meurer for the calamity of his family, upon his daughter's account, and they should have come to console and comfort him; but barbarous men take a pleasure in adding affliction to the afflicted. In the world, men are more often provoking to their own ruin, than to become the instruments of their brother's deliverance. Nor must we ever be so mean as though we had put off the harness. 2. Jephthah's warm vindication of himself. He did not endeavour to pacify them, as Gideon had done in the like case; the Ephraimites were now more outrageous than they were then, and Jephthah had not so much of a meek and quiet spirit as Gideon had. Whether they would be pacified or no, Jephthah t-skes, v. 1. To justify himself, v. 2. 3. He makes it out that they had no cause to quarrel with him, for, (1.) It was not in pursuit of glory that he had engaged in this war, but for the necessary defence of his country, with which the children of Ammon greatly surfe. (2.) He had invited the Ephraimites to come and join with him, though he neither needed them, nor was under any obligation to pay that respect to them; but yet they had declined the service; I called you, and ye delivered me not out of their hands. Had that been true which they charged him with, yet it had not been a just ground of quarrel, but it seems it was false; and, as the matter of fact now appears, he had more cause to quarrel with them, for deserting the common interests of Israel in a time of need. It is no derogation to those who are themselves most culpable, to be most clamorous in accusing the innocent. (3.) The enterprise was very hazardous, and they had more re-
son to pity him, than to be angry with him; I put my life in his hands; that is, "exposed myself to the utmost peril in what I did, having so small an army."

The honour they envied, was bought dear enough, they needed not to grudge it him; few of them would have ventured so far for it. (4.) He does not take glory of the success of himself, (that had been invisible,) but gives it all to God, "The Lord delivered them into mine hand. If God was pleased so far to make use of me for his glory, why should you be offended at that? Have you any reason to fight against me? Is not that in effect to fight against God, in whose hand I have been only an unworthy instrument?"

9. When this just answer (though not so soft an answer as Gideon did) did prevail to turn away their wrath, he took care both to defend himself from the fury, and to chastise their insolvency with the sword, by virtue of his authority as Israel's judge.

(1.) The Ephraimites had not only quarrelled with Jephthah, but when his neighbours and friends appeared to take his part, they had abused them, and given them fine language, for I adhere to our tradition, and take it, v. 4. They said in scorn, "Ye Gileadites that dwell here on the other side Jordan, are but fugitives of Ephraim, the scum and dregs of the tribes of Joseph, of which Ephraim is the chief, the refuse of the family, and are so accounted among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites. Who cares for you? All your neighbours know what you are, no better than fugitives and vagabonds, separated from your brethren, and driven hither into a corner." The Gileadites were as true Israelis as any other, and at this time had signalized themselves, both in the choice of Jephthah, and in the war with Ammon, above all the families of Israel, and yet are most basely and unjustly called fugitives. It is an ill thing to fasten names or characters of reproach upon persons or countries, as is common, especially upon those who lie under outward disadvantages: it often occasions quarrels that prove of ill consequence, as it did here. See likewise what a mischievous thing an abusive tongue is, that calls ill names, and gives surburious language; it sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell, (Jam. 3. 6.) and may a time cuts the throat of him that uses it, as it did here, Ps. 64. 8. If these Ephraimites could have deniled themselves the poor satisfactions of Gilead, the Gileadites might, in a better frame, or spirit, have prevented a great deal of bloodshed, for grievous words excite anger, and who knows how great a matter a little of that fire may kindle?

(2.) This affront raises the Gileadites' blood, and the indignity done to themselves, as well as to their captain, must be revenged. [1.] They routed them in the field, v. 4. They fought with Ephraim, and, Ephraim being but a rude uncourageable people, sent Gilead to rout them to flight. [2.] They cut off their retreat, and so completed their revenge, v. 6. The Gileadites, who perhaps were better acquainted with the passages of Jordan than the Ephraimites were, secured them with strong guards, who were ordered to slay every Ephraimit that offered to pass the river. Here was, First, Cruelty enough in the destruction of them. Sufficient surely was the Ely, which was why smote by murther when they were routed in the field, there needed not this severity to cut off all that escaped. Shall the sword devour for ever? Whether Jephthah is to be praised for this, I know not; perhaps he saw it to be a piece of necessary justice. Secondly, Cunning enough in the discovery of them. It seems the Ephraimites, though they spoke the same language with other Israelites, yet had got a custom in the dialect of their country to pronounce the Hebrew letter Shin like Samech, and they had so strangely used themselves to it, that they could not do otherwise, no, not to save their lives. We learn to speak by imitation; they that first used a for sh, did it either because it was shorter, or because it was finer, and ameliorated, more relative for Ephraim, than that you might know an Ephraimite by it; as in England we know a west-country man, or a north-country man, nay, perhaps a Shropshire man, and a Cheshire man, by his pronunciation. Thou art a Gallican, and thy speech betrays thee. By this the Ephraimites were discovered. If they took a man that they suspected to be an Ephraimite, and ameliorated, more relative for Ephraim, than that they either could not, as our translation reads it, or he did not heed, or frame, or direct himself, as some read, to pronounce it right, but said Shibboleth, and so was known to be an Ephraimite, and was slain immediately. Shibboleth signifies a river or stream; "Ask leave to go over Shibboleth, the river." Those that were thus cut off, made up the whole number of slaughtered Ephraimites forty-two thousand, v. 6. Thus another mutiny of that angry tribe was prevented.

Now let us observe the righteousness of God in the punishment of these proud and passionate Ephraimites, which in several instances answered to their sin. 1. They were proud of the honour of their tribe, gloried in this, that they were Ephraimites; but how soon are they brought to be ashamed or afraid to own their country! Art thou an Ephraimite? No, now rather of any tribe but your own. 2. They had gone in a rage over Jordan to burn Jephthah's house with fire, but now they come back to Jordan as sneakingly as they had passed it furiously, and were cut off from ever returning to their own houses. 3. They had upbraided the Gileadites with the infelicity of their country, lying at such a distance; and now they suffer by an iniquity peculiar to their own country, in not being able to pronounce Shibboleth. 4. They had called the Gileadites, unjustly, fugitives, and now they are really and in good earnest become fugitives themselves and in the Hebrew, the same word (v. 5) is used of the Ephraimites that escaped, or that fled, which they had used in scorn of the Gileadites, calling them fugitives; he that rolls the stone of reproach unjustly upon another, let him expect that it will justly return upon himself.

Lastly, More strength was given to the policy of Jephthah's government. He judged Israel but six years, and then died, v. 7. Perhaps the death of his daughter sunk him so, that he never looked up after; but it shortened his days, and he went to his grave mourning.

8. And after him Ibzan of Beth-lehem judged Israel. 9. And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, whom he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons: and he judged Israel seven years. 10. Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Beth-lehem. 11. And after him Elon a Zebulonite judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years. 12. And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Ajalon, in the country of Zebulun. 13. And after him Abdon, the son of Hillel a Pirathonite, judged Israel. 14. And he had forty sons, and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass-collts: and he judged Israel eight years. 15. And Abdon, the son of Hillel the Pirathonite, died, and was buried in Pi-
rathorn, in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites.

We have here a short account of the short reigns of three more of the judges of Israel; the first of which governed but seven years, the second ten, and the third eight. For the transgression of a land, many are the frights thereof, many in a short time, and many in a long time. Good men being removed in the beginning of their usefulness, and by the time they had applied themselves to their business. 1. Ibzan of Beth-lehem; most probably, Beth-lehem of Judah, David's city, not that in Zebulun. which is only mentioned once, Josh. 19. 15. He ruled but seven years, but by the number of his children, and his disposing of them all in marriage himself, it appears that he lived long; and, probably, the great increase of his family, and the numerous alliances he made, added to his personal merits, made him the more fit to be either chosen by the people, as Jephthah was, or called of God immediately, as Gideon was, to be Israel's judge, to keep up and carry on the work of God among them. That which is remarkable concerning him, is, his children. 1. That he had many children, sixty in all, a quiver full of arrows. Thus was Beth-lehem famous for increase, the very city where he was to be born, whose spiritual seed should be as the stars of heaven. 2. That he had an equal number of each sex, thirty sons and thirty daughters, a thing which does not often happen in the same family, yet in the great family of mankind, he that first made two, male and female, by his wise providence, preserves a succession of both in some sort of equality, as far as is requisite to the keeping up of the generations of men upon earth. 3. That he took care to marry them all; his daughters he sent abroad, et maritati dedit, so the vulgar Latin adds—he provided husbands for them; and, as it were in exchange, and both ways strengthening his interest, he took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. The Jews say, Every father owes three things to his son, to teach him to read the law, give him a trade, and get him a wife. What a difference was there between Ibzan's family, and that of his immediate predecessor, Jephthah! Ibzan has sixty children and all married, Jephthah but one, a daughter, that dies or lives unmarried. Some are increased, others are diminished; both are the Lord's doing. II. Elon of Zebulun, in the north of Canaan, was not waited up to preside in public affairs, to administer justice, and to reform abuses; ten years he continued a blessing to Israel; and then died, v. 11, 12. Dr. Lightfoot computes, that in the beginning of his time, the forty years' oppression by the Philistines began, (spoken of, ch. 13. 1.) and about that time Simson was born. Probably, his residence being in the north, the Philistines who bordered upon the southern parts of Canaan, took the opportunity of oppressing them. III. Abdon, of the tribe of Ephraim, succeeded, and in him that illustrious tribe begins to recover its reputation, having not afforded any person of note since Joshua; for Abimelech the Shechemite was rather a scandal to it. This Abdon was famous for the multitude of his offspring; (v. 14.) he had forty sons and thirty grandsons, all which he lived to see grown up; and they rejoiced in him, either as judges and officers, or as gentlemen and persons of distinction. It was a satisfaction to him thus to see his children's children, but it is feared he did not see peace upon Israel, for by this time the Philistines had begun to break in upon them. Concerning this, and the rest of these judges that ever so short an account given of them, yet notice is taken where they were buried; (v. 7, 10, 12, 15.) perhaps, because the inscriptions upon their monuments (for such were anciently used, 2 Kings 23. 17.) would serve for the confirmation and enlargement of their story, and might be consulted by such as desired further information concerning them. St. Peter having occasion to speak of David, says, His sepulchre is with us unto this day, Acts 29. Or it is intended to show the number of the places where they laid their bones; but may be improved for the lessening of our esteem of all worldly glory, which death and the grave will stain the pride of. These judges that were as gods to Israel, died like men, and all their honour was laid in the dust.

It is very strange, that in the history of all these judges, some of whose actions are very particularly related, there is not a mention of the name of the High Priest, or any other priest, or Levite appearing either for counsel or action in any public affair, from Phinehas (ch. 20. 28.) to Eli, which may well be computed two hundred and fifty years; only the name of the High Priests at that time are preserved, 1 Chron. 6. 4—7, and Ezra 7. 3—5. How can this strange obscurity of that priesthood for so long a time, now in the beginning of its days, with that mighty splendour with which it was introduced, and the figure which the institution of it makes in the law of Moses? Surely it intimates, that the institution was chiefly intended to be typical, and that the great benefits that seemed to be promised by it, were to be chiefly looked for in its anti-type, and that the everlasting priesthood of our Lord Jesus, in comparison of the excelling glory of which that priesthood had no glory, 2 Cor. 3. 10.

CHAP. XIII.

At this chapter begins the story of Samson, the last of the Judges of Israel, whose story is recorded in this book, and next before Eli. The passages related concerning him, are, from first to last, very surprising and uncommon. The figure he makes in this history is really great, and yet vastly different from that of his predecessors. We never find him at the head, either of a court or of an army, never upon the throne of judgment, or in the field of battle, yet in his own proper person a great patriot of his country and a terrible scourge to his enemies and oppressors; he was an eminent believer, (Heb. 11. 32.) and a glorious type of Him who with his own arm wrought salvation. The history of the rest of the Judges recommences from their appealment to that station, but Samson's begins with his birth, may with his conception, and no less than an angel from heaven usher him into the world, as a pattern of what should be afterward done to John Baptist, and Christ. This is related in this chapter. 1. The occasion of raising up this deliverer was the oppression of Israel by the Philistines, v. 1. II. His birth is foretold by an angel to his mother, v. 2. 5. III. She relates it to his father, v. 6, 7. IV. They both together have it again from the angel, (v. 8. 14.) whom they treat with respect, (v. 15. 18.) and who, to their great amazement, discovers what he was, at parting, v. 19. 23. V. Samson is born, 34, 35.

1. And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years. 2. And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. 3. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not; but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. 4. Now therefore be wary, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any un-
The first verse gives us a short account, such as we have too often met with already, of the great distress that Israel was in, which gave occasion for the raising up of a deliverer. They did evil, as they had done, in the sight of the Lord, and then God delivered them, as he had done, into the hands of their enemies. If there had been no sin, there would have been no war; but where sin was suffered to abound, that grace might much more abound. The enemies God now sold them to, were the Philistines, their next neighbours, that lay within them, the first and chief of the nations which were devoted to destruction; but which God left to prove them, (ch. 3. 1, 3.) the five lords of the Philistines, an inconsiderable people in comparison with Israel, (they had but five cities of any note,) and yet when God made use of them to these great Redemters did not in a particular and vexatious and troublesome manner. And this trouble lasted longer than any yet, it continued forty years, though probably not altogether violent. When Israel was in this distress, Samson was born; and here we have his birth foretold by an angel. Observe, 

1. His extraction. He was of the tribe of Dan, v. 2. Dan signifies a judge or a judge, Gen. 30. 15. And, probably, it was with an eye to Samson that dying Jacob foretold, Dan shall judge his people, that is, he shall produce a judge for his people, though one of the sons of the handmaids, as one, as well as any one of the tribes of Israel," Gen. 49. 16. The lot of the tribe of Dan lay next to the country of the Philistines, and therefore one of that tribe was most fit to be made a bridle upon them. His parents had been long childless. Many eminent persons were born of mothers that had been kept a great while in the want of the blessing of children; as Isaac, Joseph, Samuel, and John Baptist, that the mercy might be the more acceptable when it did come. Sing, O barren, that thou didst not bear, Isa. 54. 1. Note, Mercies long waited for, often prove signal mercies, and it is made to appear that they were worth waiting for, and by them others may be encouraged to continue, and hope for God's mercy. 

II. The glad tidings brought to his mother, that she should have a son. The messenger was an angel of the Lord, (v. 3.) yet appearing as a man, with the aspect and garb of a prophet, or man of God. And this angel (as the learned Bishop Patrick supposes, v. 18,) was the Lord himself, that is, the Word of the Lord, who was to be the Messiah, for his name is called Wonderful, (v. 18.) and Jehovah, v. 19. In this particular manner concern himself about this typical Redemter. It was not so much for the sake of Manoah and his wife, obscure Danites, that this extraordinary message was sent, but for Israel's sake, whose deliverer he was to be; and not only so, his services to Israel not seeming to answer to the grandeur of his entry, but for the Messiah's sake, whose type he was to be, and whose birth must be foretold by an angel, as his was. 

The angel, in the message he delivers, 1. Takes notice of her affliction, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not. From hence she might gather he was a prophet, that, though a stranger to her, and one she had never seen before, yet he knew her to be her grievance. He tells her of it, not to upbraid her with it, but because perhaps at this time she was actually thinking of this affliction, and bowing herself as one written childless. God often sends in comfort to his people very seasonably, when they feel most from their troubles. "Now thou art barren, but thou shalt not always so," as she feared, "nor long so." 2. He assures her that she should conceive and bear a son, (v. 3.) and repeats it, v. 5. To show the power of a divine word, the strongest man that ever was, a child of promise, as Isaac, born by force and virtue of a promise and faith in that promise, Heb. 11. 11. Gal. 4. 23. Many a woman, after having been long barren, has borne a son by providence, but Samson was by promise, because a figure of the Promised Seed, so long expected by the faith of the Old Testament saints. 3. He bids her not to call his name Samson, but a Nazarite from his birth, and therefore that the mother should be subject to the law of the Nazarites, (though not under the vow of a Nazarite,) and should drink no wine or strong drink, so long as this child was to have his nourishment from her, either in the womb or at the breast, v. 4, 5. Observe, This deliverer of Israel must be in the strictest manner devoted to God, an example of holiness. It is spoken of as kind, but not to be despised. God up those strong men for Nazarites, Amos 2. 11. Other judges had corrected their apostasies from God, but Samson must appear as one, more than any of them, consecrated to God; and notwithstanding what we read of his faults, we have reason to think, that being a Nazarite of God's making, he did, in the course of his conversation, exemplify, not only the ceremony, but the substance, of that separation. Deliverance from the Lord, Isa. 4. 5. When the Nazarites did consist, Numb. 6. 2. Those that would save others, must by singular piety distinguish themselves. Samuel, who carried on Israel's deliverance from the Philistines, was a Nazarite by his mother's vow, (1 Sam. 1. 11.) as Samson by the divine appointment. The mother of this deliverer must therefore deny herself, and not eat any unclean thing; what was lawful at another time, was not to be forborne. As the promise tried her faith, so this precept tried her obedience; for God requires both from those on whom he will bestow his favours. Women with child ought conscientiously to avoid whatever they have reason to think will be any way prejudicial to the health or good constitution of the fruit of their body. And perhaps Samson's mother was to refrain from wine and strong drink, not only because he was designed for a Nazarite, but because he was designed for a man of strength, which his mother's temperance would contribute to. 4. He foretells the service which this child should do to his country, He shall begin to deliver Israel. Note, It is very desirable that our children may be not only devoted entirely to God themselves, but instrumental for the good of others, and the service of their generation; not recusals, caddies under a bushel, but active and useful. Observe; He shall begin to deliver Israel. This intimated that the oppression of the Philistines should last long, for Israel's deliverance from it should not so much as begin, not one step be taken towards it, till this child, which was now unborn, should be
grown up to a capacity of beginning it. And yet he must not complete the deliverance neither, he shall only begin to deliver Israel, which intimates that the trouble should still be prolonged; God chooses to carry on his work gradually, and by several hands. One lays the foundation of a good work, another builds, and perhaps a third brings forth the topunto.

Now herein Samson was a type of Christ. (1.) As a Nazarite to God, a Nazarite from the womb. For though our Lord Jesus was not a Nazarite himself, yet he was typified by the Nazarites, as being perfectly pure from all sin, not so much as conceived in it, and entirely devoted to his Father's honour. Of the Jewish church, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, because to them pertained the promise of him, Romans 9. 4, 5. By virtue of that promise, he long lay as it were in the womb of that church, which for many ages was pregnant of him, and therefore, like Samson's mother, during that pregnancy, was made a holy nation and a peculiar people, and strictly forbidden to touch any unclean thing for his sake, who in the fulness of time was to come from them. (2.) As a deliverer of Israel; for he is Jesus a Nazarite, who saves his people from their sins. But with this difference: Samson did only begin to deliver Israel, David was afterwards raised up to complete the destruction of the Philistines, but our Lord Jesus is both Samson and David too; both the Author and Finisher of our faith.

III. The report which Manoah's wife, in a transport of joy, brings in all haste to her husband, of this surprising message, v. 6, 7. The good things were brought her whose she was alone, perhaps rigorously employed in meditation or prayer; but she could not, she would not, conceal it from her husband, but gives him an account, 1. Of the messenger. It was a man of God, v. 6. His countenance she could describe; it was very awful: he had such a majesty in his look, such a sparkling eye, such a shining face, so commanding reverence and respect, that, according to the idea she had of an angel, he had the very countenance of one. But his name she can give no account of, nor to what tribe or city of Israel he belonged, for he did not think fit to tell her, and, for her part, the very sight of him struck such an awe upon her, that she durst not ask him. She was abundantly satisfied that he was a servant of God, hi her, and message he thought carried their own evidence along with them, and she inquired no further.

2. Of the message. She gives him a particular account both of the promise and of the precept, (v. 7.) that he also might believe the promise, and might on all occasions be a monitor to her to observe the precept. Thus should yoke-fellows communicate to each other their experiences of communion with God, and their improvements in acquaintance with him, that they may be helpful to each other in the way that is called holy.

3. Then Manoah entertained the Lord, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born. 9. And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her. 10. And the woman made haste, and ran, and showed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day. 11. And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that speakest unto the woman? And he said, I am. 12. And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass: how shall we order the child? and how shall we do unto him? 13. And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto Manoah, of all that I said unto the woman let her beware. 14. She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe.

We have here an account of a second visit, which the angel of God made to Manoah and his wife.

I. Manoah earnestly prayed for it, v. 1. He was not incredulous, and therefore the heart of her husband both safely trust in her; he knew she would not go about to impose upon him, much less was he, as Josephus unworthily represents him, jealous of his wife's company, or afraid of the promises which were given him. He takes it for granted, that this child of promise would in due time be given them, and speaks without hesitation of the child that shall be born. There was not found so great faith, no not in Zechariah, a priest, then in waiting at the altar of the Lord, and to whom the angel himself appeared, as was in this honest Danite. Things hidden from the wise and prudent, who value themselves upon the niceness of their inquiries, are often revealed unto babes, who know how to prize God's gifts, and to take God's word. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet, as Manoah here, have believed. 2. All his care is, What they should do to the child that should be born. Note, Good men are more solicitous and desirous to know the duty that is to be done by them, than to know the events that shall be concerning them. For duty is ours, events are God's. Solomon inquires concerning what the good men should do, not the good they should have, Ecclesiastes 2. 3. 3. He therefore prays to God to send the same blessed messenger again, to give them further instructions concerning the management of this Nazarite, fearing lest his wife's joy for the promise, might have made her forget some part of the precept, in which she was desirous to be fully informed, and lie under no mistake. "Lord, let the man of God come again unto us, for we desire to be better acquainted with him." Note, Those that have heard from heaven cannot but wish to hear more from thence, again and again to meet with the name of God. Observe, He does not go, or send his servants abroad, to find out this man of God, but seeks him upon his knees, prays to God to send him, and, thus seeking, finds him. Would we have God's messengers, the ministers of his gospel, to bring a word proper for us, and for our instruction? Entreat the Lord to send them to us to teach us, Romans 15. 30, 32.

II. God graciously granted it: (v. 9.) God hearkened to the voice of Manoah. Note, God will not fail some way or other to guide those by his counsel, that are sincerely desirous to know his duty, and apply themselves to him to teach them, Psalms 25. 8, 9.

1. The angel appears the second time also to the wife, when she was sitting alone, probably tending the flocks, or otherwise well employed in the field where she was retired; solitude is often a good opportunity of communion with God; good people have thought themselves never less alone than when alone, if God be with them.
2. She goes in all haste to call her husband, doubtless humbly beseeching the stay of this blessed messenger, till she return, and her husband with her, v. 10, 11. She did not desire him to go with her to her husband, but will fetch her husband to him. Those that would meet with God, must attend where he is pleased to manifest himself. "Oh," says she, overjoyed, "my dear love, thy prayers are answered, yonder is the man of God come to make us another visit; he that came the other day," or, as some read it, this day, for other is not in the original, and it is probable enough that both these visits were the same day, and at the same place, and that the second time she sat excepting the angel. The favor of God was so great, she should call her husband, John 4, 16. Those that have got acquaintance with the things of God themselves, should invite others to the same acquaintance, John 1. 45, 46. Manoah is not disgusted that the angel did not this second time appear to him, but very willingly goes after his wife to the man of God. To atone (as it were) for the first fatal miscarriage, when Ely earnestly pressed Adam to that which was evil, and he took away to her, let yokfellows excite another to love and follow good works; and if the wife lead, not let the husband think it any disparagement to him, to follow her in that which is virtuous and praiseworthy.

3. Manoah being come to the angel, and satisfied by him that he was the same that had appeared to his wife, with humility, (1.) Welcome the promise; (v. 12.) Now let thy messenger come to pass; this was the language, not only of his desire, but of his faith, like that of the blessed Virgin, (Luke 1. 38.) "Be it according to thy word." Lord, I lay hold on what thou hast said, and depend upon it; let it come to pass." (2.) Beg that the prescriptions given, might be repeated; How shall we order the child? The directions were given to his wife, but he looks upon himself as a concern in the careful management of this promised seed, according to order; for the utmost care of both the parents, and their constant joint endeavour, are little enough to be engaged for the good ordering of children that are devoted to God, and to be brought up for him. Let not one devolve it on the other, but both do their best. Observe, from Manoah's inquiry, [1.] In general, that when God is pleased to bestow any mercy upon us, our great care must be how to use it well, and as we ought, because it is then only a mercy indeed, when it is rightly managed. God has given us bodies, souls, estates; how shall we order them, that we may answer the intent of the donor, and give a good account of them? [2.] In particular, those to whom God has given children, must be very careful how they order them, and what they do; that they may drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts, from their minds and manners well betimes, and train them in the way wherein they should go. Herein pious parents will beg divine assistance. "Lord, teach us how we may order our children, that they may be Nazarites, and living sacrifices to thee." 4. The angel repeats the direction he had before given, (v. 13, 14.) Of all that I forbade let her beware, and all that I commanded let her observe. Note, There is need of a great deal both of wisdom and observation, for the right ordering both of ourselves and of our children. Beware, and observe; take heed not only of drinking wine or strong drink, but of eating any thing that cometh of the vine. Those that would preserve themselves pure, must keep at a distance from that which borders upon sin, or leads to it. When she was with child of a Nazarite, she must not eat any unclean thing; so those in whom Christ is formed, must carefully cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and do nothing to the prejudice of that new man.

15. And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, I pray thee, let us detain thee until we shall have made ready a kid for thee. 16. And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread; and if thou wilt offer a burnt-offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord: for Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the Lord. 17. And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, What is thy name, that, when thy sayings come to pass, we may do thee honour? 18. And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret? 19. So Manoah took a kid, with a meat-offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord: and the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on. 20. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar: and Manoah and his wife looked on, and fell on their faces to the ground. 21. (But the angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife.) Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord. 22. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. 23. But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands; neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would, as at this time, have told us such things as these.

We have here an account,

1. Of what further passed between Manoah and the angel at this interview. It was in kindness to him, that while the angel was with him, it was concealed from him that it was an angel; for had he known it, it would have been such a terror to him, that he durst not have conversed with him as he did; (v. 16.) He knew not that he was an angel. So Christ was in the world, and the world knew him not, John 1. 29, 37, 39. Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself. We could not bear the sight of the divine glory unveiled. God having determined to speak to us as men, like ourselves, prophets and ministers, even when he spake by his angels, or by his Son, they appeared in the likeness of men, and were taken but for men of God.

Now, I. The angel declined to accept his treat, and appointed him to turn it into a sacrifice. Manoah, being thus provoked, show some token of respect and gratitude to this venerable stranger, who had brought them these glad tidings, begged he would take some refreshment with him; (v. 15.) "We will soon make ready a kid for thee." They that welcome the message, will be kind to the messengers for his sake that sends them, 1 Thess. 5. 13. But the angel told him (v. 16.) he would not eat of bread, any more than he would of Gideon's, but, as there, directed him to offer it to God, ch. 6. 20, 21.
Angels' need not meat or drink; but the glorifying of God is their meat and drink, and it was Christ's, John 6. 34. And we in some measure do the will of God as they do it, if, though we cannot live without meat and drink, yet we eat and drink to the glory of God, and so turn even our common meals into sacrifices.

2. The angel declined telling him his name, and would not so far gratify his curiosity. Manoah desired to know his name, (v. 17.) and of what tribe he was, not as if he doubted the truth of his message, but that they might return his visit, and be better acquainted with him. It is good to increase and improve our acquaintance with good men and good ministers: and he has a further design, That when thy sayings come to pass, we may do thee honour, celebrate thee as a true prophet, and recommend others to thee for divine instruction; that we may call the child that shall be born, after thy name, and so do thee honour; or that we may send thee a present, honouring one whom God has honoured. But the angel denies his request with something of a check to his curiosity, (v. 18.) Why ask thou thus after my name? Jacob himself could not prevail for this favour, Gen. 32. 29. Not a soul knows his name; and yet we have not the least notion or knowledge what. Manoah's request was honestly meant, and yet was denied. God told Moses his name, (Exod. 3. 13, 14.) because there was a particular occasion for his knowing it; but here there was no occasion. What Manoah asked for instruction in his duty, he was readily told; (v. 12, 13.) but what he asked to gratify his curiosity, was denied. God hid it in his word given us full directives concerning our duty, but never designed to answer all the inquiries of a speculative head. He gives him a reason for his refusal, It is secret. The names of angels were not as yet revealed, to prevent the idolizing of them: after the captivity, when the church was cursed with idolatry, angels made themselves known to Daniel by their names, Michael and Gabriel; and to Zacharias, the angel told his name was John, (Luke 1. 19.) I am Gabriel. But here it is secret, or it is wonderful, too wonderful for us. One of Christ's names is Wonderful, Isa. 9. 6. His name was long a secret, but by the gospel it is brought to light, Jesus, a Saviour. Manoah must not ask, because he must not know. Note, (1.) There are secret things which belong not to us, and which we must content ourselves to be told of. We must not be curious in the knowledge of the things it is not the wisdom of God that we should inquire after. God will manifest his will to us by his word, and as he sees fit, and not according to our wishes. (2.) We must therefore never indulge a vain curiosity in our inquiries concerning these things, Col. 2. 18. Nescire veli que Magister maximus docere non vult erudit a insiitia est—To be willingly ignorant of those things which our great Master refuses to teach us, is to be at once ignorant and wise.

3. The angel assisted and owned their sacrifice, and, at parting, gave them to understand who he was. He had directed them to offer their burnt-offering to the Lord, v. 16. Praises offered up to God, are the most acceptable entertainment of the angels; see Rev. 22. 9, worship God. And Manoah having so good a warrant, though he was no priest, and had no altar, turned his meat into a meat-offering, and offered it upon a rock to the Lord; (v. 19.) because, though it was not as fitting an offering as by the Levitical ordinance, yet it was acceptable, and the Lord thereupon, (v. 20.) Lord, here it is, do what thou pleasest with it. Thus we must bring our hearts to God as living sacrifices, and submit them to the operation of his Spirit. All things being now ready, (1.) The angel did wondrously, for his name was Wonderful. Probably the wonder he did was the same with what he had done for Gideon, he made fire to come either down from heaven, or up out of the rock, to consume the sacrifice. (2.) He ascended up toward heaven in the flame of the sacrifice, v. 20. By this it appeared, that he was not, as they thought, a mere man, but a messenger immediately from heaven; thence certainly he descended, for thither he ascended, John 3. 13.—6. 62. This signified God's acceptance of the offering, and intimates to what we owe the acceptance of all our offerings, even to the very mediation of the angel or the sacrifice of another angel, who puts much licence to the prayers of saints, and so offers them before the throne, Rev. 8. 3. Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God. But it is Christ in the heart by faith that makes it an offering of a sweet smelling savour; without him our services are offensive smoke, but in him acceptable flame. We may apply it to Christ's sacrifice of himself for us; he ascended in the flame of his own offering, for by his own blood he entered once into the holy place, Heb. 9. 12. While the angel did this, it is twice said (v. 19, 20.) that Manoah and his wife looked on. This is a proof of the miracle, the matter of fact was true, for out of the mouth of these two eye-witnesses the report of it is established. The angel did all that was done in the sacrifice, they did but look on; yet doubtless when the angel ascended toward heaven, he was accompanied with them in thanksgiving for the promise which came from thence, and in expectation of the performance to come from thence too. Yet when the angel is ascended, they dare not, as those that were the witnesses of Christ's ascension, stand gazing up into heaven, but in holy fear and reverence they fell on their faces to the ground. And now, (1.) They knew that he was an angel, v. 21. It was not plain it was not the body of a man they had before them, since it was not chained to the earth, nor prejudiced by fire; but ascended, and ascended in flame; and therefore with good reason they conclude it was an angel, for he maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. (2.) But he did not any more appear to them; it was for a particular reason, now over, that he was sent, not to settle a constant correspondence, as with prophets. They must remember and observe what the angel had said, and not expect to hear more.

II. We have an account of the impressions which this visit made upon Manoah and his wife. While the angel did wondrously, they looked on, and said nothing; (so it becomes us carefully to observe the wondrous works of God, and to be silent before him,) but when he was gone, having finished his work, they had time to think on their reflections; and since they had now the present sight to see God, or an angel; and this notion quite overcame his faith, for the present, as it did Gideon's, ch. 6. 22. 

1. In Manoah's reflections upon it there is great fear, v. 22. He had spoken with great assurance of the son they should shortly be the joyful parents of, (v. 8. 12.) and yet is now put into such a confusion by that very thing which should have strengthened and encouraged his faith, that he counts upon nothing but their being both cut off immediately, We shall surely die. It was a vulgar opinion generally received, and Manoah was not to be excused for it, since he had his reflections in the presence of God, an angel; and this notion quite overcame his faith. 

2. In his wife's reflection upon it there is great faith, v. 23. Here the weaker vessel was the stronger believer, which perhaps was the reason why the angel chose once and again to appear to her, because Manoah's heart was quicker to fall down in fear, than his wife's was, and she was a help-meet for him, encouraged him. Two are better than one, for if one fall into dejections and despencidencies, the other will help to raise him up. Yoke-fellows should piously assist each other's faith and joy, as there is occasion. None could argue better than Manoah's wife does here. We shall surely die, said her husband; "Nay," said she, "we need not fear that; let us never turn thy against us which is really for us. We shall not die.
unless God be pleased to kill us, our death must come from his hand and his pleasure; now the tokens of his pleasure which we have received, forbid us to think that he designs our destruction. Had he thought fit to kill us, 1. He would not have accepted our sacrifice, and signified to us his acceptance of it by turning it to ashes, Ps. 20. 3. miscarriages. The sacrifice was the ransom of our lives, and the fire fastening upon that, was a plain indication of the turning away of his wrath from us. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, but you see ours is not so. 2. He would not have showed us all these things, these strange sights, now at a time when there is little or no open vision, v. Sam. 3. 1.) nor could he have accomplished these wonderful and precious promises of a son, that shall be a Nazarite, and a deliverer of Israel; he would not have told us such things as these if he had been pleased to kill us. We need not fear the withering of those roots out of which such a branch is yet to spring.” Note, Hereby it appears God designs not the death of sinners, that he has accepted the great sacrifice which Christ offered up for their salvation, and has put them in a way of obtaining his favor, and and of them of it upon their repentance. Had he been pleased to kill them, he would not have done so. And let those good christians, who have had communion with God in the word and prayer, to whom he has graciously manifested himself, and who have had reason to think God has accepted their works, take encouragement from thence in a cloudy and dark day; “God would not have done what he has done for my soul, if he had designed to forsake me, and leave me to perish at last; for his work is perfect, nor will he mock his people with his favours. Learn to reason as Manoah's wife did, “If God had designed me to perish under his wrath, he would not have given me such distinguishing tokens of his favours.” O woman, great is thy faith.

24. And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. 25. And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Here is, 1. Samson's birth. The woman that had been long barren, bare a son, according to the promise; for her word shall fall to the ground. Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good: His name Samson, has been derived, by some, from Sannah the sun, turned into a diminutive, sol excipus—the sun in miniature; perhaps because, being born like Moses to be a deliverer, he was, like him, exceeding fair, his face shone like a little sun: or, in remembrance of the shining countenance of that man of God, who brought them the notice of him; though they knew not his name, yet thus, now that his days were come to pass, they did him honour. A little sun, because a Nazarite born, for the Nazarites were as rubies and sapphires, Lam. 4. 7. And because of his great strength, the sun is compared to a strong man; (Ps. 19. 5.) why should not a strong man then be compared to the sun when he goes forth in his strength? A little sun, because the glory of, and a light to his people Israel, as the type of Christ, the Sun of righteousness.

2. His childhood. He grew more than ordinary in strength and stature, far outgrew other children of his age, and not in that only, but in other instances, it appeared that the Lord blessed him, qualified him, both in body and mind, for something great and extraordinary. Children of promise shall have the blessing.

3. His youth. When he grew up a little, the Spirit of the Lord began to move him, v. 23. This was an evidence that the Lord blessed him. Where God gives his blessing, he gives his Spirit to qualify for the blessing. Those are blessed indeed, in whom the Spirit of grace begins to work betimes, in the days of their childhood. If the Spirit be poured out upon our offspring, they will spring up as willows by the water courses, Isa. 44. 3. 4. The Spirit of God moved Samson in the camp of Dan, that is, in the general muster of the trained bands of that tribe, who, probably, had formed a camp between Zorah and Eshtaol, near the place where he lived, to oppose the incursions of the Philistines; and, whereas Samson thus appeared as a son to them, and signalized himself by some very brave actions excelling them all in many exercises and trials of strength, and, probably, lie showed himself more than ordinarily zealous against the enemies of his country, and discovered more of a public spirit than could be expected in a child. The Spirit moved him at times, not at all times, but as the wind blows, when he listed, to show that what he did, was not from himself, then he could not have done it at any time. Strong men think themselves greatly animated by wine; (Ps. 78. 65.) but Samson drank no wine, and yet excelled in strength and courage, and every thing that was bold and brave, for he had the spirit of God moving him: therefore he not drink with wine but be filled with the Spirit, who will come to those that are sober and temperate.

CHAP. XIV.

The idea which this chapter gives us of Samson, is not what one might have expected concerning one, who, by the special designation of heaven, was a Nazarite to God, and a deliverer of Israel; and yet really he was both. Here is, 1. Samson's courtship of a daughter of the Philistines, and his marriage to her, v. 1. S. 5, 7, 8. His conquest of a lion, and the prize he found in the carcase of it, v. 5, 6, 8, 9. III. Samson's riddle proposed to his companions (v. 10. 14.) and unriddled by the treachery of his wife, v. 15. 18. 14. The occasion this gave him to kill thirty of the Philistines, (v. 19.) and to break off his new alliance, v. 20.

1. And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. 2. And he came up and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines; now, therefore, get her for me to wife. 3. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well. 4. But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. 5. Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath; and, behold, a young lion roared against him. 6. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his fa-
ther or his mother what he had done. 7. And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well. 8. And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion; and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion. 9. And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion.

Here,

1. Samson, under the extraordinary guidance of Providence, seeks an occasion of quarrelling with the Philistines, by joining in affinity with them. A strange method, but the truth is, Samson was himself a riddle, a paradox of a man, did that which was really great and good, by that which was seemingly weak and evil, because he was designed not to be a pattern to us, (who must walk by rule, and not by example,) but a type of him, who, though he knew no sin, was made sin for us, and appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, that he might condemn sin in the flesh, and save us by the sacrifice of himself. 1

1. As the negotiation of Samson's marriage was a common case, we may observe, (1.) That it was weakly and foolishly done of him to set his affections upon a daughter of the Philistines; the thing appeared very improper. Shall one, that is not only an Israelite, but a Nazarite, devoted to the Lord, covet to become one with a worshipping of Dagon? Shall one, marked for a patriot of his country, unit among those that were its sworn enemies? He saw this woman, (v. 1,) and she pleased him well, v. 3. It does not appear that he had any reason to think her either wise or virtuous, or any way likely to be a help-meet for him: but he saw something in her face that was very agreeable to his fancy, and therefore nothing will serve, but she must be his wife. He that, in the choice of a wife, is guided only by his eye and governed by his fancy, must afterward thank himself, if he find a Philistine in his arms. (1.) Yet it was wisely and well done, not to proceed so much as to make his addresses to her, till he had first made his parents acquainted with the matter. He told them, and desired them to get her for him to wife, v. 2. Herein he is an example to all children, conformable to the law of the fifth commandment. Children ought not to marry, nor to move towards it, without the advice and consent of their parents; they that do, (as Bishop Hall here expresses it,) willfully uncivil themselves, and exchange natural affections for violent. Parents have a property in their children as parts of themselves. In marriage, this property is transferred, for such is the law of the relation, that a man shall have his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife: it is therefore not only unkind and ungrateful, but very unwise for a child to marry against the conscience; whoso thus robbeth his father or mother, stealing himself from them, who is nearer and dearer to them than their good, and yet saith, It is no transgression, the same is a companion of a destroyer, Prov. 28. 24. (2.) His parents did well to dissuade him from yoking himself thus unequally with an unbeliever. Let those who profess religion, but are courting an affinity with the profane and irreligious, matching into families where they have reason to think the fear of God is not, nor the worship of God, let them hear their reasoning, and apply it to themselves. "Is there never a woman among the daughters of the brethren, or if none of our own tribe, never a one among my people, never an Israelite, that pleases thee, or that thou canst think worthy of thy affection, that thou shouldst marry, a Philistine?" In the day of his strength, the children of God corrupted and ruined themselves, their families, and that truly primitive church, by marrying with the daughters of men, Gen. 6. 2. God had forbidden the people of Israel to marry with the devoted nations, one of which the Philistines were, Deut. 7. 3. (3.) If there had not been a special reason for it, it had certainly been imperative in him, and consistent with his peace, and the peace of the church, to have ordered that it at last. Yet their tender compliance with his affections, may be observed as an example to parents, not to be unreasonable in crossing their children's choices, not to deny their consent, especially to those that have sensibly and dutifully asked it, without some very good cause. As children must obey their parents in the Lord, so parents must not provoke their children to wrath, lest they be discouraged. This Nazarite, in his subscription to this parents, recking their consent, and not proceeding till he had it, was not only an example to all children, but a type of the holy child Jesus, who went down with his parents to Nazareth, (thence called a Nazarene,) and was subject to them Luke 2. 51., 2. But this treaty of marriage is expressly said to be of the Lord, v. 4. Not only that God afterwards confirmed it to serve his design against the Philistines, but that he put it into Samson's heart to make his choice, that he might have occasion against the Philistines. It was not a thing evil in itself for him to marry a Philistine. It was forbidden, because of the danger of receiving hurt by idolaters; where there was not only no danger of that kind, but an opportunity hoped for of doing that hurt to them, which would be good service to Israel, the Lord might well be disposed to that, as it was said, (ch. 13. 25.) that the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times, and we have reason to think, he himself perceived that Spirit to move him at this time, when he made this choice; and that otherwise, he would have yielded to his parents' dissuasives, nor would they have consented at last, if he had not satisfied them it was of the Lord. This would bring him into acquaintance with the enemies of Israel, and might have such opportunities of gallling them, as otherwise he could not have. It should seem, the way in which the Philistines oppressed Israel, was, not by great armies, but by the clandestine incursions of their giants, and small parties of their plunderers; in the same way therefore Samson must deal with them; let him but by this marriage get among them, and he would be a thorn in their sides. Jesus Christ, being to deliver us from the present evil world, and to cast out the prince of it, did himself visit it, though full of pollution and enmity, and, by assuming a body, did in some sense join in affinity with it, that he might destroy our spiritual enemies, and his own arm might work the salvation.

II. Samson, by a special providence, is animated and encouraged to attack the Philistines. That being the service to which he was designed, God, when he called him to it, prepared him for it by two occurrences. 1. By enabling him, in one journey to Timnath, to kill a lion, v. 5. 6. Many decline doing the service they might do, because they know not their own strength. God let Samson know what he could do in the strength of the Spirit of the Lord, that he might never be afraid to look the greatest difficulties in the face. David, that was to complete the destruction of the Philistines, must try his hand first upon a lion and a bear, that from thence he might infer, as we might suppose Samson did,
JUDGES, XIV.

that the uncircumcised Philistines should be as one of them, 1 Sam. 17. 36. (1.) Samson's encounter with the lion was hazardous. It was a young lion, ravenous and fierce, that Samson met, roaring for his prey, and setting his eye particularly upon him; he roared in meeting him, so the word is. He was all alone, in the vineyards, whither he had ambled from his father and mother, (who kept the high road,) probably to eat grapes. Children consider not how they expose themselves to the roaring lion that seeks to devour, when, out of a fear of wantonness for liberty, they wander from under the eye and wing of their prudent pious parents.

Nor do young people consider what lions lurk in the vineyards, the vineyards of red wines, as dangerous as snakes under the green grass. Had Samson met with this lion in the way, he might have had more reason to expect help both from God and man, than here in the solitary vineyards, out of his road. But there was a special providence in it, and the more hazardous the encounter was, (2.) the victory was so much more illustrious. It was obtained without any difficulty; he strangled the lion, and tore his throat as easily as he would have strangled a kid, yet without any instrument, not only no sword or bow, but not so much as a staff or knife; he had nothing in his hand. Christ engaged the roaring lion, and conquered him in the beginning of his public work, (Matth. 4. 1, &c.) and afterward displayed his wisdom and powers, triumphing over them in himself, and through one man, as by no instrument. He was exalted in his own strength. That which added much to the glory of Samson's triumph over the lion, was, that when he had done this great exploit, he did not boast of it, did not so much as tell his father or mother that which many a one would soon have published through the whole country. Modesty and humility make up the beauty and charm of personal performances.

2. By providing him with the next day's honey, with honey in the carcase of this lion, v. 8, 9. When he came down the next time to solemnize his nativities, and his parents with him, he had the curiosity to turn aside into the vineyard where he had killed the lion, perhaps, that with the sight of the place he might affect himself with the memory of that great deliverance, and might there solemnly give thanks to the God of his deliverance. It is good thus to remind ourselves of God's former and present favours. There he found the carcase of the lion; the birds or beasts of prey, it is likely, had eaten the flesh, and in the skeleton a swarm of bees had knitted, and made a hive of it, and had not been idle, but had there laid up a good stock of honey, which was one of the staple commodities of Canaan; such plenty was there of it, that it is said to flow with milk and honey. Samson, having a better title than any man to the hive, seizes the honey with his hand. This supposes an encounter with the bees; but he that dared not the lion's paws, had no reason to fear their stings. As by his victory over the lion, he was imboldened to encounter the Philistine-giants, if there should be occasion, notwithstanding their strength and fierceness, so by dislodging the bees, he was taught not to fear the multitude of the Philistines; though they compassed about him like bees, yet in the name of the Lord he should destroy them. Ps. 118. 13. Of the honey he here found, (1.) He ate himself, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for the dead bones of an unclean beast had not that ceremonial pollution in them, that the bones of a man had. John Baptist, that Nazarite of the New Testament, lived upon wild honey. (2.) He gave to his parents to share with him; he did not eat all himself; Hast thou found honey, eat so much as is sufficient for thee, and no more, Prov. 25. 16. He let his parents share with him. Children should be grate-

ful to their parents with the fruits of their own industry, and so show piety at home, 1 Tim. 5. 4. Let those that by the grace of God have found sweetness in religion themselves, communicate their experience to their friends and relations, and invite them to come and share with them. He told not his parents whence he had it, lest they should have scrupled eating it. Bishop Hall observes, here, that those are less wise and more scrupulous than Samson, that decline the use of God's gifts, because they find them in ill vessels. Honey is honey still, though in a dead lion. Our Lord Jesus having conquered Satan, that roaring lion, believers find honey in the carcase, abundant strength and satisfaction, enough for themselves, and for all their friends, from that victory.

10. So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do. 11. And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. 12. And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if you can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty shekels, and thirty change of garments: 13. But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty shekels, and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it. 14. And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle. 15. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? is it not so? 16. And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell thee? 17. And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day that he told her, because she lay upon him; and she told the riddle to the children of her people. 18. And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day, before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle. 19. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle: and his anger was kindled, and he went up to his
father's house. 20. But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.

We have here an account of Samson's wedding feast, and the occasion it gave him to fall foul of the Philistines.

I. Samson conformed to the custom of the country, in making a festival on his nuptial solemnities, which continued seven days, v. 10. Though he was a Nazarite, he did not affect, in a thing of this nature, to be singular; but did as the young men used to do upon such occasions. There is no part of religion so contrary to the innocent usages of the places where we live; nay, it is a reproach to religion, when those who profess it, give just occasion to others to call them covetous, sneaking, and morose. A good man should strive to make himself, in the best sense, a good companion.

II. His wife's relations paid him the accustomed respect of the place upon that occasion, and brought him thirty young men to keep him company during the solemnity, and to attend him as his groomsmen. When they saw him, (v. 11.) what a comely man he was, and what an ingenuous graceful look he had, they brought him these to do him honour, and to improve by his conversation, while he stayed among them. Or, rather, when they saw him, what a strong stout man he was, they brought these seemingly to be his companions, but really to be a guard upon him, or spies to observe him. Jealous enough they were of him, but would have been more so, had they known of his victory over the lion, which therefore he had industriously concealed. The favours of Philistines have often some mischief or other designed in them.

III. Samson, to entertain the company, propounds a riddle to them, and lays a wager with them that they cannot find it out in seven days, v. 12-14. This was a very artisans upon such occasions, when friends were together, to be innocently merry, not to spend all the time in dull eating and drinking, as Bishop Patrick expresses it, or in the other gratifications of sense, as music, dancing, or shows, but to propose questions, by which their learning and ingenuity might be tried and improved. This becomes men, wise men, that value themselves by their reason; but very unlike to it are the infamous and worse than brutish entertainments of this degenerate age, which send nothing round but the glass and the health, till reason is drowned, and wisdom sunk. Now, 1. Samson's riddle was his own invention, for it was his own achievement that gave occasion for it; Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. Read my riddle, what is this? Beasts of prey do not yield meat for men, yet food came out of their devourer; and those creatures that are strong when they are alive, commonly smell strong, and are every way offensive when they are dead, as horses, and yet out of the strong, or out of the bitter, so the Syriac and Arabic read it, came sweetness. If they had but so much sense as to consider what eater is most strong, and what meat is most sweet, they would have found out the riddle; and, neither lion nor lioness could answer it. It is stranger than their belief that the thoughts of them are confined to be out of the way: the solving of the riddle would have given him occasion to tell them the entertaining story on which it was founded. This riddle is applicable to many of the methods of divine providence and grace. When God, by an overruling providence, brings good out of evil to his church and people; when that which threatened their ruin, turns to their advantage; when their enemies are made serviceable to them, and the wrath of men turns to God's praise, then comes meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong. See Phil. 1. 12. His wager was more considerable to him than to them, because he was one against thirty partners. It was not a wager laid upon God's providence, or upon any promise in the die or a card, but upon their ingenuity, and amounted to no more than an honorable recompense of wit, and a disgrace upon stupidity.

IV. His companions, when they could not expound the riddle themselves, obliged his wife to get from him the exposition of it, v. 15. Whether they were really of a dull capacity, or whether under a particular impression at this time, it was strange that none of the thirty could allow the time stumble upon so plain a thing as that, What is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion? It should seem, that in wit as well as manners, they were barbarous; barbarous indeed, to threaten the bride, that if she would not use means with the bridegroom to let them into the meaning of it, they would burn her and her father's house with fire. Could any thing be more brutish? It was base enough to turn a jest into earnest, and they were unworthy of conversation, that would grow so outrageous rather than confess their ignorance and lose so small a wager; nor would it save their credit at all, to tell the riddle when they were told it. It was yet more Villainous, to engage Samson's wife to be a traitor to her own husband, and to pretend a greater interest in her than he had. Nor that she was married to a man she knew to be a strange people. Yet most inhuman of all was it, to threaten, if she could not prevail, to burn her and all her relations with fire, and all for fear of losing each of them the value of a shirt and a coat: Have ye called us to take what we have? Those must never lay wagers, that cannot lose more tamely and easily than this.

His wife, by unreasonable importunity, obtains from him a key to his riddle. It was on the seventh day, that is, the seventh day of the week, (as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures,) but the fourth day of the feast, that they solicited her to entice her husband; (v. 15.) and she did it. 1. With great art and management, (v. 16.) resolving not to believe he loved her, unless he would gratify her in this thing. She knew he could not bear to have his love questioned, and therefore if anything worked upon his heart, “Thou dost but hate me, and love me not, if thou dost not;” whereas he had much more reason to say, “Thou dost but hate me, and love me not, if thou insistest on it.” And that she might not make this the test of his affection, he assures her he had not told his own parents, notwithstanding the confidence he reposed in them. If this prevail not, she will try the powerful eloquence of tears, she will “say, If the days of the feast be over, rather than to mar the sport, as the bride's tears must needs do, than not gain the point, and oblige her countrymen, v. 17. 2. With great success. At last, being quite wearied with her importunity, he told her what was the meaning of his riddle, and though we may suppose she promised secrecy, and that if he would but let her know, she would tell nobody, she immediately told it to the Philistines. Nor did she, by the time this was done, or expect better from a Philistine, especially when the interests of her country were ever so little concerned. See Mic. 7. 5. 6. The riddle is at length unriddled; (v. 18.) What is sweeter than honey, or a better meat? Prov. 24. 13. What is stronger than a lion, or a greater devourer? Samson generiously owns they had won the wager, though he had good reason to dispute it, because they had not declared the riddle, as the bargain was, (v. 12.) but it had been declared to them. But he only thought
fit to tell them of it. If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, made use of your interest with my wife, you had not found out my riddle. Satan, in his temptations, could not do us the mischief he does, if he did not plough with the heifer of our own corrupt nature.

1. Samson pays his wager to these Philistines with the spoils of others of their countrymen, v. 19. He took this occasion to quarrel with the Philistines, went down to Ashkelon, one of their cities, where, probably, he knew there was some great festival observed at this time, to which many flocked, out of whom he picked out thirty, slew them, and took their clothes, and gave them to those that expounded the riddle: so that, in balancing the account, it appeared that the Philistines were left the worse for all the lives they lost, was worth all the suits of clothes they won; since the body is more than raiment. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, both to authorise and to enable him to do this.

Lastly. This proves a good occasion of weaning Samson from his new relations. He found how his companions had abused him, and how his wife had betrayed him, and therefore his anger was kindled, v. 19. Better be angry with Philistines, than in love with them, because, when we join ourselves to them, we are most in danger of being ensnared by them. And meeting with this ill usage among them, he went up to his father's house. It were well for us, if the unkindnesses we meet with from the world, and our disappointments in it, had but this good effect upon us, to oblige us by faith and prayer to return to our heavenly Father's house, and rest there. The inconveniences that occur in our way, should make us love home, and long to be there. No sooner was he gone, than his wife was disposed of to another, v. 20. Instead of begging his pardon for the wrong she had done him, when he justly resented it, only by withdrawing in displeasure for a time, she immediately marries him that was the chief of the guests, the friend of the bridegroom, whom perhaps she loved too well, and was too willing to oblige, when she got her husband to tell her the riddle. See how little confidence is to be put in men, when those may prove our enemies whom we have used as our friends.

**CHAP. XV.**

Samson, when he had counted an alliance with the Philistines, did but seek an occasion against them, ch. 14. 4. Now here we have a further account of the occasions he took to weaken them, and to avenge, not his own, but Israel's quarrels, upon them. Every thing here is surprising; if any thing be thought incredible, because impossible, it must be remembered that with God nothing is impossible, and it was by the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him, that he was both directed to, and strengthened for, those unusual ways of making war. I. From the perfidiousness of his wife and her father, he took occasion to burn their corn, v. 1...5. II. From the Philistines, he took occasion to burn his wife and her father; and took occasion to smite them with a great slaughter, v. 6...8. III. From the treachery of his countrymen, who delivered him bound to the Philistines, he took occasion to kill both him, and them, with the help of the ass, v. 9...17. IV. From the distress he was then in, for want of water, God took occasion to show him favour: in a seasonable supply, v. 18...20.

1. But it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat-harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber: but her father would not suffer him to go in. 2. And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her. 3. And Samson said concerning them. Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure. 4. And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails. 5. And when he had set thebrands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives. 6. Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire. 7. And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease. 8. And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Elam.

Here is,

I. Samson's return to his wife, whom he had left in displeasure; not hearing, perhaps, that she was given to another, when time had a little cooled his resentment, he came back to her, visited her with a kid, v. 1. The value of the present was inconsiderable, but it was intended as an obligation, and perhaps was then so used, when those that had been at variance were brought together again; he sent this that he might sup with her in her apartments, and she with him on his provision, and so they might be friends again. It was generously done of Samson, though he was the party offended, and the superior relation, to whom therefore she was bound in duty to sue for peace, and to return to the first motion of reconciliation. When differences happen between near relations, let those be ever reckoned the wisest and the best, that are most forward to forgive and forget injuries, and most willing to stoop and yield for peace sake.

II. The repulse he met with; her father forbade him to come near her, for truly he had married her to another, v. 2. He endeavours, 1. To justify himself in this wrong. I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her. A very ill opinion he had of Samson, measuring that Nazarite by the common temper of the Philistines; could he think worse of him, than to suspect, that because he was justly angry with his wife, he utterly hated her; and because he had seen cause to return to his father's house for a while, therefore he had abandoned her for ever? Yet this is all he had to say, in excuse of this injury. Thus he made the woman his reproach, to raise the worst of robberies. But it will never bear us out in doing ill, to say, "We thought others designed ill." 2. He endeavours to pacify Samson, by offering him his younger daughter, whom, because the handsomer, he thought Samson might accept, in full recompense for the wrong. See what confusions those did admit, and bring their families to, that were not governed by the fear and law of God; marrying a daughter this week to one, and next week to another; giving a
man one daughter first, and then another. Samson scorned his proposal; he knew better things than to take a wife to his sister, Lev. 18. 11. The revenge Samson took upon the Philistines for this abuse. Had he designed herein only to plead his own cause, he would have challenged his rival, and would have chastised him and his father-in-law only. But he looks upon himself as a public person, and the affront as done to the whole nation of Israel; for probably, they put this slight upon him, because he was of that nation. He pleased them with it, that they had put such an abuse upon an Israelite; and therefore he resolves to do the Philistines a displeasure, and does not doubt but this treatment which he had met with among them, would justify him in it; (v. 3.) Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines. He had done what became him, in offering to be reconciled to his wife; but she having rendered it impracticable, now they could not blame him if he showed his just resentments. Note, When differences arise, we ought to do our duty in order to the ending of them, and then whatever the ill consequences of them may be, we shall be blameless. Now the way Samson took to be revenged on them, was, by setting their corn-fields on fire, which would be a great weakening and impoverishing to the country, v. 4, 5. 1. The method he took to do it, was very strange; i. e., he had and fire, corn, Book burnt tails tail, into the fields, the corn, each couple had a stick of fire between their tails, with which being terrified, they ran into the corn for shelter, and so set fire to it; thus the fire would break out in many places at the same time, and therefore could not be conquered, especially if it was done, as it is probable it was, in the night. He might have employed men to do it, but perhaps he could not obtain enough that would be courageous to do it, and himself could do it but in one part of the time, which would not effect his purpose. We never find Samson, in any of his exploits, make use of any person whatsoever, either servant or soldier, therefore, in this project, he chose to make use of foxes as his incendiaries. They had injured Samson by their subtlety and malice, and now Samson returns the injury by subtle foxes and mischievous flames, which does them more mischief and harm than the animals he employed, to design to put contempt upon the enemies he fought against. This stratagem is often alluded to, to show how the church's adversaries, that are of different interests and designs among themselves, that look and draw contrary ways in other things, yet have often united in a fire-brand, some cursed project or other, to waste the church of God, and particularly to kindle the fire of his enemies. 2. The mischief he hereby did to the Philistines, was very great. It was in the time of wheat harvest, (v. 1.) so that the straw being dry, it soon burnt both the shocks of corn that were cut, and the standing corn, and the vineyards and olives. This was a waste of the good creatures, but where other acts of hostility are lawful, destroying the forage is justly reckoned to be so. If he might take away their lives, he might take away their livelihood; and God was righteous in it, the corn, and the wine, and the oil, which they had prepared for Dagon, to be a meat-offering to him, were thus, in the season thereof, made a burnt-offering to God's justice. IV. The Philistines' outrage against Samson's treacherous wife and her father; understanding that they had provoked Samson to do this mischief to the country, they roused up Samson and burnt him with fire, perhaps in their own house. To Samson himself they durst not attack, and therefore with more justice than perhaps they themselves designed in it, they wreak their vengeance upon those who, they could not but own, had given him cause to be angry. Instead of taking vengeance upon Samson, they took vengeance for him, when he, out of respect to the relation he had stood in to them, was not willing to do it for himself. See his hand in it, to whom vengeance belongs! those that deal treacherously, shall be spoiled and dealt treacherously with, and the Lord is known by these judgments which he executes; especially when, as here, he may take away his people's enemies as instruments for revenging his people's injuries upon another. When a barbarous Philistine sets fire to a treacherous one, the righteous may rejoice to see the divine vengeance, Ps. 58. 10, 11. Thus shall the wrath of man praise thee, Ps. 76. 10. The Philistines had threatened Samson's wife, that if she would not get the riddle out of him, they would burn her and her father's house with fire, ch. 14, 15. 3. The Philistines made all their efforts to save Samson and his wife; and had betrayed his wife, and what come of it? They were very angry that she feared, and sought by sin to avoid, came upon her; and she and her father's house were burnt with fire, and her countrymen, whom she sought to oblige by the wrong she did to her husband, brought it upon her. The mischief we seek to escape by any unlawful practices, we often pull them upon our own heads. He that will thus save his life shall lose it. V. The occasion that Samson took from hence to do them yet a greater mischief, which touched their bone and their flesh; (v. 7, 8.) Though ye have done this to them, and thereby showed what ye would do to me if ye could, yet that shall not deter me from being further vexatious to you. Or, Though ye think, by doing this, ye have made me satisfaction for the affront I received among you, yet have I Israel's cause to plead as a public person, and for the wrongs done to them, I will be avenged on you; and if ye will then forbear your insults, I will cease, aiming at no more than the deliverance of Israel. So he smote them hip and thigh, with a great stroke; so the word is. We suppose the wounds he gave them to have been mortal, as wounds in the hip or thigh often prove, and therefore translate it, with a great slaughter. Some think he only lamed them, disabled them for service, as horses were houghed or lam-strung. It seems to be a phrase used to express a desperate attack; he killed them pell-mell, or routed them home and foot. He smote them with his hip upon thigh, that is, with the strength he had, not in his arms and hands, but in his hips and thighs, for he kicked and spurred at them, and so mortified them, trod them in his anger, and scattered them in his fury, Isa. 63. 3. And, when he had done, he retired to a natural fortress in the top of the rock Etam, where he waited to see whether the Philistines would be tamed by the correction he had given them.

9. Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi. 10. And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he has done to us. 11. Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them. 12. And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we
may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves. 13. And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock. 14. And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him; and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his hands loosed from off his hands. 15. And he found a new jaw-bone of an ass, and put forth his hand and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

16. And Samson said, With the jaw-bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.

17. And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jaw-bone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lehi.

Here is,

I. Samson violently pursued by the Philistines. They went up in a body, a more formidable force than they had together when Samson smote them hip and thigh, and they pitched in Judah, and spread themselves up and down the country to find out Samson, who, they heard, was come this way.

v. 9. When the men of Judah, who had tamely submitted to their yoke, pleaded that they had paid their tribute, and that none of their tribe had given them any offence, they freely own they designed nothing in this invasion but to seize Samson; they would fight neither against small nor great, but only that Judge of Israel, (v. 10.) to do to him, as he has done to us. This is, to smite him and the like, as he did our; an eye for an eye. Here was an army, come against one man, for indeed he was himself an army. Thus a whole band of men was sent to seize our Lord Jesus, that blessed Samson, though a tenth part would have served now that his hour was come, and ten times as many would have done nothing, if he had not yielded.

II. Samson basely betrayed and delivered up by the men of Judah, v. 11. Of Judah were they? Degenerate branches of that valiant tribe! Utterly unworthy to carry in their standard the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Perhaps they were disaffected to Samson because he was not of their tribe; out of a foolish fondness for their forfeited preceptitude, they would rather be oppressed by Philistines, than rescued by a Deliverer. Often has the church's deliverance been obstructed by such jealousies, as not only have hindered, but so far stood against the Lord's own purposes.

v. 10. If they had had the least spark of ingenuity and courage remaining in them, having so brave a man as Samson was, to head them, they would now have made one bold struggle for the recovery of their liberty; but no marvel if they that had debased themselves to hell in the worship of their dunghill-gods, (Isa. 57. 9.) thus debased themselves to the dust, in submission to their insulating oppressors. Sin dispirits men, nay, it incapacitates them for all acts that belong to their peace. Probably, Samson went into the border of that country to offer his service, supposing his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them, as M. ses did, Acts 7, 25. But they thrust him from them, and very disingenuously, I. Blamed him for what he had done against the Philistines, as if he had done them a great injury. Their grateful returns have those often received, that have done the greatest service imaginable to their country. Thus our Lord Jesus did many good works, and for those they were ready to stone him. 2. They begged of him that he would suffer them to bind him, and deliver him up to the Philistines. Cowardly, unhumble wretches! Fond of their fetters, and in love with servitude! Thus the Jews delivered up our Saviour, though they knew of a fear lest the Romans should come, and take away their place and nation. With what a solrid servile spirit do they argue? Knowest thou not that the Philistines rule over us? And whose fault was that? They knew they had no right to rule over them, nor had they been sold into their hands, if they had not first sold themselves to work wickedness.

III. Samson tamely yielding to be bound by his countrymen, and delivered into the hands of his enraged enemies, v. 12, 13. How easily could he have beaten them off, and kept the top of his rock against these three thousand men, and none of them all could, or durst, have lain hands on him; but he patiently submitted. 1. That he might give an example of great meekness, mixed with great strength and courage; as one that had rule over his own spirit, he knew how to yield, as well as how to conquer. 2. That by being delivered up to the Philistines, he might have an opportunity of making a slaughter of them. 3. That he might be a type of Christ, who when he had showed what he could do in striking those down that came to seize him, yielded to be bound and led as a Lamb to the slaughter.

Samson justified himself in what he had done against the Philistines; "As they did to me, so I did to them." It seems, he knew he that had ought not to retaliate it upon me, for they began." He covenants with the men of Judah, that if he put himself into their hands, they should not fall upon him themselves, because then he should be tempted to fall upon them, which he was very loath to do. This they promised him, (v. 13.) and then he surrendered. The men of Judah, being his betrayers, were, in effect, his murderers; they would not do him these kindness, but they did that which was worse, they delivered him into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines, who, they knew, would do worse than kill him, would abuse and torment him to death. Perhaps they thought, as some think Judas did, when he betrayed Christ, that he would by his strength, deliver himself out of their hands; but if he had, that was no thanks to them, and if they thought otherwise, they might think it again, that he could and would have delivered them too, if they would have adhered to him, and made him their head. Justly is their misery prolonged, who to oblige their worst enemies, thus abuse their best friend. Never were men so infatuated, except those who thus treated our blessed Saviour.

IV. Samson, with singing his part good against the Philistines, even then when he was delivered into their hands, fast pinioned with two new cords. The Philistines, when they had him among them, shouted against him, v. 14. So, triumphing in their success, and insulting over him; if God had not tied their hands faster than the men of Judah had tied
this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised? 19. But God clave a hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day. 20. And he judged Israel, in the days of the Philistines, twenty years.

Here is,

1. The distress Samson was in, after this great performance, v. 18. He was sore athirst. It was a natural effect of the great heat he had been in, and the great pains he had taken; his zeal consumed him, ate him up, and made him forget himself, till, when he had time to pause a little, he found himself reduced to the last extremity for want of water, and ready to faint. Perhaps there was a special hint of God at this time of his power and goodness, and God would hereby keep him from being proud of his great strength and great achievements, and let him know that he was but a man, and liable to the calamities that are common to men. And Josephus says, It was designed to chastise him for not making mention of God and his hand, in his memorial of the victory he had obtained, but taking all the praise to himself; I have slain a thousand men, even now that he is ready to die for thirst, he is under a sensible conviction that his own arm could not have saved him, without God's right hand and arm. Samson had drank largely of the blood of the Philistines, but blood will never quench any man's thirst. Providence so ordered it, that there was no water near him, and he was so fatigued that he could not go far to seek it: the men of Judah, one would think, should have met him, now that he was come off a conqueror, with bread and wine, as Melchizedek did Abram, to atone for the injury he had done him; but so little notice did they take of their deliverer, that he was ready to perish for want of a draught of water. Thus are the greatest slights often put upon those that do the greatest services. Christ, on the cross, said, I thirst.

2. His prayer to God in this distress. Those that forget to seek them who do good services, may perhaps be compelled to attend him with their prayers. Afflictions are often sent to bring unthankful people to God. Two things he pleads with God in this prayer; 1. His having experienced the power and goodness of God in his late success; Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant. He owns himself God's servant in what he had been doing, "Lord, wilt thou not own me, and be poor servant of thine, and have me in thy service? I am thine, save me." He calls this victory a deliverance, a great deliverance; for if God had not helped him, he had not only not conquered the Philistines, but had been swallowed up by them. He owns it to come from God, and now corrects his former error, in assuming it too much to himself; and this he pleads in his present strait. Note, If a prayer of praise is not so easy as a prayer of petition, yet experience makes this a very excellent pleas in prayer for further mercy. "Lord, thou hast delivered often, wilt thou not deliver still?" Ps. 56. 13. 2. His being now exposed to his enemies: "Irst I fall into the hands of the uncircumcised, and then they will triumph, will tell it in Gath, and in the streets of Ashkelon; and will, it not redound to God's dishonour, if his champion be-

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come so easy a prey to the uncircumcised?" The best pleas are those taken from God's glory.

III. The seasonsable relief God sent him. God heard his prayer, and sent him water, either out of the well, or out of the earth through the bone, v. 19. That bone which he made an instrument of God's service, God, to recompense him, made an instrument of his supply. But I rather incline to our marginal reading, God clave a hollow place that was in Lelihi: the place of this action was, from the jaw-bone, called Lelihi: even before the action we find it so called, v. 9, 14. And there, in the field or hill, or plain, or whatever it was, that was so called, God caused a fountain suddenly and seasonably to open just by him, and water to spring up out of it in abundance, which continued a well ever after. Of this fair water he drank, and his spirits revived. We should be more thankful for the mercy of water, did we consider how ill we can spare it. And this instance of Samson's relief should encourage us to trust in God, and seek to him, for, when he pleasures, he can often rivers in high places. See Isa. 41. 17, 18.

IV. The memorial of this, in the name which Samson gave this upstart fountain, En-hakkore, the well of him that cried, thereby keeping in remembrance, both his own distress, which occasioned him to cry, and God's favour to him, in answer to his cry. Many a spring of comfort God gives to his people, which not only rendered by his name, it is the well of him that cried. Samson had given a name to that place, which denoted him great and triumphant, Ramath-lehi, the lifting up of the jaw-bone; but here he gives it another name, which denotes him wanting and dependant.

Lastly, The continuance of Samson's government after these achievements, v. 20. At length, Israel submitted to him, and committed themselves to his care. Now we have no dispute that God was with him, so that henceforward they all owned him, and were directed by him as their judge; the stone which the builders refused, became the head-stone. It intimates the low condition of Israel, that the government was dated by the days of the Philistines; yet it was a mercy to Israel, that though they were oppressed by a foreign enemy, yet they had a Judge that was not corrupted, and kept them from ruining one another. Twenty years his government continued according to the usage of the Judges' administration; but of the particulars we have no account, save of the beginning of his government in this chapter, and the end of it in the next.

CHAP. XVI.

Samson's name (we have observed before) signifies a little sun: (sol pares.) we have seen this sun rising very bright, and his morning-ray standing near; and on the contrary, we take it for granted, that the middle of the day was proportionably illustrious, while he judged Israel twenty years; but the melancholy story of this chapter gives us such an account of his evening, as doth not commence till the day is spent. This little sun set under a cloud, and yet, just in the setting, darted forth one such strong and glorious beam, as made him then a type of Christ, conquering by death. Here is,

1. Samson's journey to Gaza, and his adventure there. He had a harlot, and hardly escaping, v. 1-3. II. Samson quite ruined by his familiarity with another harlot, Delilah. Observe, 1. How he was betrayed by her to his swoon; and also, (1.) By her means got it out of him at last where his great strength lay, v. 5-17. (2.) Then robbed him of his strength, by taking from his head the crown of his separation, v. 18-20. (3.) Then seized him, blinded him, imprisoned him, and at solemn festival made a show of him, v. 21-25. 2. How he avenged himself of them, by pulling down the theatre upon their heads, and so dying with them, v. 26-31.

1. THEN went Samson to Gaza, and saw there a harlot, and went into unto her. 2. And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they com passed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him. 3. And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of a hill that is before Hebron.

Here is,

1. Samson's sin, v. 1. His taking a Philistine to wife, in the beginning of his time, was, in some degree, excusable; but to join himself to a harlot that he accidentally saw among them, was such a profanation of his honour as an Israelite, as a Nazarite, that we cannot but blush to read it. 'Tell it not in Gath. 2. His vile conduct makes the gracious visagio of Nazarite blander than a coal, Lam. 4. 7, 8. We find not that Samson had any business at Gaza; if he went thither in quest of a harlot, it would make one willing to hope, that, as bad as things were otherwise, there were no prostitutes among the daughters of Israel. Some think he went thither to observe what posture the Philistines were in, that he might get some advantages against them; if so, he forgot his business, neglected that, and so fell into this snare. His sin began in his eye, with which he should have made a covenant; he saw there one in the attire of a harlot, and the lust which conceived, brought forth sin, he went in unto her.

2. Samson's danger. Notice was sent to the magistrates of Gaza, perhaps by the treacherous harlot herself, that Samson was in the town, v. 2. Probably, he came in a disguise, or in the dusk of the evening, went into an inn, or public-house, which happened to be kept by this harlot. The gates of the city were hereupon shut, guards set, all kept quiet, that Samson might suspect no danger; now they thought they had him in a prison, and doubted not but to be the death of him the next morning. O that all those who indulge their sensual appetites in drunkenness, uncleanness, or fleshly lusts, would see one of the sin he was now in guilty of, and of himself because of it, and with a pious resolution not to return to it; rose under an apprehension of the danger he was in, that he was as one that slept upon the top of a mast, rise with such thoughts as these; "Is this a bed fit for a Nazarite to sleep in? Shall a temple of the living God be thus polluted? Can I be safe under this guilt?" It was bad that he lay down to sleep; but it could have been worse if he had lain still under them. He makes immediately toward the gate of the city, probably finds the guards asleep, else he had made them sleep their last, stays not to break open the gates, but plucks up the posts, takes them, gates and bar and all, all very large and strong, and a vast weight, yet he carries them on his back several miles up to the top of a
As the story unfolds, we see the Philistines' attempt to secure the victory against Samson, whose strength was paramount. 

4. And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. 5. And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and we will give thee, every one of us, eleven hundred pieces of silver. 6. And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee. 7. And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withes that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man. 8. Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withes which had not been dried, and she bound him with them. 9. Now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withes as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire: so his strength was not known. 10. And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherein with thou mightest be bound. 11. And he said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withes that were never occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man. 12. Delilah therefore took seven green withes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And there were lers in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like as a thread. 13. And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou waverest the seven locks of my head with the web. 14. And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web. 15. And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth. 16. And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death, 17. That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and he like any other man.

The burnt child dreads the fire; yet Samson, that has more than the strength of a man, in this comes short of the wisdom of a child; for though he had been more than once brought into the highest degree of mischief and danger by the love of women, and lasting after them, yet he would not take warning, but is here again taken in the same snare, and with such third time pays for all. Solomon seems to refer especially to this story of Samson, so that his caution against uncleanness, he gives this account of a whorish woman, Prov. 7. 26, That she hath cast down many wounded, yet many strong men have been slain by her. And ch. 6. 26, That the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. This bad woman that brought Samson to ruin, is here named Delilah, an infamous name, and fitly used to express the person, or thing, that by flattery or falsehood, brings mischief and destruction on those to whom kindness is pretended. See here,

I. The affection Samson had for Delilah; he loved her, v. 4. Some think she was his wife, but then he would have had her home to his own house; others, that he courted her to make her his wife; but there is too much reason to suspect that it was a sinful affection he had for her, and that he lived in uncleanness with her: whether she was an Israelite or a Philistine, is not certain. If an Israelite, which is scarcely probable, yet she had the heart of a Philistine.

II. The interest which the lords of the Philistines made with her to betray Samson, v. 5. That which they told her they designed, was, to humble him, or afflict him; they would promise not to do him any hurt, only they would disable him to do them any. And so much conscience it should seem they made of this promise, that even then, when he lay ever so much at their mercy, they would not kill him, no, not when the razor that cut his hair, might sooner, and more easily have cut his throat. 2. That which they desired, in order hereunto, was, to know where his great strength lay, and by what means he might be bound. Perhaps they imagined he had some spell or charm which he carried about with him, by the force of which he did all these great things, and doubted not, but if they could get that from him, he would be manageable; and therefore, having had reason enough formerly to know which was his blind side, hoped to find out his riddle a second time; by ploughing with his heifer, they engaged Delilah to get it out of him, telling her what a kindness it would be to them, and, perhaps, assuring her it should not be referred to any real mischief, either to him or her. 3. For this they bid high, promised to give her each of them eleven hundred pieces of silver, fifty-five hundred in all. So many shekels reckoned to above one thousand pounds sterling; with this she was hired to betray one she pretended to love; see how horrid wickedness the love of money is the root of.
Our blessed Saviour was thus overtaken by one whom he called friend, and with a kiss too, for filthy lucre. No marvel if those who are unchaste, as Delilah, be unjust; such as lose their honesty in one instance.

III. The arts by which he put her off from time to time, and kept his own counsel a great while. She asked him _where his great strength lay_, and whether it was possible for him to be bound and afflicted, (v. 6.) pretending that she desired only that he would satisfy her curiosity in that one thing, and that she thought it was impossible he should be bound, otherwise than by her charms. When she urged him very much, he told her, I. That he might be bound with _seven green withes_, v. 7. The experiment was tried, (v. 8.) but it would not do; he _broke the withes_ as easily as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire, v. 9. 2. When she still continued her importunity, (v. 10.) he told her that with two new ropes he might be so cramped and hampered, that he might be as easily dealt with as any other man, v. 11. This experiment was tried too, but it failed; the _new ropes_ broke from off his arm _like a thread_, v. 12. 3. When she still pressed him to communicate the secret, and upbraided him with it as an unkindness, that he had bantered her so long, he then told her that the weaving of the seven locks of his head would make a great alteration in him, v. 13. This came nearer the matter than anything he had yet said, but it would not do; his strength appeared to be very weak after this trial. When, from the trial of this, purely by the strength of his hair, he carried away _the wind of the beam_, and the web.

Now, in the making of all these experiments, it is hard to say, whether there appears more of Samson's weakness, or Delilah's wickedness. (1.) Could any thing be more wicked than her restless and unreasonable importunity with him, to discover a secret, which she knew would endanger his life, if ever it were lodged any where but in his own breast? What could be more base and disingenuous, more false and treacherous, than to lay his head in her lap, as one whom she loved, and at the same time to design the betraying of him to those by whom he was mortally hated? (2.) Could any thing be more weak than for him to continue a parley with one who, he so plainly saw, was aiming to do him a mischief, that he should sit down and converse with the person, and let him create an early question, that she might know _how to do him a mischief_; when he perceived liers in wait for him in the chamber, and that they were ready to apprehend him if they had been able, he did not immediately quit the chamber, with a resolution never to come into it any more; nay, that he should again lay his head in that lap, out of which he had been so often roused with that alarm, _The Philistines are upon thee,_.

IV. The discovery he at last made of this great secret; and if the discovery prove fatal to him, he must thank himself, who had not power to keep his own counsel from one that manifestly sought his ruin. _Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird, but in Samson's sight is the net spread, and yet he is taken in it._ If he had not been blind, as the Philistines put out his eyes, he might have seen himself before he fell. This signifies a _consumer_, she was so to him. Observe, 1. How she teased him, telling him she will not believe he loved her, unless he will gratify her in this matter; (v. 15.) _How canst thou say I love thee, when thine heart is not with me?_ That is, "when thou canst not trust me with the counsels of thy heart?" Passionate lovers cannot bear to have their love called in question, they would do any thing rather than their sincerity should be suspected; here therefore Delilah had this fond fool (excuse me that I call him so) at an advantage. This expostulation is indeed grounded upon a great truth, That those only have our love, not that have our good words, or our good wishes, but that have our hearts. That is love without dissimulation; but it is falsehood and flattery in the highest degree, to say, We love those with whom our hearts are not. How can we say, We love either our brother whom we have seen, or God, whom we have not seen, if our hearts be not with them? She continued many days vexatious to him with her importunity, so that he had no pleasure of his life with her; (v. 16.) why then did he not leave her? It was because he was captivated to her by the power of love, falsely so called, but truly last. This bewitched him with the force of it, see, 2. How she conquered him; (v. 17.) _he told her all his heart._ God left him to himself to do this foolish thing, to punish him for indulging himself in the lusts of uncleanness. The angel that foretold his birth said nothing of his great strength, but only that he should be a Nazarite, and particularly that no razor should come upon his head, ch. 13. 5. He discovered to God his great strength, for he was to be strengthened according to the glorious power of that Spirit which wrought in him mightily, that his strength, by promise, not by nature, might be a type and figure of the spiritual strength of believers, Col. 1. 11, 29. Therefore the badge of his consecration was the pledge of his strength; if he lose the former, he knows he forfeits the latter. If I be shaven, I am no longer a Nazarite; and then my strength, that is, the kingdom of his bodily strength to depend so much on his hair, which could have no natural influence up on it, either one way or other, teaches us to magnify divine institutions, and to expect God's grace, and the continuance of it, only in the use of those means of grace, wherein he has appointed us to attend upon him, the word, sacraments, and prayer. In these earthen vessels is his treasure.

18. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once: for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. 19. And she made him sleep upon her knees: and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. 20. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out, as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.
But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him in fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison-house.

We have here the fatal consequences of Samson's folly in betraying his own strength; he soon paid dearly for it. A whore is a deep ditch; he that is abroad of the Lord shall fall therein. In that pit Samson sinks.

1. What care Delilah took to make sure of the money for herself. She now perceived, by the manner of his speaking, that he had told her all his heart, and the lords of the Philistines that hired her to do this base thing, are sent for; but they must be sure to bring the money in their hands, v. 18. The wages of the light-headed were accordingly produced, unknown to Samson; it would grieve one's heart, to see one of the bravest men then in the world, sold and bought, as a sheep for the slaughter; how does this instance sully all the glory of man, and forbid the strong man ever to boast of his strength!

2. What course she took to deliver him up to them according to the bargain. Many in the world would, for the hundredth part of what was given Delilah, sell those that they pretend the greatest respect for. Trust not in a friend then, but no confidence in a guide. See what a treacherous method she took, (v. 19.) she made him sleep upon her knees. Josephus says, She gave him some intoxicating liquor, which laid him to sleep; what opiates she might steal into his cup, we know not, but we cannot suppose that he knowingly drank wine or strong drink, for that would have been a forfeiture of his Nazariteship, as much as the cutting off his hair. She pretended the greatest kindness then when she designed the greatest mischief, which yet she could not have compassed, if she had not made him sleep. See the fatal consequences of security. Satan ruins men by rocking them asleep, flattering them into a good opinion of their own safety, and so bringing them to mind nothing, and fearing nothing, and then he robs them of their strength and honour, and leads them captive at his will. When we sleep our spiritual enemies do not. When he was asleep, she had a person ready to cut off his hair, which he did so silently and so quickly, that it did not awake him, but plainly affected him; even in his sleep, his spirit manifestly sunk upon it. I think we may suppose, that if this ill turn had been done him in his sleep by some person without his being himself accessory to it, as he was here, it would not have had this strange effect upon him; but it was his own wickedness that corrected him. It was his iniquity, else it had not been so much his infidelity.

3. What little concern he himself was in at it, v. 20. He could not but miss his hair as soon as he awoke, and yet said, "I will shake myself, as at other times, when the Philistines are upon me, to make my part good against them." Perhaps he thought to shake himself the more easily, and that his head would feel the lighter, now that his hair was cut; little thinking how much heavier the burden of guilt was, than that of hair. He soon found in himself some change, we have reason to think so, and yet not to be startled from it. He did not consider that that was the reason of the change.

Note, Many have lost the favourable presence of God, and are not aware of it; they have provoked God to withdraw from them, but are not sensible of their loss, nor ever complain of it. Their souls languish and are grown weak, their gifts wither, every thing goes cross with them; and yet they impugn not this to the right cause, they are not aware that God is departed from them, nor are they in any case to reconcile themselves to him, or to recover his favour. When God is departed, we cannot do as at other times.

4. What improvement the Philistines soon made of their advantages against him, v. 21. The Philistines took the heart of Samson from him; those that have thrown themselves out of God's protection, become an easy prey to their enemies. If we sleep in the lap of our lust, we shall certainly wake in the hands of the Philistines. It is probable they had promised Delilah not to kill him, but they took an effectual course to disable him; the first thing they did when they had him in their hands, and found they could manage him, was, to cut out his eyes by applying fire to them, in the Arabic version. They considered that his eyes would never come again, as perhaps his hair might, and that the strongest arms could do little without eyes to guide him, and therefore if now they blind him, they for ever blind him. His eyes were the inlets of his sin, he saw the harlot at Gaza, and went in unto her, (v. 1.) and now his punishment began there. Now that the Philistines had blinded him, he had time to save something of his own lust which had blinded him. The best preservative of the eyes, is, to turn them away from beholding vanity. They brought him down to Gaza, that there he might appear in weakness, where he had lately given such proofs of his strength, (v. 3.) and be a jest to those to whom he had been a terror. They bound him with fetters of brass, who had before been held in the cords of his own iniquity, and he did grind in the prison-house in their Briddwell, either for their profit, or his punishment, or both. The Devil does thus by sinners, blinds the minds of them which believe not, and so enslaves them and secures them in his interests. Poor Samson, how art thou fallen! How is thine honour hid in the dust! How are the glory and defence of Israel become the drudge and triumph of the Philistines! The crown is fallen from his head, and unto him, for he hath sinned. Let all take warning by his fall, carefully to preserve their purity, and to watch against all fleshly lusts; for all our glory is gone, and our defence departed from us, when the covenant of our separation to God, as spiritual Nazarites, is profaned.

22. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven. 23. Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. 24. And when the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us. 25. And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison-house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars. 26. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them. 27. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there: and
there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport. 23. And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O Lord, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. 29. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. 30. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein: so the dead which he slew at his death, were more than they which he slew in his life. 31. Then his brethren, and all the house of his father, came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol, in the burying place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

Though the last stage of Samson's life was inglorious, and one could wish there were a veil drawn over it, yet this account here given of his death may be allowed to lessen, though it do not quite roll away, the reproof of it, for there was honour in his death. No doubt, he greatly repented of his sin, the dishonour he had by it done to God, and his forfeiture of the honour God had put upon him, for that immediately recoiled to him, appears, 1. By the return of the sign of his Nazariteness; (v. 22.) His hair began to grow again when he was shaven, that is, to be as thick and as long as when it was cut off. It is probable their general thanksgiving to Dagon was not long deferred, before which Samson's hair was thus grown; by which, and the particular notice taken of it, it seems to have been extra-ordinary, and designed for a special indication of the return of God's favour to him upon his repentance. For the growth of his hair was neither cause nor sign of the return of his strength, further than as it was the badge of his consecration, and a token that God accepted him as a Nazarite again, after the interruption, without those ceremonies which were appointed for the restoration of a lapsed Nazarite, which he had not now the opportunity of performing, Numb. 6. 9. It is strange that the Philistines, in whose hands he was, were not jealous of the growth of his hair again, and did not cut it; but perhaps they were willing his great strength should return to him, that they might have so much the more work cut of him, and now he was blind they were in no fear of any hurt from him. 2. By the use God made of him for the destruction of the enemies of his people, and that at a time when it would be most for the honour of God, and the vindication of that, and it served to give the defence and deliverance of Israel. Observe, 1. How insidiously the Philistines affronted the God of Israel. (1.) By the sacrifices they offered to Dagon, his rival. This Dagon they call their god, a god of their own making, represented by an image, the upper part of which was in the shape of a man, the lower part of a fish, purely the creature of fancy; yet it served them to set up in opposition to the true and living God. To this pretend-
2. When they were destroyed; (1.) When they were merry, sure, and jovial, and far from apprehending themselves in any danger. When they saw Samson lay hold on the pillars, we may suppose it served them for a jest, and they made sport with that too; What will this foolish Jew do? How will he entrust the sinners brought to desolation in a moment! They are lifted up in the pride and mirth, that their fall may be the more dreadful. Let us never enjoy the mirth of wicked people, but infer, from this instance, that their triumphing is short, and their joy but for a moment. (2.) It was when they were praising Dagon their god, and giving that honour to him which his own hand had designed for his own treason against the King of kings, his crown and dignity; justly therefore is the blood of these traitors mingled with their sacrifices. Belshazzar was cut off when he was praising his made gods, Dan. 5. 4. (3.) It was when they were making sport with an Israelite, a Nazarite, and insulting over him, persecuting him whom God had smitten. Nothing fills the measure of the iniquity of any person or people faster than mocking and missusing the servants of God, yea, though it is by their own folly that they are brought low. Those know not what they do, nor whom they affront, that make sport with a good man.

3. How they were destroyed; Samson pulled the house down upon them; God, no doubt, putting it into his heart, as a public person, thus to avenge God's people. It was the punishment of his perversity. (1.) He gained strength to do it by prayer, v. 28. That strength which he had lost by sin, he recovers, like a true penitent, by prayer; as David, who, when he had provoked the Spirit of grace to withdraw, prayed, (Ps. 51. 12.) Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit. We may suppose that this was only a mental prayer, and that his voice was not heard; (for it was made in a noisy clamorous crowd of Philistines;) but though his voice was not heard of men, yet his prayer was heard of God, and graciously answered; and though he lived not to give an account himself of this his prayer, as Nehemiah did of his, yet God not only accepted it in heaven, but, by revealing it to the inspired penman, provided for the registering of it in his church. He prays to God to remember him, and strengthen him this once, thereby owning that his strength for what he had already done, he had from God, and begged it might be afforded to him once more to give them a parting blow. That it was not from a principle of passion or personal revenge, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God and Israel, that he desired to do this, appears from God's accepting and answering the prayer. Samson died praying, so did our blessed Savior; but Samson prayed for vengeance, Christ for forgiveness. (2.) He gained opportunity to do it, by leaning on the two pillars which were the chief supports of the building, and were, it seems, so near together, that he could take hold of them both at one time, v. 26, 29. Having hold of them, he bore them down with all his might, crying aloud, Let me die with the Philistines, v. 30. and there, proved faith in Act 2: during the wound, he died. The vast concourse of people that was upon the roof, looking down through it to see the sport, we may suppose contributed to the fall of it. A weight so much greater than ever it was designed to carry, might perhaps have sunk of itself, at least it made the fall more fatal to those within; and indeed few of either could escape the stroke, for the whole temple was thrown down. This was done, not by any natural strength of Samson, but by the almighty power of God, and is not only marvellous, but miraculous, in our eyes.

Now in this, [1.] The Philistines were greatly mortified. All their lords and great men were killed, and abundance of their people, and this, in the midst of their triumph; the temple of Dagon (as many think the house was) was pulled down, and Dagon buried in it. This would give a great check to the insolence of the survivors; and if Israel had had but so much sense and spirit left them, to improve the advantages of this juncture, they might now have thrown off the Philistines' yoke. (2.) Samson may very well be justified, and brought in not guilty of any sinful murder, either of himself or of the Philistines. He was a public person, a declared enemy to the Philistines, against whom he might therefore take all advantage; they were now in the same situation as his enemies, and making war upon him, all present were aiding and abetting. It mightily die with him. Nor was he a fele de se, or a self murderer, in it, for it was not his own life that he aimed, though he had too much reason to be weary of it, but the lives of Israel's enemies, for the reaching of which he bravely resigned his own, not counting it dear to him, so he might finish his course with honour. [3.] God was very much glorified, in pardoning Samson's great transgressions, of which this was an evidence. It has been said that the prince's giving of a commission to one convicted, amounts to a pardon. Yet though he was a God that forgave him, he took vengeance of his inventions; (Ps. 99. 8.) and by his suffering his champion to die in fetters, warned all to take heed of those lusts which war against the soul. However, we have good hope of the future, that though Samson died with the Philistines, he had not his share inportion with them. The Lord knows them that are his. [4.] Christ was plainly typified. He pulled down the Devil's kingdom, as Samson did Dagon's temple; and when he died, obtained the most glorious victory over the powers of darkness. Then when his arms were stretched out upon the cross, as Samson's to the two pillars, he gave a fatal stroke to the gates of hell, and, like Samson, he had prayed him, that had the power of death, that is the Devil; (Heb. 2. 14, 15.) and herein exceeded Samson, that he not only died with the Philistines, but rose again to triumph over them.

Lastly, the story of Samson concludes, 1. With an account of his burial; his own relations, animated by the glories that attended his death, came and found out where his body was, and brought it home, and placed it in the place of his father's sepulchres; the Philistines being in such a constellation, that they durst not oppose it. 2. With the repetition of the account we had before of the continuance of his government, he judged Israel twenty years; and if they had not been as mean and sneaking as he was brave and daring, he had left them sound, but long before, even soon after the death of Joshua, in the days of Phinehas the son of Eleazar, ch. 20. 98. But it is east here into the latter part of the book, that it might not interrupt the history of the Judges. That it might appear how happy the nation was in the Judges, how happy they were when there was none. 1. Then idolatry began in the family of Micaeh, ch. 17. 11. It spread itself into the tribe of Dan, ch. 18. 11. Then villany was committed by the Nazarite of the tribe of Manasseh, and the Philistines were happy. 10. Then that whole tribe was destroyed for countenancing it, ch. 20. 9. Then strange expedients were adopted to keep up that tribe, ch. 21. Therefore blessed be God for the government we are under. In this chapter we are told how Micaeh an Ephramite furnished himself, I
With an image for his god, ver. 1. 6. 2. With a Levite, such a one as he was, for his priest, v. 7. 13.

1. AND there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah.

2. And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son.

3. And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the Lord, from my hand, for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image; now, therefore, I will restore it unto thee. 4. Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah.

5. And the man Micah had a house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. 6. In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Here we have,

I. Micah and his mother quarrelling. 1. The son robs the mother. The old woman had hoarded, with long scraping and saving, a great sum of money—eleven hundred pieces of silver. It is likely she intended, when she died, to leave it to her son; in the mean time, it did her good to look upon it, and to count it over. The young man has a family of children grown up, for he had one of age to be a priest; (v. 5.) he knows where to find his mother's cash, thinks he has more need of it than she has, cannot stay till she dies, and so takes it away privately for his own use. Though it is a fault in the renters to withhold from the children that is meet, and leads them into temptation to wish them in their graves, yet even that will by no means excuse the wickedness of those children that steal from their parents, and think all their own which they can get from them, though by the most indirect methods. 2. The mother curses the son, or whosoever had taken her money. It should seem she suspected her son; for when she cursed, she spoke in his ears so loud, and with so much passion and vehemence, as made both his ears to tingle. See what mischief the love of money makes, how it destroys the duty and comfort of every relation. It was the love of money that made Micah so unkind to his mother as to rob her; and made her so unkind and void of natural affection to her son as to curse him if he had it and concealed it. Outward losses to good people to their prayers, but bad people to their curses. This woman's silver was her god, before it was made either into a graven or a molten image, else the loss of it would not have put her into such a passion as quite to forget and break through all the laws of decency and piety. It is a very foolish thing for those that are provoked, to throw their curses about, as a madman that casteth firebrands and death; since they know not but they may light upon those that are most dear to them.

II. Micah and his mother reconciled. 1. The son was so terrified with the mother's curses, that he restored the money. Though he had so little grace as to take it, he had so much left as not to dare to keep it, when his mother had sent a curse after it. He could not believe his mother's money would do him any good, without her mother's blessing; no darest he deny the theft when he is charged with it, nor retain the money when it is demanded by the right owner. It is best not to do evil, but if it is next best, when it is done, to undo it again, by repentance, confession, and restitution. Let children be afraid of having the prayers of their parents against them; for though the curse causeth not to come, yet that which is justly deserved, may be justly feared, even though it were passionately and indecently uttered. 2. The mother was so pleased with her son's repentance, that she recalled her curses, and turned them into prayers for her son's welfare; Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son. When those that have been guilty of a fault, appear to be free and ingenuous in owning it, they ought to be commended for their repentance, rather than still be condemned and upbraided for their faults.

III. Micah and his mother agreeing to turn their money into a god, and set up idolatry in their family; and this seems to have been the first instance of the revolt of any Israelite from God and his instituted worship, after the death of Joshua, and the elders that outlived him, and is therefore particularly related. And though this was only the worship of a true God by image, against the second commandment, yet this opened the door to the worship of the other gods, Baalim and the groves, against the first and great commandment. Observe,

1. The mother's contrivance of this matter. When the silver was restored, she pretends she had dedicated it to the Lord; (v. 3.) either before it was stolen, and then she would have thought to be the reason why she was so much grieved at the loss of it, and imprecated evil on him that had taken it, because it was a dedicated, and therefore an accursed, thing; or, after it was stolen, she had made a vow that if she could retrieve it, she would dedicate it to God, and then she would have the providence that had so far favoured her as to bring it back to her hands, to be an example of God's favour. Come to God in the right way; "there is no God like the Lord, thou hast a mind to it: let it be neither mine nor thine, but let us both agree to make it into an image for a religious use." Had she put it to a use that had been indeed for the service and honour of God, it had been a good way of accommodating the matter between them; but as it was, the project was wicked. Probably, this old woman was one of those that came out of Egypt, and would have such images made as she had seen there; now that she began to dote, she called to remembrance the follies of her youth, and perhaps told her son that this way of worshipping God by images, was, to her knowledge, the old religion.

2. The son's compliance with her. It should seem, when she first proposed the thing, he stumbled at it, knowing what the second commandment was; for then (v. 3.) she designed it for her son to make an image of, yet he restored it to his mother, (being loath to have a hand in making the image,) and she gave it to the founder and had the thing done, blaming him perhaps for scrupling it, v. 4. But when the images were made, Micah, by his mother's persuasion, was not only well reconciled to them, but exceedingly pleased and in love with them; so strangely bewitching was idolatry, and so much supported by traditions received from their parents, 1 Pet. 1. 18. Jer. 44. 17. But observe how the old woman's covetousness prevailed, in part, above her superstition; she had wholly de-
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2.

7. And there was a young man out of Beth-lehem-judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there.

3. And the man departed out of the city from Beth-lehem-judah, to sojourn where he could find a place; and he came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.

9. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Beth-lehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place.

10. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals.

So the Levite went in. 11. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was taken to him as one of his sons. 12. And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.

13. Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.

We have here an account of Micah's furnishing himself with a Levite for his chaplain, either thinking his son, because the heir of his estate, too good to officiate, or rather, because not of God's tribe, not good enough.

Observe

1. What brought this Levite to Micah. By his mother's side he was of the family of Judah, and lived at Beth-lehem among his mother's relations, (for that was not a Levites' city,) or, upon some other account, as a stranger or inmate, sojourned there, v. 7. Therefore he went to sojourn where he could find a place, and in his travels came to the house of Micah in mount Ephraim, v. 8. Now, 1. Some think it was his unhappiness that he was under a necessity of removing, either because he was persecuted and abused, or rather neglected and starved, at Bethlehem. God had made plentiful provision for the Levites, but the people withheld their dues, and did not help them into the possession of the cities assigned them; they were reduced to straits, and no care was taken for their relief. Israel's forsaking of God, began with forsaking the Levites, which therefore they are warned against, Deut. 12. 19. It is a sign religion is going to decay, when good ministers are neglected, and at a loss for a livelihood. But, 2. It seems rather to have been his fault and folly, that he loved to wander, the more so as he had forfeited the respect of his friends, and, having a roving head, would go seek his fortune, as we say. We cannot conceive that things were yet come to that bad pass among them, that a Levite should be poor, unless it was his own fault. As these are fit to be pitied, that would fix but may not, so these are fit to be punished, that might fix but will not.

Unsettledness being, one would think, a constant unbusiness, it is strange that any Israelite, especially any Levite, should affect it.
II. What bargain Micah made with him. Had he not been well enough content with his son for his priest, he would have gone or sent abroad to inquire for a Levite; but now he only takes hold of one that dropped into his hands, which showed that he had no great zeal in the matter. It is probable that this rambling Levite heard, in the country, of Micah’s house of gods, his graven and molten image, which, if he had had any thing of the spirit of a Levite in him, would have brought him thither, to reprove Micah for his idolatry, to tell him how directly contrary it was to the law of God, and how it would bring the judgments of God upon him; but instead of this, he began to intrigue such of that sacred tribe, thither he goes, to offer his service, with

Have you any work for a Levite? For I am out of business, and go to sojourn where I may find a place; all he aimed at was to get bread, not to do good, v. 9. Micah courts him into his family, (v. 10.) and promises him, 1. Good preferment; Be unto me a father and a priest. Though a young man and taken up at the door, yet if he take him for a priest, he will respect him as a father, so far is he from setting him among his servants. He asks not for his credentials, takes no time to inquire how he behaved in the place of his last settlement, considers not whether, though he was a Levite, yet he might not be of such a bad character, as to be a plague and scandal to his family, but thinks, though he were ever so great a rake, he might serve for a priest to a graven image. Like Micah’s priest of the lowest of the people, 1 Kings 12. 31. No marvel if they who can make any thing serve for a god, make any thing serve for a priest. - 2. A tolerable maintenance. He will allow him meat, and drink, and clothes, a double suit, so the word is in the margin, a better and a worse, one for every day’s wear, and one for holy days, and ten shekels, about twenty-five shillings a year, for speckled money; a poor salary, in comparison of what God provided for the Levites that behaved well; but those that forsake God’s service, will never mend themselves, nor find a better master. The ministry is the best calling, but the worst trade, in the world.

III. The Levite’s settlement with him, v. 11. He was content to dwell with the man; though his work was superstitious, and his wages scandalous, he objected not to it. Thus we see himself, that he had lighted on so good a house. Micah, thinking himself holier than any of his neighbours, presumed to consecrate this Levite; (v. 12.) as if his building, furnishing, and endowing, this chapel, authorized him, not only to appoint the person that should officiate there, but to confer those orders upon him which he had no right to give, nor the other to receive. And now he shows him respect as a father, and tenderness as a son, and, with that, is willing to make up the deficiency of the coin he gave him.

IV. Micah’s satisfaction in this; (v. 13.) Now I know that the Lord will do me good; that is, he hoped that his new establishment would gain reputation among his neighbours, and that would turn to his advantage, for he would share in the profits of his house, and God would countenance, and bless him in all he put his hand unto, because I have a Levite to be my priest. 1. He thought it was a sign of God’s favour to him and his images, that he had so opportunely sent a Levite to his door. Thus they who please themselves with their own delusions, if Providence unexpectedly bring any thing to their hands, that furthers them in their evil way, are too apt from thence to infer that God takes pleasure with them. 2. He thought now that the error of his priesthood was amended, all was well, though he still retained his graven and molten image. Note, Many deceive themselves into a good opinion of their state, by a partial reformation. They think they are as good as they should be, because, in some particular instance, they are not so bad, and yet they are as bad as ever; the fault would atone for persisting in all the rest. 3. He thought the making of a Levite into a priest was a very meritorious act, which really was a presumptuous usurpation, and very provoking to God. Men’s pride, and ignorance, and self-flattery, will undertake, not only to justify, but magnify and sanctify, the most during impieties and invasions upon the divine prerogatives. With much reason might Micah have said, "Now may I fear that God will curse me, because I have debauched one of his own tribe, and drawn him into the worship of a graven image;” yet, for this, he hopes God will do him good. 4. He thought that having a Levite in the house with him, would of course entitle him to the divine favour. Carnal hearts are apt to build too much upon their external privileges, and to conclude that God will certainly do them good, because they have been sold of God’s part, and, well in praying families, are linked in society with those that are very good, and sit under a lively ministry; whereas all this is but like having a Levite to be their priest, which amounts to no security at all that God will do them good, unless they be good themselves, and make a good use of those advantages.

CHAP. XVIII.

How idolatry crept into the family of Micah we read in the chapter before, how it was translated from thence into the tribe of Dan we have an account in this chapter, and how it gained a settlement in a city of note; for how great a matter doth a little fire kindle! The tribe of Dan had their lot assigned them last of all the tribes, and, it happening to be too strait for them, a considerable city in the utmost corner of Canaan northward was added to it, "Let them get it, and take it;" it was called Laish or Le Beth, Josh. 10. 47. Now here we are told, I. How they sent spies to bring them an account of the place, who, by the way, got acquainted with Micah’s priest, v. 1 - 6. II. What they say to Micah, and his reply, v. 7 - 10. III. What forces were sent to conquer Laish, v. 11. - 13. IV. How they, by the way, plundered Micah’s gods, v. 14. - 25. V. How easily they conquered Laish, v. 27. - 29. and, when they had it, set up the graven image in it, v. 30, 31.

1. In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel. 2. And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts. men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who, when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there. 3. When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite; and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what maketh thou in this place? and what hast thou here? 4. And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest. 5. And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may
know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. 6. And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go.

Here is,
1. The eye which these Danites had upon Laish, not the whole tribe of Dan, but one family of them, to whose lot, in the subdivision of Canaan, that city fell. Hitherto this family had sojourned with their brethren, who had taken possession of their lot, which lay between Jud. and the Philistines, and had declined going to their own city, because they was going over to them, v. 1. It lay a great way off, separate from the rest of their tribe: it was entirely in the enemy's land, and therefore they would spunge upon their brethren, rather than go far to provide for themselves. But, at length, necessity forced them to it, and they began to think of an inheritance to dwell in. It is better to have a little of one's own, than always to hang upon others.

2. The inquiry which this family of the Danites made concerning Laish. They sent five men to search the land, (v. 2.) that they might know the character of the country, whether it was an inheritance worth going so far for; and the posture of the people, whether the making of themselves masters of it was a thing practicable, what force was necessary in order thereunto, and which was the best way of making themselves masters upon it. They were sent, were men of valour, who, if they fell into their enemies' hands, knew how to look danger in the face. It is prudent to look before we leap; D.m had the subtlety of a serpent by the way, (Gen. 49. 17.) as well as the courage of a lion's whelp, leaping from Bashan, Deut. 33. 22.

3. The acquaintance which their spies got with Micah's priest, and the improvements they made of that acquaintance. It seems, they had known this Levite formerly, he being, in his rambles, been sometimes in their country; and though his countenance might be altered, they knew him again by his voice, v. 3. They were surprised to find him so far off, inquired what brought him thither, and he told them, v. 4. what business he had there, and what encouragement. They, understanding that he had no oracle in his custody, desired he would tell them whether they should prosper in their present undertaking, v. 5. See their carelessness and regardlessness of God and his providence; they would not have inquired of the Lord at all, if this Levite's mentioning of the teraphim he had with him, had not put it into their heads. Many never think of religion but just when it falls in their way, and they cannot avoid it, like chance-occurrences. See how the Danites looked upon the divine law, that they thought God, who had forbidden the religious use of graven images, would yet own them in consulting an image, and give them an answer of peace. Should he be inquired of by them? Ezek. 14. 3. They seem to have had a greater opinion of Micah's teraphim, than of God's Urim; for they had passed by Shiloh, and, for aught that appears, had not consulted with him, Mic 1. 6. High in their ignorance of the divine law, shabby Levite shall be an oracle to them. He betakes himself to his usual method of consulting his teraphim; and whether he himself believed it or no, he humoured the thing so well, that he made them believe he had an answer from God, encouraging them to go on, and assuring them of good success, v. 6. Go in peace, you shall be safe, and may be easy, for I am with thee, and my spirit is in thy midst. But is he approves it, (as the Lord is said to know the way of the righteous with acceptation,) and therefore L will make it prosperous; his eye will be upon you for: good, he will direct your way, and preserve your going out and coming in. Note, Our great care should be that our way be such as God approves, and if it be so, we may go in peace. If God care for us, on him let us cast our care, and be satisfied that we cannot miss our way, if he go before us.

7. Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in anything; and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man. 8. And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol; and their brethren said unto them, What say ye? 9. And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it is very good: and are ye still? be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land. 10. When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where there is no want of any thing that is in the earth. 11. And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war. 12. And they went up, and pitched in Kirjath-jearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan, unto this day: behold, it is behind Kirjath-jearim. 13. And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah.
community shares in the guilt. (2.) See what method must be used for the restraint of wickedness. Sinners must be put to shame, that they who will not be restrained by the shamefulness of the sin before God and their own consciences, may be restrained by the shamefulness of the punishment before men. All ways must be tried to dash sin out of countenance, and cover it with contempt, to make people ashamed of their idleness, drunkenness, cheating, lying, and other sins, by making reputation always appear on virtue's side. (3.) See how miserable, and how near to ruin, those places are, that either have no magistrates, or none that bear the sword to any purpose; the wicked then walk on, and try by the Lord. No happy are we in good laws and a good government.

2. It was ill guarded. The people of Laish dwelt careless, quiet, and secure, their gates left open, their walls out of repair, because under no apprehension of danger, any way; though their wickedness was so great, that they had reason to fear divine vengeance every day. It was a sign that the Israelites, through their sloth and cowardice, were not now so terroriz'd as the Canaanites were, as they had been when they first came among them, else the city of Laish, which, probably, knew itself to be assigned to them, would not have been so very secure. Though they were an open and inland town, they lived secure like the Zidonians, who were surrounded with the sea, and were well fortified both by art and nature; but were far from the zeal of the Lord, and the good of others, ready to help them to the danger which, by debauching their manners, they had helped to bring them into. And lastly, They had no business with any man, which bespeaks either the idleness they affected, they followed no trade, and so grew lazy and luxurious, and utterly unable to defend themselves, or the independency they affected, they scorned to be either in subjection to, or alliance with, any of their neighbours, and so they had none to protect them, or bring in any aid to them. They cared for nobody, and therefore nobody cared for them. Such as these were the men of Laish.

II. The encouragement which from hence they gave to their countrymen that sent them, to prosecute their design upon this city, v. 8 -10. Probably, the Danites had formed notions of the insuperable difficulties of the undertaking, that it would not be possible ever to make themselves masters of Laish, and therefore had kept themselves so long out of the possession of it; perhaps suggesting likewise to one another, in their unbelief, that it was not a country worth going so far and running such a risk for. Which jealousies the spies (and they were not, in this, evil spies) had an eye to in their report.

1. They represented the place as desirable: If ye will trust our judgments, we have seen the land, and we are agreed in our verdict upon the view, that, behold, it is very good, (v. 9.) better than this mountainous country into which we are here crowded by the Philistines. You need not doubt of living here comfortably in it, for it is a place where there is no want of any thing, (v. 10.) See what a good land Canaan was, that this city, which lay furthest of all the rest, in the utmost corner of the country, stood on such a fruitful spot. 2. They represented it as attainable; they do not at all question but, with God's blessing, they may soon get possession of it; for the people are secure, v. 10. And the more secure, always the less safe; "God has given it into your hands, and you may have it for the taking." They stir them up to the undertaking; Arise, that we may go up against them, let us go about it speedily and resolutely. They expostulate with them for their delays, and chide them out for their sluggishness; Are ye still? Be not slothful to go. Men need to be thus stirred up to mind even their interest. Heaven is a very good land where there is no want of any thing; our God has, by the promise, given it into our hands, let us be not slothful then in making it sure, and laying hold on eternal life, but strive to enter.

III. The Danites' expedition against Laish. This particular family of them, to whose lot that city fell, now at length make towards it, v. 11.-13. The military men were but six hundred in all, not a hundredth part of that tribe, for when they entered Canaan, the Danites were above sixty-four thousand, Numb. 23:1, 24:3. It was strange that none of their brethren of their own tribe, much less any other, came in to their assistance; but it was long after Israel came to Canaan, before there appeared among them any thing of a public spirit, or concern for a common interest, which was the reason why they seldom united in a common head, and that kept them low and incomprehensible. It appears, by v. 21, that these six hundred were the whole number that went to settle there, for they had their families and effects with them, their little ones and cattle, so confident were they of success. The other tribes gave them a free passage through their country, their first day's march brought them to Kirjath-jearim; (v. 12.) and such rare things were military encampments now become in Israel, that the place where they rested that night, was from thence called Mahaneh-dan, the camp of Dan; and, probably, the place whence they began their march between Zorah and Eshtaol, was called by the same name, and is meant, ch. 13. 25. The second day's march brought them unto mount Ephraim, near Micah's house, (v. 13.) and there we must pause awhile.

14. Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and tera phim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now, therefore, consider what ye have to do. 15. And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and saluted him. 16. And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which were of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate. 17. And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, and came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war. 18. And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye? 19. And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thy hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel? 20. And the priest's heart
was glad; and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people. 21. So they turned and departed, and put the little ones, and the cattle, and the carriage, before them. 22. And when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan. 23. And they cried unto the children of Dan: and they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company? 24. And he said, Yea have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what is this that ye say, unto me, What aileth thee? 25. And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life with the lives of thy household. 26. And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned, and went back unto his house.

The Danites had sent out their spies to find out a country for them, and they sped well in their search; but here, now that they came to the place, (for till that brought it to their mind, it does not appear that they had mentioned it to their brethren,) they hid themselves with a further discovery, they can tell them where there are gods; "Here in these houses, there are an ephod, and teraphim, and a great many fine things for devotion, such as we have not the like in our country, now therefore consider what ye have to do, v. 14. We consulted them, and had a good answer from them; they are worth having, nay, they are worth stealing, (that is, having upon the went with them,) and if we can but make ourselves masters of these gods, we may the better hope to prosper, and make ourselves masters of Laish." So far they were in the right, that it was desirable to have God's presence with them, but wretchedly mistimed when they took these images for tokens of God's presence, which were fitter to be used in a puppet play, than in acts of devotion. They thought an oracle would be pretty company for them in their enterprise, and instead of a council of war, to advise upon every emergency: and the place they were going to settle in, being so far from Shiloh, they thought they had more need of a house of gods among themselves, than Micah had that lived so near it. They might have made as good an ephod and teraphim themselves as this was, and which would have served their purpose as well, but the reputation which they found this in the possession of (though it had had that reputation but a while,) and not that into strange veneration for it, which they would soon have dropped, if they had had so much sense as to inquire into its original, and whether there was any thing divine in its institution.

Being determined to take these gods along with them, we are here told how they stole the images, and when the priest, frightened Micah from attempting to rescue them.

I. The five men that knew the house, and the avenues to it, and particularly the chapel, went in and fetched out the images, with the ephod and teraphim, and all the appurtenances, while the six hundred men kept the priest in talk at the gate, v. 15. See what little care this sorry priest took of his gods; while thus sauntering at the gate, and gazing at the strangers, his treasure, as such well was, was gone. See how impotent these sorry gods were, that could not keep themselves from being stolen; it is mentioned as the reproach of idols, that themselves are gone into captivity, Isa. 46. 2. O, the sottishness of these Danites! How could they imagine those gods should protect them, that could not keep themselves from being stolen? Yet because they went by the name of gods, if it was not enough that they had with them the presence of the invisible God, nor that they stood in relation to the tabernacle, where there were even visible tokens of his presence, nothing will serve them but they must have gods to go before them, not of their own making indeed, but, which it was bad, of their own stealing. Their idolatry began in theft, a proper prologue for such an opera. In order to the breaking of the second commandment, they begin with the eighth, and take their neighbour's goods to make them their gods. The holy God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, but the Devil loves it. Had these Danites seized the images, to deface and abolish them, and the priest, to punish him, they had done like Israelites indeed, and had appeared jealous for their God, as their fathers had done; Josh. 22. 16. and they should take these for their own use was such a complicated crime, as should show they neither feared God; nor regarded man, but were perfectly lost both to godliness and honesty.

II. They set upon the priest, and flattered him into a good humour, not only to let the gods go, but to go himself along with them; for without him they knew not well how to make use of the gods. Observe, 1. How they tempted him, v. 19. They assigned him various services, which was a plea for the fervent with them than what he now had. It would be more profitable to be chaplain to a regiment, (for they were no more, though they call themselves a tribe,) than to be only a domestic chaplain to a private gentleman. Let him go with them, and he shall have more dependents on him, more sacrifices brought to his altar, and more fees for consulting his teraphim, than he had here. 2. How they won him. A little persuasion, v. 20. The proposal took well enough with him, and being fancy, which would never let him stay long at a place, and gratified his covetousness and ambition. He had no reason to say, but that he was well off, where he was, Micah had not deceived him, or changed his wages, he was not moved with any remorse of conscience for attending on a graven image; had he gone away to Shiloh to minister to the Lord's priests, according to the duty of a Levite, he might have been well off there. (Deut. 18. 6.) and his removal had been commendable; but instead of that, he takes the images with him, and carries the infection of the idolatry into the whole city. It had been very unjust and ungrateful to Micah, if he had only gone away himself, but much more so, to take the images along with him, which, he knew, the heart of Micah was set upon.

A better course was expected of worthy Levite; what house can be sure of him who has forsaken the house of the Lord? Or what friend will he be true to, that has been false to his God? He could not pretend that he was under compulsive force, for he was glad in his heart to go. If ten shekels won him, (as Bishop Hall expresses it,) eleven would lose him; for what can hold those that have made shipwreck of a good conscience? The hireling flees because he is a hireling. The priest and his gods went in the midst of the people, there
they placed him, that they might secure him, either from going back himself, if his mind should change, or from being fetched back by Micah; or perhaps in imitation of the order of Israel's march through the wilderness, in which the ark and the priests preceded the host.  

III. They frightened Micah back, when he pursued them to recover his gods. As soon as ever he perceived that his chapel was plundered, and his chaplain was run away from him, he mustered all the forces he could, and pursued the robbers, v. 22. His neighbours, and perhaps tenants, that used to join with him in his devotions, were forward to help him on this occasion; they got together, and pursued them, who had stolen his cattle before them, (v. 21.) could make no great haste, so that they soon overtook them; hoping by strength of reason to recover what was stolen, for the disproportion of their numbers was such, that they could not hope to do it by strength of arm. The pursuers called after them, desiring to speak a word with them; they in the rear, (where it is probable they posted the fiercest and strongest of their company, expecting there to be attacked,) turned about, and asked Micah what ailed him to be so much concerned, and what he would have, v. 23. He argues with them, and pleads his right, which he thought should prevail; but they, in answer, plead their might, which, it proved, did prevail; for it is common that might overcomes right.  

1. He insists upon the wrong they had certainly done him; (v. 24.) "Ye have taken away my gods, my images of God, which I have such an indifferent, unstable title to, for I made them myself, and which I have such an affection for, that I am undone if I lose them, for what have I more that will do me any good, if these be gone?" Now, (1.) This discovers to us the folly of idolaters, and the power that Satan has over them. What a folly was it for him to call those his gods, which he had made, when he only is to be worshipped by us as a God, that made us? Folly indeed to set his heart upon such silly idle things, and to look upon himself as undone when he had lost them! (2.) This may discover to us our spiritual idolatry; that creature which we place our happiness in, which we set our affections inordinately upon, and which we can by no means find in our hearts to part with, of which we say, "What have we more?" That we make an idol of. That is put in God's place, and is an usurper, which we are conscious of our loss of comfort, our hope, and happiness, and all, were bound up in it. But, (3.) If all people will thus walk in the name of their god, shall we not be in like manner affected towards our God, the true God? Let us reckon the having of an interest in God, and communion with him, incomparably the richest portion, and the loss of God the sorest loss; Woe unto us if he depart, for what have we more? Deserted souls that are left after the Lord, or they will not. Micah did, that you should ask, what ails them? For the tokens of God's favour are suspended, his comforts are withdrawn; and what have they more?  

2. They insist upon the mischief they would certainly do him, if he prosecuted his demand. They would not hear reason, nor do justice, nor would so much as offer to pay him the prime cost he had been at; and yet they are not possession so reasonable upon what they had taken, when they had served their present purpose with them in this expedition, and had time to copy them, and make others like them for themselves: much less had they any compassion for a loss he so bitterly lamented; they would not so much as accost him kindly, or give him good words, but resolve to justify their robbery with murder; if he did not immediately let fall his claims; (v. 25.) "Take heed, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life; and that is worse than losing thy gods." Wicked and unreasonable men reckon it a great provocation to be asked to do justice, and support themselves by their power against right and reason. Micah's crime is asking his own; yet, for this, he is in danger to lose his life, and the lives of his household. Micah has not courage enough to venture his life for the rescue of his gods, so little opinion had he of their being able to protect him and bear him out, and therefore tamely gives them up, v. 26. He turned, and went back to his house: and if the loss of his idols did but convince him (as, one would think, it should) of their vanity and impotency, and of his own folly in setting his heart upon them, and send him back to the true God from whom he had revolted, he that lost them, had a much better bargain than they that by force of arms carried them off. If the loss of our idols cure us of the love of them, and make us say, What have we to do any more with idols? the loss will be unspeakable gain. See Isa. 2. 20.—30. 22.  

27. And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire. 28. And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zidon, and they had no business with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by Beth-rehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein. 29. And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit, the name of the city was Laish at the first. 30. And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Maunasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. 31. And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.  

Here is,  
I. Laish is conquered by the Danites. They proceeded on their march, and, because they met with no disaster, perhaps concluded they had not done amiss in robbing Micah; many justify themselves in their impiety by their prosperity. Observe, 1. What posture they found the people of Laish in, both of those of the city, and those of the country about; they were quiet and secure, not jealous of the five spies that had been among them to search out the land, nor had they any intelligence of the approach of this enemy, which made them a very easy prey to this little handful of men that came upon them, v. 27. Note, Many are brought to destruction by their security. 2. Satan gets advantage against us when we are careless and off our guard; it is, therefore, the man that feareth always. 2. What a complete victory they obtained over them; they put all the people to the sword, and burnt down so much of the city as they thought fit to rebuild, (v. 27, 28,) and, for aught that appears herein, they met with no resistance; for the measure of the iniquity of the Canaanites was full, that of the Danites was but beginning to fill. 3. How the con-
They bu it the city, or much of it, anew, (the old buildings being gone to decay,) and called the name of it Dim, to be a witness for them that they were Danites by birth, though separated so far off from their brethren, which might hereafter, by reason of their distance, be called in question. We should feel concerned not to lose the privilege of our relation to God's Israel, and therefore should take all occasions to own it, and preserve the remembrance of it to our's after us.

II. Idolatry immediately set up there. God had graciously performed his promise, in putting them in a place which fell to their lot, and oblong them thereby to be faithful to him who had been so to them: they inherited the labour of the people, that they might observe his statutes, Ps. 105. 44, 45. But the first thing they do after they are settled, is, to break his statutes; as soon as they began to settle themselves, they set up the graven image, v. 30. perversely attracting their success to that idol, which, if God had not been infinitely patient, would have been their ruin. Thus a prosperous idolaer goes on to offend, imputing this his power unto his god, Heb. 1. 11. Their Levite, who officiated as priest, is at length named here, Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh. The w rd Manasseh, in the original, has the letter Nun set over the head, which, some of the Jewish Rabbins say, is an intimation that it should be left out, and then Manasseh will be Moses, and this Levite, they say, was grandson to the famous Moses, who indeed had a son, named Gershom; but, say they, the historian, in honour of Moses, by a half interposition of that letter, turned the name into Manasseh. The vulgar Latin reads it Moses. And if indeed Moses had a grandson that was rakish, and was picked up as a fit tool to be made use of in the setting up of idolatry, it is not the only instance (which is not the unhappy degenerating of the posterity of great and good men. Children's children are not always the crown of old men. But the learned Bishop Patrick takes this to be an idle conceit of the Rabbins, and supposes this Jonathan to be of some other family of the Levites. How long these corruptions continued, we are told in the close. 1. That the posterity of this Jonathan continued to act as priests, or Levites, till the death of Laish, and in the country about, till the captivity, v. 30. After Micah's image was removed, that family retained the character of priests, and had respect paid them as such by that city, and it is very probable that Jeroboam had an eye to them, when he set up one of his calves there, (which they would welcome to Dan, and put some reputation upon, when the priests of the Lord would have nothing to do with them,) and that his family officiated as some of his priests. 2. That these images continued till Samuel's time, for so long the ark of God was at Shiloh; and, it is probable, in his time effectual care was taken to suppress and abolish this idolatry. See how dangerous it is to adorn an infection, for spiritual distempers are not so soon cured as caught.

CHAP. XIX.

The three remaining chapters of this book contain a most tragical story of therackensnedness of the men of Gibeah, patronised by the tribe of Benjamin, for which that tribe was severely chastised, and almost entirely cut off by the rest of the tribes. This seems to have been done, not long after the death of Jerahmeel, for it was then they was no king, no judge in Israel; (v. 1. and ch. 21. 25.) and Phinehas was then High Priest, ch. 20. 28. These particular iniquities, the Danites' idolatry, and the Benjamites' immorality, let in that general apostasy, ch. 3. 7. The abuse of the Levites' concubine is here very particularly related. 1. Her adulterous elopement from him, v. 1. 2. His reconciliation to her, and the journey he took to fetch her home, v. 3. III. Her father's kind entertainment of him, v. 4. 5. IV. The abuse he met with at Gibeah, where, being benighted, he was forced to take up. 1. He was neglected by the men of Gibeah, (v. 10. 15.) and entertained by an Ephraimitc that squatted among them, v. 16. 21. They set upon him in his quarters, as the Sodomites did on Lot's guests, v. 22. 23. 24. 3. They villanously forced his concubine to death, v. 23. 24. 25. The course he took, to send notice of this to all the tribes of Israel, v. 29. 30. 1. AND it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah. 2. And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Beth-lehem-judah, and was there four whole months. 3. And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto her, and to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses; and she brought him into her father's house; and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him. 4. And his father-in-law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there. 5. And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son-in-law, Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way: 6. And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry. 7. And when the man rose up to depart, his father-in-law urged him; therefore he lodged there again. 8. And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart: and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until afternoon, and they did eat both of them. 9. And when the man rose up to depart, he and his concubine and his servant, his father-in-law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold now, the day draweth toward evening; I pray you tarry all night: behold, the day groweth to an end; lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and to-morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home. 10. But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus, which is Jerusalem: and there were with him two asses saddled; his concubine also was with him. 11. And when they were by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in unto this city of the
When he came to fetch her back. Thus God promises concerning adulterous Israel, (Hos. 2. 14.) I will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her.

III. Her father bid him very welcome, and, by his extraordinary kind to him, endeavoured to make him for that the Levite was so contented with his lodging, and to confirm him in his disposition to be reconciled to her. 1. He entertains him kindly, rejoices to see him, v. 3. treats him generously for three days, v. 4. And the Levite, to show that he was perfectly reconciled, accepted his kindness, and we do not find that he upbraided him or his daughter with what had been amiss, but was very civil and as pleasant as at his first wedding-feast. It becomes, being Levites, to forgive as God does. Every thing among them gave a hopeful prospect of their living comfortably together for the future; but could they have foreseen what befell them within one day or two, how would all their mirth have been imber-icted and turned into mourning! When the affairs of our families are in the best posture, we ought to rejoice with trembling; because we know not what troubles one day may bring about. We cannot foresee what evil is near us, but we ought to consider, what may be, that we may not be secure, as if to-morrow must needs be as this day, and much more abundant, Isa. 56. 12. 2. He is very earnest for his stay, as a further demonstration of his hearty welcome: the affection he had for him, and the pleasure he took in his company, proceeded, 1. From a civil regard to him as his son-in-law and an ingrafted branch of his own house. Love and duty are owing to those whom we are by marriage related to, as well as to those who are bone of our bone; and they that show kindness, as this Levite did, may expect, as he did, to receive kindness.

And, 2. From a pious respect to him as a Levite, a servant of God's house; if he were such a Levite as he should be (and nothing appears to the contrary,) he is to be commended. This during his stay, finding his conversation profitable, and having opportunity to learn from him the good knowledge of the Lord; hoping also that the Lord will do him good, because he has a Levite to be his son-in-law, and will bless him for his sake. (1.) He forces him to stay the fourth day, and that was kind, not knowing when they might be together again, he engages him to stay as long as he possibly could. The Levite, though all was lost, was not without a heart, and becomes man's heart is where his business is, for as a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place. It is a sign a man has either little to do at home, or little heart to do what he has to do, that can take pleasure in being long abroad where he has nothing to do. It is especially good to see a Levite willing to go home to his few sheep in the wilderness. Yet this Levite was much by it; for honor and kind management to stay longer than he intended, v. 5. 7. We ought to avoid the extremes of an over-easy yielding, to the neglect of our duty on the one hand, and that of moroseness and willfulness to the neglect of our friends and their kindnesses on the other hand. Our Saviour, after his resurrection, was prevailed upon to stay with his friends longer than he first intimated to be his purpose, Luke 24. 29. (2.) He forces him to stay till the afternoon of the fifth day, and that, as it proved, was unkind, v. 8, 9. He would by no means let him go before dinner, promises him he shall have dinner early, designing thereby, as he had done the day before, to detain him another night; but the Levite was intent on the house of the Lord at Shiloh, v. 18, and being impatient to get thither, would stay no longer. Had they set out early, they might have
reached some better lodging place than that which they were now constrained to take up with, nay, they might have got to Shiloh. Note, Our friends' designed kindnesses often prove, in the event, real injuries; what is meant for our welfare, becomes a trap. Who knows what is good for a man in this life? The Levite was unaware in setting out so late; he might have got home better, if he had staid a night, as the day the Lord had before him.

IV. In his return home, he was forced to lodge at Gibeah, a city in the tribe of Benjamin, afterward called Gibeah of Saul, which lay on his road toward Shiloh and mount Ephraim. When it drew toward night, and the shadows of the evening were stretched out, they began to think (as it behoves us to do when we observe the day of our life hastening toward a peri-) where they would lodge for the night. They got no lodging there, the inn they met with pursued their journey; he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goes: they could not but desire rest, for which the night was intended, as the day for labour. 1. The servant proposed that they should lodge in Jebus, afterwards Jerusalem, but as yet in the possession of the Jebusites. "Come," (said the servant,) "let us lodge in this city of the Jebusites," v. 11. And if they had done so, it is probable they had had much better usage than they met with; in Gibeah of Benjamin. Debouched and profitteer Israelites are worse and much more dangerous than Cannanites themselves. 2. But the master, as became one of God's tribe, would by no means quarter, no, not one night, in a city of strangers, (v. 12.) not because he questioned his safety among them, but he was not willing, if he could possibly avoid it, to have so much intimacy and familiarity with them as a night's lodging came to, nor to be so much beholden to them. By shunning this place, he would witness against the wickedness of those that contrated friendship and familiarity with those who devoured nations. Let Israelites, Levites especially, associate with Israelites, and not with the sons of the stranger. 3. Having passed by Jebus, which was about five or six miles from Beth-lehem, (the place whence they came,) and not having daylight to bring them to Ramah, they stopped at Gibeah; (v. 13.- 15.) there they sat down in the street, nobody offering them a lodging. In these countries, at that time, there were no inns, or public houses, in which, as with us, travellers might have entertainment for their money; but they carried entertainment along with them, as this Levite did here, (v. 19.) and depended upon the courtesy and hospitality of the inhabitants for a lodging. Let us take occasion from hence, when we are in neys, to thank God for this, among other conveniences of travelling, that there are inns to entertain strangers, and in which they may be welcome, and well accommodated, for their money. Surely there is no country in the world wherein one may stay at home with more satisfaction, or go abroad with more comfort, than in our own nation. This traveller, then, the Levite, (and to those of that tribe God had particularly commanded his people to be kind upon all occasions,) met with very cold entertainment at Gibeah, no man took them into his house; if they had any reason to think he was a Levite, perhaps that made those ill-disposed people the more shy of him. There are those who will have this laid to their charge at the great day, I was a stranger, and ye took me not in.

16. And, behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even, which was also of mount Ephraim; and he sojourned in Gibeah: but the men of the place were Benjamites. 17. And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a way-faring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou? 18. And he said unto him, We are passing from Beth-lehem-judah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence am I: and I went to Beth-lehem-judah, but I am now going to the house of the Lord; and there is no man that receiveth me to house. 19. Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man which is with thy servants: there is no want of any thing. 20. And the old man said, Peace be with thee: howsoever, let all thy wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street. 21. So he brought them into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.

Though there was not one of Gibeah, yet it proved there was one in Gibeah, that showed some civility to this distressed Levite, who was glad that any one took notice of him. It was strange that some of those wicked people, who, when it was dark, designed some harm to him and his companion, did not make pretence of kindness, invite them in, that they might have a fairer opportunity of perpetrating their villany; but either they had not wit enough to be so designing, or not wickedness enough to be so deceiving. Or, perhaps, none of them separately thought of such a wickedness, till in the black and dark night they got together to contrive what mischief they should do. Bad people in confederacy make one another much worse than any one of them would be by themselves. When the Levite, and his wife, and servant, were beginning to fear that they must lie in the street all night, (and as good have lain in a den of lions,) they were at length invited into a house. And we are here told,

1. Who that kind man was, that invited them. 1. He was a man of mount Ephraim, and only sojourner in Gibeah, v. 16. Of all the tribes of Israel, the Ephraimites had most reason to be kind to poor travellers, for their ancestor, Benjamin, was born upon the road, his mother then upon a journey, and very near to this place, Gen. 35. 16, 17. Yet they were hard-hearted to a traveller in distress, while an honest Ephraimite had compassion on him, and no doubt, was the more kind to him, when, upon inquiry, he found that he was his countryman, of mount Ephraim likewise. He that was himself but a sojourner in the land, was more compassionate to a wayfaring man, for he knew the heart of a stranger, Exod. 23. 9. Deut. 10. 19. Good people that look upon themselves but as strangers and sojourners in this world, should, for this reason, be tender one to another, because they all belong to the same better country, and are not at home here. 2. He was an old man, one that was grown gray, and had seen the improving virtue of the Israelite; the rising generation was entirely corrupted; if there was any good remaining among them, it was only with those that were old and going off. 3. He was coming home from his work out of the field at even. The evening calls home labourers, Ps. 104. 23. But, it should seem, this was the only labourer that this evening brought home to Gibeah. The rest had given up themselves to sloth.
and luxury, and no marvel there was among them, as in Sodom, abundance of uncleanness, when there was among them, as in Sodom, abundance of idleness, Ezek. 16. 49. But he that was honestly diligent in his business, all day, was disposed to be generously hospitable to them. See how generous the Levite was, not to give his substance, that they may have to give, Eph. 4. 28. It appears, from v. 21. that he was a man of some substance, and yet had been himself at work in the field. No man's estate will privilege him in idleness.

II. How free and generous he was in his invitation; he did not stay till they applied themselves to him to beg for a night's lodging, but when he saw them, (v. 17.) inquired into their circumstances, and presented them with his kindness: thus our good God answers before we call. Note, A charitable disposition expects only opportunity, not inutility, to do good, and will succour, upon sight, unsought unto. Hence we read of a bountiful eye, Prov. 22. 9. If Gibeah was like Sodom, this old man was like Lot in Sodom, who sat in the gate to invite strangers, Gen. 19. 1. Thus Job opened his doors to the traveller, and would not suffer him to lodge in the street, Job 31. 32. Observe, 1. How ready he was to give credit to the Levite's account of himself, when he saw no reason at all to question the truth of it. Charity is not apt to distrust, but hopeth all things, (1 Cor. 13. 7.) and will not make use of Nabab's excuse for his churlishness to David, Many servants now-a-days break from their master, 1 Sam. 25. 16. The Levite, in his account of himself, pretends that he was not going to the house of the Lord, (v. 18.) for there he designed to attend, either with a trespass-offer for the sins of his family, or with a peace-offering for the mercies of his family, or both, before he went to his own house. And if the men of Gibeah had any intimation of his being bound that way, probably they would therefore be disinclined to entertain him; the Samaritans would not receive Christ, because his face was toward Jerusalem, Luke 9. 53. But for that reason, because he was a Levite, and was now going to the house of the Lord, this good old man was the more kind to him. Thus he received a disciple in the name of a disciple, a servant of God for his Master's sake.

2. How free he was to give him entertainment. The Levite was himself provided with all necessaries, (v. 19.) wanted nothing but a lodging, but his generous host would be himself at the charge of his entertainment, (v. 20.) Let all thy wants be upon mee; so he brought him into his house, v. 21. Thus God will, some way or other, raise up friends for his people and ministers, even when they seem forlorn.

22. Now, as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him. 23. And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly. 24. Behold, here is my daughter, a maiden, and his concubine; then I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing. 25. But the men would not hearken to him; so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go. 26. Then came the woman, in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord was, till it was light. 27. And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down at the door of the house, and her hands were upon the threshold. 28. And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going: but none answered. Then the man took her up upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place. 29. And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, together with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel.

30. And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.

Here is,

I. The great wickedness of the men of Gibeah. One could not imagine that ever it should enter into the heart of men that had the use of human reason, of Israelites that had the benefit of divine revelation, to be so very wicked. "Lord, what is man!" said David, "what a mean creature is he!" "Lord, what is man," may we say, upon the reading of this story, "what a vile creature is he, when he is given up to his own heart's lusts!" 1. The sinners are here called the sons of Belial, that is, ungodly men, men that would endure no yoke. Children of the Devil, for he is Belial, resembling him, and joining himself in rebellion against God and his government. Sons of Benjamin, of whom Moses had said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him, (Deut. 33. 12.) are become such sons of Belial, that an honest man cannot lodge in safety among them. 2. The sufferers were a Levite and his wife, and that kind man that gave them entertainment. We are strangers upon earth, and must expect strange usage. It is said they were making their hearts merry when this trouble came upon them, v. 22. If the mirth was innocent, it teaches us of what uncertain continuance all our creature-comforts and enjoyments are; when we are ever so well pleased with our friends, we know not how near our enemies are; nor, if it be well with us this hour, can we be sure it will be so the next. If the mirth was sinful and excessive, let it be a warning to us to keep a strict guard upon ourselves, that we grow not intemperate in the use of lawful things, nor be transported into indecencies by our cheerfulness, for the end of that mirth is heaviness. God can soon change the note of those that are making their hearts merry, and turn their laughter into mourning, and their joy into heaviness. Let us see what the wickedness of these Benjamites was.
1. They made a rude and insolent assault, in the night, upon the habitation of an honest man, that not only lived peaceably among them, but kept a good house, and was a blessing and ornament to their city. They beset the house round, and, to the great terror of those within, beat as hard as they could at the door, v. 22. A man's house is his castle, in which he ought to be both safe and pleased with the freedom to do so; (v. 23.) Seeing that this man is come into my house. They are base and abject spirits, that will trample upon the helpless, and use a man the worse for his being a stranger, whom they know ill of.

2. They designed, in the most filthy and abominable manner, (not to be thought of without horror and detestation,) to abuse the Levite, whom perhaps they supposed to be young and coming to bring him forth, that we may know him. We should certainly have concluded they meant only to inquire whence he came, and to know his character, but that the good man of the house, who understood their meaning too well, by his answer lets us know that they designed the gratification of that most unnatural and worse than brutish lust, which was expressly forbidden by the law of Moses, and called an abomination, Lev. 18. 22. They that are guilty of it are ranked in the New Testament among the worst and vilest of sinners, (1 Tim. 1. 10.) and such as shall not inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. 6. 9. Now, [1.] This was the sin of Sodom, and from thence is called Sodomy. The dead Sea, which was the standing monument of God's vengeance upon Sodom for its filthiness, was one of the boundaries of Canaan, and lay not many miles off from Gibeah; we may suppose the men of Gibeah had seen it many a time, and yet would not take warning by it, but did worse than Sodom, (Ezek. 16. 48.) and sinned just after the similitude of their transgression. Who would have expected (says Bishop Hall) such extreme abomination to come out of the loins of Jacob? Even the worst pagans were saints to them. What did it avail them that they had the master of the house in their streets; God's law in their fingers, but the Devil in their hearts? Nothing but hell itself can yield a worse creature than a depraved Israelite. (2.) This was the punishment of their idolatry, that sin to which they were, above all other, most addicted. Because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, therefore he gave them up to those vile affections, by which they did pollute themselves in the lusts of their own heart, and were given over to those abominable lusts which dishonoured him, and turned his glory into shame, Rom. 1. 24, 28. See and admire, in this instance, the patience of God; why were not these sons of Belial struck blind, as the Sodomites were? Why were not fire and brimstone rained from heaven upon their city? It was because God would leave it to Israel to punish them by the sword, and would reserve his own punishment of them for the future, in which, in which those that go after strange flesh, shall suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7.

3. They were dead to the reproofs and reasons of the good man of the house, who, being well acquainted (we may suppose) with the story of Lot and the Sodomites, seeing the men of this city imitate the Sodomites, set himself to imitate Lot, v. 23.

4. They were out to them as Lot did, spoke civilly to them, and called them brethren, begged of them to desist, pleaded the protection of his house which his guests were under, and represented to them the great wickedness of their attempt; “Do not so wickedly, so very wickedly,” he calls it folly and a vile thing. But in one thing he confessed too far to Lot’s example, (as we are apt, in offering the way to sin, to follow them, even in their false steps,) in offering them his daughter to do what they would with. He had not power thus to prostitute his daughter, nor ought he to have done this evil that good might come. But this wicked proposal of his, may be in part excused, from the great surprise and terror he was in, his concern for his guests, and his having too close regard to what Lot did in the like case, especially not finding that the angels who were by, reproved him for it. And perhaps he hoped that his mentioning of this as more a natural gratification of their lust, would have sent them back to their common harlots. But they would not hearken to him, v. 25. Headstrong lusts are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, they bear the conscience, and make it insensible.

5. These men, which were the beloved of the inhabitants among them, and abused her to death, v. 25. They slighted the old man’s offer of his daughter to their lust, either because she was not handsome, or because they knew her to be one of great gravity and modesty; but when the Levite brought them his concubine, they took her with them by force to the place appointed for their filthiness. Josephus, in his narrative of this story, makes her to be the person they had a design upon when they beset the house, and says nothing of their villainous design upon the Levite himself. They saw her (he says) in the street, when they came into the town, and were smitten with her beauty; and perhaps, though she was reconciled to her husband, her looks did not speak her to be one of the most modest; many bring mischief of this kind upon themselves by their loose carriage and behaviour; a little spark may kindle a great fire. One would think the Levite should have followed them, to see what became of his wife, but it is probable he durst not, lest they should do him a mischief. In the miserable end of this woman, we may see the righteous hand of God, punishing her for her former uncleanness, when she played the whore against her husband, v. 12. Though her father had countenanced her, and her husband too close regard to what Lot did in the like case, the Levite, in the forgotten now that the quarrel was made up, yet God remembered it against her, when he suffered these wicked men thus wickedly to abuse her; in doing which, how unrighteous soever they were, in permitting it the Lord was righteous. Her punishment answered her sin. Culpa libido siu, funa libido siu—Lust was her sin, and lust was her punishment. By the law of Moses, she was to have had the punishment that her promiscuity deserved; but it was that punishment from men, yet vengeance pursued her; for if there was no king in Israel, yet there was a God in Israel, a God that judgeth in the earth. We must not think it enough to make our peace with men, whom by our sins we have wronged, but are concerned, by repentance and faith, to make our peace with God, who sees not as men see; for so light a sin oftentimes do. The jistice of God in this matter, does not extenuate the horrid wickedness of those men of Gibeah, than which nothing could be more barbarous and inhuman.

II. The notice that was sent of this wickedness to all the tribes of Israel. The poor abused woman made towards her husband’s lodgings, as soon as ever the approach of the day-light obliged the sons
of Belial to let her go, (for those works of darkness hate and dread the light,) v. 25. Down she fell at the door, with her hands on the threshold, begging pardon (as it were) for her former transgression, and in the posture of a penitent, with her mouth in the dust, she expired; there she found her, (v. 26, 27.) supposed her asleep, or overcome with shame and confusion; but she had happened, but soon perceived she was dead; (v. 28.) and, therefore, our body, which we may suppose, had all over it marks of the hands, the blows, and other abuses, she had received. On this sad occasion, he wove his purpose of going to Shiloh, and went directly home; he that went out in hopes to return rejoicing, came in again melancholy and disconsolate, sat down and considered, Is this an injury fit to be passed by? He cannot call to mind, from head to foot, the misfortunes of Gibeah, as the Levite did, nor let himself be thereby disposed in the same manner, insulted by the Sodomites. There was no king in Israel, nor (for that there appears) any Sanhedrim, or great council, to appeal to, and demand justice from; Phinehas is High Priest, but he attends closely to the business of the sanctuary, and will be no judge or divider; he has therefore no other way left him, than to appeal to the people: let the Levite judge, though they had no general stated assembly of all the tribes, yet it is probable that each tribe had a meeting of their chiefs within itself; to each of the tribes, in their respective meetings, he sent by special messengers a remonstrance of the wrong that was done him, in all its aggravating circumstances, and with it a piece of his wife’s dead body, (v. 29.) both to confirm the truth of the story, and to affect them the more with it. He divided it into twelve pieces, according to the bones, so some read it, that by the joints, sending one to each tribe, even to Benjamin among the rest, with the hope that some among them would have been moved to join in punishing so great a villany, and the more warmly, because committed by some of their own tribe. It did indeed look very barbarous, thus to mangle a dead body, which, having been so wretchedly dishonoured, ought to have been decently interred; but the Levite designed hereby, 1. To represent their barbarous usage of his wife, whom they had better have cut in pieces thus, than have used as they did. 2. To express his own passionate concern, and thereby to excite the like in them. And it had the desired effect. All that saw the pieces of the dead body, and were told how the matter was, expressed the same sentiments upon it. (1.) That the men of Gibeah had been guilty of a very heinous piece of wickedness, the like of which had never before been known in Israel, v. 30. It was a complicated crime, loaded and blackened with all possible aggravations. They were not such fools as to make a mock at this sin, or turn the story off with a jest. (2.) That a general assembly of all Israel should be called, to debate what was fit to be done for the punishment of this wickedness, which might but add to this thread of impending iniquity in Gibeah, and the wrath of God might not be poured upon the whole nation for it. It is not a common case, and therefore they stir up one another to come together upon the occasion, with this, Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds. We have here the three great rules by which they that sit in council ought to go in every anxious affair. (1.) Let every man retire into his own house and sit alone; (2.) Let every man take advice of his friend, know his opinion, with his reasons, and weigh them. (3.) Then let every man speak his mind, and give his vote according to his conscience. In the multitude of such counsellors there is safety.  

CHAP. XX.

Into the book of the wars of the Lord the story of this chapter must be brought, but it looks as sad and uncomfortable as any article in all that history; for there is nothing in it that looks bright and pleasant, but the pious zeal of Israel against the wickedness of the men of Gibeah, which made them rise on the side of just and holy war; but otherwise the obstinacy of the Benjamites in protecting their criminals, which was the foundation of the war, the vast loss which the Israelites sustained in carrying on the war, and (though the righteous cause was victorious at the last) the issue of the war, in the almost utter extirpation of the tribe of Benjamin, make it, from first to last, melancholy. And yet this happened soon after the glorious settlement of Israel in the land of promise, upon which, one would have expected every thing to be prosperous and serene. In this chapter we have, I. The Levite’s cause heard in a general convention of the tribes, v. 1. 7. II. A unanimous resolution to avenge his quarrel upon the men of Gibeah. v. 8. 11. III. The Benjamites appearing in defence of the criminals, v. 12. 17. IV. The defeat of Israel in the first and second day’s battle, v. 18. 25. V. Their humbling of themselves before God upon that occasion, v. 26. 28. VI. The total rout they gave the Benjamites in the third engagement, by a stragiam, by which they were all cut off, except six hundred men, v. 29. 48. And all this, the effect of the indignities done to one poor Levite and his wife: so little do they that do iniquity, consider what will be the end thereof.  

1. THEN all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the Lord in Mizpeh. 2. And the chief of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword. 3. (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh.) Then said the children of Israel, Tell us how was this wickedness? 4. And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, I came into Gibeah that belongeth to Benjamin, and my concubine, to lodge: 5. And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, and thought to have slain me; and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead. 6. And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel. 7. Behold, ye are all children of Israel; give here your advice and counsel. 8. And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any of us go to his tent, neither will we any of us turn into his house: 9. But now, this shall be the thing which we will do to Gibeah, we will go up by lot against it: 10. And we will take ten men of a hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and a hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten
thousand, to fetch victual for the people, that they may do, when they come to Gib- eah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel. 11. So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.

Here is,

1. A general meeting of all the congregation of Israel, to examine the matter concerning the Levite's concubine, and to consider what was to be done upon it, v. 1, 2. It does not appear that they were summoned by the authority of any one common head, but they came together by the mutual consent and agreement, as it were, of one common heart, fired with a holy zeal for the honour of God and Israel. 1. The place of their meeting was Miz- peh, they gathered together unto the Lord there; for Mizpeh was so very near to Shiloh, that their encampment might very well be supposed to reach from Mizpeh to Shiloh. Shiloh was a small town, and therefore, when there was a general meeting of the people to prevent themselves from being parted, it was well to put their encampment at some distance from it, where they might have convenient quarters to hold the meeting. They were, therefore, to Mizpeh, and the Levite came from thence. 2. The persons that met, were all Israel, from Dan, (the city very lately so called, ch. 18. 29.) in the north, to Beer-sheba, in the south, in the land of Gilead, that is, the tribes on the other side Jordan, all as one man; so unanimous were they in their concern for the public good. Here was an assembly of the people of God; not a convocation of the Levites and priests, though a Levite was the person principally concerned in the cause, but an assembly of the people, to whom the Levite referred himself with an Ap- peal to the people; the people of God were four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword, that is, were armed and disciplined, and fit for service; and some of them, perhaps, such as had known the wars of Canaan, ch. 3. 1. In this assembly of all Israel, the chief (or corners) of the people (for rulers are the corner-stones of the people that keep all together) presented themselves as the representatives of the rest; they ren- dered themselves at their respective posts, at the head of the thousands and hundreds; the fifties and tens, over which they presided; for so much order and government, we may suppose at least, they had among them, though they had no general or commander in chief. So that here was, (1.) A general congress of the states for counsel; the chief of the people presented themselves to lead and direct in this affair. (2.) A general rendez- vous of the forces, the Levite and his men being convened before and were men of war, v. 17. not hirelings or press- ed men, but the best freeholders that went at their own charge. Israel was above six hundred thou- sand when they came into Canaan, and we have reason to think they were, at this time, much in- creased, rather than diminished: but then all be- tween twenty and sixty were military men; now we may suppose more than the one half exempt from military service, for the Levites, though these were as the trained bands. The militia of the two tribes and a half were forty thousand, Josh. 4. 13. but the tribes were many more.

II. Notice given to the tribe of Benjamin of this meeting, v. 3. They heard that the children of Is- rael were gone up to Mizpeh; probably they had a legal summons sent them to appear with their brethren, that the cause might be fairly debated, before any resolutions were taken up upon it, and so the mischief that followed, would have been happily prevented; but the notice they had of this meeting, rather hardened and exasperated them, than awakened them to think of things that belonged to their peace and honour.

III. A summary examination of the crime charged upon the men of Gibeah. A very horrid re- presentation of it had been made by the report of the messengers that were sent to call them to- gether, but it was fit it should be more closely inquired into, because such things are often made worse than really they were; a committee therefore was appointed to examine the witnesses, (upon oath, v. 4.) and report the facts of the case. They had only the testimony of the Levite himself, that is here re- corded, but it is probable his servant and the old man were examined, and gave in their testimony, for that more than one were examined, appears by the original, (v. 3.) which is, Tell ye us; and the law was, that none should be put to death, much less many, upon the testimony of one witness only. The Levite gives a particular account of the mat- ter. That he came into Gibeah only as a traveller, to lodge there, not exciting the least suspicion that he designed them any ill turn, v. 4. That the men of Gibeah, even those that were of substance among them, that should have been a protection to the stranger within their gates, riotously set upon the house where he lodged, and thought to have slain him; he could not, for shame, relate the de- demand which they, without shame, made, ch. 19. Thus they declared their sin as Sodom, even the sin of Sodom, but his modesty would not suffer him to repeat it, it was sufficient to say they would have slain him, for he would rather have been slain than have submitted to their villany; and if they had got him into their hands, they would have abused him to death; witness what they had done to his concubine, they have forced her, that she is dead, v. 5. And to excite in his countrymen an indignation at this wickedness, he had sent pieces of the mangled body to all the tribes which had fetched them together to bear their testimony against the lewdness and folly committed in Israel, v. 6. All lewdness is folly, but especially lewd- ness in Israel; for them to defile their own bodies, who have the honourable seal of the covenant in their flesh; for them to defy the divine-vengeance, to whom it is so clearly revealed from heaven—so God is their own and the Levites their own; he concludes his declaration with an appeal to the judgment of the court, v. 7. Ye are all children of Israel, and therefore ye know law and judge- ment; (Esth. 1. 13.) "Ye are a holy people to God, and have a dread of every thing which will dishonour God, and defile the land; ye are of the same community; members of the same body, and therefore likely to feel from the distempers of it; so God is their own and the Levites their own, they take particular care of the Levites, God's tribe among you, and therefore give here your advice and coun- sel, what is to be done."
JUDGES, XX.

12. And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness is this that is done among you? 13. Now therefore deliver us the men, the children of Belial, which are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel: 14. But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel. 15. And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time, out of the cities, twenty and six thousand men that drew sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven hundred chosen men. 16. Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men left-handed; every one could sling stones at a hair breadth, and not miss. 17. And the men of Israel, besides Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword: all these were men of war.

Here is,

I. The air and just demand which the tribes of Israel, now encamped, sent to the tribe of Benjamin, to deliver up the malefactors of Gibeah to justice, v. 12, 13. If the tribe of Benjamin had come up, as they ought to have done, to the assembly, and agreed with them in their resolutions, they had had none to deal with but the men of Gibeah only, but they, by their absence, taking part with the criminals, application must be made to them all; the Israelites were zealous against the wickedness that was committed, yet they were disinclined in their zeal, and did not think it would justify them in falling upon the whole tribe of Benjamin, unless they, by refusing to give up the criminals, and protecting them against justice, should make themselves guilty, ex post facto—as accessories after the fact. They desire them to consider how great the wickedness was, that was committed, v. 12, and that it was done among them; and how necessary it was therefore that they should either punish the malefactors with death themselves, according to the law of Moses, or deliver them up to this general assembly, to be so much the more publicly and solemnly punished, that evil might be made a warnings away from Israel, the national guilt removed, the infection stopped by cutting off the gangrent part, and national judgments prevented; for the sin was so very like that of the Sodomites, that they might justly fear, if they did not punish it, God would rain hail from heaven upon them, as he did, not only upon Sodom, but the neighbouring cities. If the Israelites had not made this reasonable demand, they would have had much more reason to apprehend the following desolations of Benjamin. All methods of accommodation must be used before we go to war, or go to law. The demand was like that of Job’s to Abel, 2 Sam. 20. 20, 21. “Only deliver up the the traitor, and we will lay down our arms,” On these terms, and no other, God will be at peace with us, that we may part with our sins, that we mortify and crucify our lusts, and then all shall be well; his anger will be turned away.

II. The wretched obstinacy and perverseness of the men of Benjamin, who seem to have been as unanimous and zealous in their resolutions to stand by the criminals, as the rest of the tribes were to punish them; so little sense had they of their honour, duty, and interest.

They were so prodigiously vile, as to patronise the wickedness that was committed. They would not hearken to the voice of their brethren, v. 13. Either because they apprehended of the tendency of this crime to more vicious and debauched at this time than the rest of the tribes, and therefore would not bear to have that punished in others, which they knew themselves guilty of. Some of the most fruitful and pleasant parts of Canaan fell to the lot of this tribe; their land, like that of Sodom, was as the garden of the Lord, which, perhaps, helped to make the inhabitants, like the men of Sodom, wicked, and to provoke them to this crime before the Lord. Gen. 13. 10, 13. Or, because (as Bishop Patrick suggests) they took it ill that the other tribes should meddle with the concerns of their’s; they would not do that which they knew was their duty, because they were reminded of it by their brethren, by whom they scorned to be taught and controlled. If there were any wise men among them that would have complied with the demand made, yet they were overpowered by the majority, who thus made the crime of the men of Gibeah their own. Thus we have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, if we say A confederacy with those that have, and make ourselves guilty of other men’s sins, by countenancing and defending them. It seems there is no cause so bad but it will find some patrons, some advocates, to appear for it; but woe be to those by whom such offences come. Those will have a great deal to answer for, that obstruct the course of necessary justice, and strengthen the hands of the wicked, by saying, O wicked man, thou shalt not die.

2. They were so prodigiously vain and presumptuous, as to make head against the united force of all Israel. Never, surely, were men so wretchedly infatuated as they were, when they took up arms in opposition (for,) to so good a cause as Israel had. How could they expect to prosper when they fought against justice, and consequently against the just God himself, against them that had the High Priest and the divine oracle on their side, and so acted in downright rebellion against the sacred and supreme
authority of the nation? (2.) To so great a force as Israel had. This disproportion of their numbers was much greater than that, Luke 14, 31, 32, where he that had but ten thousand, durst not meet him that came against him with twenty thousand, and therefore desired conditions of peace. There the enemy was but two to one, here above fifteen to one; yet they desisted conditions of peace. All the forces they could bring into the field, were but twenty-six thousand men, beside seven hundred men of Gibeah; (v. 15.) yet with these they will dare to face four hundred thousand men of Israel, v. 17. Thus smirers are infatuated to their own ruin, and provoke him to jealousy, who is so infinitely stronger than they, 1 Cor. 10, 22. But it should seem they depended upon the skill of their men, to make up what was wanting in numbers, especially a regiment of slingers, seven hundred men, who, though left-handed, were so dexterous at slingings stones, that they would not be a hair's breadth beside their mark, v. 16. But these good marksmen were very much out of their aim, when they espoused this bad cause. Benjamin signifies the son of the right hand, yet we find his posterity left-handed.

18. And the children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up first. 19. And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah. 20. And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin; and the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Gibeah. 21. And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground, of the Israelites that day, twenty and two thousand men. 22. And the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves, and set their battle again in array, in the place where they put themselves in array the first day. 23. (And the children of Israel went up, and went before the Lord until even, and asked counsel of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the Lord said, Go up against him.) 24. And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day. 25. And Benjamin went forth again against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground, of the children of Israel again, eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword.

We have here the defeat of the men of Israel in their first and second battle with the Benjaminites. 1. Before their first engagement, they ask counsel of God concerning the order of their battle, and were directed, and yet they were sorely beaten. They did not think it was proper to ask of God, whether they should go up at all against Benjamin (the case was plain enough, the men of Gibeah must be punished for their wickedness, and they must do it, or it would not be done,) but "Who shall go first?" (v. 18.) that is, "Who shall be general of our army?" For, whissoever tribe was appointed to go first, the prince of that tribe must be looked upon as commander in chief of the whole body; for if they had meant it of the order of their march only, it had been proper to have asked, "Who shall go next?" and then, "Who next?" But if they know that Judah must go first, they know they must all observe the orders of the prince of that tribe. This appears from the answer which was given to them, v. 17, that the Lord Jesus was to spring from that tribe, 1 Tim. 6, 14, 15. To this day this tribe is to have the pre-eminence. The tribe that went up first had the most honourable post, but withal the most dangerous, and, probably, lost most in the engagement. Who would strive for precedence that sees the peril of it?

Yet though Judah, that strong and valiant tribe, goes up first, and all the tribes of Israel attend them, (And the Lord, (as it is called, Ps. 110, 7.) is too hard for them all. The whole army lay down to Gibeah, v. 19. The Benjaminites advance to raise the siege, and the army prepares to give them a warm reception, v. 20. But between the Benjaminites that attacked them in the front with incredible fury, and the men of Gibeah that sallied out upon their rear, they were put into confusion, and lost twenty-two thousand men, v. 21. Here was no manner of confusion among them, for there was no quarter given, but all put to the sword.

II. Before the second engagement, they again asked counsel of God, and more solemnly than before, for they went before the Lord until even, (v. 23.) lamenting the loss of so many brave men, especially as it was a token of God's displeasure, and would give occasion to the Benjaminites to triumph in the success of their wickedness. Also at this time they did not ask, should they go slow or fast, but, Whether they should go up at all. They intimate a reason, why they should scruple it, especially now that Providence had frowned upon them, because Benjamin was their brother; and a readiness to lay down their arms, if God should order them. God bid them go up, he allowed the attempt; though Benjamin was their brother, he was a gangrened member of their body, and must be cut off. Upon this, they encouraged themselves, perhaps more in their own strength than in the divine commission, and made a second attempt upon the forces of the rebels, in the same place where the former battle was fought, (v. 22.) with the hope of retrieving their credit upon the same spot of ground where they had lost it, which they would not superstitiously change, as if there were anything unlucky in the place; but this time it was second time, and second time, and a brass vessel, with the loss of eighteen thousand men, v. 25. The former day's loss, and this, amounted to forty thousand, which was just a tenth part of the whole army, and the same number that they had drawn out by lot to fetch victuals, v. 10. They decimated themselves for that service, and now God again decimated them for the slaughter.

But what shall we say to these things, that so just and holy God, could possibly be guilty to the worst once and again? Were they not fighting God's battles against sin? Had they not his commission? What, and yet miscarry thus! 1. God's judgments are a great deep, and his way is in the sea. Clouds and darkness are often round about him, but judgment and justice are always the habituation of his throne. We may be sure of the righteousness, when we cannot see the reasons of God's proceedings. 2. God would hereby show them, and us in them, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, that numbers are not to be confided in, which perhaps the Israelites did with too much assurance. We must never lay that weight on an arm of flesh, which the Rock of ages only will bear. 3. God designed hereby to correct
Israel for their sins. They did well to show such a zeal against the wickedness of Gibeah; but were there not with them, even with them, sins against the Lord their God? Those must be made to know their own iniquity, that are forward in condemning the iniquity of others. Some think it was a rebuke to them, for not witnessing against the idolatry of Micah and the Danites, by which their religion was corrupted, as they now did against the lewdness of Gibeah and the Benjamites, by which the public peace was disturbed, though God had particularly ordered them to levy war upon idolaters, Deut. 13. 12. &c. 4. God would hereby teach us, not to think it strange, if a good cause suffer worst for a while, nor to judge of the merits of it by the success of it. The interest of grace in the heart, and of religion in the world, may be foiled, and suffer great loss, and seem to be quite run down, but judgment will be brought forth to victory at last. *Vinece mur in Jerusalem, sed non in bello.—We are foiled in a battle, but not in the whole campaign.* Right may fall, but it shall arise.

26. Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord. 27. And the children of Israel inquired of the Lord, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days;) 28. And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the Lord said, Go up; for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand. 29. And Israel set liers in wait round about Gibeah. 30. And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in array against Gibeath, as at other times. 31. And the children of Benjamin went out against the people, and were drawn away from the city; and began to smite of the people and kill, as at other times, in the highways, of which one goeth up to the house of God, and the other to Gibeah in the field, about thirty men of Israel. 32. And the children of Benjamin said, They are smitten down before us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, They be flees, and draw them from the city unto the highways. 33. And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and put themselves in array at Baal-tamar; and the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, even out of the meadows of Gibeath. 34. And there came against Gibeath ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was sore: but they knew not that evil was near them. 35. And the Lord smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day twenty and five thousand and a hundred men: all these drew the sword. 36. So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten: for the men of Israel gave place to the Benjamites, because they trusted unto the liers in wait which they had set beside Gibeath. 37. And the liers in wait hasted, and rushed upon Gibeath; and the liers in wait drew themselves along, and smote all the city with the edge of the sword. 38. Now there was an appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait, that they should make a great flame with smoke rise up out of the city. 39. And when the men of Israel retired in the battle, Benjamin began to smite and kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons; for they said, Surely they are smitten down before us, as in the first battle. 40. But when the flame began to arise up out of the city with a pillar of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and behold, the flame of the city ascended up to heaven. 41. And when the men of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil was come upon them. 42. Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel unto the way of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them: and them which came out of the cities they destroyed in the midst of them. 43. Thus they inclosed the Benjamites round about, and chased them, and trode them down with ease, over against Gibeath toward the sun-rising. 44. And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men: all these were men of valour. 45. And they turned, and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men; and pursued hard after them unto Gidon, and slew two thousand men of them. 46. So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword: all these were men of valour. 47. But six hundred men turned, and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months. 48. And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well the men of every city as the beast, and all that came to hand: also they set on fire all the cities that they came to.

We have here a full account of the complete victory which the Israelites obtained over the Benjamites in the third engagement: the righteous cause was victorious at last, when the managers of it amended what had been amiss; for when a good cause suffers, it is for want of good management.
Observe then how the victory was obtained, and how it was pursued.

1. How the victory was obtained. Two things they had trusted too much to in the former engagements, the goodness of their cause, and the superior numbers; it was true, that they had both right and strength on their side, which were great advantages. But they depended too much upon them, to the neglect of those duties, which now, this third time, when they see their error, they apply themselves to.

2. They, previously, so confident of the goodness of their cause, that they thought no need of God, depend only on God for his presence and blessing; they took that for granted, and, perhaps they concluded that he owed them his favour, and could not in justice withhold it, since it was in defence of virtue that they appeared, and took upon arms. But God having showed them that he was under no obligation to prosper their enterprise, that he neither needed them nor was tied to them, that they were more indebted to him for the honour of being ministers of his justice, than he to them for the service, now they became humble petitioners for success. Before, they only consulted God's oracle, _Who shall go up first?_ And, _Shall we go up?_ But now they implored his favour, fastened and prayed, and offered burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings, v. 26, to make an atonement for sin, and an acknowledgment of their dependence upon God, as an expression of their desire toward him. We cannot express the evident signs of conscience, unless we thus seek it in the way he has app-inted. And when they were in this frame, and thus sought the Lord, that he not only ordered them to go up against the Benjamites the third time, but gave them a promise of victory, _To-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand_, v. 28.

3. They were, previously, so confident of the greatness of their strength, that they thought it needless to use any art, to lay any ambush, or form a stratagem, not doubting but to conquer them purely by a strong hand; but now they saw it was requisite to use some policy, as if they had an enemy to deal with them, that had been superior in number; accordingly they set _lairs in wait_, v. 29, and gained their point, as their fathers did before Ai; Josh. 8. stratagems of that kind being most likely to take the Benjamites by surprise. It does not signify that they had trained the enemy, and made the pretended flight the less suspected. The management of this artifice is here very largely described. The assurance God had given them of success in this day's action, instead of making them remiss and presumptuous, set all hands and hands on work for the effecting of what God had promised. Observe the method they took; the body of the army faced the city of Gibeah, as they were in the front, advancing toward the city gates, v. 30. TheBenjamites, the body of whose army was now quartered at Gibeah, sallied out upon them, charged them with great bravery; the besiegers gave back, retired with precipitation, as if their hearts failed them upon the sight of the Benjamites, which they were willing to believe, who proudly conceived that by their former success they had vanquished the less formidable; sorry reflection the Israelites sustained in this instance of flight, about thirty men were cut off in their rear, v. 31, 39. But when the Benjamites were all drawn out of the city, the ambush seized the city, v. 37, gave a signal to the body of the army, v. 38, 40, which immediately turned upon them, v. 41, and, it should seem, another considerable party that was posted at Beth-taan came upon them at the same time; v. 33, so that the Benjamites were quite surround- ed, which put them into the greatest consternation that could be: a sense of guilt now disheartened them, and the higher their hopes had been raised, the more grievous was this confusion. At first, _the battle was sore_, v. 34. the Benjamites fought with fury, but when they saw what a snare they were drawn into, they thought one pair of heels (as we say) was worth two pair of hands, and they made the best of their way toward the wilderness, v. 42, but in vain, _the battle overtook them_, and, to complete their distress, _they which came out of the cities of Israel_, that waited to see the event of the battle, joined with the pursuers and helped to cut them off. Every man's hand was against them.

Observe, in this story, 1. That the Benjamites, in the beginning of the conflict, were more confident that the day was their own. _They are better men before us_, v. 32, 39. Sometimes God suffers wicked men to be lifted up in successes and hopes, that their fall may be the sorer. See how short their joy is, and their triumphing but for a moment. _Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast_, except he has reason to boast in God. 2. Evil was near them, and they did not know it; v. 34. but v. 41. they saw, when it was too late to prevent it, _that evil was come upon them_. What evils may at any time be near us, we cannot tell, but the less they are feared, the heavier they fall; sinners will not be persuaded to see evil near them, but how dreadful will it be when it comes, and there is no escaping! 1 Thess. 5. 3. (**3.**) Though the men of Israel played their parts so well in this engagement, yet the victory is ascribed to God; v. 35. _The Lord smote Ben- jamin before Israel_, not only the Benjamites, but also God, was the success. 4. _They trampled down men of Benjamin with ease_, when God fought against them, v. 43. It is an easy thing to trample upon those who have made God their enemy. See Mal. 4. 3.

II. How the victory was prosecuted and improved in a military execution done upon these sinners against their own souls. 1. Gibeah itself was destroyed in the first place, that nest of lewdness. The ammab center of the city by surprise, drew themselves along, that is, dispersed themselves into several parts of it, which they might easily do, now that all the men of war were sallied out, and had very presumptuously left it defenceless, and smote all they found, even women and children, _with the sword_, v. 37, and set fire to the city, v. 40. Sin brings ruin upon cities. 2. The army in the field was quite routed and cut off, eighteen thousand men of Benjamin were slain, v. 35. Those that escaped from the field were pursued, and cut off in their flight, to the number of seven thousand, v. 45. It is to no purpose to think of out-running divine vengeance. _Evil pursues sinners_, and it will overtake them. 4. Even they that tarried at home, were involved in their ruin. _They let their sword devour for ever_, not considering that it was the better part, _the contrite heart_, as Ab- ramm pleads long after, when he was at the head of an army of Benjamites, probably with an eye to this very story, 2 Sam. 25. 26, 26. They put to the sword all that breathed, and set fire to _all the cities_, v. 48. So that all of the tribe of Benjamin, for aught that appears, there remained none alive but six hundred men that took shelter in the rock Rimmon, and lay close there four months, v. 47. Now, 1. It is a sad token of God's justice. The whole tribe of Benjamin was culpable; but must they therefore be used as devoted Ca- manites? That it was done in the heat of war—That this was the way of prosecuting victories which the sword of Israel had been accustomed to—That the Israelites were extremely exasperated against the Benjamites for the slaughter they had made among them in the two former engagements—will go far to a little way to excuse the cruelty of this execution. It is true, they had sworn that who-
soever did not come up to Mizpeh, should be put to death: ch. 21. 5. but that, if it was a justifiable oath, yet extended only to the men of war, the rest were not expected to come. Yet, (2.) It is easy to justify the hand of God in it; Benjamin had sinned against him, and God had threatened, that if they forgot him, they should perish as the nations that were before them perished, Dent. 8. 20. who were all in this manner cut off. It is easy likewise to improve it for warning against the beginnings of sin, they are like the letting forth of water, therefore leave it off before it be meddled with, for we know not what will be in the end thereof. The eternal ruin of souls will be worse, and more fearful, than all these desolations of a tribe. This affair of Gibeah is twice spoken of by the prophet Hosea, as the beginning of the corruption of Israel, and a pattern to all that followed, ch. 9. 5. They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah, and ch. 10. 9. Thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah, and it is added, that the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not that is, did not at first, overtake them.

CHAP. XXI.

The ruins of the tribe of Benjamin we read of in the foregoing chapter; now here we have, I. The lamentation which Israel made over these ruins, v. 1. . 4. 6. 15. II. The provision they made for the repair of them out of the six hundred men that escaped, for whom they procured wives. I. Of the origin of the inhabitants of Gibeon, which they destroyed that city for not sending to the general rendezvous, v. 5. 7. . 14. 2. Of the daughters of Shiloh, v. 16. . 25. And so this melancholy story concludes.

1. NOW the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife. 2. And the people came to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore; 3. And said, O Lord God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel? 4. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. 5. And the children of Israel said, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the congregation unto the Lord? For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up to the Lord to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death. 6. And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day. 7. How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the Lord, that we will not give them of our daughters to wives? 8. And they said, What one is there of the tribes of Israel that came not up to Mizpeh to the Lord? And, behold, there came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly. 9. For the people were numbered, and, behold, there were none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there. 10. And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children. 11. And this is the thing that ye shall do, ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man. 12. And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. 13. And the whole congregation sent some to speak to the children of Benjamin that were in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them. 14. And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not. 15. And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the Lord had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

We may observe, in these verses,

I. The ardent zeal which the Israelites had expressed against the wickedness of the men of Gibeah, as it was countenanced by the tribe of Benjamin. Occasion is here given to mention two instances of their zeal on this occasion, which we did not meet with before.

1. While the general convention of the states was gathering together, and was waiting for a full house before they would proceed, they bound themselves with the great excretion, which they called the Cherum, utterly to destroy all those cities that should not send in their representatives and their quota of men upon this occasion; or, had sentenced them to that curse, who should thus refuse; (v. 3.) for they were to look upon such refusers, as having no indignation at the crime committed, no concern for the securing of the nation from God's judgments by the administration of justice, nor any regard to the authority of a common consent, by which they were summoned to meet.

2. When they were met, and had heard the cause, they made another solemn oath, that none of all the thousands of Israel, then present, nor any of those whom they represented, (not intending to bind their posterity,) should, if they could help it, marry a daughter to a Benjamite, v. 1. This was made an article of the war, not with any design to extirpate the tribe, but because in general they would treat them who were then actors and abettors of this villany, in all respects as they treated the devoted nations of Canaan, whom they were not only obliged to destroy, but with whom they were forbidden to marry; and because in particular, they judged them unworthy to match with a daughter of Israel, that had been so very barbarous and abusive to one of the tender sex, than which nothing could be done more base and villainous, nor a more certain indication of a mind perfectly lost to all honour and virtue. We may suppose that the Levite's sending the mangled pieces of his wife's body to the several tribes, helped very much to inspire them with all this fury, and much more than a bare narrative of the fact, though ever so well attested, would have done. So much does the eye affect the heart.

II. The deep concern which the Israelites did
express for the destruction of the tribe of Benjamin when it was accomplished. The tide of their anger against Benjamin's crime, did rise even higher and the magnitude of their grief for Benjamin's destruction, ran as high and as strong after. They repented for Benjamin their brother, v. 6. 15. They did not repent of their zeal against the sin; there is a holy indignation against sin, the fruit of godly sorrow, which is to salvation, not to be repented of; 2 Cor. 7. 10, 11. But they repented of the sad consequences of what they had done, that they had carried the matter further than was either just or necessary; it had been enough to test out evil. They, when found in arms, they needed not to have cut off the husbandmen and shepherds, the women and children. Note, 1. There may be over-doing in well-doing. Great care must be taken in the government of our zeal, lest that which seemed supernatural in its causes, prove unnatural in its effects. That is no good divinity, which swallows up humanity. Many a war is ill ended which was well begun. 2. Even necessary justice is to be done with compassion. God does not punish with delight, nor should men.

3. Strong passions make work for repentance. What we say and do in a heat, our calmer thoughts commonly wish undone again. 4. In a civil war, (according to the usage of the Romans,) no victories ought to be celebrated with triumphs, because, whichever side gets, the community loses, as there is a tribute cut off from Israel. What the latter is the body for one member's crumbling another?

Now, how did they express their concern? (1.) By their grief for the breach that was made; they came to the house of God, for thither they brought all their doubts, all their counsels, all their cares, and all their sorrows. There was to be heard on this occasion, not the voice of joy and praise, but one of lamentation, and deep complaint. They lifted up their voices and wept sore, (v. 2.) not so much for the forty thousand which they had lost, (those would not be so much missed out of eleven tribes,) but for the entire destruction of one whole tribe; for this was the complaint they poured out before God, (v. 3.) There is one tribe lacking. God had taken care of every tribe; their number twelve was that which they were known by; every tribe had its place in the muster-roll. They were in the High Priest's breast-plate; every tribe had his blessing, both from Jacob and Moses, and it would be an intolerable reproach to them, if they should drop any out of this illustrious jury, and lose one out of twelve; especially Benjamin, the youngest, who was particularly dear to Jacob their common ancestor, and whom all the rest ought to have been in a particular manner tender of. Benjamin is not, was not, then will become so? Benjamin became a Benjamite, the son of the right hand, a son of sorrow! In this trouble they built an altar, not in competition, but in communion, with the appointed altar at the door of the tabernacle, which was not large enough to contain all the sacrifices they designed; for they offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, to give thanks for their victory, and also to atone for their own folly in the pursuit of it, and to implor their in their present strait. Every thing that grieves us, should bring us to God. (2.) By their amicable treaty with the poor distressed refugees that were hidden in the rock Rimmon, to whom they sent an act of indemnity, assuring them, upon the public faith, that they would now no longer treat them as enemies, but receive them as brethren, v. 15. The falling out of friends should thus be the renewing of friendship. Even those that have sinned, if at length they repent, must be forgiven and comforted, 2 Cor. 2, 7.

(3.) By the care they took to provide wives for them, that their tribe might be built up again, and the ruins of it repaired. Had the men of Israel been as indigent; the Lord would not have been pleas'd with the exterminating of the family of Benjamin, because then the land allotted to them would eschew to the rest of the tribes, ob defectum sanguinis— for want of heirs, and be easily seized for want of occupants; but these have not the spirit of Israelites, who aim to raise themselves upon the ruins of their neighbours. They were so far from any design of this kind, that all heads are at work and the young men are means for the repopulating of this tribe. All the women and children of Benjamin were slain; they had sworn not to marry their daughters to any of them; it was against the divine law that they should match with the Canaanites; to oblige them to that, would be, in effect, to bid them go serve other gods.

What must they do then for wives for them? While the poor distressed Benjamites that were hidden in the rock feared their brethren were contriving to ruin them, they were at the same time upon a project to prefer them; and it was this;

[1.] There was a piece of necessary justice to be done upon the city of Jabesh-Gilead, which belonged to the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan. It was found, upon looking over the muster-roll, (which was taken, ch. 20. 2.) that none appeared from that city, upon the general summons, (v. 8, 9.) and it was resolved upon as just that they should not be missed. If it was found, upon the city were absent, that whatever city of Israel should be guilty of such a contempt of the public authority and interest, that city should be an anathema; Jabesh-Gilead lies under that severe sentence, which might by no means be dispensed with. They that had spared the Canaanites in many places, who were devoted to destruction by the divine command, could not find in their hearts to spare their brethren, who were devoted by their own curse. Why did they not now send men to root the Jebusites out of Jerusalem, to avoid whom the poor Levite had been forced to go to Gibeah? ch. 19. 11, 12. Men are commonly more zealous to support their own authority than God's. A detachment is therefore sent of twelve thousand men, to execute the sentence upon Jabesh-Gilead. Having found, that when the whole body of the army went against them, they were not able to deliver them into their hands, on this expedition they sent but a few, v. 10. Their commission is, to put all to the sword, men, women, and children, (v. 11.) according to that law, (Lev. 27. 29.) Whosoever is devoted of men, by those that have power to do it, shall surely be put to death.

[2.] An expedition is from hence formed for providing the Benjamites with wives. When Moses sent the same number of men to enquire the Lord of Midian, the same orders were given, as here, that all married women should be slain with their husbands, as one with them, but that the virgins should be saved alive, Numb. 31. 17, 18. That precedent was sufficient to support the distinction here made between a wife and virgin, v. 11, 12. Four hundred virgins that were marriageable, were found in Jabesh-Gilead, and these were married to so many of the surviving Benjamites, v. 14. Their fathers were not present when the vow was made, not to marry with Benjamites, so that they were not under any colour of obligation by it; and besides, being a prey taken in war, they were at the disposal of the conquerors. Perhaps the alliance now contracted between Benjamin and Jabesh-Gilead, made Saul, who was a Benjamite, the more concerned for that place, (1 Sam. 11. 4.) though then inhabited by new families.
said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin? 17. And they said, There must be an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel. 18. Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed be he that giveth a wife to Benjamin. 19. Then they said, Behold, there is a feast of the Lord in Shiloh yearly, in a place which is on the north side of Beth-el, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebanon. 20. Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards; 21. And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. 22. And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favourable unto them for our sakes; because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, that ye should be guilty. 23. And the children of Benjamin did so, and took them wives according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them: 24. And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe, and to his family; and they went out from thence every man to his inheritance. 25. In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

We have here the method that was taken to provide the two hundred Benjamines that remained, with wives. And though the tribe was reduced to a small number, they were only in care to provide each man with one wife, not with more, under pretence of multiplying them the faster. They may not bestow their daughters upon them; but to save their oath, and yet do them a kindness, by getting them to them, they put them into a way of taking them by surprise, and marrying them, which should be ratified by their parents' consent, ex post facto—afterward. The less consideration is used before the making of a vow, the more, commonly, there is need of after, for the keeping of it.

I. That which gave an opportunity for the doing of this, was, a public ball at Shiloh, in the fields which all the young ladies of that city, and the parts adjacent, were so disposed, met to dance, in honour of a feast of the Lord then observed; probably the feast of tabernacles, (v. 19.) for that feast (Bishop Patrick says,) was the only season wherein the Jewish virgins were allowed to dance; and that, not so much for their recreation, as to express their holy joy, as David, when he danced before the ark; otherwise, the present melancholy posture of public affairs would have made dancing unseasonable, as Isa. 22, 12, 13. The dancing was very modest and chase, it was not mixed dancing; no men danced with these daughters of Shiloh, nor did any married women so far forget their gravity as to join with them. Here, at their own desire and design, made them an easy prey to those that had a design upon them. Whence, Bishop Hall observes, that the ambuses of evil spirits carry away many souls from dancing to a fearful deviation.

II. The elders of Israel gave authority to the Benjamines to do this, to lie in wait in the vineyards which surrounded the green they used to dance on, and, when they were in the midst of their sport, to come upon them, and catch them for himself, and carry them straight away to their own country, v. 20, 21. They knew that none of their own daughters would be there, so that they could not be said to give them, for they knew nothing of the matter. A sorry salvo is better than none, to save the breaking of an oath: it were much better to be cautious in making vows, that there be not occasion afterward, as there was here, to say before the angel, that it was an error. Here was a very preposteros way of match-making, when both the mutual affection of the young people and the consent of the parents must be presumed to come after; the case was extraordinary, and may by no means be drawn into a precedent. Over-hasty marriages often occasion a leisurely repentance; and what comfort can be expected from a match made either by force or fraud? The virgins of Jabez-Gilead were taken out of the midst of blood and slaughter, but these of Shiloh out of the midst of mirth and joy; the former had reason to be thankful that they had their lives for a prey, and the latter, it is to be hoped, had no cause to complain, after a while, when they found themselves matched, not to men of broken and desperate fortunes, as they seemed to be, who were lately fetched out of a cave, but to men of the best and largest estates in the nation, as they must needs be, when left to the whole tribe of Benjamin, which consisted of forty-five thousand six hundred men, (Num. 26. 41.) came to be divided again among six hundred, who had all by survivorship.

III. They undertook to pacify the fathers of these young women: as to the infringement of their paternal authority, they would easily forgive it, when they considered to what fair estates their daughters were matched, and that every man a wife, in every man a wife they were likely to be; but the oath they were bound by, not to give their daughters to Benjamines, might perhaps stick with some of them, whose consciences were tender; yet as to that, this might satisfy them: 1. That the necessity was urgent, (v. 22.) We reserved not to each man his wife; now owning that they did ill to destroy all the women, and desiring to atone for their too rigorous construction of their vow, in order to destroy all the Benjamines also, for they had a very absurd, and, in the same construction of their vow not to match with them. “And therefore, for our sakes, who were too severe, let them keep what they have got.” For, 2. In strictness it was not a breach of their vow; they had sworn not to give them their daughters, but they had not sworn to fetch them back if they were forcibly taken. So that if there was any fault, the oath must be limited, and not to themselves, nor to their posterity, but to the nation. He pronounces a very easy quod fieri non debuit, factum vate—That which ought not to have been done, is yet valid when it is done. The thing was done, and is ratified only by conivance, according to the law, Num. 30. 4.

Lastly. In the close of all, we have, 1. The setting of the tribe of Benjamin again. The few that remained, returned to the inheritance of that tribe, v. 25. And soon after from among them sprang Eshub, who was famous in his generation, the second
Judge of Israel, ch. 3. 15. 2. The disbanding and dispersing of the army of Israel, v. 24. They did not set up for a standing army, nor pretend to make any alterations or establishment in the government; but when the affair was over, for which they were called together, they quietly departed in God's peace, every man to his family. Public services must not make us think ourselves above our own private affairs, and the duty of providing for our own house. 3. A repetition of the cause of these confusions, v. 25. Though God was their King, every man would be his own master, as if there was no king. Blessed be God for magistracy.
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

UPON THE BOOK OF

RUTH.

This short history of the domestic affairs of one particular family, fitly follows the book of Judges, (the events related here, happening in the days of the Judges,) and fitly goes before the books of Samuel, because in the close it introduces David: yet the Jews, in their Bibles, separate it from both, and make it one of the five Megilloth, or Volumes, which they put together toward the latter end; in this order, Solomon's Song, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. It is probable that Samuel was the penman of it. It relates, not miracles or laws, wars or victories, or the revolutions of states, but the afflictions first, and afterward the comfort, of Naomi; the conversion first, and afterward, the preference, of Ruth. Many such events have happened, which perhaps we may think as well worthy to be recorded. But these God saw fit to transmit the knowledge of to us; and even common historians think they have liberty to choose their subject. The design of this book is,

I. To lead to providence; to show us how conversant it is about our private concerns, and to teach us in them all to have an eye to it, acknowledging God in all our ways, and in all events that concern us. See 1 Sam. 2. 7. 8. Ps. 113. 7-9.

II. To lead to Christ, who descended from Ruth, and part of whose genealogy concludes the book, from whence it is fetched into Math. 1. In the conversion of Ruth the Moabitess, and the bringing of her into the pedigree of the Messiah, we have a type of the calling of the Gentiles in due time into the fellowship of Christ Jesus our Lord. The affections of Naomi and Ruth we have an account of, ch. 1. Instances of their industry and humility, ch. 2. The bringing of them into an alliance with Boaz, ch. 3. And their happy settlement thereby, ch. 4. And let us remember the scene is laid in Beth-lehem, the city where our Redeemer was born.

RUTH, I.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter we have Naomi's afflictions. I. As a distressed housekeeper, forced by famine to remove into the land of Moab, v. 1. 2. II. As a mournful widow and mother, bewailing the death of her husband and her two sons, v. 3-5. III. As a careful mother-in-law, desirous to be kind to her two daughters, but at a loss how to be so, when she returns to her own country, v. 6-13. Orpah she parts with in sorrow, v. 14. Ruth she takes with her in fear, v. 15-18. IV. As a poor woman sent back to the place of her first settlement, to be supported by the kindness of her friends, v. 19-22. All these things were melancholy, and seemed against her, and yet all were working for good.

1. NOW it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. 2. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. 3. And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. 4. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. 5. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

The first words give all the date we have of this story. It was in the days when the Judges ruled, v. 1. not in those disorderly times when there was no king in Israel. But under which of the judges
these things happened, we are not told, and the conjectures of the learned are very uncertain. It must be toward the beginning of the judges' time, for Boaz, who married Ruth, was born of Rahab, who received the spices in Joshua's time. Some think it was in the days of Ehud, others of Deborah; the learned Bishop Patrick inclines to think it was in the days of Gideon, because in his days only we read of a famine by the Midianites' invasion, Judges 6. 3, 4. While the judges were ruling, one city, and some another, Providence takes particular cognizance of Beth-lehem, and has an eye to a King, to Messiah himself, who should descend from two Gentle mothers, Rahab and Ruth. 

I. A famine in the land; in the land of Canaan, that land flowing with milk and honey. This was one of the judgments which God had threatened to bring upon them for their sins, Lev. 26. 19, 20. He has many arrows in his quiver; in the days of the judges they were oppressed by their enemies; and when by that judgment they were not reformed, God tried this, for when he judges, he will overcome. When the land had rest, yet it had not plenty; even in Beth-lehem, which signifies the house of bread, there was scarcity. A fruitful land is turned into barrenness, to correct and restrain the luxury and wantonness of them that dwell therein.

II. An account of one particular family distress-ed in the famine; it is that of Elimelech. His name signifies my God a King; agreeable to the state of Israel when the judges ruled, for the Lord was their king. The land of Moab was only in their affliction, that God was their's, and that he reigns for ever. His wife was Naomi, which signifies my amiable or pleasant one. But his sons' names were Mahlon and Chilion, sickness and consumption, perhaps because weakly children, and not likely to be long-lived. Such are the productions of our pleasant things, weak and infirm, fading and dying. Elimelech was one of the three sons of Jesse, and came from Bethlehem, into the country of Moab, on the other side Jordan, for subsistence, because of the famine, v. 1, 2. It seems there was plenty in the country of Moab, when there was scarcity of bread in the land of Is-rael. Common gifts of providence are often be-stowed in greater plenty upon those that are strangers to God, than upon those that know and worship him. Moab is at ease from his youth, while Israel is oppressed. And, 4. 11. not because God loves Moabites better, but because they have their portion in this life. Thither Elimelech goes, not to settle for ever, but to sojourn for a time, during the drought, as Abraham, on the like occasion, went into Egypt, and Isaac into the land of the Philistines. Now here, 1. Elimelech's care to provide for his family, and his taking his wife and children with him, were, without doubt, commendable. He removed not only for famine, but because he had denied the faith, 1 Tim. 5. 8. When he was in his straits, he did not forsake his house, go seek his fortune himself, and leave his wife and children to shift for their own maintenance, but, as became a tender husband and a loving father, where he went, he took them with him, not as the ostrich, Job 39. 16. But, 2. I see not how his removal into the country of Moab, upon this occasion, could be justified. Abraham took away his sojourners in Canaan, and it was agreeable to their condition to remove; but the seed of Israel were now fixed, and ought not to remove into the territories of others, the law of God had obliged his neighbours to relieve him; (Lev. 25. 35.) but that was not his case, for he went out full, v. 21. By those who tarried at home, it appears the famine was not so extreme, but that there was sufficient to keep life and soul together; and his charge was but small, only five sons. But if he could not be content with the short allowance which he took up with, and in the day of famine could not be satisfied, unless he kept as plentiful a table as he had done formerly, if he could not live in hope that there would come years of plenty again in due time, or could not with patience wait for these years, it was his fault, and he did by it dishonour God, and the good land he had given them, 4. 11. awoken the hands of his brethern, in whom he should have been willing to take his lot, and in the famine examined himself to others. If all should do as he did, Canaan would be despoiled. Note, It is an evidence of a discontented, distrustful, unstable spirit, to be weary of the place in which God hath set us, and to be for leaving it immediately, whenever we meet with any uneasiness or inconvenience in it. It is folly to think of escaping that cross which, being laid in our way, we ought to take up. It is our wisdom to make the best of that which is, for it is seldom that changing our place is mending it. Or if he would remove, why to the country of Moab? If he had made inquiry, it is probable he would have found plenty in some of the tribes of Israel, those, for instance, on the other side Jordan, that bordered on the land of Moab; if he had that zeal for God and his worship, and that affection for his brethren, which became an Israelite, he would not have persuaded himself so easily to go to sojourn among Moabites.

IV. The marriage of his two sons to two of the daughters of Moab after his death, v. 4. All agree that this was ill done; the Chaldee says, They transgressed the decree of the word of the Lord, in taking strange wives. If they would not stay unmarried till their return to the land of Israel, they were not so off for but that they might have fetched them wives from thence. Little did Elimelech think, when he went to sojourn in Moab, that ever his sons should thus join in affinity with Moabites. But those that bring young people into bad acquaintance, and take them out of the way of public ordinances, though they may think them well-principled, and armed against temptation, know not what they do, nor what will be the end thereof. It does not appear that the Moabitess were either proselyted to the Jewish religion, for Orpah is said to return to her gods, v. 15. the gods of M°ab were her's still. It is a groundless tradition of the Jews, that Ruth was the daughter of Eglon king of Moab, yet the Chaldee paraphrast inserts it; but this and their other tradition, which he inserts likewise, cannot agree that Boaz, who married Ruth, was the same with Jizan who judged Israel two hundred years after the death of Elimelech, Judges 12.

V. The death of Elimelech and his two sons, and the disconsolate condition Naomi was thereby re-duced to. Her husband died, v. 3. and her two sons, v. 5. soon after their marriage; and the Chaldee says, Their days were shortened, because they transgressed the law in marrying strange wives. See here, 1. That wherever we go, we cannot cut our own death, whose fatal arrows fly in all places. 2. That we have no expectation to escape the death out of the way of our duty. He that will save his life by any indirect courses shall lose it. 3. That death, when it comes into a family, often makes breach upon break. One is taken away, to prepare another to follow soon after; one is taken away, and that affliction is not duly improved, and therefore God sends another of the same kind. When Naomi had lost her husband, she took so
much the more complacency, and put so much the
more confidence, in her sons; under the shadow of
those surviving comforts, she thinks she shall live
among the heathen; and exceedingly glad she was
of these gourds, but, behold, they wither presently,
green and growing up in the morning, cut down
and dried up before night; buried soon after they
were married, for neither of them left any children.
So uncertain and transient are all our enjoyments
here. It is therefore our wisdom to make sure of
those comforts that will be made sure, and which
death cannot rob us of. But how desolate was the
condition, and how disconsolate the spirit, of poor
Naomi, when the woman was left of her two sons,
and her husband! When these two things come upon
her in a moment, come upon her in her perfection,
by whom shall she be comforted? Lose of
children and widowhood! Isa. 47. 9.—51. 19. It is
God alone who has wherewithal to comfort those
that are cast down.
6. Then she arose, with her daughters-in
law, that she might return from the coun
try of Moab: for she had heard in the
country of Moab how that the Lord had
visited his people in giving them bread.
7. Wherefore she went forth out of the place
where she was, and her two daughters-in
law with her: and they went on the way to
return unto the land of Judah. 8. And Naomi
said unto her two daughters-in-law,
Go, return each to her mother's house: the
Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have
dealt with the dead, and with me. 9. The
Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each
of you in the house of her husband. Then
she kissed them; and they lifted up their
voice and wept. 10. And they said unto her,
Surely we will return with thee unto thy
people. 11. And Naomi said, Turn
again, my daughters, why will you go with
me? are there yet any more sons in my
womb, that they may be your husbands?
12. Turn again, my daughters, go your
way; for I am too old to have a husband.
If I should say, I have hope, if I should
have a husband also to-night, and should
also bear sons; 13. Would ye tarry for
them till they were grown? would ye stay
for them from having husbands? nay, my
dughters; for it grieveth me much, for your
sakes, that the hand of the Lord is gone
out against me. 14. And they lifted up
their voice, and wept again: and Orpah
kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave
unto her. 15. And she said, Behold, thy
sister-in-law is gone back unto her people,
and unto her gods: return thou after thy
sister-in-law. 16. And Ruth said, Entreat
me not to leave thee, or to return from fol
lowing after thee: for whither thou goest, I
will go; and where thou lodgest, I will
lodge: thy people shall be my people, and
thy God my God. 17. Where thou diest
will I die, and there will I be buried: the
Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught
but death part thee and me. 18. When
she saw that she was steadfastly minded to
go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

See here,
The good affection Naomi bore to the land of
Israel, 7. 6. Though she could not stay in it while
the famine lasted, she would not stay out of it when
the famine ceased; though the country of Moab had
afforded her shelter, and supply in time of need,
yet she did not intend it should be her rest for ever,
no land should be that but the holy land, in which
the sanctuary of God was, of which he had said,
This is my rest for ever. Observe,
1. God, at last, returned in mercy to his people
for though he contended long, he will not continue
always. As the judgment of oppression, under
which they often groaned in the time of the judges,
still came to an end, after a while, when God had
raised them up a deliverer; so here, the judgment
of famine: at length God graciously visited his people
in giving them bread. Plenty is God's gift, and it
is his visitation which, by bread, the staff of life,
holds our souls in life. Though this mercy be the
more striking when it comes after famine, yet if we
have constantly enjoyed it, and never knew what
famine meant, we are not to think it the less valua
ble.
2. Naomi then returned, in duty to her people.
She had often inquired of their state, what harvest
they had, and how the markets went, and still the
tidings were discouraging; but like the prophet's
servant, who, having looked seven times and seen
no sign of rain, at length discerned a cloud, no big
ner than a man's hand, which soon overspread the
heavens; so Naomi, at last, has good news brought
her of plenty in Beth-lehem, and then she can think
of no other than returning thither again. Her new
alliances in the country of Moab could not make her
forget her relation to the land of Israel. Note.
Though there be a reason for our being in bad
places, yet when the reason ceases, we must by no
means continue in them. For reason, when lost,
are great afflictions, but when the force ceases, and it is continued of choice, then it be
comes a great sin. It should seem, she began to
think of returning immediately upon the death of
her two sons: (1.) Because she looked upon that
affliction to be a judgment upon her family for
lingering in the country of Moab: and hearing this
voice to be the voice of the rod, and of him that afflicted
it, she obeys and returns. Had she returned upon
the death of her husband, perhaps she might have
saved the life of her sons; but when God judgeth,
he will overcome, and if one affliction prevail not to
awaken us to a sight and sense of sin and duty, anoth
er shall. When death comes into a family, it
ought to be improved for the reforming of what is
amiss in the family: when relations are taken away
from us, we are put upon inquiry, whether, in some
instance or other, we are not out of the way of our
duty, that we may return to it. God calls our sins
to remembrance when he stays a son, 1 Kings 17. 18.
And if he thus hedge up our way with thorns, it is
that he may oblige us to say, We will go and re
turn to our first Husband, as Naomi here to her
country, Hos. 2. 7. (2.) Because the land of Moab
was now become a melancholy place to her. It
is with little pleasure that she can breathe in that
air in which her husband and sons had expired; or
walk on that ground in which they lay buried out of her
sight, but not out of her thoughts; now she will go
to Canaan again. Thus God takes away from us
the comforts we stay ourselves too much upon, and

RUTH, I.
solace ourselves too much in, here in the land of our sojournings, that we may think more of our home in the other world, and 'by faith and hope may hasten towards it. Earth is imbritered to us, that heaven may be endeared.

II. The good affection which her daughters-in-law, and one of them especially, bore to her, and her great return to them, the good affection.

1. They were both so kind as to accompany her, some part of the way at least, when she returned toward the land of Judah. Her two daughters-in-law did not go about to persuade her to continue in the land of Moab, but if she was resolved to go home, would pay her all possible civility and respect at parting; and this was one instance of it, they would bring her on her way, at least, to the utmost limits of their country, and help to carry her luggage as far as they went, for it does not appear she had any servant to attend her, v. 7. By this we see both that Naomi, as became an Israelite, had been very kind and obliging to them, and had won their love, in which she is an example to all mothers-in-law; and that Orpah and Ruth had a just sense of her kindness, for they were willing to return in such far. It was a sign they had dwelt together in unity, though they were dead, by whom they lived, and how they lived. Though they retained an affection to the gods of Moab, (v. 15,) and Naomi was still faithful to the God of Israel, yet that was no hinderance to either side from love and kindness, and all the good offices that the relation required. Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are too often at variance, (Matth. 10. 33,) and therefore it is the more commendable if they live in love; let all in that relation aim at the praise of despotic charity.

2. When they had gone a little way with her, Naomi, with a great deal of affection, urged them to go back; (v. 8, 9,) Return each to her mother's house. When they were dislodged by a sad providence from the house of their husbands, it was a mercy to them that they had their parents yet living, that they had their houses to go to, where they might be welcome and easy, and were not turned out to the world. Naomi suggests that their own mothers would be more agreeable to them than a mother-in-law, especially when their own mothers had houses, and their mother-in-law was not sure she had a place to lay her head in, which she could call her own.

She dismisses them, (1.) With commendation: that is a debt owing to those who had conducted themselves well in any relation, they ought to have the praise of it, Ye have dealt kindly with the dead and with me; that is, 'Ye were good wives to your husbands that are gone, and have been good daughters to me; and not wanting to your duty in either relation. Note, When we and our relations are parting, by death or otherwise, it is very comfortable, if we have both their testimony, and the testimony of our own consciences for us, that while we were together, we carefully endeavour to do our duty in the relation. This will help to allay the bitterness of parting; and while we are together we should labour so to conduct ourselves, as that when we part, we may not have cause to reflect with regret upon our miscarriages in the relation. (2.) With prayer. It is very proper for friends, when they part, to part with prayer. She sends them home with her blessing; and the blessing of a mother-in-law is not to be slighted. In this blessing she twice mentions the name Jehovah, Israel's God, and the kinsman-redeemer; that is, her daughters to look up to him as the only Fountain of all good. To him she prays in general, that he would recompense to them the kindness they had showed to her and her's. It may be expected and prayed for in faith, that God will deal kindly with those that have dealt kindly with their relations, He that waterveth, shall be watered also himself; and, in particular, that they might be happy in marrying again; The Lord grant that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Note, [1.] It is very fit, that according to the apostle's direction, (1 Tim. 5. 14,) the younger women, and he that looks after them, should marry, bear children, and guide the house. And it is as just that those who have approved themselves good wives, should not again be blessed with good husbands, especially those that, like these widows, have no children. [2.] The married state is a state of rest, such rest as this world affords, rest in the house of a husband, more than can be expected in the house of a mother, or a mother-in-law. [3.] This rest is God's gift, and will not be found in our outward condition, God must be acknowledged in it. There are those that are unequally yoked, that find little rest even in the house of a husband. Their affliction ought to make those the more thankful, to whom the relation is comfortable; yet let God be the Rest of the soul, and no perfect rest thought of on this side heaven. (3.) She dismissed them with great affection; she kissed them; she placed that on them that better to give them, but silver and gold she has none. Here is a right and kind kiss shall be the seal of such a true friendship, (as though she never saw them more,) she will, while she lives, retain the pleasing remembrance of. If relations must part, let them thus part in love, that they may (if they never meet again in this world) meet in the world of everlasting love.

3. The two young widows could not think of parting with their good mother-in-law, so much had they been accustomed to their protection; they were drawn upon them; they not only lifted up their voice and wept, as loath to part, but they professed a resolution to adhere to her; (v. 10,) 'Surely we will return with thee unto thy people, and take our lot with thee.' It is a rare instance of affection to a mother-in-law, and an evidence that they had, for her sake, conceived a good opinion of the people of Israel. Even Orpah, who afterward went back, preferred it to her going over with her head to God, (v. 10,) and so went good ward with Naomi. The sad ceremony of parting, and the tears shed on that occasion, drew from her this protestation, but it did not hold. Strong passions, without a settled judgment, commonly produce weak resolutions.

4. Naomi sets herself to dissuade them from going along with her, v. 11-13. If she had had any sons in Canaan, or any near kinsmen, whom she could have expected to marry the widows, to raise up seed to them that were gone, and to redeem the mortgaged estate of the family, it might have been some encouragement to them to hope for a comfortable settlement at Beth-lehem. But she had no sons, nor could she think of any near kinsman, likely to do the kinsman's part, and therefore argues that she was never likely to have any sons to be husbands for them, for she was too old to have a husband; it became her age to think of dying and going out of the world, not of marrying and beginning the world again. Or, if she had a husband, she could not expect to have children, nor if she had sons, could she think that these young widows would stay unmarried, till her sons that should be yet born, would grow up to be marriageable. Yet this was not all, she could not only not propose to herself to marry them like themselves, but she knew not how to maintain them like themselves. The greater part of the poor condition, to which she was reduced, was, that she was not in a capacity to do for them as she would. It grieved me more for your sakes, than for my own, that
the hand of the Lord is gone out against me. Ob-
serve, (1.) She judges herself chiefly amid at the
aspect that God's quarrel was principally
with her, "The hand of the Lord is gone out
against me." I am the sinner, it is with me that
God has a controversy, it is with me that he is con-
tending, I take it to myself." This will become us
when we are under affliction; though many others
share in the trouble, yet we must hear the voice of
the rod, as if it spoke only against us, and to us, not
bilitating the rebukes of it on other people's houses,
but as asking them to ourselves. (2.) She laments
most the trouble that redounded to them from it.
She was the sinner, but they were the sufferers, It
grieveth me much for your sakes. A gracious genci-
nous spirit can better bear its own burthen, than it
can bear to see it a grievance to others, or others
drawn any ways into trouble by it. Naomi could
more easily want herself, than see her daughters-
fortified from going, They that love thee, my daugh-
ters, for alas, I am in no capacity to do you any kindness."

But did Naomi do well, thus to discourage her
daughters from going with her, when, by taking
them with her, she might save them from the
idolatry of Moab, and bring them to the faith and
worship of the God of Israel? Naomi, no doubt
desired to do that. But, [1.] If they did come with
her, she would not have them to come upon her
account, to take upon them a profession of
religion, only in compliance to their relations, to
oblige their friends, or for the sake of company,
will be converts of small value and of short continu-
ance. [2.] If they did come with her, she would
have them to make it their deliberate choice, and
to sit down first and count the cost, as it concerns
these to do, that may take up a profession of
religion. It is good for young women, especially for
our Saints, when course with him who, in the
heat of zeal, spoke that bold word, Master, I will
follow thee whithersover thou goest; Come,
come," says Christ, "canst thou fare as I fare? The
Son of man has not where to lay his head; know
that, and then consider whether thou canst
find in thy heart to take thy lot with me," Matti.
8. 19, 20. Thus Naomi deals with her daughters-
in-law. Thoughts promoted by the allurements by serious
consideration, are likely to be kept always in the
imagination of the heart; whereas what is soon ripe,
is soon rotten.

5. Orpah was easily persuaded to yield to her
own corrupt inclination, and to go back to her
country, her kindred, and her father's house, now
when she stood fair for an effectual call from it.
They both lifted up their voices and wept again, (v. 14.) being more affected with the tenderer
side, then Naomi had said; but it had a different effect
upon them; to Orpah it was a saviour of death unto
death; the representation Naomi had made of the
inconveniences they must count upon, if they went
forward to Canaan, sent her back to the country
of Moab, and served her as an excuse for her apostasy.
But, on the contrary, it strengthened Ruth's resolu-
tion, and her good affection to Naomi, with whose
wisdom and goodness she was never so charmed,
as she was upon this occasion; thus to her it was a
saviour of life unto life. 1. Orpah kissed her mother-
n-law; that is, took an affectionate leave of her,
bid her farewell for ever, without any purpose to
follow her hereafter as he that said he would follow
Christ, when he had buried his father, or bidden
them farewell that were at home. Orpah's kiss
showed she had an affection for Naomi, more
loving and tender towards her; yet she did not love
her well enough to leave her country for her sake.
Thus, many have a value and affection for Christ,
and yet come short of salvation by him, because
they cannot find in their hearts to forsake other
things for him. They love him, and yet leave him,
because they do not love him enough, but love other
things better. Thus the young man that went away
from Christ, went away sorrowful, Matt. 19. 22.
But, (2.) Ruth clave unto her. Whether, when she
came from home, she was resolved to go for-
ward with her or no, does not appear; perhaps she
was before determined what to do, out of a sincere
affection to the God of Israel, and to his law, of
which, by the good instructions of Naomi, she had
some knowledge.

6. Naomi persuades Ruth to go back, urging, as a
further inducement, her sister's example; v. 15,
Thy sister-in-law is gone back to her people, and
therefore of course gone back to her gods; for what-
ever she might have done while she lived with her
mother-in-law, it would be next to impossible for
her to show any respect to the God of Israel, when
she went to live among the worshippers of Cle-
mosh. Those that forsake the communion of saints,
and return to the people of Moab, will certainly
break off their communion with God, and embrace
the idols of Moab. Now, return thou, after thy sister;
that is, "If ever thou wilt return, return now.
This is the greatest trial of thy constancy; stand this trial, and thou art mine for ever." Such
offences as that of Orpah's revolt, must needs come,
that the example of her faith and constancy, may be
made manifest, as Ruth was upon this occasion.

7. Ruth puts an end to the debate, by a most
solemn profession of her immovable resolution
never to forsake her, nor to return to her own
country and her old relations again, v. 16, 17.
Nothing could be said more fine, more brave, than this; she seems to have had another spirit, and another
speech, now that her sister was gone, and it is an
instance of the purity of her heart, and the resolute
choice of the better part. Draw me thus, and we
will run after thee. Her mother's dissuasions make her the more resolute; as when Joshua said to the people, Ye cannot serve the
Lord, they said it with the more vehemence, Nay,
but we will.

1. She begs of her mother-in-law to say no more
against her going, "Entreat me not to leave thee,
or to return after thee; for all thy entreaties now cannot shake that resolution which thy instructions formerly have wrought in me; and therefore let me hear no more of them." Note, It is a great vexation and uneasiness to those that
are resolved for God and religion, to be tempted
and solicited to alter their resolution. They that
would not think of it, would not hear of it. Entreat me
not. The margin reads it, Ye are not against me. Note,
It is a wretched thing to reckon those against us, and really our
enemies, that would hinder us in our way to the
heavenly Canaan. Our relations they may be, but
they cannot be our friends, that would dissuade us
from, and discourage us in the service of God, and
the work of religion.

2. She is very particular in her resolution to
leave to her, and never to forsake her; and she
speaks the language of one resolved for God and
heaven. She is so in love, not with her mother's
beauty, or riches, or gaiety, (all those were with-
ered and gone,) but with her wisdom, and virtue,
and grace, which remained with her, even in her present
poor and melancholy condition, that she resolves
to cleave to her. [1.] She will travel with her;
"Whither thou goest I will go, though to a country
I never saw, and which I have been trained up in
love. Nor to be at home in the country of my
mother; yet with thee every road shall be pleasant.
[2.] She will dwell with her; "Where thou
lodgest I will lodge, though it be in a cottage, not,
though it be no better a lodging than Jacob had,
when he had the stones for his pillow. Where thou
RUTH, I.

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settest up thy staff, I will set up mine, be it where it will be. (5.) She will twine interests with her, "They people shall be my people." From Naomi's character she concludes certainly, that that great nation was a wise and understanding people; she judges of them all by her good mother, who, whenever she went, was a credit to her country, (as all those should study to be, who profess relation to the better country, that is, the heavenly,) and therefore she will think herself happy if she may be numbered one of that. "Thy people shall be mine to associate with, or to be comfortable to, and to be concerned for." (4.) She will join in religion with her; thus she determined to be her's, 

usque ad aras—to the very altars, "Thy God shall be my God, and farewell to all the gods of Moab, which are vanity and a lie. I will adore the God of Israel, the only living and true God, trust in him alone, serve him, and in every thing be ruled by him; this is to be the Lord for ever." (5.) She will gladly die in the same bed, Where thou diest will I die: she takes it for granted they must both die, and that, in all probability, Naomi, as the elder, would die first, and resolves to continue in the same house, if it might be, till her days also were fulfilled; intimating likewise a desire to partake of her happiness in death; she wishes to die in the same place, in token of her dying after the same manner, and return to the God of Naomi, and let my last end be like hers. (6.) She will desire to be buried in the same grave, and to lay her bones by her's; There will I be buried; not desiring to have so much, as her dead body carried back to the country of Moab, in token of any remaining kindness for it; but Naomi and she having joined souls, she desires they may mingle dust, in her company, lying together, and being together for ever in the other world.

3. She backs her resolution to adhere to Naomi with a solemn oath; The Lord do so to me, and more also, (which was an ancient form of imprecation,) if ought but death part thee and me. An oath for confirmation was an end of this strife, and would leave a lasting obligation upon her, never to forsake that good way she was now making choice of. (1.) It is plain what Naomi desired; that she should separate between them, and for a time. She could promise to die, and be buried in the same place, but not at the same time; it might so happen, that she might die first, and that would part them. Note, Death parts those whom nothing else will part. A dying hour is a parting hour, and should be so thought of by us, and prepared for. (2.) It is resolved that nothing else should part them; not any kindness from her own people, nor any other influence, nor any zeal for the people among them; nor any unkindness from Israel, nor the fear of poverty and disgrace among them. "No, I will never leave thee." Now this is a pattern of a resolute convert to God and religion; thus must we be at a point. First, We must take the Lord for our God. "This God is my God for ever and ever:" I have avouched him for mine, and I will not go back again. Secondly, We must take his people for our people in all conditions; though they be a poor despised people, yet, if they be his, they must be our's. Thirdly, Having cast in our lot among them, we must be willing to take our lot with them, and to fare as they fare. We must submit to the same yoke, and draw in it faithfully; take up the same cross, and carry it cheerfully; go where God would have us to go, though it should be into humiliation, and to lodge where he would have us to lodge, though it be in a prison; die where he will have us to die, and lay our bones in the graves of the upright, who enter into peace, and rest in their beds, though they be but the graves of the common people. Fourthly, We must resolve to continue and persevere, and herein our adherence to Christ must be closer than that of Ruth to Naomi; she resolved that nothing but death should separate them; but we must resolve that death itself shall not separate us from our happiness in Christ, and then we may be sure that death itself shall not separate us from our happiness in Christ. Fifthly, We must bind our souls with a bond never to break these pious resolutions, and swear unto the Lord that we will cleave them. Fast bind, fast find. He that means honestly, does not start at assurances.

Lastly, Naomi was hereby silenced, r. 18. When she saw that Ruth was steadfastly minded to go with her, (which was the very thing she aimed at in all that she had said, to make her of a steadfast mind in going with her,) when she saw that she had gained her point, she was well satisfied, and left off speaking to her. She could desire nothing else than that solemn protestation which Ruth had just now made. See the power of resolution, how it puts temptation to silence. Those that are resolved, and go in religious ways without a steadfast mind, tempt the tempter, and stand like a door half open, which invites a thief; but resolution shuts and bolts the door, resists the Devil, and forces him to fly.

The Chaldee paraphrase thus relates the debate between Naomi and Ruth. Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, for I will be a proselyte; Naomi said, We are commanded to keep sabbaths, and good days, on which we may not travel above a thousand cubits; (a sabbath-day's journey:) Well, says Ruth, whither thou goest, I will go. Naomi said, We are commanded not to tarry all night with Gentiles; Well, says Ruth, where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Naomi said, We are commanded to keep six hundred and thirteen sweatiefs; Well, says Ruth, whatever thy people keep, I will keep, for they shall be my people. Naomi said, We are forbidden to worship any strange god; Well, says Ruth, thy God shall be my God. Naomi said, We have four sorts of deaths for malefactors, stoning, burning, strangling, and slaying with the sword; Well, says Ruth, where thou diest, I will be buried, in the house of Sephukre; And there said, Ruth, will I be buried.

19. So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them; and they said, Is this Naomi? 20. And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. 21. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me hither again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? 22. So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley-harvest.

Naomi and Ruth, after many a weary step, (the fatigue of the journey, we may suppose, being somewhat relieved by the good instructions Naomi gave to her proselyte, and the good discourse they had together,) came at last to Beth-lehem. And they came very seasonably, in the beginning of the
barley harvest, which was the first of their harvests, that of wheat following after. Now Naomi's own eyes might convince her of the truth of what she had heard. 2. How old acquaintance gathered about her, to inquire concerning her state, and to bid her welcome to Beth-lehem again. Or perhaps, they were moved about her, lest she should be a charge to the town, she looked so bare. By this it appears that she had formerly lived respectively, else there had not been so much notice taken of her. If those that have been in a high and prosperous condition, break, or fall into poverty or disgrace, their fall is the more remarkable, and they said, Is this Naomi? The woman of the city said it, for the word is feminine. They with whom she had formerly been intimate were surprised to see her in this condition; she was so much broken and altered with her afflictions, that they could scarcely believe their own eyes, or think that this was the same person whom they had formerly seen, so fresh and fair, and gay; Is this Naomi? So unlike is the rose, when it is withered, to the rose that was blooming. What a poor figure does Naomi make now, compared with what she made in her prosperity! If any asked this question in contempt, upbraiding her with her miseries, ("Is this she that could not be content to fare as her neighbours did, but must ramble to a strange country? See what she has got by it") their temper was very base and sordid: nothing more barbarous than to triumph over those that are fallen. But we suppose it was when it was asked, with compassion and commiseration; "Is this she that lived so plentifully, and kept so good a house, and was so charitable to the poor? How is the gold become dim?" They that had seen the magnificence of the first temple, wept, when they saw the meanness of the second; so these here. Note, Afflictions will make great and surprising changes in a little time. When we see how sickness and old age can change the fittest creature, we may think of what the Beth-lehemites said, Is this Naomi? One would not take it to be the same person. God, by his grace, fits us for all such changes, especially the great change!

II. Of the composure of Naomi's spirit. If some upbraided her with her poverty, she was not moved against them, as she would have been, if she had been poor and proud; but, with a great deal of pious patience, bore that, and all the melancholy effects of her affliction; (v. 20, 21.) Call me not Naomi, call me Mara, &c. Naomi signifies pleasant or amiable; but all my pleasant things are laid waste; call me Mara, bitter, or bitterness, for I am now a woman of a sorrowful spirit. Thus does she bring her mind to her condition, which we all ought to do, when our condition is not in every thing agreeable to us. And in this there is a pious and good reason; if we were emptied of; a good part which shall not be taken from those that have it. (2.) She acknowledges the hand of God, his mighty hand, in the affliction. "It is the Lord that has brought me home again empty; it is the Almighty that has afflicted me." Note, Nothing conduces more to a gracious soul under an affliction, than the consideration of the hand of God in it. It is the word, 1 Sam. 3. 18. Job 1. 21. Especially to consider, that he who afflicts us, is Shaddai, the Almighty, with whom it is folly to contend, and to whom it is our-duty and interest to submit. It is that name of God by which he enters into covenant with his people, I am God Almighty, God All-sufficient, Gen. 17. 1. He afflicts as a God in covenant, and his all-sufficiency may be our support and supply under all our afflictions. He that empowers us of the creature, knows how to fill us with himself. (3.) She speaks very feebly of the impression which the affliction had made upon her; He has dealt very bitterly with me. The cup of affliction is a bitter cup; and even that which afterward yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness, yet for the present, is not joyous, but grievous, Heb. 12. 11. Job complains, Thou writest bitter things against me, Job. 13. 26. (4.) She owns the affliction to come from God as a controversy; The Lord hath testified against me. Note, When God corrects us, he testifies against us, and contends with us, (Job 10. 17.) intimating that he is displeased with us. Every rod has a voice, the voice of a witness.

2. The composure of her spirit with this change. "Call me not Naomi, for I am no more pleasant, either to myself or to my friends, but call me Mara, a name more agreeable to my present state." Many that are debased and impoverished, yet affect to be called by the empty names and titles of honour they have formerly enjoyed. Naomi did not so; her humility regards not a glorious name in a dejected state; if God deal bitterly with her, she makes application to herself, and is willing to be called Mara, bitter. Note, It well becomes us to have our hearts humbled under humbling providence; one word spoken down to our comfort, and we are humbled down, and our spirits should be brought down with it. And then our troubles are sanctified to us, when we thus comport with them; for it is not an affliction in itself, but an affliction righteously borne, that does good. Perfidisti tota, si nondum miseris esse deditis!—So many calamities have been lost upon you, if you have not yet learned how to suffer. Sen. ad Helv. Tribulation works patience.

CHAP. II.

There is scarcely any chapter in all the sacred history, that supplies us so fully as this to the thoughts into which a person as Ruth, a poor Moabish widow, so mean an action as her gleaning corn in a neighbour's field, and the minute circumstances thereof. But all this was in order her being grafted into the line of Christ, and taken in among his ancestors, that she might be secure of the espousals of the Gentle church to Christ, Isa. 54. 1. And this makes the story remarkable; and many of the passagems of it are instructive, and very improving. Here 1. Ruth's humility and industry in gathering corn, Providence directing her to Boaz's field, v. 1. 9. II. The great favour which Boaz showed to her in many instances, v. 4. 16. III. The return of Ruth to her mother-in-law, v. 18. 22.

1. And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name
213 And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. 3. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her lap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

Naomi had now gained a settlement in Bethlehem among her old friends; and here we have an account.

I. Of her rich kinsman, Boaz, a mighty man of wealth, v. 1. The Chaldee reads it, mighty in the law; if he was both, it was a most rare and excellent conjuction, to be mighty in wealth, and mighty in the scriptures too; those that are so, are mighty indeed. He was grandson of Nahshon, that was prince of the tribe of Judah in the wilderness, and son of Salmon, probably a younger son, by Rahab, the harlot of Jericho; he carries might in his name, Boaz, in him is strength; and he was of the family of Elimelech, that family which was now reduced and brought so low. Observe, 1. Boaz, though a rich and a great man, had poor relations; every branch of the tree is not a top branch. Let not, therefore, the rich in this world be ashamed to own their kindred that are mean and despised, lest they be found therein proud, scornful, and unnatural. 2. Naomi, though a poor contemptible widow, had rich relations, whom yet she neither boasted of, nor was burthensome to, nor expected any thing from, when she was returning to Beth-lehem in distress. Those that have rich relations, while they themselves are poor, ought to know that it is the wise providence of God that makes the difference, (in which we ought to acquiesce,) and that to be proud of our relation to such, is a great sin, and to trust it, is great folly.

II. Of her poor daughter-in-law, Ruth. 1. Her condition was very low and poor; which was a great trial to the faith and constancy of a young proselyte. The Beth-lehemites had done well, if they had cited Naomi and her daughter-in-law first to one good house, and then to another; (it would have been a great support to an aged widow, and a great encouragement to a new convert;) but, instead of tasting the dainties of Canaan, they have no way of getting necessary food, but by gleaning corn; and otherwise, for ought that appears, they might have starved. Note, God has chosen the poor of this world; and poor they are like to be, for though God has chosen them, commonly men overlook them. 2. Her character, in this condition, was very good; v. 2. She said to Naomi, not, “Let me now go to the land of Moab again, for there is no living here; here there is want, but in my father's house there is bread enough;” no, she is not mindful of the country from which she came out, otherwise she had now a fair occasion to return; the God of Israel shall have God, and though he slay not, yet will she trust in him and never forsake him. But her request is, Let me go to the field and glean ears of corn. Those that are well born, and have been well brought up, know not what straits they may be reduced to, nor what mean employments they may be obliged to get their bread by, Lam. 4. 5. When the case is thus melancholy, let Ruth be remembered, who is a great example.

I. Of humility: when providence had made her poor, she did not say, “To glean, which is in effect to beg, I am ashamed;” but cheerfully stoops to the meanness of her circumstances, and accommodates herself to her lot. High spirits can more easily starve than stoop; Ruth was none of those. She does not tell her mother she was never brought up to live upon crumbs. Though she was not brought up to it, she is brought down to it, and is not easily at it. Nay, it is her own motion, not her mother's injunction; humility is one of the brightest ornaments of youth, and one of the best omens. Before Ruth's honour was this humility. Observe, how humbly she speaks of herself, in her expectation of leave to glean; “Let me glean after him, in whose sight I shall find grace.” She does not say, “I will go glean, and surely nobody will deny me the liberty;” but, “I will go glean, in the hope that somebody will allow me the liberty.” Note, Poor people must not demand kindness as a debt, but humbly ask it, and take it as a favour, though in ever so small a matter. It becomes the poor to use entreaties.

2. Of industry. She does not say to her mother-in-law, “Let me now go a visiting to the ladies of the town, or go a walking in the fields to take the air, and be merry, I cannot sit all day moping with you;” no, it is not sport, but business, that her heart is upon, “Let me go glean and glean ears of corn, and that will turn to some good account.” She was one of those virtuous women that love not to eat the bread of idleness; she loved to take pains. This is an example to all people, let the least be expected to play a part in the providence of the world, and let their hands find to do, do it with their might; a disposition to diligence bodes well, both for this world and the other. Love not sleep, love not sport, love not sauntering, but love business. It is also an example to poor people to work for their living, and not beg that which they are able to earn. We must not be shy of any honest employment, though it be mean, Job 19:21—22:14, which by some are thought to be a reproach. Sin is not so abominable, but we must not think anything else so at Providence calls us to.

3. Of regard to her mother; though she was but her mother-in-law, and though, being loosed by death from the law of her husband, she might easily suppose herself thereby loosed from the law of her husband's mother, yet she is dutifully observant of her. She will not go out without letting her know, as in the days of her husband, to ask permission. This is not hypocrisy, but common honesty; they ought to show to their parents and guardians; it is a part of the honour due to them. She did not say, “Mother, if you will go with me, I will go glean;” but, “Do you sit at home, and take your ease, and I will go abroad, and take pains.” Juniores ad Labores—Youth should work. Let young people take advice from the aged, but not put them upon toil.

4. Of dependence upon Providence; intimated in that, I will glean after him, in whose sight I shall find grace. She knows not which way to go, nor whom to inquire for, but will trust Providence to raise her up some friend or other that will be kind to her. Let us always keep up good thoughts of the Divine Providence, and believe, that while we do well, it will do well for us. Let us be careful to end it did well for Ruth; for when she went out alone, without guide or companion, to glean, her hap was to light on the field of Boaz, v. 3. To her it seemed casual, she knew not whose field it was, nor had she any reason for going to that more than any other, and therefore it is said to be her hap; but Providence directed her steps to this field. Note, God wisely orders small events; and those that seem altogether contingent, serve his own glory, and the good of his people. Many a great affair is brought about by a little turn, which seemed forfutitous to us, but was directed by Providence with design.

And, behold, Boaz came from Beth-
RUTH, II.

1. He had a servant that was set over the reapers, v. 6. In great families, it is requisite there should be one to oversee the rest of the servants, and appoint to each his portion, both of work and meat. Ministers are such servants in God's house, and it is requisite that they be both wise and faithful, and show their Lord all things, as he here, which is his own business not to do.

2. Yet he came himself to his reapers, to see how the work went forward, if he found any thing amiss, to rectify it, and to give further orders what should be done. This was both for his own interest, (he that wholly leaves his business to others, will have it done by halves; the master's eye makes a fat horse,) and it was also for the encouragement of his servants, who would go on the more cheerfully in their work, when their master countenanced them so far as to make them a visit. Masters that live at ease, should think with tenderness of those that toil for them, and bear the burthen and heat of the day.

3. Kind and pious salutations were interchanged between Boaz and his reapers. He said to them, The Lord be with you; and they replied, The Lord bless thee, v. 4. Hereby they expressed, (1.) Their esteem for one another, by addressing each other thus: the reapers one to another, the servants one to another, and their servants to him, as a good master. When he came to them, he did not fall a chiding them, as if he came only to find fault and exercise his authority, but he prayed for them; “The Lord be with you, prosper you, and give you health and strength, and preserve you from any disaster;” nor did they, as soon as ever he was out of hearing, fall a cursing him, as some ill-natured servants that hate their master, and think it a matter of course to return him his courtesy, and boisterously make the appearance of blessing, Lord bless thee, and make our labours serviceable to thy prosperity!” Things are likely to go on well in a house where there is such good-will as this between masters and servants. (2.) Their joint dependence upon the divine providence; they expressed their kindness to each other by praying one for another. They show not only their courtesy, but their piety, and an acknowledgment that all good things come from God, and are a dispensation of his grace. They therefore should value and desire above any thing else, both for ourselves and others. Let us from hence learn to use, [1.] Courteous salutations, as expressions of a sincere good-will to our friends. [2.] Pious ejaculations, lifting up our hearts to God for his favour, in such short prayers as these. Only, we must take heed that they do not degenerate into formality, lest in them we take the name of the Lord our God in vain; but if we be sincere in them, we may in them keep up our communion with God, and fetch in mercy and grace from him. It appears to have been the usual custom, thus to wish reapers good speed, Ps. 129. 7, 8.

4. He took an account from his reapers concerning a stranger he met with in the field, and gave necessary orders concerning her, that they should not touch her, v. 9, nor reproach her, v. 13. Masters must take care, not only that they do not hurt themselves, but that they suffer not their servants and those under them, to do hurt. He also ordered them to be kind to her, and let fall some of the handfuls on purpose for her; though it is fit that masters should restrain and rebuke their servants' wastefulness, yet they should not tie them up from being charitable, but give them allowance for that, with prudent directions.

II. Boaz was very kind to Ruth, and showed her a great deal of favour, induced to it by the account he had of her, and what he observed concerning
RUTH, II.

1. The steward gave to Boaz a very fair account of her, proper to recommend her to his favour, v. 6, 7. (1.) That she was a stranger, and therefore one of those that by the law of God were to gather the gleanings at the petitioner's request, Deut. 26. 10. 9. 10. She is the Moabitish damsel. (2.) That she was allied to his family; she came back with Naomi, the wife of Elimelech, a kinsman of Boaz. (3.) That she was a proselyte, for she came out of the country of Moab, to settle in the land of Israel. (4.) That she was very modest, and had not grieved till she had asked leave. (5.) That she was very industrious, and so far as may be, she continued to work even until now. And the poor, that are industrious and willing to take pains, are fit to be encouraged. Now, in the heat of the day, she tarried a little in the house or booth, that was set up in the field for shelter from the weather, to repose herself, and some suggest that it is probable she retired for her devotion. But she soon came back to her work, and, except that little intermission, kept close to it all the day. (6.) That she was willing to work with her own hands, or do that work which was neither menial nor base. Servants should be just in the characters and reports they give to their masters, and take heed they do not misrepresent any person, nor without cause discourage their masters' charity.

2. Boaz was hereupon extremely civil to her in divers instances. (1.) He ordered her to attend his reapers in every field they gathered in, and not to glean in another field, for she should not need to go, which would be a breach of rule; (2.) A place where else to mend herself. (2.) He charged all his servants to be very tender of her, and respectful to her, who, no doubt, would be so to one whom they saw their master kind to. She was a stranger, and, it is probable, her language, dress, and mien, differed much from theirs; but he charged them that they should not in any thing affront her, or be abusive to her, (3.) that his servants are too apt to be to strangers. (3.) He bid her welcome to the entertainment he had provided for his servants. He ordered her, not only to drink of the water which was drawn for them, (for that seems to be the liquor he means, v. 9.) drawn from the famous well of Beth-lehem, which was by the gate, the water of which David longed for, 2 Sam. 21. 13.) but at meat-time to eat from of them, and, so he did to her, Thou hast comforted me, for that thou hast spoken friendly to me. These that are great, and in high places, know not how much good they may do to their inferiors with a kind look, or by speaking friendly to them; and so small an expense, one would think, they should not grudge, when it shall be put upon the score of their charity. (4.) When Boaz gave her her dinner with his reapers, she ate so much that it was not wholly sufficient her, and left the rest; and immediately rose up to glean, v. 14. 15. She did not, under pretence either of her want, or of her labour, eat more than was convenient for her, nor so much as to unfit her for work in the afternoon: temperance is a friend to industry; and we must eat and drink to strengthen us for business, and not to indispose us to it.

17. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out what she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley. 18. And she took it up, and went into the city; and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her...
that she had reserved after she was sufficed. 19. And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz. 20. And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. 21. And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. 22. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. 23. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley-harvest, and of wheat-harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law.

Here,

I. Ruth finishes her day's work, v. 17. 1. She took care not to lose time, for she gleaned until even. We must not be weary of well-doing, because in due season we shall reap. She did not make an excuse to sit still, or go home, till the evening; let us work the works of him that sent us, while it is day. She scarcely used, much less did she abuse, the kind means that were for her; for though he commanded his servants to leave handfuls for her, she continued to glean the scattered ears. 2. She took care not to lose what she had gathered, but threshed it herself, that she might the more easily carry it home, and might have it ready for use. The slothful man roseth not that which he took in hunting, and so loseseth the benefit of it; but the substance of a diligent man is precious, Prov. 12. 11. Ruth had gathered it ear by ear, but when she had put it all together, it was an ephah of barley, about four pecks. Many a little makes a great deal. It is an encouragement to industry, that in all labour, even that of gathering, there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury. When she had got her corn into as little compass as she could, she took it up herself, and carried it into the city; though, had she asked them, it is likely some of Boaz's harvestmen would have done that for her. We should study to be as little as possible troublesome to those that are kind to us. She did not think it either too hard or too mean a service, to carry her corn herself into the city, but was rather pleased with what she had gotten by her own industry, and careful to secure it; and let us thus take care that we lose not those things which we have wrought, which were gained, 2 John 8.

II. She paid her respects to her mother-in-law; went straight home to her, and did not go to converse with Boaz' servants; showed her what she had gleaned, that she might see she had not been idle. 1. She entertained her with what she had left of the good dinner Boaz had given her. She gave to her that she had reserved, after she was sufficed, v. 18. which refers to v. 14. If she had any thing better than another, her mother should have part with her. Thus, having showed industry abroad, she showed piety at home; so children's maintaining of their parents is called, (1 Tim. 5. 4.) and it is part of their honour due to them by the fifth commandment, Matt. 15. 6. 2. She gave her an account of her day's work, and how a kind providence had favoured her in it, which made it very comfortable to her; for the gleanings that a righteous man hath, are better than the harvests of many wicked, Ps. 37. 16. (1.) Naomi asked her where she had been: Where hast thou gleaned to-day? Note, Parents should take care to inquire into the ways of their children, how, and where, and in what company they spend their time. This may prevent many extravagancies which children, left to themselves, run into, by which they bring both themselves and their parents to shame. If we are not our brethren's, yet surely we are our children's keepers: and we know what a son Adonijah proved, that never had been childen. Parents should examine their children, not to frighten or discourage them, so as to make them hate home, or tempt them not to tell a lie, but to commend them if they have done well, and with mildness to reprove and caution them if they have done otherwise. It is a good question for us to ask ourselves in the close of every day, "Where have I gleaned to-day? What improvements have I made in knowledge and grace? What have I done or gotten, that will turn to a good account?"

(2.) Ruth gave her a particular account of the kindness she had received from Boaz, (v. 19.) and the hopes she had of further kindness from him, he having ordered her to attend his servants throughout all the harvest, v. 21. Note, Children should look upon themselves as accountable to their parents and to those that are over them, and not to think it a disparagement to them to be examined; and to them to make it a matter which is good, and they shall have praise of the same. Ruth told her mother what kindness Boaz had showed her, that she might take some occasion or another to acknowledge it, and return him thanks; but she did not tell her how Boaz had commended her, v. 11. Humility teaches us, not only not to praise ourselves, but not to be forward to publish others' praises of us.

(3.) We are here told what Naomi said to it. She prayed particularly for him that had been her daughter's benefactor, even before she knew who it was; (v. 19.) Blessed be he, whoever he was, that did take knowledge of thee; shooting the arrow of prayer at a venture. But more particularly, when she was told who it was; v. 20, Blessed be he of the Lord. Note, The poor must pray for those that are kind and liberal to them, and thus requite them, when they are not capable of making them return it to others, as Prov. 17. 13. Let us pray for those that refresh them, Job 29. 13. 31. 20. And he that hears the cries of the poor against their oppressors, (Exod. 22. 27.) it may be hoped, will hear the prayers of the poor for their benefactors. She now remembered the former kindnesses Boaz had showed to her husband and sons, and joins those to this, he has not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. If we be the dead, let us show kindness even to those that seem to have forgotten our former favours, perhaps it may help to revive the remembrance, even of those which seem buried.

[2.] She acquainted Ruth with the relation their family was in to Boaz; The man is near of kin to us. It should seem she had been so long in Moab, that she had forgotten her kindred in the land of Moab, till by this providence God brought it to her mind. At least, she had not told Ruth of it, though it might have been some encouragement to a young
proselyte. Unlike to humble Naomi, are many, who, though fallen into decay themselves, are continually beasting upon their great relations. Nay, observe the chain of thought here, and in it a chain of providences, bringing about what was designed concerning Ruth. Ruth names Boaz as one that had been kind to her; Naomi bethinks herself that she should be, and presently recalls herself; "The man is near of kin to us; now that I hear his name, I remember him very well." This thought brings her another to our mind; our God, that has the right to redeem our estate that was mortgaged, and therefore from him we may expect further kindness. That is the likeliest man in all Beth-lehem to set us up." Thus God brings things to our mind, sometimes of a sudden, that prove to have a wonderful tendency to our good.

3. She appointed Ruth to continue her attendance in the fields of Boaz; (v. 22.) "Let them not mert thee in any other field, for that will be construed a contempt of his courtesy." Our blessed Saviour is our _Goel_; it is he that has a right to redeem: if we expect to receive benefit by him, let us closely adhere to him, and his fields and his family; let us not go to the world and its fields for that which is to be had with him only, and which he has encouraged us to expect from him. Has the Lord dealt thus with us? Let us not be found in any other field, nor seek for happiness and satisfaction in the creature. Tradesmen take it ill, that those are in their books, go to another shop. We lose divine favours, if we slight them. Some think Naomi gave her daughter-in-law a tacit rebuke; she had spoken (v. 21.) of keeping fast by the young men; *"Nay,"* said Naomi, (v. 22.) *"It is good that thou shutt shutt the young men out, as fishes are finer for them than the young men." But they are too critical: Ruth spake of the young men, because they were the principal labourers, and to them Boaz had given directions concerning her; and Naomi takes it for granted, while she attended the young men, her society would be with the maidens, as was fit.

Ruth dutifully obeyed her mother's directions; she continued to glean to the end, not only of the barley-harvest, but of the wheat-harvest, which followed it, that she might gather food in harvest to serve for winter, Prov. 6. 6-8. She also kept fast by the maidens of Boaz, with whom she afterward cultivated an acquaintance, which might do her service, v. 23. But she constantly came to her mother at night in due time, as became a virtuous woman, that was for working-days, and not for merry nights. And when the harvest was ended, (v. 21.) Bishop Patrick expounds it,) she did not gad abroad, but kept her aged mother company at home. Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land, and we know what a disgrace her vanity ended in; Ruth kept at home, and helped to maintain her mother, and went out on no other errand than to get provision for her; and we shall find afterward what preferment her humility and industry ended in.

Seest thou a woman diligent in her business? Honour is before him.

CHAP. III.

We found it very easy, in the former chapter, to applaud the decency of Ruth's behaviour, aní, to show what good use we may make of the account given us of it; but, in this chapter, we shall have much ado to vindicate it from the imputation of indecency, and to save it from having an ill use made of it; but the goodness of those times was such, as saves what is recorded here from being ill done, and yet the badness of these times is such, that it will not justify any now in doing the like. Here is, I. The direction Naomi gave to her daughter-in-law, how to claim Boaz for her husband, v. 1...5. II. Ruth's punctual observance of these directions, v. 6. 7. III. The kind and honourable treatment Boaz gave her, v. 8. 15. IV. Her return to her mother-in-law, v. 16. 18.

1. THEN Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? 2. And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? behold, he winnoweth barley to-night in the threshing-floor. 3. Wash thyself, therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: _but_ make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. 4. And it shall be, when he hath set down, thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. 5. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.

Here.

1. Naomi's care for her daughter's comfort, is, without doubt, very commendable, and is recorded for imitation. She had no thoughts of marrying herself, ch. 1. 12. But though she was old, had resolved upon a perpetual widowhood, yet she was far from the thoughts of confining her daughter-in-law to it, that was young. Age must not make itself a standard to youth. On the contrary, she is full of the conveniences to get her daughter well rid. Her wisdom projected that for her daughter, which her daughter's modesty forbade her to project for herself, v. 1. This she did, 1. In justice to the dead, to raise up seed to them that were gone, and to preserve the family from being extinct. 2. In kindness and gratitude to her daughter-in-law, who had conducted herself very dutifully and respectfully to her. "My daughter, this is her father-in-law looking upon her in all respects as her own," _shall I not seek rest for thee_, that is, *"a settlement in the married state; shall I not get thee a good husband, that it may be well with thee," that is, _that thou mayest live pleasantly and pleasantly, and not spend all thy days in the mean and melancholy condition we now live in?_ Note, (1.) A married state is, or should be, a state of rest to young people; wandering affections are then fixed, and the heart must be at rest: it is at rest in the house of a husband, and in his heart, ch. 1. 9. Those are giddily indeed, that marriage does not compose. (2.) That which should be desired and designed by those that enter into a marriage state, is, _that it may be well with them_; in order to which, it is necessary that they chuse well; otherwise, instead of being a rest to them, it may prove the greatest uneasiness. Parents, in disposing of their children, must have, in their eye, _that it may be well with them_. And be it always remembered, _That it is best for us, which is best for our souls_. (2.) It is the duty of parents to seek this rest for their children, and to do all that is fit for them to do, in due time, in order to it. And the more dutiful and respectful they are to them, though they can the worse spare them, yet they should the rather prefer them, and the better. II. The kindness and care of this young woman, in order to her daughter's preferment, was very extraordinary, and looks suspicious. If there was anything improper in it, the fault must lie upon Naomi, who put her daughter upon it, and who knew, or should know, the laws and usages of Israel better than Ruth. 1. It was
true, that Boaz, being near of kin to the deceased, and (for aught that Naomi knew to the contrary) the nearest of all now alive, was obliged by the divine law to marry the widow of Mahlon, who was the eldest son of Elimelech, and was dead without issue, v. 2. "Is not Boaz of our kindred, and therefore bound in conscience to take care of our affairs? Why should we not remind him of his duty? This may encourage us to lay ourselves by faith at the feet of Christ, that he is our near kinsman, having taken our nature upon him, he is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. 2. It was a convenient time to remind him of it, now that he had got so much acquaintance with Ruth, by her constant attendance upon his reapers during the whole harvest, which was now ended; and he also, by the kindness he had shewed to Ruth in lesser matters, had encouraged Naomi to hope that he would not be unkind, much less unjust, in that greater. And she thought it was a good opportunity to apply to him, when he made a winnowing-feast at his threshing-floor, (v. 2.) then and there completing the joy of the harvest, and treating his workmen like a kind master; He winnoweth barley to-night, that is, he makes his entertainment tonight; as Nabul and Absalom had feasts at their sheep-shearing, so Boaz at his winnowing. 3. Naomi therefore orders her daughter-in-law to make herself clean and neat, not to make herself fine; (v. 3.) "Wash thyself and anoint thee, not paint thee, (as Jezebel,) put on thy raiment, but not the attire of the harlot, and go down to the floor, for he is probably the most kind person to herself; and perhaps it was the usage in that country, that in this case the woman should make the demand, so much is intimated by the law, (Deut. 25.) 7. 9. Naomi therefore orders her daughter-in-law to make herself clean and neat, not to make herself fine; (v. 3.) "Wash thyself and anoint thee, not paint thee, (as Jezebel,) put on thy raiment, but not the attire of the harlot, and go down to the floor, for he is probably the most kind person to herself; and perhaps it was the usage in that country, that in this case the woman should make the demand, so much is intimated by the law, (Deut. 25.) 7. 9. Naomi therefore orders her daughter-in-law to make herself clean and neat, not to make herself fine; (v. 3.) "Wash thyself and anoint thee, not paint thee, (as Jezebel,) put on thy raiment, but not the attire of the harlot, and go down to the floor, for he is probably the most kind person to herself; and perhaps it was the usage in that country, that in this case the woman should make the demand, so much is intimated by the law, (Deut. 25.) 7. 9.
servants with extraordinary entertainments, and, for their encouragement, did eat and drink with them. It well becomes those that are rich and great, to be generous to, and also to be familiar with, those that are under them, and employed for them. 3. When Boaz had supped with his workmen, and been a while pleasant with them, he went to bed in due time, so early, that by midnight he had his first sleep, (v. 8.) and thus he would be fit for his morning work. But on the next day, it would not, from this instance, entice the least suspicion of his character, or seem to do so; perhaps blaming himself that he had not offered the service of a kinsman to these distressed widows, and saved her this trouble, and ready to say as Judah concerning his daughter-in-law, She is more righteous than I.

Note, (1.) He commended her, spoke kindly to her, called her by her name, and spoke honourably of her, as a woman of great virtue. She had showed in this instance more kindness to her mother-in-law, and to the family into which she had matched, than in any instance yet. It was very kind to leave her own country, and come along with her mother to the land of Israel, to dwell with her, and help to maintain her; for this he had high comfort (ch. 4. 11.) but not he says, Thou hast showed more kindness in the latter end, than at the beginning. (v. 10.) in that she consulted not her own fancy, but her husband's family, in marrying again. She received not the addresses of young men (much less did she seek them) whether poor or rich, but was willing to marry as the law directed, though it was to an old man, because it was from the honour and interest of the family into which she had matched, and the possession of an entire kindness. Young people must aim, in disposing of themselves, not so much to please their own eye, as to please God and their parents.

(2.) He promised her marriage; (v. 11.) "Fear not that I will slight thee, or expose thee; no, I will do all that thou requir'st, for it is the same that the law requires, from the next of kin, and I have no reason to deny it, for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." V. 11.

Note, (1.) Exemplary virtue ought to have its due praise, (Phil. 4. 8.) and it will recommend both men and women to the esteem of the wisest and best. Ruth was a poor woman, and poverty often obscures the lustre of virtue: yet Ruth's virtues, even in a mean condition, were generally taken notice of, and could not be hid; nay, her virtues took away the reproach of her poverty; if poor people be but good people, they shall be known not from God and man. Ruth had been remarkable for her humility, which paved the way to this honour; the less she proclaimed her own goodness, the more did her neighbours take notice of it. (2.) In the choice of yoke-fellows, virtue should especially be regard'd, known approved virtue; let religion determine the choice, and it will certainly crown the choice and make it most valuable: it is better than gold, and when it is said to be good with an inheritance, the meaning is, that an inheritance is worth little without it.

III. The good acceptance Ruth gained with Boaz. What she did, had no ill effect, either one way or other, so that Naomi was not mistaken in her good opinion of her kinsman. He knew her demand was just and honourable, and treated her accordingly, and did not deal with his sister as with a harlot, Gen. 34. 31. For, 1. He did not offer to violate her chastity, though he had all the opportunity that could be for it. The Chaldee paraphrase thus descants upon it, He subdued his concupiscence, and did not approach to her, but did as Joseph the Just, who would not come near to his Egyptian mistress, and as Phallath the Pious, who, when Saul had given him Michal, David's wife, (1 Sam. 25. 44.) put a sword between himself and her, that he might not touch her. Boaz knew it was not any sinful lust that brought her thither, and therefore bravely maintained both his own honour and her's. 2. He did not put any ill construction upon what she did, did not reproach her as an impudent woman, and

unfit to make an honest man a wife; she having approved herself well in the facts, and all her conduct having been modest and discreet; he would not, from this instance, entertain the least suspicion of her character, or seem to do so; perhaps blaming himself that he had not offered the service of a kinsman to these distressed widows, and saved her this trouble, and ready to say as Judah concerning his daughter-in-law, She is more righteous than I.
promise he backs with a solemn oath, for it was a conditional contract of marriage; (v. 13.) As the Lord liveth. Thus keeping the matter in suspense, he bade her wait till morning. Bishop Hall thus sums up this matter in his Contemplations.

"Boaz, instead of touching her as a wanton, blessed her as a father, encourageth her as a friend, promised her as a kinsman, rewards her as a patron, and sends her away laden with hopes and gifts, no less chaste, more happy, than she came. O admirable temperance, worthy the progenitor of Him in whose lips and heart there was no guile!"

14. And she lay at his feet until the morning; and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor. 15. Also he said, Bring the vail that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city. 16. And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her. 17. And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law. 18. Then said she, Sit still my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.

We are here told,

1. How Ruth was dismissed by Boaz. It had not been safe for her to go home in the dead of the night, therefore she lay at his feet (not by his side) until morning; but as soon as ever the day broke, that she had light to go home by, she got away, before one could know another, that if she were seen, yet she might not be known to be abroad so unseasonably. She was not shy of being known to be a gleaner in the field, nor ashamed of that mark of her poverty, lest it should be known to be a night-walker, for her virtue was a greater est honour, and that which she most valued.

Boaz dismissed her. 1. With a charge to keep counsel; (v. 14.) Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor, and lay all night so near to Boaz; not that they needed to care much what people said of them, while they were both conscious to themselves of an unsullied purity, but because few could come so near the fire as they did, and not have been scorched. Had it been known, it would have occasioned suspicions in some, and reflections from others; good people would have been troubled, and bad people would have triumphed, and therefore let it not be known. Note: We must always take care, not only to keep a good conscience but to keep a good name: either we must not do that, which, though innocent, is liable to be misinterpreted, or if we do, we must not let it be known. We must avoid not only sin, but scandal. There was likewise a particular reason for concealment here; if this matter should take wind, it might prejudice the freedom of the other kinsman's choice, and he would make this his reason for refusing Ruth, that Boaz and she had been together. 2. He dismissed her with a good present of corn, which would be very acceptable to her poor mother at home, and an evidence for her, that he had not sent her away in dislike, which Naomi might have suspected, if he had sent her away empty. He gave it her in her vail, or apron, or mantle; gave it her by measure; like a prudent corn master, he kept an account of all he delivered out; it was six measures, that is, six omers, as is supposed, or six of his measure. If this number of measure was, it is probable that he gave her as much as she could well carry, v. 15. And the Chaldee says, Strength was given her from the Lord to carry it; and add that now it was told her by the spirit of prophecy, That from her should descend six of the most righteous men of their age, namely, David, Daniel, his three companions, and the King Messiah.

II. How she was welcomed by her mother-in-law. She wished her, "Who art thou, my daughter? Art thou a bride or no? Must I give thee joy?" So Ruth told her how the matter stood, v. 16, 17. Whereupon her mother, 1. Advised her to be satisfied in what was done; Sit still, my daughter, till thou know how the matter will fall, v. 18. How is decreed in heaven, so the Chaldee reads it, for marriages are made there. She had done all that was fit for her to do, and now she must patiently wait the issue, and not be perplexed about it. Let us learn hence to cast our care upon providence, to follow that and attend the motions of it, composing ourselves into an expectation of the event, with a resolution to acquiesce in it, whatever it be; sometimes that proves best done for us, that is least our own doing: "Sit still therefore, and see how the matter will fall, and say, Let it fall how it will, I am ready for it." 2. She advised her that Boaz, having undertaken this matter, would approve himself a faithful careful friend; He will not be at rest, till he have finished the matter. Though it was a busy time with him in the fields and the floor, yet having undertaken to serve his friend, he would not neglect the business. Naomi believes Ruth has won his heart, and therefore he will not be easy till he knows whether she be his or no. This she gives as a reason why Ruth should sit still and not comp lex herself about it, that Boaz had undertaken it, and he would be sure to manage it well. Much more reason have good Christians to be careful for nothing, but cast their care on God, because he has promised to care for them; and what need have we to care, if he do? "Sit still and we will suggest this matter will fail, for the Lord will perfect that which concerns thee, and will make it to work for good to thee." Ps. 37. 5, 6. 138. 8. Your strength is to sit still. Isa. 30. 7.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, we have the wedding between Boaz and Ruth, in the circumstances of which there was something uncommon, which is kept upon record, for the illustration, not only of the law concerning the marrying of a brother's widow, (Deut. 25. 5) &c. for cases help to explain laws, but of the gospel too, for from this marriage descended David, and the Son of David, whose eoussals to the Gentile church were hereby typified. We are here told, 1. How Boaz got clear of his rival, and left Ruth to her mother-in-law. 2. How for this, Ruth was publicly solemnized, and attended with the good wishes of his neighbours, v. 9. 12. III. The happy issue that descended from this marriage. Obed, the grandfather of David, v. 10. And with the accounts of Obed's posterity, 18. 22. Perhaps it was to oblige him, that the blessed Spirit directed the inserting of this story into the sacred canon, he being desirous that the virtues of his great-grandmother, Ruth, together with her Gentile extraction, might be extended to posterity, and the singular providence that attended her.

1. THEN went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there; and, behold, the kinsman of Naomi, Boaz spake, came by: unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he
1. Boaz calls a court immediately. It is probable he was himself one of the elders (or aldermen) of the city, for he was a mighty man of wealth; perhaps he was father of the city, and sat chief, for he seems here to have gone up to the gate, as one having authority, and not as a common person; like Job, ch. 29. 7, &c. We cannot suppose him less than a magistrate in his city, who was grandson to Nahshon, prince of Judah; and his lying at the end of a heap of corn in the threshing-floor the night before, was not at all inconsistent, in those days of plainness, with the honour of his sitting judge in the gate. But why was Boaz so hasty, why so fond of the match? Ruth was not rich, but lived upon alms; not honourable, but a poor stranger; she was never said to be beautiful; if ever she had been so, we may suppose that weeping, and travelling, and grieving, had withered her lilies and roses. But that which made Boaz in love with her, and solicitous to expedite the affair, was, that all her neighbours agreed she was a virtuous woman; this set her price with him far above rubies, Prov. 31. 10. And therefore, he thinks, if, by marrying her, he might do her a real kindness, he should also do himself a very great kindness; he will therefore bring it to a conclusion immediately. It was not court-day, but he got ten men of the elders of the city to meet him in the town-hall over the gate, where public business used to be transacted, v. 2. So many, it is probable, by the custom of the city, made a full court. Boaz, though a judge, would not be a judge in his own cause, but desired the concurrence of other elders. Honest intentions dread not a public cognizance.

2. He summons his rival to come and hear the matter that was to be proposed to him; (v. 1.) "Ho, such a one, sit down here." He called him by his name, no doubt, but the divine historian thought not fit to record it, for because he refused to raise up the name of the dead, he deserved not to have his name preserved to his descendants in history. Providence favoured Boaz in ordering it so, that this kinsman should come by thus opportunely, just when the matter was ready to be proposed to him. Great affairs are sometimes much furthered by small circumstances which facilitate and expedite them.

3. He proposes to the other kinsman the redemption of Naomi's land, which, it is probable, had been mortgaged for money to buy bread, and the famine was in the land; (v. 3.) "Naomi has a parcel of land to sell, namely the equity of the redemption of it out of the hands of the mortgagee, which she is willing to part with;" or, as some think, it was her jointure for life, and wanting money, for a small matter she would sell her interest to the heir in law, who was the fittest to be a purchaser. This he gives the kinsman legal notice of, (v. 4.) that he might have the refusal of it. Whoever had it must pay for it, and Boaz might have said, "My money is as good as my kinsman's; if I have a mind to it, why may I not buy it privately, since I had the first proffer of it, and say nothing to my kinsman?" No; Boaz, though fond enough of the purchase, would not do so mean a thing, as to take a bargain over another man's head, that was near unto to it; and the terms are not to be only just and honest, but fair and honourable, in all our dealings, and to do nothing which we are unwilling should see the light, but be above-board.

4. The kinsman seemed forward to redeem the land, till he was told, that if he did that, he must marry the widow, and then he flew off. He liked the land well enough, and, probably, caught at that for more greedily, because he hoped that the poor widow being his brother's wife, if she married it, might have so much the better bargain; "I will redeem it" (said he) "with all my heart;" thinking it would be a fine addition to his estate, v. 4. But Boaz told him there was a young widow in the case, and if he have the land, he must take her with it, Terra transit cum onere.—The estate passes with this incumbrance; either the divine law or the usage of the country, would oblige him to it, or Naomi insisted upon it that she should not be left to beg. Boaz was upon this condition, v. 5. Some think this does not relate to that law of marrying the brother's widow, (for that seems to oblige only the children of the same father, (Deut. 25. 5.) unless by custom it was afterward made to extend to the next of kin,) but it refers to the law of redemption of inheritances (Lev. 25. 24, 25.) for it is a Goel, a redeemer, that were inquired for; and if so, it was not by the law, but by Naomi's own resolution, that the purchaser was to marry the widow. However it was, this kinsman, when he heard the conditions of the bargain, refused it; (v. 6.) "I cannot redeem it for myself, I will not meddle with it upon these terms, lest I mar my own inheritance;" the land, he thought, would be an improvement of his inheritance, but not the land with the woman, that would mar it. Perhaps he thought it would be a disparagement to him to marry such a poor widow that, was come from a strange country, and almost lived upon alms; he fancied it would be a blemish to his family, it would mar his blood, and disgrace his posterity; her eminent virtues were not sufficient in his eye to balance this. The Chaldee paraphrase makes his reason for this refusal to be, that he had another wife, and if he should take Ruth, it was not occasion of grief and contention in his family, and that would mar the comfort of his inheritance. Or, he thought she might bring him a great many children, and they would all expect shares out of his estate, which would scatter it into too many
hands, so that his family would make the less figure. This makes many shy of the great redemption, they are not willing to espouse religion; they have heard well of it, and have nothing to say against it; they will give it their good word, but at the same time they will give their good word with it, they are willing to part with it, and cannot be bound for it, for fear of injuring their own inheritance in this world. Heaven they could be saved, but he does they can dispense with; it will not agree with the lusts they have already espoused, and therefore let who will purchase heaven at that rate, they cannot.

5. The right of redemption is fairly resigned to Boaz; if this nameless kinsman lost a good bargain, a good estate, and a good wife too, he may think himself for not considering it better, and Boaz will think himself doing his way clear to that which he valued and desired above anything. In those ancient times it was not the usage to pass estates by writings, as afterwards, (Jer. 32. 10, &c.) but by some sign or ceremony, as with us by livery and seisin, as we commonly call it; that is, the delivery of seisin, seisin of a house by giving the key, of land by giving turf and a twig. The ceremony here used, was, he that surrendered, plucked off his shoe, (1st Chaldee says, it was the glove of his right hand,) and gave it to him who was to receive it. He did this, surrender, intimating thereby, that whatever right he had to tread or go upon the land, he conveyed and transferred it, upon a valuable consideration, to the purchaser; this was a testimony in Israel; v. 7. And it was done in this case, v. 8. If this kinsman was obliged by the law to have married Ruth, and his refusal had been a contempt of that law, Ruth must have plucked off his shoe, and slept in his face. Deut. 25. 9. But though this relation should in some measure oblige him to the duty, yet the distance of his relation might serve to excuse him from the penalty, or Ruth might very well dispense with it, since his refusal was all she desired from him. But Bishop Patrick, and the best interpreters, think this had no relation to that law, and that the drawing off of the shoe was not any disgrace, as there, but a confirmation of the surrender, and an evidence that it was not fraudulently or surreptitiously obtained. Note, Fair and open dealing in all matters of contract and commerce, is what all those must make conscience of, that would approve themselves Israelites indeed, without guile. How much more honourably and honestly does Boaz come by this purchase, than if he had secretly underminded his kinsman, and privately struck up a bargain with Naomi, unknown to him. Honesty will be found the best policy.

9. And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. 10. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. 11. And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthy in Ephratah, and be famous in Beth-lehem.

12. And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, (whom Tamar bare unto Judah,) of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman.

Boaz now sees his way clear, and therefore delays not to perform his promise made to Ruth, that he would do the kinsman's part, but, in the gate of his city, before the elders and all the people, publishes a marriage contract between himself and Ruth the Moabitess, and therewith the purchase of all the estate that belonged to the family of Elimelech. If he had not been (ch. 2. 1.) a mighty man of wealth, he could not have compassed his return with such ceremony, and have done this service to his kinsman's family. What is a great estate for God, even in this world, it enables a man to do much the more good in his generation, and especially to those of his own household, if lie have but a heart to use it so?

Now concerning this marriage, it appears, I. That it was solemnised, or at least published, before many witnesses; (v. 9, 10.) Ye are witnesses, I. "That I have bought the estate; who soever is a part of it, mortgaged to them, let him come to me and shew his name, family, and agree to the value of the land," which was computed by the number of years to the year of jubilee, (Lev. 25. 15.) when it would have returned of course to Elimelech's family. The more public the sales of estates are, the better they are guarded against frauds. 2. "That I have purchased the widow to be my wife;" he had no portion with her; what might have been had, was incumbered, and he could not leave it without full recompense. If she were worth, and therefore he might well say, he purchased her, and yet being a virtuous woman, he reckoned he had a good bargain. House and riches are the inheritance of fathers, but a prudent wife is more valuable, is from the Lord as a special gift. He designed, in marrying her, to preserve the memory of the dead, that the name of Mahlon, though he left no son to heir it up, might not be cut off from the gate of his place, Deut. 25. 9. by thine impiety might be preserved, that it should be inserted in the public register, that Boaz married Ruth the widow of Mahlon, the son of Elimelech, which posterity, whenever they had occasion to consult the register, would take particular notice of. And this history being preserved for the sake of that marriage and the issue of it, that proved an effectual means to perpetuate the name, and to carry it far beyond the thought or intention of Boaz, to the world's end. And observe that because Boaz did this honour to the dead, as well as this kindness to the living, God did him the honour to bring him into the genealogy of the Messiah, by which his family was dignified above all the families in Israel; while the other kinsman, that was so much afraid of diminishing himself, and marring his inheritance, by marrying the widow, has his name expunged, buried in oblivion and disgrace. A tender and generous concern for the honour of the dead, and the comfort of poor widows and strangers, neither of which can return the kindness, (Luke 14. 14.) is what God will be well pleased with, and will surely recompense. Our Lord Jesus is our God, our Redeemer, our everlasting Redeemer; he looked, like Boaz, with compassion on the posterity of fallen mankind; at a vast expense he redeemed the heavenly inheritance for us, which by sin was mortgaged, and forfeited in the hands of divine justice, and which we could never have been able to redeem. He likewise purchased a peculiar people, whom he would espouse to himself, though strangers and foreigners, like Ruth,
poor, and despised, that the name of that dead and buried race might not be cut off for ever. He ventured the marrying of his own inheritance, to do this, for though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor; but he was abundantly recompensed for it by his Father, who, because he thus humbled himself, hath highly exalted, and given him a name above every name. Let us own our obligations to him, make sure our contract with him, and study all our days how to do him honour.

Boaz, by making a public declaration of this marriage and purchase, not only secured his title against all pretenders, as it were by a fine with proclamations, but put honour upon Ruth, showed that he was not ashamed of her, and her parentage, and poverty, and left a testimony against clandestine marriages. It is only that which is evil, that hates the light, and comes not to it. Boaz called with a free and liberal hand, for it was a virtue he could justify, and would never disown; and such regard was then had, even to the condemned crowd, that not only the elders, but all the people that were in the gate, passing and re-passing, were appealed to, (v. 9.) and hearten to, (v. 11.) when they said, We are witnesses.

II. That it was attended with many prayers. They were all joined in the supplications when they witnessed to it, wished well to it, and blessed it, v. 11, 12. Ruth, it should seem, was now sent for, for they speak of her (v. 12.) as present, this young woman; and he having taken her to wife, they look upon her as already come into his house. And very heartily they pray for the new-married couple. The senior elder, it is likely, made this prayer, and the rest of the elders, with the people, joined in it, and minister who gives himself to the word of the Lord, and prayer, as he is the fittest person to exhort, so he is the fittest to bless and pray for, those that enter into this relation. 2. We ought to desire and pray for the welfare and prosperity one of another so far from envying or grieving at it. Now here,

(1.) They pray for Ruth; The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and Leah; that is, "God make her a good wife, and deservedly so, with many virtues, and a pleasant companion, and yet needed the prayers of her friends, that by the grace of God she might be made a blessing to the family she was come into. They pray she might be like Rachel and Leah, rather than like Sarah and Rebekah; for Sarah had but one son, and Rebekah but one that was in covenant; the other was Esau, who was rejected: but Rachel and Leah did build up the house of Israel; all their children were in the church, and their offspring was numerous. "May she be a flourishing, fruitful, faithful, vine by thy house side.""

(2.) They pray for Boaz, that he might continue to do worthy in the city, to which he was an ornament, and might there be more and more famous. They desire that the wife might be a blessing, in the private affairs of the house, and the husband a blessing, in the public business of the town; that she in her presence and he in his, might be an ornament, and successful. Observe, The way to be famous, is to do worthy. Great reputation must be got by great merits. It is not enough not to do unworthily, to be harmless and inoffensive, but we must do worthy, be useful and serviceable to our generation; they that would be truly illustrious, must in their places shine as lights.

(3.) They pray for the family; Let thy house be like the house of Pharez; that is, "Let it be very numerous, let it greatly increase and multiply, as the house of Pharez did." The Beth-lehemites were of the house of Pharez, and knew well how numerous it was; in the distribution of the tribes, that grandson of Jacob had the honour which none of the rest had but Manasseh and Ephraim, that his posterity was subdivided into two distinct families, Hezron and Hamul, Numb. 26. 21. Now they pray that the family of Boaz, which was one branch of that stock, might in process of time become as numerous and as great as the whole stock now was.

13. So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and, when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son. 14. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. 15. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him. 16. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. 17. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

18. Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, 19. And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, 20. And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, 21. And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, 22. And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

Here is,

1. Ruth a wife; Boaz took her with the usual solemnities, to his house, and she became his wife, v. 13. All the city, no doubt, congratulating the pre- ferment of a virtuous woman, purely for her virtues. We have reason to think that Orpah, who returned from Naomi to her people, and her gods, was never half so well preferred as Ruth was. He that forsakes all for Christ, shall find more than all with him; it shall be recompensed a hundred fold in this present time. Now Orpah wished she had gone with Naomi too; but she, like the other kinsman, stood in her own light. Boaz had prayed that this pious prospelye might receive a full reward of her courage and constancy from the God of Israel, under whose wings she was come to trust; and now he became an instrument of that kindness, which was an answer to his prayer, and helped to make his own words good. Now she had the command of those servants with whom she had associated, and of those fields in which she had gleaned. Thus sometimes, God raised up the poor out of the dust to set them with princes, Ps. 113. 7, 8.

2. Ruth a mother; The Lord gave her conception, for the fruit of the womb is his reward, Ps. 127. 3. It is one of the keys he hath in his hand; and he sometimes makes the barren woman that had been
and of which they will say, they have no pleasure in them. Observe, They say of Ruth, that she loved Naomi, and therefore was better to her than seven sons. See how God in his providence sometimes makes up the want and loss of those relations from whom we expected most comfort, in those from whom we expected least. The bonds of love prove stronger than those of nature, and there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother; so here, there was a daughter-in-law, better than an own child. See what wisdom and grace will do.

Now here, [1.] The child is named by the neighbours, v. 17. The good woman would have it called Obed, a servant, either in remembrance of the meanness and poverty of the mother, or in prospect of his being hereafter a servant, and very serviceable, to his grandmother. It is no dishonour to those that are ever so well born, to be servants to God, their friends, and their generation. The motto of the prince of Wales, is, Ich dien—I serve. [2.] The child is nursed by the grandmother, that is, dry nursed, when the mother had weaned him from the breast, v. 16. She laid it in her bosom in token of her tender affection to it, and care of it. Grandmothers are often most fond.

4. Ruth is hereby brought in among the ancestors of David and Christ, which was the greatest honour. The genealogy is here drawn from Pharez, through Boaz and Obed, to David, and so leads toward the Messiah, and therefore not an endless genealogy.
EXPOSITION
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
UPON THE FIRST BOOK OF
S A M U E L.

This book, and that which follows it, bear the name of Samuel in the title, not because he was the pen- man of them, (except of so much of them as fell within his own time, to the twenty-fifth chapter of the first book, in which we have an account of his death,) but because the first book begins with a large account of him, his birth and childhood, his life and government; and the rest of these two volumes that are denominated from him, contains the history of the reigns of Saul and David, who were both anointed by him. And because the history of these two kings takes up the greatest part of these books, the vulgar Latin calls them the first and second Books of the Kings; and the two that follow, the third and fourth, which the titles of our English Bibles take notice of with an alias, otherwise called the first Book of the Kings. The LXX call them the first and second Books of the Kingdoms. It is needless to contend about it, but there is no occasion to vary from the Hebrew verity. These two books contain the history of the two last of the judges, Eli and Samuel, who were not, as the rest, men of war, but priests; and so much of them is an entrance upon the history of the kings. They contain a con- siderable part of the sacred history, are sometimes referred to in the New Testament, and often in the title of David's Psalms, which, it placed in their order, would fall in, in these books. It is uncertain who was the penman of them; it is probable that Samuel wrote the history of his own time, and that, after him, some of the prophets that were with David, (Nathan, as likely as any,) continued it. The first book gives us a full account of Eli's fall, and Samuel's rise and good government, ch. 1-8. Of Samuel's resignation of the government, and Saul's advancement and mai-administration, ch. 9-15. The choice of David, his struggles with Saul, Saul's ruin at last, and the opening of the way for Da- vid to the throne, ch. 16-31. And these things are written for our learning.

I. SAMUEL, I.

CHAP. I.
The history of Samuel here begins as early as that of Sam- son did, even before he was born, as after wards the histo- ry of John the Baptist and our blessed Saviour. Some of the scripture worthies drop out of the clouds, as it were, and their first appearance is in their full growth and lustre. But others are accounted for from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception. It is true of all, what God says of the prophet Jeremiah, Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee, Jer. 1. 5. But some great men were brought into the world with more observation than others, and were more early distinguished from common persons, as Samuel for one. God, in this matter, acts as a free agent. The story of Samson introduces him as a child of promise, Judg. 13. But the story of Samuel introduces him as a child of prayer. Samuel's birth was foretold by an angel to his mother; Samuel was asked of God by his mother; both together intimate what won- ders are produced by the word and prayer. Samuel's mother was Hannah, the principal person concerned in the story of this chapter. I. Here is her affliction, she was childless, and this affliction aggravated by her riv- al's insolence, but in some measure balanced by her hus- band's kindness, v. 1-8. II. The prayer and vow she made to God under this affliction, in which Eli the High Priest at first censured her, and afterward encour- aged her, v. 9-18. III. The birth and nursing of Sa- muel, v. 19-55. IV. The presenting of him to the Lord, v. 24. 28.

1. NOW there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite: 2. And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. 3. And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship, and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were
there. 4. And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninannah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: 5. But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion: for he loved Hannah; but the LORD had shut up her womb. 6. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. 7. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. 8. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?

We have here an account of the state of the family into which Samuel the prophet was born. His father's name was Elkanah, a Levite, and of the family of the Kershites, (the most honourable house of that tribe,) as appears, 1 Chron. 6:33, 34. His ancestors, as he himself relates, were born in Ephraim, that is, of Bethlehem-Judah, which was called Ephrathah, Ruth 1.2. There this family of the Levites was first seated, but one branch of it, in process of time, removed to mount Ephraim, from which Elkanah descended: Micah's Levite came from Beth-lehem to Mount Ephraim, Judg. 17. 8. Minister's families are as moveable as any. Perhaps notice is taken of their being originally Ephratites, to show their alliance to David. His Elkanah lived at Ramah, now Ramathaim, which signifies the double Ramah, the higher and lower town, the same with Arimathea of which Joseph was, here called Ramathaim-zophim. Zophim signifies watchmen, probably, they had one of the schools of the prophets there, for prophets are called watchmen: the Chaldean paraphrase calls Elkanah a disciple of the prophets. But it seems to me that it was in Samuel that prophecy was revived. Before this time the being for a great while, no open vision, ch. 3.1. Nor is there any mention of a prophet of the Lord from Moses to Samuel, except Judg. 6.8. So that we have no reason to think that there was any nursery or college of prophets here, till Samuel himself founded one, ch. 19. 19, 20. This is the account of Samuel's parentage, and the place of his nativity.

Let us now take notice of the state of the family. 1. It was a devout family. All the families of Israel should be so, but Levites' families in a particular manner. Ministers should be patterns of family religion. Elkanah went up at the solemn fasts to the tabernacle at Shiloh, to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts. I think this is the first time in scripture, that God is called the Lord of hosts, Jehovah Sabaoth, a name by which he was afterward very much called and known. Probably, Samuel the Davidian, and, for ought that appears, but a prophet or office which required his high attendance at the tabernacle, but he went up as a common Israelite, with his own sacrifices, to encourage his neighbours and set them a good example. When he sacrifice, he worshipped, joining prayers and thanksgivings with his sacrifices. In this course of religion he was constant, for he went up yearly.

And that which made it the more commendable in him was,

1. That there was a general decay and neglect of religion in the nation; some among them worse shipped other gods, and the generality were remiss in the service of the God of Israel: and yet Elkanah kept his integrity, whatsoever else he, in resolution was, that he and his house should serve the Lord.

2. That Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were the men that were now chiefly employed in the service of the house of God; and they were men that conducted themselves very ill in their place, as we shall find afterward; yet Elkanah went up to sacrifice. God had then tied his people to one place, one altar, and forbidden them, under any pretence whatsoever, to their being in pure obedience to that command, he attended at Shiloh; if the priests did not do their duty, he would do his. Thanks be to God, we, under the gospel, are not tied to any one place or family; but the pastors and teachers whom the exalted Redeemer has given to his church, are those only whose ministration tends to the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ, Eph. 4.12. So that we have many advantages under the gospel, though we are not as those under the Old Testament.

3. That faith; but our obligation is to those that are the helpers of our holiness and joy, not to any that by their scandalous immoralities, like Hophni and Phinehas, make the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred; though still the validity and efficacy of the sacraments depend not on the purity of him that administers them.

4. Yet it was a divided family, and the divisions of it carried with them both guilt and grief. Where there is piety, it is pity but there should be unity. The joint devotions of a family should put an end to divisions in it.

1. The original cause of this division, was Elkanah's marrying two wives, which was a transgression of the original institution of marriage, to which our Saviour reduces it, Matt. 19. 5. 8. From the beginning it was not so. It made mischief in Abrahams's family, and Jacob's, and here in Elkanah's: how much better does the law of God provide for our comfort and ease in this world than we should, if we were left to ourselves! It is probable that Elkanah married Hannah first, and because he had no children by her so soon as he hoped, he married Peninannah, who bare him children, indeed, but was in other things a vexation to him. Thus are men often beaten with rods of their own making, and therefore, in pure obedience to that command, he attended at Shiloh; if the priests did not do their duty, he would do his. Thanks be to God, we, under the gospel, are not tied to any one place or family; but the pastors and teachers whom the exalted Redeemer has given to his church, are those only whose ministration tends to the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ, Eph. 4.12. So that we have many advantages under the gospel, though we are not as those under the Old Testament.

2. That which followed upon this error, was, that the two wives could not agree. They had different blessings; Peninannah, like Leah, was fruitful and had many children, which should have made her easy and thankful, though she was but a second wife, and was less beloved; Hannah, like Rachel, was childless indeed, but she was very dear to her husband, and he took all occasions to let both her and others know that she was so, and many a worthy portion he gave her; ver. 5. and this should have made her easy and thankful. But they were of different temper; Peninannah could not bear the blessing of fruitfulness, but she grew haughty and insolent; Hannah could not bear the affliction of barrenness, but she grew melancholy and discontented; and Elkanah had a difficult part to act between them.

1. Elkanah kept up his attendance at God's altar, notwithstanding this unhappy difference in his family, and took his wives and children with him, that if they could not agree in other things, they might agree to worship God together. If the devotions of a family prevail not to put an end to its divisions, yet let not the divisions put a stop to the devotions.
(2.) He did all he could, to encourage Hannah, and to keep up her spirits under her afflictions, v. 4, 5. At the feasts, he offered peace-offerings, to supplicate for peace in his family; and when he and his house came to enjoy the sacrifices in token of their communion with God and his altar, though he carved to Peninnah and her children competent portions, yet to Hannah he gave a worthy portion, the choicest piece that came to the table, the piece (whatever it was) that used to be given on such occasions to those that were most valued: this he did, in token of his love to her, and to give all possible assurances of it. Observe, [1.] Elkanah loved his wife never the less for her being barren. Christ loves his church, notwithstanding her infirmities, her barrenness; and so ought men to love their wives, Eph. 5. 25. To abate our just love to any relation for the sake of any infirmity which they cannot help, and which is not their sin, but their affliction, is to make God’s providence quarrel with his precept, and very unnaturally to add affliction to the afflicted. [2.] He studied to show his love to her so much, the more, because she was afflicted, insulted, and low-spirited. It is wisdom and duty to support the weakest, and to hold up those that are run down. [3.] He showed his great love to her, by the share he gave her of his peace-offerings. Thus we should testify our affection to our friends and relations, by abounding in prayer for them. The better we love them, the more room let us give them in our prayers.

9. 2. She was also young, and very peevish and provoking. (1.) She upbraided Hannah with her affliction, despaired her because she was barren, and gave her taunting language, as one whom Heaven did not favour. (2.) She envied the interest she had in the love of Elkanah, and the more kind he was to her, the more was she exasperated against her; which was all over base and b barious. (3.) She did this much; when they went up to the house of the Lord, perhaps, because she was no more together than at other times, or because then Elkanah showed his affection most to Hannah. But it was very sinful at such a time to show her malice, when pure hands were to be lifted up at God’s altar without wrath and quarrelling. It was likewise very unkind at that time to vex Hannah, not only because then they were in company, and other women might observe of it, but then Hannah was too much to mind her deprivations. It was to quiet, calm, and composed, and free from disturbance. The great adversity to our purity and peace is then most insidious to ruffle us, when we should be most composed. When the sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord, Satan will be sure to come among them, Job 1. 4. (4.) She continued to do this from year to year, not once or twice, but it was more constant practice; nor was her difference to her husband her companion, nor Hannah, could break her of it; and Lastly, That which she designed, was, to make her fret; perhaps in hopes to break her heart, that she might possess her husband’s heart solely. Or, because she took a pleasure in her un easiness; nor could Hannah gratify her more than by fretting. Note, It is an evidence of a bad disposition, to delight in grieving those that are under trouble, and using a model of a sorrowful spirit, in putting those out of humour, the more they are fret and be uneasy. We ought to bear one another’s burthens, not add to them.

(4.) Hannah (poor woman) could not bear the provocation; she wept, and did not eat, v. 7. It made her uneasy to herself and to all her relations. She did not eat of the feast, her trouble took away her appetite, made her unfit for any company, and a jar in the harmony of family-joy. It was not of the feast upon the sacrifice that she did not eat, for they were not to eat of the holy things in their mourning, Deut. 26. 14. Lev. 10. 19. Yet it was her infirmity, so far to give way to the sorrow of the world, as to unfit herself for holy joy in God. Those that are of a fitful spirit, and are apt to lay provocations too much to heart, are enemies to themselves, and strip themselves very much of the comforts both of life and godliness. We find that God took notice of this ill effect of discontentments and disagreements in the conjugal relation; the parties aggrieved, covered the altar of the Lord with tears, insomuch that he regarded not the offering, Mal. 2. 13.

(5.) Elkanah said what he could to her, to comfort her. She did not upbraid him with his unkindness in marrying another wife, as Sarah did, nor did she render to Peninnah railing for railing, but took the trouble wholly to herself, which made her an object of much compassion. Elkanah showed himself extremely grieved at her grief; (v. 8.) Hannah why weepest thou? [1.] He is much concerned to see her thus overwhelmed with sorrow. They that by marriage are made one flesh, ought thus far to be of one spirit too, to share in each other’s troubles, so that one cannot be easy while the other is uneasy. [2.] He gives her a loving reproof for it, Why weepest thou? And why is thy heart grieved? As many as God loves he rebukes, and so should we. He puts her upon inquiring into the cause of her grief; though she had just reason to be troubled, yet let her consider whether she had reason to be troubled to such a degree; especially so much as to be taken off by it from eating of the holy things. Note, Our sorrow upon any account is then sinful and inordinate, when it diverts us from our duty to God, and hinders our comfort in him; when it makes us unthankful for the mercies we enjoy, and distrustful of the goodness of God to us in further mercies; when it casts a dam upon our joy in Christ and in all the conveniences of our particular relations. [3.] He intimates that nothing should be wanting on his part to balance her grief. “Am not I better to thee than ten sons? Thou knowest thou hast my affection entire, and let that comfort thee.” Note, We ought to take notice of our comforts, to keep us from grieving excessively for our crosses; for, our crosses we deserve, but our comforts we have for our sake. If we could keep the balance even, we must look at that which is for us, as well as that which is against us, else we are unjust to Providence, and unkind to ourselves. God hath set the one over-against the other, (Eccles. 7. 14.) and so should we.

9. So Hannah rose up, after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk: (now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord:) And after she had drunk: (now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord:) 10. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. 11. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. 12. And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth
13. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. 14. And Eli unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. 15. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord; I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but, have poured out my soul before the Lord. 16. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. 17. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. 18. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

Elikanah had gently reproved Hannah for her inordinate grief, and here we find the good effect of it. I. It brought her to her meat. She ate and drank, v. 9. She did not harden herself in sorrow, nor grow sullen when she was reproved for it; but when she perceived her husband uneasy that she did not come and eat with them, she cheered up her own spirits as well as she could, and came to table. It is as great a piece of self-denial to control our passions, as it is to control our appetites. II. It brought her to her prayers. It put her upon considering, "Do I well to be angry? Do I well to fret? What good does it do me? Instead of binding the burthen thus upon my own shoulders, had I not better ease myself of it, and cast it upon the Lord by prayer?" Elikanah had said, \textit{Am not I better to thee than ten sons?} Which perhaps occasioned her to think with herself, "Whether he be so or no, God is, and therefore to him will I apply myself, and before him will I pour out my complaint, and try what relief that will give me." If ever she will make a more solemn address than ordinary to the throne of grace upon this errand, now is the time. They are at Shiloh, at the door of the tabernacle, where God had promised to meet his people, and which was the \textit{house of prayer}. They had lately offered their peace-offerings, to obtain the favour of God and all good, and in token of their communion with him; and, taking the comfort of their being accepted of him, they had feasted upon the sacrifice, and now it was proper to put up their prayer in virtue of that sacrifice; for the peace-offerings typified Christ's mediation, as well as the sin-offerings, for by it not only atonement is made for sin, but the audience and acceptance of our prayers, and an answer of peace to them, are obtained for us: to that Sacrifice, in all our supplications, we must have an eye.

Now concerning Hannah's prayer, we may observe,

1. The warm and lively devotion there was in it; which appeared in several instances, for our direction in prayer. (1.) She improved the present grief and trouble of her spirit, for the exciting and quickening of her pious affection in prayers. \textit{Being in bitterness of soul, she prayed,} v. 10. This good use we should make of our afflictions, they should make us the more lively in our addresses to God. Our blessed Saviour himself, being in an agony, \textit{prayed more earnestly,} Luke 22. 44. (2.) She mingled tears with her prayers. It was not a dry prayer; she wept sore; like a true Israelite, \textit{She wept and made supplication,} (Hes. 12. 4.) with an eye to the tender mercy of our God, who knows the troubled soul; the prayer came from the heart, and a tear for a word. Which (3.) She was very particular, and yet very modest, in her petition. She begged a child, a man child, that it might be fit to serve in the tabernacle. God gives us leave, in prayer, not only to ask good things in general, but to mention that special good thing which we most need and desire. Yet she says not, as Rachel, \textit{Give me children,} Gen. 30. 1. She will be very thankful for one.

(4.) She made a solemn vow or promise, that if God would give her a son, she would give him \textit{up to God,} v. 11. He would be, by birth, a Levite, and so devoted to the service of God; but he should be, by her vow, a Nazarite, and his very childhood should be sacred. It is probable she had acquainted Elikanah with her purpose before, and had his consent and approbation. Note, (1.) Parents have a right to dedicate their children to God, and to live under the law and spirit of prayer and service. Sacrilege is thereby laid upon them to serve God faithfully \textit{all the days of their life.} (2.) It is very proper, when we are in pursuit of any mercy, to bind our own souls with a bond, that if God give it us, we will devote it to his honour, and cheerfully use it in his service. Not that hereby we can pretend to merit the gift, but thus we are qualified for it, and for the comfort of it. In hope of mercy, let us promise duty. (5.) She spoke all this so softly, that none could hear her. Her lips moved, but \textit{her voice was not heard,} v. 13. Hereby she testified her belief of God's knowledge of the heart and its desires. Thoughts are words with him, nor is he one of those gods that must be cried aloud to, 1 Kings 18. 27. It was likewise an instance of her humility and holy shame-facedness in her approach to God; she was none of those that \textit{made their voice to be heard on high,} Isa. 58. 4. It was a secret prayer, and therefore, though made in a public place, yet was thus made secretly, and not, as the Pharisees prayed, \textit{to be seen of men.} It is true, prayer is not a thing we have reason to be ashamed of, but we must avoid all appearances of ostentation. Let what passes between God and our souls, be kept to ourselves. 2. The hard censure she fell under for it. Eli was now High Priest, and Judge in Israel: he sat upon a seat in the temple, to oversee what was done there, v. 9. The tabernacle is here called the \textit{temple,} because it was now fixed, and served all the purposes of a temple. There Eli sat to receive addresses and give direction, and somewhere, (it is probable,) in a private corner, he espied Hannah at her prayers, and, by her unusual manner, fancied she was drunken, and spoke to her accordingly; v. 14. \textit{How long wilt thou be drunken?} — the very inquisition that Peter and the apostles fell under, when the Holy Ghost gave them utterance, Acts 2. 4. Perhaps in this degenerate age, it was no strange thing to see drunken women at the door of the tabernacle; for, otherwise, one would think the vile lust of Hophni and Phinehas could not have been easy a proof of it. ch. 2. 22. Eli took Hannah for one of these. It is one bad effect of the abounding of iniquity, and its becoming fashionable, that it often gives occasion to suspect the innocent. When a disease is epidemic, every one is suspected to be tainted with it. Now, (1.) This was Eli's fault; and a great fault it was, to pass so severe a censure without better
observation or information. If his own eyes were already waxen dim, he should have employed those about him to inquire. Drunkards are commonly noisy and turbulent, but this poor woman was silent and composed. His fault was the worse, that he was the priest of the Lord, who should have had compassion on the ignorant, Heb. 5. 2.

Note. It ill becomes us to be rash and hasty in our censures of others, and to be forward to believe peopple guilty of bad things, while they themselves do that on which the censure is grounded, is doubtful and unproved, or is capable of a good construction. Charity commands us to hope the best concerning all, and forbids censoriousness. Paul had very good information, when he did but partly believe, (1 Cor. 11. 18.) hoping it was not so. Especially we ought to be cautious how we censure the devotion of others, lest we call that hypocrisY, enthusiasm, or superstition, which is really the fruit of an honest zeal, and is accepted of God.

(2.) It was Hannah's affliction; and a great affliction it was, added to all the rest; vinegar to the wounds of her spirit. She had been reproved by Elkanah, because she would not eat and drink; and now to be reproached by Eli, as if she had eaten and drunk too much, was very hard. Note, It is no new thing for those that do well, to be ill thought of. We must not think it strange if at any time it be our lot.

3. Hannah's humble vindication of herself from this crime with which she was charged. She bore it admirably well; she did not retort the charge, and upbraid him with the debauchery of his own sons; did not bid him look at home and restrain them; did not tell him how ill it became one in his place, thus to abuse a poor sorrowful worshipper at the house of prayer. If we are not unjustly censured, we have need to set a double watch before the door of our lips, that we do not recriminate, and return censure for censure. Hannah thought it enough to vindicate herself, and so must we, v. 15, 16. (1.) In justice to herself, she expressly denies the charge; speaks to him with all possible respect, calls him My lord; intimates how very desirous she was to stand well in his opinion, and how loath to lie under his censure. "No, my lord, it is not as you suspect, I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, nor any at all," (though it was proper enough to be given to one of such a heavy heart, Prov. 31. 6.) "much less to any excess; therefore count not thy handmaid for a daughter of Belial," Note. Drunkards are children of Belial, women-drunkards particularly; children of the wicked one; children of disobedience; children that will not endure the yoke; (else they would not be drunk;) they are more especially what has just been stated, when actually drunk. They that cannot govern themselves, will not bear that any one else should. Hannah owns the crime had been very great, if she had indeed been guilty of it, and he might justly have shut her out of the courts of God's house; but the very manner of her speaking in her own defence, was sufficient to demonstrate that she was not drunk. 2. In justice to him, she accounts for the manner which had given occasion to his suspicion. "I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit, dejected and discomposed, and that is the reason I do not look as other people; the eyes are red, not with wine, but with weeping. And at this time, I have not been talking to myself, as drunkards and fools do, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord, who hears and understandeth the language of my heart, and of my complaint, and of my abundance of my complaint and grief." She had been, more than usual, fervent in prayer to God, and that, she tells him, was the true reason of the disorder she seemed to be in. Note, When we are unjustly censured, we should endeavour, not only to clear ourselves, but to satisfy our brethren, by giving them a just and true account of that which they misinterpreted.

4. The atonement Eli made for his rash unfriendly censure, by a kind and fatherly benediction, v. 17. He did not (as many are apt to do in such a case) take it for an affront to have his mistake rec-ognized, and to have his censure reproved, but he put him out of humour. But, on the contrary, he now encouraged Hannah's devotions, as much as before he had discomfited them; not only inti- mated that he was satisfied of her innocence by those words, Go in peace, but being High-priest, as one having authority, he blessed her in the name of the Lord, and though he knew not what the particular blessing was, that she had been praying for, yet he puts his Amen to it, so great an opinion he had she now conceived of her prudence and piety. The God of Israel grant thee thy petition, whatever it is, that thou hast asked of him. Note, By our meek and humble carriage toward those that reproach us because they did not know us, we may perhaps make them our friends, and turn their censures of us into prayers for us.

The great satisfaction of mind with which Hannah now went away, v. 18. She begged the continuance of Eli's good opinion of her, and his good prayers for her, and then she went her way, and did eat of what remained of the peace-offerings, (none of which was to be left until the morning,) and her countenance was no more sad; no more as it had been, giving marks of inward trouble and discomposure; but she looked pleasant and cheerful, and all was well. Whence came this sudden happy change? She had by prayer committed her case to God, and left it with him, and now she was no more perplexed about it. She had prayed for herself, and Eli had prayed for her; and she believed that God would either give her the mercy she had prayed for, or make up the want of it to her some other way. Note, Prayer is heart's ease to a gracious soul; the seed of Jacob have often found it so, being confident that God will never say unto them, Seek ye me in vain. See Phil. 4. 6. 7. Prayer will smooth the countenance; it should do so.

19. And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Hannah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her. 20. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord. 21. And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. 22. But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever. 23. And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the Lord establish his word. So the woman did, and gave her son suck until she weaned him. 24. And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and
I. The return of Elkanah and his family to their own habitation, when the days appointed for the feast were over. v. 19. Observe how they improved their time at the tabernacle: every day they were there, even that which was fixed for their journey home, they worshipped God. And they rose up early to do it. It is good to begin the day with God. Let him that is the first, have the first. They had a journey before them, and a family of children to take with them, and yet they would not stir till they had worshipped God together. Prayer androvender do not hinder a journey. They had spent several days now in religious worship, and yet they attended once more. We should not be weary of well-doing.

II. The birth and name of this desired son. At length the Lord remembered Hannah; the very thing she desired; (v. 11.) and more she needed than that, was enough; for then she conceived and bare a son. God seems long to forget his people's burthens, troubles, courts, and prayers, yet he will at length make it to appear that they are not out of his mind. This son the mother called Samuel, v. 20. Some make the etymology of it to be much the same with that of Ishmael, heard of God, because the mother's prayers were remarkably heard, and he was an answer to them. Others, because of the reason she gives for the name, make it to signify asked of God; it comes nearly to the same; she designed by it to perpetuate the rememberance of God's favour to her in answering her prayers. Thus she designed, upon every mention of his name, to take the comfort to herself, and to give God the glory of that gracious condescension. Note, Mercies in answer to prayer, are to be remembered with peculiar expressions of thankfulness, as Ps. 116. 1, 2. How many seasonable deliverances and supplies may we call Samuel, asked of God; and whatever is so, we are in a special manner engaged to devote to him. Hannah intended by this name to put her son in mind of the obligation he was under to be the Lord's, in consideration of this, that he was asked of God, and was at the same time dedicated to him. A child of prayer is in a special manner bound to be a good child. Lennu's mother reminded him that he was the son of her vows, Prov. 31. 2. III. The close attendance Hannah gave to the nursing of him, not only because he was dear to her, but because he was devoted to God, and for him she nursed him. She therefore nursed him herself, and did not hang him on another's breast. We ought to take care of our children, not only with an eye to the law of nature as they are our's, but with an eye to the covenant of grace as they are given up to God. See Ezek. 16. 50, 21. This sanctifies the nursing of them, when it is done as unto the Lord.

Elkanah went up every year to worship at the tabernacle, and particularly to perform his vow; perhaps some vow he had made distinct from Hannah's, if he should give him a son by her, v. 21. But Hannah, though she stood for the courts of God's house, begged leave of her husband to stay at home; for the women were not under any obligation to go up to the three yearly feasts, as the men were. However, Hannah had been accustomed to go, but now desir'd to be excused, 1. Because she would not be so long absent from her nursery. Can a woman forget her sucking child? We may suppose she kept constant at home, for if she had gone any whither, she would have gone to Shiloh. Note, God will have mercy, and not sacrifice. Those that are detained from public ordinances, by the nursing and tending of little children, may take comfort from this instance, and believe, that if they do that with an eye to God, he will graciously accept them therein; and though they tarry at home, they shall divide the spoil. 2. Because she would not go up to Shiloh till her son was big enough, not only to be taken thither, but to be left there; for if once she took him thither, she thought she could never find it in her heart to bring him back again. Note, Those who are steadfastly resolved to pay their vows, may yet see good cause to defer the payment of them. Every thing is beautiful in its season. No animal was accepted in sacrifice, till it had been for some time under its mother, Lev. 22. 27. Fruit is best when it is ripe. Elkanah agrees to what she proposes, v. 23. Do what wemeth thee good. So far was he from de-lighting to cross her, that he referred it entirely to her. Behold, how good and pleasant a thing it is, when yoke-fellows thus draw even in the yoke, and accommodate themselves to one another; each thinking well of what the other does, especially in works of piety and charity. He adds a prayer, Only the Lord establish his word; that is, God preserve the child through the perils of his infancy, that the solemn vow which God signified his acceptance of, by giving us the child, may be performed in its season, and so the whole matter may be accomplished. Note, Those that have in sincerity devoted their children to God, may with comfort pray for them, that God will establish the word sealed to them, at the same time that they were sealed for them.

IV. The solemn entering of this child into the service of the sanctuary. We may take it for granted that he was presented to the Lord at forty days old, as all the first-born were; (Luke 2. 22, 23.) but that is not mentioned, because there was nothing in it singular; but now that he was weaned, he was presented, not to be redeemed. Some think it was as soon as he was weaned from the breast, which, the Jews say, was not till he was two years old. She gave him suck till she had weaned him, v. 23. Others think it was not till he was weaned from childish things, at eight or ten years old. But I see no inconvenience in admitting such an extraordinary child as this, into the tabernacle, at three years old, to be educated among the children of the priests. It is said, v. 24, The child was young; but, being intelligent above his years, he was no trouble. None can begin too soon to be a child of prayer. The child, of age, is a child of prayer. The Hebrew reads it, in his learning-age. For whom shall he teach knowledge, but them that are newly weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. Isa. 28. 9. Observe how she presented her child. 1. With a sacrifice; no less than three bullocks, with a meat-offering for each, v. 24. A bullock, perhaps, for each year of the child's life. Or, one for a burnt-offering, another for a sin-offering, and
chap. ii.

In this chapter, we have, I. Hannah's song of thanksgiving to God for his favour to her, in giving her Samuel, ch. i. 10. II. Their return to their family, with Eli's blessing, v. 11., 20. The increase of their family, (v. 21.) Samuel's growth and improvement, (v. 11., 16., 24., 26.) and the care Hannah took to clothe him, v. 19., 31. To great wickedness of Eli's sons, v. 12., 17., 23., 24. The over-mild reproof that Eli gave them for it, v. 23., 25. V. The justly dreadful message God sent him by a prophet, threatening the ruin of his family for the wickedness of his sons, v. 27., 30.

1. and Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. 2. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee; neither is there any rock like our God. 3. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. 4. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. 5. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath borne seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. 6. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. 7. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. 8. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dung-hill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. 9. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. 10. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them; the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

We have here Hannah's thanksgiving, dictated, not only by the spirit of prayer, but by the spirit of prophecy. Her petition for the mercy she desired, we had before, (ch. i. 11.) and here her return of praise; in both, out of the abundance of a heart deeply affected, (in the former, with her own wants, and in the latter, with God's goodness,) her mouth speaks.

Observe in general, 1. When she had received mercy from God, she owned it, with thankfulness to his praise. Not like the nine lepers, Luke 17. 17. Praise is our rent, our tribute, we are unjust if we do not pay it. 2. The mercy she had received, was an answer to prayer, and therefore she thought herself especially obliged to give thanks for it. What we win by prayer, we may wear with comfort, and must wear with praise. 3. Her thanks-
I. Samuel, II.

giving is here called a prayer; Hannah prayed; for thanksgiving is an essential part of prayer. In every address to God, we must express a grateful regard to him as our Benefactor. Nay, and thanksgiving for mercies received, shall be accepted as a petition for further mercy. 4. From this particular mercy which she had received from God, she takes occasion to recognise an elevated and enlarged heart, to speak glorious things of God, and of his government of the world, for the good of his church. Whatever at any time gives rise to our praises, in this manner they should be raised. 5. Her prayer was mental, her voice was not heard; but in her thanksgiving she spake, that all might hear her. She made her supplication with groanings that could not be uttered, but now her lips were opened with joy to show forth God's praise. 6. This thanksgiving is here left upon record for the encouragement of those of the weaker sex to attend the throne of grace; God will regard their prayers and praises. The virgin Mary's song has great affinity with this of Hannah, Luke 1. 46. 

Three things we have in this thanksgiving.

1. Hannah's triumph in God, in his glorious perfections, and the great things he had done for her, v. 27. Observed.

1. What great things she says of God. She takes little notice of the particular mercy she was now rejoicing in, does not commend Samuel for the prettiest child, the most tender and sensible of his age, or that she ever saw, as fond parents are apt to do; no, she overlooks the gift, and praises the Giver; whereas most forget the Giver, and fasten only on the gift. Every stream should lead us to the fountain; and the favours we receive from God, should raise our admiration of the infinite perfections there are in God. There may be other Samuels, but no other Jehovah. There is none beside thee. Note, God is to be praised as a peerless Being, and of unparalleled perfection; this glory is due unto his name, to own, not only that there is none like him, but that there is none beside him. All others were pretenders, Ps. 18. 33. The fear of the Lord here celebrates the glory of. (1.) His unspotted purity. This is that attribute which is most praised in the upper world, by those that always behold his face, Is. 6. 3. Rev. 4. 8. When Israel triumphed over the Egyptians, God was praised as glorious in holiness, Exod. 15. 11. So here, in Hannah's triumph, There is none holy as the Lord. It is the rectitude of his nature, his infinite agreement with himself, and the equity of his government and judgment, in all the administrations of both. At the remembrance of this, we ought to give thanks. (2.) His almighty power. Neither is there any rock (or any strength, for so the word is sometimes rendered) like our God. Hannah had experienced a mighty support by staying herself upon him, and therefore speaks as she had found, and seems to refer that to of Moses, Deut. 33. 29. 30. 31. (3.) His unchangeable dominion. He is the Judge of all, is a God of knowledge; he clearly and perfectly sees into the character of every person, and the merits of every cause, and he gives knowledge and understanding to those that seek it of him. (4.) His unerring justice. By him actions are weighed. His own are so, in his eternal counsels; the actions of the children of men are so, in the balance of his judgment; so that he will render to every man according to his work, and is not mistaken in what any man is, or does.

2. How she solaces herself in these things. What we give God the glory of, we may take the comfort of; Hannah does so, (1.) In holy joy. My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; not so much in her son, as in her God; he is to be the Gladness of our joy, (Ps. 43. 4.) and our joy must not terminate in any thing short of him. I rejoice in thy salvation; not only in this particular favour to me, but in the salvation of thy people Israel, those salvations especially which this child will be an instrument of, and that above all, by Christ, which those are but the types of. (2.) In holy triumph. My horn is exalted; not only my reputation saved by my having a son, but greatly raised by having such a son. We read of some of the singers whom David appointed to lift up the horn, an instrument of music, in praising God; (1 Chron. 25. 5.) so that, My horn is exalted, means this, My praises are very much elevated to an unusual strain. Exalted in the Lord; God is to have the honour of all our exaltations, and in him must we seek all our wisdom. This is; this, Now I have wherewith to answer them that reproached me; he that has his quiver full of arrows, his house full of children, shall not be ashamed to speak with the enemy in the gate, Ps. 127. 5.

3. How she herewith silences those that set up themselves as rivals with God, and rebels against him; v. 3. Talk no more exceeding boldly. Let them think of Hannah's sons, he has nothing more with her confidence in God, and praying to him; at length she found it not in vain. See Mic. 7. 10, Then she that is mine enemy, shall see it, and shame shall cover her that said, Where is my God? Or, perhaps, it was below her to take so much notice of Peninnah, and her malice, in this song; but this is intended as a check to the insolence of the Philistines, and other enemies of God and Israel, that set their mouth against the heavens, Ps. 73. 4. that this should make them to silence and shun him that has thus judged for me against my adversary, will judge for his people against all their's." II. The notice she takes of the wisdom and sovereignty of the divine providence, in its disposal of the affairs of the children of men; such are the vicissitudes of them, and such the strange and sudden turns and revolutions of them, that it is often found a very short step between the height of prosperity and the depth of adversity; God has not only set the one over against the other, Eccl. 7. 14, but the one very near the other, and no gulf fixed between them, that we may rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not.

1. The strong are soon weakened, and the weak are soon strengthened, when God pleases, v. 4. On the one hand, if he speak the word, the bow of the mighty men are broken, they are disarmed, distressed, to do as they have done, and as they have designed; they have been worsted in battle who seemed upon all accounts to have had the advantage on their side, and thought themselves sure of victory. See Ps. 46. 9.—37. 15, 17. Particular persons are soon weakened by sickness and age, and they find that the bow does not long abide in strength, many a mighty man who has gloried in his might, has found that the bow has been broken, and that it has fallen to him when he trusted to it. On the other hand, if the Lord speak the word, they who stumbled through weakness, who were so feeble that they could not go straight or steady, are girded with strength, in body and mind, and are able to bring great things to pass. They who are weakened by sickness, return to their vigour, Job 33. 25. by sorrow shall recover their comfort; which will confirm the weak hands and the feeble knees, Isa. 38. 10. The Virgin sleeves up in the day of that side that was given up for gone, and even the lame take the prey, Isa. 33. 23.

2. The rich are soon impoverished, and the poor strangely enriched of a sudden, v. 5. Providence sometimes does so blast men's estates, and cross their endeavours, and with a fire not blown consume their increase, that they who were full,
Promised On produced nor enriching in them, necessary Are despond rich abundance them gives son, that faith; full hath the was both of versal (v. 3.) of Father issues 3.

Riches flee away, (Prov. 23. 5.) and leave those miserable, who, when they had them, placed their happiness in them. To them that have been full and free, poverty and slavery must needs be doubly grievous. But, on the other hand, sometimes Providence so orders it, that they lose many honors, ceased, that is ceased to hide themselves for bread as they had done; having, by God's blessing on their industry, got before hand in the world, and enough to live upon at ease, they shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more. This is not to be ascribed to fortune, nor merely to men's wisdom or folly, Riches are not to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill; (Ecc. 9. 11.) nor is it always men's own fault that they become poor, but, (v. 7.) The Lord maketh some poor, and maketh others rich; the impoverishing of one is the enriching of another, and it is God's doing. To some he gives power to get wealth, from others he takes away power to keep the wealth they have. Are we poor? God made us poor, which is a good reason why we should be content, and reconcile ourselves to our condition. Are we rich? God made us rich, which is a good reason why we should preserve him, and be cheerful in the abundance of good things he gives us. It may be understood of the same person; those that were rich God makes poor, and after a while makes rich again, as Job: he gave, he takes away, and then gives again. Let not the rich be proud and secure, for God can soon make them poor; let not the poor despise and despair, for God can in due time enrich them again.

3. Empty families are replenished, and numerous families diminished and made few. This is the instance that comes close to the occasion of the thanksgiving. The barren hath borne seven, meaning herself, for though at present she had but one son, yet that one being a Nazarite, devoted to God, and employed in his immediate service, he was to her as good as seven. Or, it is the language of her faith; now that she has one, she hopes for more, and was never more cheerful and of God. 2. In God is her trust, that if we reckon Samuel but for two, as we may well, she has the number she promised herself; the barren hath borne seven, while, on the other hand, she that hath many children, is waxed feeble, and hath left bearing; she says no more, Peninnah is now mortified, and crest-fallen. The tradition of the Jews, is, that when Hannah bore one child, Peninnah buried two. There are, indeed, two instances both of the increase of families that were inconceivable, and the extinguishing of families that made a figure, Job 12. 23. Ps. 107. 38. &c.

4. God is the sovereign Lord of life and death; (v. 6.) The Lord killeth and maketh alive. Understand it, (1.) Of God's sovereign dominion and universal agency, in the lives and deaths of the children of men. He presides in births and burials. With whom are the souls of men? Of what body is death, the Lord killeth, death is his messenger, strikes whom and when he bids; none are brought to the dust, but it is he that brings them down, for in his hand are the keys of death, and the grave, Rev. 1. 18. Whenever any are born, is it he that makes them alive; none knows what is the way of the spirit, but this we know, that it comes from the Father of spirits. Whenever any are recovered from sickness, and delivered from imminent perils, it is God that bringeth up, for to him belong the issues from death. (2.) Of the distinction he makes between some and others; he killeth some, and maketh, that is, keepeth others alive that were in the same danger, in war, suppose, or in their profession. Two in a bed together, it may be one taken by death, and the other yet alive; even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes. Some that were most likely to live, brought down to the grave, and others that were as likely to die, brought up; for living and dying do not go by likelihoods. God's providences towards some are killing, ruining to their comforts; and towards others at the same time reviving. (5.) Of the changes he makes with one and the same person. He killeth and bringeth down to the grave; that is, he brings even to death's doors, and revives and raises up, when even life was despaired of, and a sentence of death received, 2 Cor. 1. 8, 9. He returneth to destruction, and then says, Return, Ps. 90. 3. Nothing is too hard for God to do, no not the quickening of the dead, and putting life into dry bones.

5. Advancement and abasement are both from him. He brings some low, and lifts up others; (v. 7.) humbles the proud, and gives grace and honour to the lowly; lays these in the dust that would vie with the God above them, and trample upon all about them; (Job 40. 12, 13.) but lifts up those with his salvation, that humble themselves before him, Jam, 4. 10. Or, it may be understood of the same persons; those whom he had brought low, when he found them sufficient for, he this is enlarged upon, v. 8. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, a low and mean condition, nay, from the dunghill, a base and servile condition, loathed, and despised, to set them among princes. See Ps. 113. 7, 8. Promotion comes not by chance, but from the counsel of God, which often prefers those that were very unlikely, and that men thought very unworthy. Joseph and Daniel, Moses and David, were thus changed from prison to a palace, from a sheep-hook to a sceptre. The princes they are set among, may be tempted to disdain them, but God can establish the honour which he gives thus surprisingly, and make them even to inherit the throne of glory. Let not these whom Providence has thus preferred, be upbraided with the dust and the dunghill they are raised cut of, for the meaner their beginnings were, the more are they favoured, and God doth bless their advancement, if it be by lawful and honourable means. Lastly, A reason is given for all these dispensations, which obliges us to acquiesce in them, how surprising soever they are, for, the pillars of the earth are the Lord's. (1.) If we understand it literally, it bespeaks God's almighty power, which cannot be controlled. He upholds the whole creation, founded the earth, and still sustains it by the word of his power. He doth dispose of all the affairs of families and kingdoms far beyond our conception and expectation, who hang the earth upon nothing? Job 26. 7. But, (2.) If we understand it figuratively, it bespeaks his incontestable sovereignty, which cannot be disputed. The princes and great ones of the earth, the directors of states and governments, are the pillars of the earth, Ps. 75. 3. On these hinges the affairs of the world; (What cannot he do in his day, but they are the Lord's, Ps. 47. 9.) for him they have their power, and therefore he may advance whom he pleases; and who may say, What dost thou? III. A prediction of the preservation and advancement of all God's faithful friends, and the destruction of all his and their enemies, having testified her joyful triumph in what God had done, and is doing, she concludes with joyful hopes of what he would do, v. 9, 10. Pious affections (says Bishop Patrick) in those days rose up many times to the height of prophecy, whereby God continued in that nation his true religion, in the midst of their idolatry.
trophs inclinations. This prophecy may refer, 1.
More immediately to the government of Israel by
Samuel, and Elkanah, and whom his line employed to
ancestors. The Israelites, God's saints, should be
protected and delivered; the Philistines, their ene-
gies, particularly by thunder, ch. 7. 10. Their dominion
should be enlarged, king David strengthened and
greatly exalted, and Israel (that in the time of the
judges had made so small a figure, and had much
ado to subsist) should now shortly become grand
and considerable, and give laws to all its neighbours.
An extraordinary change that was, and the birth
of Samuel was, at it were, the dawning of that day.

But, 2. We have reason to think that this prophecy
looks further, to the kingdom of Christ, and the
administration of that kingdom of grace, of which she
now comes to speak, having spoken so largely of the
kingdom of providence. And here is the first time
that we meet with the name Messiah, or his Anointed.
The ancient expostulation, both Jewish and Chris-
tian, make it to look beyond David, to the Son of
David; glorious things are here spoken of the king-
dom of the mediator, both before and since his in-
carnation; for the method of the administration of it,
both by the eternal Word, and by that Word made
flesh, is much the same.

Concerning that kingdom, we are here assured,
1. That all the loyal subjects of it shall be care-
fully and powerfully protected; v. 3. He will keep
his sheep, viz. Those are people in the world
that are God's saints, his select and sanctified
ones; and he will keep their feet, that is, all that
belongs to them shall be under his protection, down
to their very feet, the lowest part of the body. If
he will keep their feet, much more their head and
hearts; or, he will keep their feet, that is, he will
secure the ground they stand on, and establish their
goings, he will set a guard of grace on their
futile and dangerous, that their feet may neither
wander out of the way, nor stumble in the way.
When their feet are ready to slip, Ps. 73, 2, his mer-
cy holdeth them up, Ps. 94, 18. and keepeth them
from falling, Jude 24. While we keep God's
ways, he will keep our feet. See Ps. 37, 23, 24.

2. That all the powers engaged against it shall
not be able to effect the ruin of it. By strength no
man shall prevail; God's strength is engaged for
the establishment of it; and while it is so, no man's strength
shall not prevail against it. The church seems destitute
of strength, her friends few and feeble; but preval-
ency does not go by human strength; Ps. 33. 16.
God neither needs it for him, (Ps. 147. 10.) nor
dreads it against him.

3. That all the enemies of it will certainly be
broken and brought down: The wicked shall be silent
in darkness; v. 9. They shall be struck both blind
and dumb, not able to see their way, nor have
any thing to say for themselves. Damned sinners
are sentenced to utter darkness, and in it they will
be for ever speechless, Matth. 22. 12, 13. The
wicked are called, The adversaries of the Lord,
and it is foretold, v. 10. that they shall be broken to
pieces. Their designs against his kingdom among
men, will all be dashed, and they themselves de-
struction, it is plain. God's strength thereof to
God has many ways of doing it, and, rather than fail,
from heaven shall be thunder upon them, and so,
not only put them in terror and consternation, but
bring them to destruction. Who can stand before
God's thunderbolts?

4. That the conquests and commands of this
kingdom shall extend themselves to distant regions;
The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth. David's
victories and dominions reached far, but the utter-
most parts of the earth are promised to the Messiah
for his possession. Ps. 2. 8. to be either reduced to
his golden, captive, or ruined by his iron rod. God
is Judge of all and he will judge for his people,
against his and their enemies, Ps. 110. 5, 6.

(5.) That the power and honour of Messiah the
Prince shall grow and increase more and more. He
shall give strength unto his King for the accom-
plishing of his great undertaking, Ps. 69. 21. and
see Luke 22. 43. strengthen him to go through the
difficulties of his humiliation, and in his exaltation
he will lift up the head, (Ps. 110. 7.) lift up the horn,
the power and honour of his anointed, and make him
higher than the kings of the earth, Ps. 89. 27. This
crowns the triumph, and is, more than any thing,
the matter of her exaltation. her horn is exalted,
v. 1. because she foreshews the horn of the Messiah
will be so. This secures the hope; the subjects of
Christ's kingdom will be safe, and the enemies of it
shall be ruined, for the Anointed, the Lord Christ,
is girt with strength, and is able to save and destroy
unto the uttermost.

11. And Elkanah went to Ramah to his
house; and the child did minister unto the
Lord before Eli the priest. 12. Now the
sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew
not the Lord. 13. And the priest's custom
with the people was, that, when any man
offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came,
while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-
hook of three teeth in his hand; 14. And
he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or cal-
dron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook brought
upon the priest took for himself. So they did
in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came
thither. 15. Also before they burnt the fat,
the priest's servant came, and said to the
man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for
the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh
the, but raw. 16. And if any man said
unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat
presently, and then take as much as thy soul
desireth; then he would answer him, Nay;
but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I
will take it by force. 17. Wherefore the sin
of the young men was very great before the
Lord; for men abhorred the offering of the
Lord. 18. But Samuel ministered before the
Lord, being a child, girded with a linen
ephod. 19. Moreover, his mother made him
a little coat, and brought it to him from year
to year, when she came up with her hus-
band to offer the yearly sacrifice. 20. And
Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said,
The Lord give thee seed of this woman,
for the loan which is lent to the Lord. And
they went unto their own home. 21. And
the Lord visited Hannah, so that she con-
ceived, and bare three sons and two daugh-
ters. And the child Samuel grew before the
Lord. 22. Now Eli was very old, and
heard all that his sons did unto all Israel;
and how they lay with the women that as-
sembled at the door of the tabernacle of the
congregation. 23. And he said unto them,
Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. 24. Nay, my sons: for it is no good report that I hear; ye make the Lord’s people to transgress.

25. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding, they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them. 26. (And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men.)

In these verses we have the good character and posture of Eliakim’s family, and the bad character and posture of Eli’s family; the account of these two is observably interwoven throughout this whole paragraph; as if the historian intended to set the one over against the other, that they might set off one another. The devotion and good order of Eliakim’s family aggrivated the iniquity of Eli’s house; while the wickedness of Eli’s sons made Samuel’s early piety shine the more bright and illustrious.

I. Let us see how well things went in Eliakim’s family, and how much better than formerly.

1. Eli dismissed them from the house of the Lord, when they were too old to minister in the tabernacle; and he laid his hand upon the head of his two sons, with a blessing, v. 20. He blessed as one having authority; The Lord gave thee more children of this woman, for the loan that is lent to the Lord. If Hannah had then had many children, it had not been such a generous piece of piety to part with one out of many for the service of the tabernacle; but when she had but one, an only one, whom she loved, her Isaac, to present him to the Lord, was such an act of heroic piety as should by no means lose its reward. As when Abraham had offered Isaac, he received the promise of a numerous issue, (Gen. 22. 16, 17.) so did Hannah, when she had presented Samuel unto the Lord, a living sacrifice. Note, What is lent to the Lord will certainly be repaid with interest, to our unspeakable advantage, and oftentimes in kind. Hannah resigns one child to God, and is recompensed with five, for Eli’s blessing; or (v. 21.) she bare three sons and two daughters. There is nothing lost by lending to God, or losing for him; it shall be repaid a hundredfold, Matth. 19. 29.

2. They returned to their own habitation; this is twice mentioned; (v. 11. and again v. 20.) it was very pleasant to attend at God’s house, to bless him, and to be blessed of him. But they have a family at home that must be looked after, and thither they return, cheerfully leaving the dear little boy behind them, knowing they left him in a good place; and it does not appear that he cried after them, but was as willing to stay as they were to leave him, so soon did he put away childish things, and behave like a man.

3. They kept up their constant attendance at the house of God, with their yearly sacrifice, v. 19. They did not think that their son’s ministering there would hinder them, knowing that offering must take the benefit of drawing near to God, they would omit no appointed season for it; and now they had one onestone more in Shiloh to draw them thither. We may suppose they went thither to see their child oftener than once a year, for it was not ten miles from Ramah, but their annual visit is taken notice of, because then they brought their yearly sacrifice; and then Hannah fitted up her son (and some think oftener than once a year) with a new suit of clothes, a little coat (v. 19.) and every thing belonging to it. She undertook to find him in clothes during his apprenticeship at the tabernacle, and took care he should be well provided, that he might appear the more decent and sightly in his ministration, and to encourage him in his towardly beginnings. Parents must take care that their children want nothing that is fit for them, whether they are with them or from them; but those that are duteous and hopeful, and minister to the Lord, must be thought worthy of double care and kindness.

4. The child Samuel did very well. Four several times he is mentioned in these verses, and two things were told of:

(1.) The service he did to the Lord. He did well indeed, for he ministered to the Lord, (v. 11. 18.) according as his capacity was; he learnt his catechism, and was constant to his devotions; soon learnt to read, and took a pleasure in the book of the law, and thus he ministered to the Lord. He ministered before Eli, that is, under his inspection, and as he ordered him, not before Eli’s sons; all parties were agreed that they were unfit to be his tutors. Perhaps, he attended immediately on Eli’s person, was ready to him to fetch and bring as he had occasion, and that is called ministering to the Lord. Some little services perhaps he was employed in about the altar, though much under the age appointed by the law for the Levites’ ministration. He could light the candle, or set it up, or run an errand, or shut a door; and because he did this with a pious disposition of mind, it is called ministering to the Lord, and great notice is taken of it. After a while, he did his work so well, that Eli appointed that he should minister with a linen ephod as the priests did, (though he was no priest,) because he saw that God was with him. Note, Little children must learn betimes to minister to the Lord, and God will accept them; particularly, let them learn to pay respect to their teachers as Samuel to Eli. None can begin too soon to be religious. See Ps. 8. 2. and Matth. 21. 15, 16.

(2.) The blessing he received from the Lord, He grew before the Lord, as a tender plant, (v. 21.) grew on (v. 20.) in strength and stature, and especially in wisdom and understanding, and learned for his master. Note, Those young people that serve God as well as they can, he will enable to improve, that they may serve him better. They that are planted in God’s house, shall flourish, Ps. 92. 13. He was in favour with God and with men. Note, It is a great encouragement to children to be tractable, and virtuous, and good betimes, that if they be, both God and man will love them. Such children are the darlings both of heaven and earth. What is here said of Samuel, is said of our blessed Saviour, that great example, Luke 2. 52.

II. Let us now see how ill things went in Eli’s family, though seated at the very door of the tabernacle. The nearer the church, the further from God.

1. The abominable wickedness of Eli’s sons; (v. 12.) The sons of Eli were sons of Belial. It is emphatically expressed. Nothing appears to the contrary, but that Eli himself was a very good man, and, no doubt, had educated his sons well, giving them good instructions, setting them good examples, and putting up many a good prayer for them; and yet, when they grew up, they proved sons of Belial, profane wicked men, and arrant rakes; They knew not the Lord. They could not but have a notional knowledge of God and his law, a fit knowledge; (Rom. 2. 20.) yet because their practice was not accordingly, they are spoken of as wholly ignorant of God; they lived as if they knew nothing at all of God. Note, Parents cannot give grace to their children, nor does it run in the blood.
Many that are sincerely pious themselves, live to
see those that come from them, notoriously impious
and profane, for the race is not to the swift. Eli was
High Priest and Judge in Israel; his sons were
priests by their birth; their character was sacred
and honourable, and obliged them, for their reputa-
tion's sake, to observe decorum: they were resi-
dent at the fountain-head both of magistracy and
ministry, and yet they were sons of Belial, and
their honour, power, and management made them too
much the worse. They did not go to serve other
gods, as those did that lived at a distance from
the altar, for from the house of God they had their
wealth and dignity; but, which was worse, they
managed the service of God as if he had been one
of the dunghill-deities of the heathen. It is hard to
say which dishonours God more, idolatry, or
profaneness, especially the profaneness of the priest.
Let us see the wickedness of Eli's sons; and it is a
sad sight.

(1.) They profaned the offerings of the Lord, and
made a gain to themselves, or rather a gratification
of their own luxury, out of them. God had pro-
vided competently for them out of the sacrifices; the
offerings of the Lord made by fire, were a consider-
able branch of their revenue, but that did not please
them, they served not the God of Israel but their own
bellies; (Rom. 13. 13.) Let every wise person that
has got goods, that he never have enough, Isa. 56. 11.
(1.) They robbed the offerers, and seized for
themselves some of their part of the sacrifice of the
peace-offerings. The priests had for their share
the wave-breast and the heave-shoulder, (Lev. 7.
34.) but that did not content them; when the flesh
was boiling for the offerer to feast upon religiously
with his friends, they sent a servant with a flesh-
hook of three teeth, a trident, and that must be
shown out of the offerers' flesh, which was but the
priest must have; (v. 13, 14.) and the people,
out of their great veneration, suffered this to grow
into a custom, so that after a while prescription
was pleaded for this manifest wrong. [2.] They step-
ped in before God himself, and encroached upon
his right too; as if it were a small thing to weary
men, they wearied my God also, Isa. 7. 13. Be it
observed to the Israelites in their church, the priests
were yielded to their unwarantable de-
mands from them, yet they were very solicitous
that God should not be robbed; Let them not fail
to burn the fat presently, v. 16. Let the altar have
due, for that is the main matter; unless God have
the fat, they can feast with little comfort upon the
flesh: it was a shame that the priests should need
thus to be admonished by the people of their duty;
but they regarded not the admonition, for they
will be served first, and will take what he thinks fit
of the fat too, for he is weary of boiled meat; he
must have roast, and, in order to that, they must
give it him raw; and if the offerer dispute it, though
not in his own favour, (let him take what he pleases
of his part,) but in favour of the altar, (let them be
sure to burn the fat first,) even the priest's servant
was grown so very imperious, that he would either
have it not taken by force; than which there
would not be a greater affront to God, or a greater
abuse to the people. The effect was, First, That
God was displeased: The sin of the young men was
very great before the Lord, v. 17. Nothing is more
provoking to God than the profanation of sacred
things, and men serving of their lusts with the offer-
ings of the Lord. Secondly, That religion suf-
fered by it; Men abhorred the offerings of the Lord.
A great many, very many, of his management of his
offerings, and too many insensibly fell into a contempt
of the offerings themselves for their sakes. It was
the people's sin to think the worst of God's institu-
tions, but it was the much greater sin of the priests,
that gave them occasion to do so. Nothing brings
a greater reproach upon religion, than ministers'
covetousness, sensuality, and impiousness. In the
midst of this sad story, comes in the repeated men-
tion of Samuel's devotion, But Samuel ministered
before the Lord, as an instance of the power of God's
grace, in preserving him pure and pious, in the midst
of this wicked crew; and that helped to keep up the
sinking credit of the sanctuary in the minds of the
people, why, when they had said all they could
against Eli's sons, could not but admire Samuel's
seriousness, and speak well of religion for his s.i.e.

(2.) They debauched the women that came to
worship at the door of the tabernacle; (v. 22.) they
had wives of their own, but were like fed horses,
Jer. 5. 8. To have gone to the harlots' houses, the
common prostitutes, had been abominable wicked-
ness; but to use the interest which as priests they
had in those women that had devout dispositions,
and were religiously inclined, and to bring them to
commit this wickedness, was such horrid impiety,
as one can scarcely think it possible that men who
called themselves priests, should ever be guilty of.
Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and tremble, O
earth! No words can sufficiently express the vili-
nity of such practices as these.

2. The reproof which Eli gave his sons for this
very wickedness, was very old, (v. 22.) and
could not himself inspect the service of the taber-
nacle as he had done, but left all to his sons, who,
because of the infirmities of his age, slighted him,
and did what they would; however, he was told of
the wickedness of his sons, and we may well im-
gaine what a heart-breaking it was to him, and how
much it added to the burthens of his age; but it
should seem he did not so much as reprove them,
but be heard of their debauching the women, after
then he thought fit to give them his check. Had he
rebuked them for their greediness and luxury, this
might have been prevented. Young people should
tell of their faults, as soon as it is perceived that
they begin to be extravagant, lest their hearts be
hardened. Now concerning the reproof he gave
them, observe,

(1.) That it was very just and rational. That
which he gave was very proper. [1.] He tells
them that the matter of fact was too plain to be
denied, and too public to be concealed; I hear of
your evil dealings by all this people, v. 23. It is not
the surprise of one or two, but the avowed testimony
of many, all your neighbours cry out shame on you,
and bring their complaints to me, expecting that I
should redress the grievance. [2.] He shows
them the bad consequences of it, that they not only
sinned, but made Israel to sin, and would have the
people's sin to answer for, as well as their own;
[3.] You that should turn men from iniquity, (Mal. 2.
6.) you make the Lord's people to transgress, and
corrupt the nation instead of reforming it; you tempt
people to go serve other gods, when they see the
God of Israel so ill served. [3.] He warns them
of the danger they brought themselves into by it;
(v. 25.) he intimates to them what God afterward
told him, that the iniquity would not be purged with
sacrifice nor offering, ch. 3. 14. If one man sin against
another, the judge, that is, the priest, who
was appointed to be the judge in many cases, (Deut.
17. 9.) shall judge him, shall undertake his cause,
arbitrate the matter, and make atonement for the
offender; but if a man sin against the Lord, that is,
if a priest profane the holy things of the Lord, if
a man that deals with God for others, deal with
himself, what could be worse? Eli was himself
a judge, and had often made intercession for transg-
gressors, but, says he, You that sin against the
Lord, that is, against the law and honour of
God, in those very things which immediately per-
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I. SAMUEL, II.

27. And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh’s house? 28. And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? 29. Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation, and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? 30. Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. 31. Behold, the days come that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father’s house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. 32. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. 33. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. 34. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die both of them. 35. And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in my heart, and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine Anointed for ever. 36. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest’s offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

Eli reproved his sons too gently, and did not threaten them as he should, and therefore God sent a prophet to him to reprove him sharply, and to threaten him, because, by his indulgence of them, he had strengthened their hands in their wickedness. If good men be wanting in their duty, and by their carelessness and remissness contribute anything to the sin of sinners they must expect both to hear of it, and to smart for it. Eli’s family was now nearer to God than all the families of the earth, and therefore he will punish them, Amos 3. 2. The message is sent to Eli himself, because God would bring him to repentance and save him; not to his son whom he had determined to destroy. And it might have been a means of awakening him to his duty at last, and so to have prevented the judgment; but we do not find it had any great effect upon him.

The message this prophet delivers from God, is very close.

I. He reminds him of the great things God had done for the house of his fathers, and for his family. He appeared to Aaron in Egypt, (Exod. 4. 27.) in the house of bondage, as a token of further favour which he designed for him, v. 28. He advanced him to the priesthood, entitled it upon his family, and thereby dignified it above any of the families of Israel. He intrusted him with honourable work, to offer on God’s altar, to burn incense, and to wear that ephod in which was the breast-plate of judgment. He settled upon him an honourable maintenance, as a token out of all the offerings made by fire, v. 28. What could he have done more for them, to engage them to be faithful to him? Note. The distinguishing favours we have received from God, especially those of the spiritual priesthood, are great aggravations of sin, and will be remembered against us in the day of account, if we profane our crown, and betray our trust, Deut. 32. 6. 2 Sam. 12. 7, 8.

II. He exhibits a high charge against him and his family; his children did wickedly, and he connived at it, and thereby involved himself in the guilt; the indictment therefore runs against them.
I. His sons had improperly profaned the holy things of God; "Ye kick at my sacrifice which I have commanded; not only trample upon the institution as a mean thing, but spurn at it as a thing you hate to be tied up to." They did the utmost despite imaginable to the offerings of the Lord, when they committed all that outrage and rapine about them that we read of, and violently plundered the Lord's house; and in effect, as was written, (Zech. 14. 20) and took that to themselves, which God had appointed to be burned on his altar. 2. Eli had bolstered them up in it, by not punishing their insolence and impertinency; "Thou for thy part honourest thy sons above me," that is, "Thou hast rather see my offerings disgraced by their profanation of them, than see thy sons disgraced by a legal censure upon them for so doing, which ought to have been upon them," that is, presumption and deprivation ab officio et beneficio—of their office and its emoluments. Those that allow and countenance their children in any evil way, and do not use their authority to restrain and punish them, do in effect honour them more than God, being more tender of their reputation than of his glory, and more desirous to humour them than to honour him. 3. Those who are all shrewd in the gains of the sacrilege, it is to be feared, shall be Eli himself, though he disliked and reproved the abuses committed, yet did not forbear to eat of the consecrated meat they sacrilegiously got; (v. 15.) he was a fat (like a) heavy man; (ch. 4. 18.) and therefore it is charged upon the whole family, (though Hophni and Phinehas were principally guilty,) Ye make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings. God gave them a sufficient to feed them, but that would not suffice; they made themselves fat, and served their lusts, with that which God was to be served with. See Hierae, 4. 8.

III. He declares the cutting off of the entail of the high-priesthood from his family; (v. 30.) "The Lord God of Israel, who is jealous for his own honour and Israel's, says, and lets them know it, that thy commission is revoked and superseded. I said, indeed, that thou house, and the house of thy father Ithamar, (for from that younger son of Aaron, Eli was descended,) should walk before me for ever. Upon what occasion the dignity of the high-priesthood was transferred from the family of Eleazar to that of Ithamar, does not appear; but it seems it had been done, and Eli stood fair to have that honour perpetuated to his posterity; but observe, this was disallowed by God’s own ordination and arrangement with it, They shall walk before me for ever; and that is, There shall have the honour, provided they faithfully do the service; walking before God is the great condition of the covenant, Gen. 17. 1. Let them set me before their face, and I will set them before my face continually; (Ps. 41. 12.) otherwise not. But now the Lord says, Be it far from me: Now that ye cast me off, you can expect no other than that I should cast you off; you will not walk before me as you should, and therefore you shall not; such wicked and abusive servants God will discard, and turn out of his service. Some think there is a further reach in this recall of the grant, and that it was not only to be fulfilled shortly in the deposing of the posterity of Eli, when Zadok, who descended from Eleazar, was put in Abiathar’s room, but it was to have its complete accomplishment at length in the actual establishment of the Levitical priesthood by the priesthood of Christ.

IV. He gives a good reason for this revocation, taken from a settled and standing rule of God’s government, according to which, all must expect to be dealt with; (like that by which Cain was tried, Gen. 4. 7.) Then that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed. Observe in general, 1. That God is the Fountain of honour and dishonour; he can exalt the meanest, and put contempt upon the greatest. 2. As we deal with God, we must expect to be dealt with by him, and yet, more favourably than we deserve. See Ps. 18. 25, 26. Particularly be it spoken, (1.) To the everlasting reputation of religion and serious godliness, that it gives honour to God, and puts honour upon men. Below we seek and serve the glory of God, and he will be behind hand with none that do so, but here and hereafter will secure their glory. The way to be truly great, is to be truly good. If we humble and deny ourselves in any thing to honour God, and have a single eye to him in it, we may depend upon this promise, he will put the best honour upon us. See John 12. 26. (2.) Be it spoken to the everlasting reproach of impious profaneness, that this does dishonour to God, (despises the greatest of blessings, his angels adore,) and will bring dishonour upon men, for they that do so, shall be lightly esteemed; not only God will lightly esteem them, (that, perhaps, they will not regard, as they that honour him value his honour, of whom therefore it is said, I will honour them,) but they shall be lightly esteemed by all the world, the very honour they are proud of shall be taken away; they shall see themselves despised by all mankind, and by all the highest; when they are gone, their memory shall rot, and when they rise, again, it shall be to everlasting shame and contempt. The honour which their important malice puts upon God and his omnipotent justice, will return upon their own heads, Ps. 79. 17.

V. He foretells the particular judgments, which should come upon his family, to its perpetual ignominy. A curse should be entailed upon his posterity, and a terrible curse it is; and shows how jealous God is in the matters of his worship, and how ill he takes it, when those who are obliged by their character and profession to preserve and advance the interests of his glory, are false to their trust, and betray them. If God’s ministers be vicious and profane, how much more punishment shall they be thought worthy of, here and for ever, than other sinners! Let such read the doom here passed on Eli’s house and temple. It is threatened, 1. That their power should be broken; (v. 31.) I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father’s house; they should bestripped of all their authority, should be deposed, and have no influence upon the people as they had had: God would make them contemptible and base. See Mal. 2. 8. 9. The sons had abused their power to oppress people and enroach upon their rights, and the father had not used his power as he ought to have done, to restrain and punish them, and therefore it is justly threatened, that the arm should be cut off, which was not stretched out as it should have been. 2. That their lives should be shortened; he was himself an old man; but instead of using the wisdom, gravity, expense, and authority, of his age, for the good of God and the support of religion, he had suffered the infirmities of age to make him more cool and remiss in his duty, and therefore it is here threatened, that none of his posterity should live to be old: (v. 31. 32.) it is twice spoken; There shall not be an old man in thy house for ever; and again, (v. 33.) All the increase of thine house, from generation to generation, shall die in the flower of their age, when they are in the midst of the years of their service; so that though the family should not be extinct, yet it should never be considerable, nor should any of it come to be eminent in their day. Bishop Patrick relates it, out of some of the Jewish writers, that, long after this, there being a family in Jerusalem, none of which commonly lived above
eighteen years, upon search it was found that they
descended from the house of Eli, on which this
sentence was passed.
3. That all their consorts should be imibittered.
(1.) The comfort they had in the sanctuary, in its
wealth and prosperity; Thou shalt see an enemy in
my habitation. This was fulfilled in the Philistines' invasions,
and the mischiefs they did to Israel, by which the country was impoverished, (ch. 13. 19.)
and, no doubt, the priests' incomes were thereby
very much impaired. The captivity of the ark was
such an act of hostility, committed upon God's
habitation, as broke Eli's heart. As it is a blessing to a
family to see peace upon Israel, (Ps. 128. 5, 6.)
so the contrary is a sore judgment upon a family,
especially a family of priests. 2. The comfort of their
children. The man of thine, whom I shall not cut off by an untimely death, shall live to be a
blot and burden to the family, a scandal and vexa-
tion to his relations; he shall be to consume thine
eyes, and grieve thine heart, either for his foolish-
ness, or his sickness, or his wickedness, or his poverty. Grief for a dead child is great; but for a
bad child often greater.
4. That their substance should be wasted, and
they should be reduced to extreme poverty; (v. 36.)
He that is left alive in thy house, shall have little
joy of his life, for want of a livelihood he shall
come to those who have little bread or a
substance. (1.) He shall beg for the smallest alms, a piece of silver, and the word signifies the
least piece, and a morsel of bread. See how this
answered the sin. Eli's sons must have the bes-
pieces of flesh, but their sons will be glad of a mor-
sel of bread. Note, Want is the just punishment
of wantonness. Those who could not be content
without dainties and varieties, are brought, they, or
this truth, and their sons as a matter of necessity,
to beg. There is a famine as to what is
necessary in the Lord to the church. (2.) He shall beg for the meanest
office; Put me into somewhat belonging to
the priesthood, as it is in the original, make me as one
of the hired servants; the fittest place for a prodigal.
Plenty and power are forfeited, when they are
abused. They should not be able to pretend to
any good preferment, not to any place at the altar,
but should petition for some poor employment, be
this cruel as hath been, and even the lowest place,
so they might but get bread. This, it is probable,
was fully accomplished, when Abiathar, who was
of Eli's race, was deposed by Solomon for treason,
and he and his turned out of office in the temple, (1
Kings 2. 26, 27.) by which it is easy to think his
posterity were reduced to the extremities here
described.
5. That God would shortly begin to execute
these judgments in the death of Hophni and Phine-
has, the sad tidings of which Eli himself should
live to hear; This shall be a sign to thee, v. 34. When thou hearest it, say, "Now the word of God
begins to operate; here is one threatening fulfilled,
from which I infer that all the rest will be fulfilled
in their order." Hophni and Phinehas had many a
time sinned together, and it is here foretold that
they should die together both in one day. Bind
these two in a bundle for the fire. It was fulfilled,
ch. 4. 11.
Lastly, In the midst of all these threatenings
against the house of Eli, here is mercy promised to
Israel; (v. 35.) I will raise me up a faithful priest.
1. This was fulfilled in Zadoc, one of the family of
Eleazar, who came into Abiathar's place, in the
beginning of Solomon's reign, and was faithful to
his trust, and he and his hearkened to the voice of the
people as long as the Levitical priesthood continued.
Note, The wickedness of ministers, though it de-
stroy themselves, yet it shall not destroy the minis-
try. How bad soever the officers are, the office
shall continue always to the end of the world. If
some falsify their trust, yet others shall be raised
up, that will be true to it. God's work shall never
fail to the ground for want of hands to carry it on.
The High Priest is here said to walk before God's
anointed, that is, David and his seed, because he
was the breast-plate of judgment, which he was
to consult, not in common cases, but for the king,
in the affairs of state. Note, Notwithstanding the
degeneracy we see and lament in many families,
God will secure to himself a succession. If some
grow worse than their ancestors, others, to balance
that, shall grow better. 2. It has its full accom-
complishment in the priesthood of Christ, that merciful and faithful High Priest, whom God raised up
when the Levitical priesthood was destroyed, who
in all things did his father's mind, and for whom
God would build a sure house, build it on a rock, so
that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

CHAP. III.

In the foregoing chapter we had Samuel a young priest,
though by birth a Levite only, for he ministered before
the Lord in a linen ephod; in this chapter we have him
a young prophet, which was more; he was a man of
many manner revealing himself to him, and in him re-
viving, if not commencing, prophecy in Israel. Here
is, I. God's first manifestation of himself in an extra-
ordinary manner to Samuel, v. 1, 2. 2. The message
he sent by him to Eli, 11, 14. 3. The faithful delivery
of that message to Eli, and his submission to the righ-
teousness of God in it, v. 11, 18. 4. The establish-
ment of Samuel to be a prophet in Israel, v. 18, 21.

1. And the child Samuel ministered unto the
Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those
days; there was no open vision. 2. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began
to wax dim, that he could not see; 3. And there the lamp of God went out in the tem-
ple of the Lord, where the ark of God was,
and Samuel was laid down to sleep; 4. That the Lord called Samuel: and he an-
swered, Here am I. 5. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calldst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again.
And he went and lay down. 6. And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose, and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me.
And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. 7. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the
Lord yet revealed unto him. 8. And the Lord called Samuel again the third
time. And he arose, and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me.
And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the
child. 9. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord;
for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went
and lay down in his place. 10. And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Sa-
muel answered, Speak: for thy servant
heareth.
I. To make way for the account of God's revealing himself first to Samuel, we are here told, (v. 1.)

1. How industrious Samuel was in serving God, according as his place and capacity were; (v. 1.) The child Samuel, though but a child, ministered unto the Lord before Eli. It was an aggravation of the wickedness of Eli's sons, that the child Samuel shamed them: They brought offerings into the Lord's sanctuary, but Samuel ministered to him; they slighted their father's admonitions, but Samuel was observant of them, he ministered before Eli, under his eye and direction. It was the praise of Samuel, that he was so far from being influenced by their bad example, that he did not in the least fall off, but improved and went on. And it was a preparative for the honours God intended him; he had a mind and talent that was fitted for them. He was not contrusted with much more. Let those that are young, be humble and diligent, and they will find that the surest way to preferment. Those are fittest to rule, that have learnt to obey. 2. How scarce a thing prophecy then was which made the call of Samuel to be the greater surprise to himself, and the greater favour to Israel; The word of the Lord was precious in those days. Now and then a man of God was an extraordinary messenger; (as ch. 2. 27.) but there was no settled prophets, to whom the people might have recourse for counsel, nor from whom they might expect the discoveries of the divine will. And the rarity of prophecy made it the more precious in the account of those that knew how to put a right value upon it. It was precious, for what there was, (it seems,) was private, there was no open vision, that is, there were none that were publicly known to have visions. Perhaps, the impiety and impurity that prevailed in the tabernacle, and, no doubt, corrupted the whole nation, had provoked God, as a token of his displeasure, to withdraw the Spirit of prophecy; till the decree was gone forth for the raising up of a more faithful priest, and then, as an earnest of that, this faithful prophet was raised up.

The manner of God's revealing himself to Samuel is here related very particularly, for it was uncommon.

I. Eli was retired; Samuel had waited on him to his bed, and the rest that attended the service of the sanctuary, were gone, we may suppose, to their several apartments; (v. 2.) Eli was laid down in his place, he went to bed betimes, being unfit for business, and soon weary of it, and perhaps loving his ease too well. Perhaps, he was too much given to nurse his sons, which grieved his sons the greater liberty. And he sought retirement the more, because his eyes began to wax dim, an affliction which came justly upon him for winking at his sons' faults.

II. Samuel was laid down to sleep, in some closet near to Eli's room, as his place of the back-stairs, ready within call, if the old man should want any thing in the night; perhaps to read to him, if he could not sleep; or to take his chamber office rather than any of his own family, because of the toady disposition he observed in him. When his own sons were a grief to him, his little servitor was his joy. Let those that are afflicted in their children, thank God if they have any about them, in whom they are comforted. Samuel was laid down ere the lamp of God went out; (v. 3.) it should seem he lay somewhere so near the lamp place, that he was the first to rise, before any of the lamps in the branches of the candlestick went out, (for the main lamp never went out,) which, probably, was toward midnight; till that time, Samuel had been employing himself in some good exercise or other, reading and prayer, or perhaps cleaning or making ready the holy place; and then went softly to his bed. Then we may expect God's gracious visits, when we are constant and diligent in our duty.

III. God called him by name, and he took it for Eli's call, and ran to him, v. 4. 5. Samuel lay awake in his bed, his thoughts, no doubt, well employed, (as David's, Ps. 63. 6.) when the Lord called him. (But the Chaldec paraphr. thinks, out of the holy place, and the Chaldec paraphr. reads it, A voice was heard out of the temple of the Lord; but Eli, though it is likely he lay nearer, heard it not; yet, possibly, it might come some other way. Hereupon, we have an instance, 1. Of Samuel's industry, and readiness to wait on Eli; supposing it was he that called him, he hastened out of his warm bed, and ran to him, to see if he wanted anything; or, there was some thing he was not well, nor his situation, if it was the Lord, who said, "Here am I," said he. As a Lord's servants, to come when they are called; and to the younger, not only to submit to the elder, but to be careful and tender of them. 2. Of his inconstancy, and unacquaintedness with the visions of the Al mighty, that he took that to be only Eli's call, which was really the call of God. Such mistakes as these we make oftener than we think of. God can call any thing, as well as Eli, as the call of the minister, and answer it accordingly; calls to us by his providences, and we look only at the instruments. His voice cries, and it is but here and there a man of wisdom that understands it to be his voice. Eli assured him he did not call him, yet did not chide him for disturbing him with being over officious; did not call him a fool, and tell him he dreamed, but mildly bade him lie down again, he had nothing for him to do. If servants must be ready at their masters' call, masters also must be tender of their servants' comfort, that they may not be servant and thy maid servant may rest as well as thou. So Samuel went and lay down. God calls many by the ministry of the word, and they say, as Samuel did, Here am I; but not looking at God, not discerning his voice in the call, the impressions of it are soon lost; they lay down again, and their convictions come to nothing.

IV. The same call was repeated, and the same mistake made, a second and third time, v. 6-9. 1. God continued to call the child: yet again, (v. 6.) and again the third time, v. 8. Note, The call which divine grace designs to make effectual, shall be repeated till it is so; that is, till we come at the call, for the purpose of God, according to which we are called, shall certainly stand. 2. Samuel was still a wonder at it that it was the Lord, who spake by Samuel in his chamber office, and not by a familiar spirit, who was at the time another, but afterward he understood better. The witness of the Spirit in the hearts of the faithful, is often thus mistaken, by which means they lose the comfort of it; and the strivings of the Spirit with the consciences of sinners are likewise often mistaken, and so the benefit of their convictions is lost: God speaketh once, ye twice, but man perceiveth it not, Job 33. 14. 5. Samuel went to...
Now also the call was doubled, *Samuel, Samuel*, as if God delighted in the mention of his name; or to intimate that now he should be made to understand who spake to him. *God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this*, Ps. 62. 11. It was an honour to hear, that God was pleased to know him by name; 

(Exod. 33. 12.) 2. *And Samuel did shew himself ready and effectual, when he called him by name,* and so brought it particularly to him, as *Saul, Saul.* Thus God called to Abraham by name, Gen. 22. 1. 

Samuel said as he was taught, *Speak, for thy servant heareth.* Note, Good words should be put into children's mouths betimes, and apt expressions of pious and devout affections, by which they may be prepared, and not kept in the dark, to acquaint with divine things, and trained up to a sincere heart, in the sight of God. Teach young people what they shall say, for they cannot order their speech by reason of darkness. Samuel did not now rise and run as before, when he thought Eli called, but lay still and listened. The more sedate and composed our spirits are, the better prepared they are for divine discoveries. Let all tumultuous thoughts and passions be kept under, and every thing be quiet and serene in the soul, and then we are fit to hear from God. We must be silent, when he speaks. But Observe, Samuel left out one word; he did not say, *Speak, Lord,* but only, *Speak, for thy servant heareth,* perhaps, as Bishop Patrick suggests, out of uncertainty whether it was God that spoke to him or no. However, by this answer, *Speak, for thy servant heareth,* way was made for the message he was now to receive, and Samuel was brought acquainted with the words of God, and visions of the Almighty; and this *ere the lamp of God went out,* (v. 3.) *in the temple of the Lord,* which some of the Jewish writers put a mystical sense upon: before the fall of Eli, and the eclipsing of the Urim and Thummim for some time thereby, God called Samuel and made him an oracle; whence they have an observation among their doctors, *That the sun riseth, and the sun goeth down;* (Eccl. 1. 3.) that is, say they, Ere God maketh the sun of one righteous man to set, he makes the sun of another righteous man to rise. 

Smith ex Kimchi.

11. And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. 12. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. 13. For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. 14. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever. 15. And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord: and Samuel feared to show Eli the vision. 16. Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I. 17. And he said, What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee. 18. And Samuel told him every
whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.

Here is,

1. The message which, after all this introduction, God delivered to Samuel concerning Eli's house. God did not come to him now, to tell him how great a man he should be in his day, when a figure he should make, and what a blessing he should be to Israel. Young people have commonly a great curiosity to be told their fortune, but God came to Samuel, not to gratify his curiosity, but to employ him in his service, and send him on an errand to another person, which was much better; and yet the matter of this first message, which, no doubt, made a very great impression upon him, might be of good use to him afterward, when his own sons proved, though not so bad as Eli's, yet not so good as they should have been, ch. 8. 3.

The message is short, not near so long as that which the man of God brought; (ch. 2. 27.) for Samuel being a child, it could not be expected he should remember a long message, and God considered his frame. The memories of children must not be overcharged, nor not with divine things. But it is a sad message, a message of wrath, to ral-

ly the messengers. If they offer no evidence there pronounced, because perhaps Eli did not give so much regard to that as he ought to have done. Divine threatenings, the less they are heeded, the surer they will come, and the heavier they will fall. Reference is here had to what was there said concerning both the sin and the punishment.

1. Concerning the sin, it is the iniquity that he knew not, ch. 13. The man of God told him of it, and many a time his own conscience had told him of it. O what a great deal of guilt and corruption is there in us, concerning which we may say, "It is the iniquity which our own heart knoweth; we are conscious to ourselves of it!" In short, the iniquity was this, his sons made themselves vile, and he restran-

them not. Or, as it is in the Hebrew, he frowned not upon them. If he did show his dis-

like to their wicked courses, yet not to that degree that he ought to have done: he did reproce them, but he did not punish them, for the mischief they did, nor deprive them of their power to do mischief, which, as a father, High Priest, and judge, he might have done. Note, (1.) Sinners do by their own wickedness make themselves vile. They de-

brach themselves, for every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lusts; (Jam. 1. 14.) and thereby they debase themselves, and make themselves not only mean, but odious to the holy God, and holy men and angels. Sin is a vile thing, and vilifies men more than any thing, Ps. 15. 4. Eli's sons made light of God, and made his offerings vile in the people's eyes; but the shame returned into their own bosom, they made themselves vile. (2.) Those that do not restrain the sins of others, when it is in the power of their hand to do it, make themselves partakers of the guilt, and will be charged as accessories. Those in authority will have a great deal to answer for, if they make not the word they hear, a terror to evil workers.

2. Concerning the punishment, it is that which I have spoken concerning his house; (v. 12. and v. 13.) I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever; that is, that a curse should be entailed upon his family from generation to generation. The particulars of this curse we had before; they are not here repeated, but it is added.

(1.) That when that sentence began to be executed, it would be very dreadful and amazing to all Israel; (v. 11.) Both the ears of every one that hears it shall tingle. Every Israelite would be struck with terror and astonishment, to hear of the slaying of Eli's sons, the breaking of Eli's neck, and the dispersion of Eli's family. Lord, how terrible art thou in thy judgments! If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? Note, God's judgments upon others should affect us with a holy fear, Ps. 119. 120.

(2.) That these direful first-fruits of the execu-
tion would be certain earnest of the prosperous

full accomplishment of it. "When I begin, I will proceed, and make an end of all I have threatened," v. 12. It is intimated that it might, possibly, be some time before he would begin, but let them not call that forbearance an acquittance, nor that re-

prieve a pardon; for when at length he does begin, he will make thorough work of it, and though he stay long, he will strike home. (3.) That no room should be left for hope that this sentence might be reversed, and the execution stayed or mitigated, v. 14. [1.] God would not revoce the sentence, for he backed it with an oath; I have sworn to the house of Eli: and God will not go back from what he hath sworn, either in mercy or judgment. [2.] He would never come to a composi-
tion for the forfeiture. The iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering, etc. Every punishment shall be made for sin, not any abatement of the punishment.

This was the imperfection of the legal sacrifices, that there were iniquities which they did not reach, which they would not purge; but the blood of Christ cleanses from sin, and secures all those that by faith are interested in it, from that eternal death which is the wages of sin.

II. The deliverer of this message to Eli. Obser-

vate,

1. Samuel's modest concealment of it, v. 15. (1.) He lay till the morning, and we may well suppose he lay awake pondering on what he had heard, repe-

ting it to himself, and considering what use he must make of it. After we have received the spirit-

ual food of God's word, it is good to compose our-

selves and give it time to digest. (2.) He opened the doors of the house of the Lord, in the morning, and he called the priests, and took them into the holy of holies. That he should do so at other times, was an in-

stance of extraordinary tardiness in a child, but that he should do so this morning, was an instance of great humility. God had highly honoured him above all the children of his people, yet he was not proud of the honour, nor puffed up with it; did not think himself too great and too good to be employ-

ed in these mean and servile offices, but, as che-

rishing his servant, went and opened the doors of the tabernacle. Note, Those whom God manifests himself to, he makes and keeps low in their own eyes, and willing to stoop to any thing by which they may be serviceable to his glory, though but as door-keepers in his house. One would have ex-

pected that Samuel should have been so full of his vision, as to forget his ordinary service; that he should have gone among his companions, as one in ex-

"cency, to tell them what converse he had with God this night; but he modestly keeps it to him-

self, tells the vision to no man, but silently goes on in his business. Our secret communion with God is not to be proclaimed on the house tops. (3.) He feared to show Eli the vision. If he was afraid that Eli would be angry with him, and chide him, it will give us cause to suspect that Eli used to be as severe with this tenderly child, as he was indulgent to his own ways; and that that will bear hard upon him. But we will suppose it was rather because he was afraid to grieve and trouble the good old man, that he was so shy. If he had run immediately with the tidings to Eli, it would have looked as if he de-
sired the woful day, and hoped to build his own family upon the ruin of Eli's, therefore it became him not to be forward to do it; no good man can take pleasure in bringing evil tidings, especially not Samuel to Eli, the pupil to the tutor whom he loved and revered.

2. Eli's careful inquiry into it; (v. 16, 17.) as soon as ever he heard Samuel stirring, he called for him, probably, to his bed-side; and having perceived before, that God had spoken to him, he obliged him, not only by importunity, I pray thee, hide it not from me, but, finding him timorous and backward, by an adjuration likewise, God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me! He had too reason to fear that the message prophesied no good concerning him, but evil; and yet, because it was a message from God, he could not contentedly be ignorant of it. A good man desires to be acquainted with all the will of God, whether it make for, or against him. His adjuration, God do so to thee, if thou hide any thing from me, may intimate the fearful doom of unfaithful watchmen; if they warn not sinners, they bring upon themselves and care, which they should have denounced in God's name, against those that go on still in their trespasses.

3. Samuel's faithful delivery of his message at last; (v. 18.) He told him every whit; when he saw that he must tell him, he never minced the matter, nor offered to make it better than it was, to blunt that which was sharp, or to gild the bitter pill, but delivered the message as plainly and fully as he received it, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God. Christ's ministers must deal thus faithfully.

4. Eli's pious acquiescence in it: he did not question Samuel's integrity, was not cross with him, nor had he any thing to object against the equity of the sentence; he did not complain of the punishment, as Cain did, that it was greater than either he deserved or could bear, but patiently submitted, and accepted the punishment of his iniquity; It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. He understood the sentence to intend only a temporal punishment, and the entail of disgrace and poverty upon his posterity, and not a final separation of them from the favour of God, and therefore he cheerfully submitted; did not repine, because he knew the demerits of his family; nor did he now intercede for the reversing of the sentence, because God had ratified it with a solemn oath, of which he would not repent: he therefore composed himself into an humble resignation to God's will, as Aaron, in a case not much unlike; (Lev. 10. 3.) He held his peace. In a few words, (1.) He lays down this satisfying truth, "It is the Lord; it is he that pronounces the judgment, from whose bar there lies no appeal, and against whose sentence there lies no exception. It is he that will execute the judgment, whose hand cannot be resisted, whose arm assailed, or sovereignty contested. It is the Lord, who will thus sanctify and glorify himself, and it is highly fit he should. It is the Lord, with whom there is no unrighteousness, who never did nor ever will do any wrong to any of his creatures, nor exact more than their iniquity deserves." (2.) He infers from it this satisfying conclusion, "Let him do what seemeth him good; I have nothing to say against his proceedings; he is righteous in all his ways, and by his will his word therefore his will be done. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." Thus we ought to quiet ourselves under God's reproofs, and never to strive with our Maker.

19. And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. 20. And all Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.

21. And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord. Samuel being thus brought acquainted with the visions of God, we have here an account of the further honour done him as a prophet.

1. God did him honour. Having begun to favour him, he carried on and crowned his own work in him; (v. 19.) Samuel grew, for the Lord was with him. All our increase in wisdom and grace, is owing to the presence of God with us; it is all in all to our growth. God honoured Samuel, (1.) By further manifestations of himself to him. Samuel had faithfully delivered the messages he was intrusted with, and therefore God employed him again in his service; (v. 21.) The Lord revealed him if again to Samuel in Shiloh. Note; God will graciously repeat his visits to those that receive them aright. (2.) By fulfilling what he spake by him; (v. 19.) God did let none of his words fall to the ground; whatever Samuel said, as a prophet, it proved true; more was not wanting in the seasons. Probably, there were some remarkable instances of the truth of Samuel's predictions, that happened soon after, which confirmed those that were afterward to be fulfilled, and gave general satisfaction as to his mission. God will confirm the word of his servants, and perform the counsels of his messengers, (Isa. 44. 26.) and do what he hath said.

2. Israel did him honour. They all knew, and owned that Samuel was established to be a prophet, v. 20. (1.) He was famous; all that came up to Shiloh to worship, took notice of him, and admired him, and talked of him when they came home. Early piety will be the greatest honour of young people, and bring them, as much as any thing, and as soon, into reputation. Them that honour God he will honour. (2.) He grew useful and very serviceable to his generation. He that began betimes to be good, soon came to do good. His established commission, his exalted commission, and established reputation with the people, gave him a great opportunity of shining as a light in Israel. When old Eli was rejected, young Samuel was established; for God will never leave himself without a witness, nor his church without a guide.

CHAP. IV.

The predictions in the foregoing chapter, concerning the ruin of Eli's house, here begin to be fulfilled; how long after, does not appear; but it was not long. Such sinners God often makes quick work with. Here is, 1. The disgrace and loss Israel sustained in consequence with the Philistines, v. 1-5. II. Their foolish project to fortify themselves, by bringing the ark of God into their camp among the shoulders of Hophni and Phinehas, v. 3, 4. which made them secure, v. 5. and struck a fear into the Philistines, but such a fear as cowed them, v. 6-9. III. The fatal consequences of it; Israel was beaten, and the ark taken prisoner, v. 10, 11. IV. The tidings of this brought to Shiloh, and the sad reception of those tidings. 1. The city was taken into confusion, v. 12, 13. 2. Eli fainted away, fell, and broke his neck, v. 14-18. 3. His daughter-in-law fell in labour upon it, bore a son, but died immediately, v. 19, 22. These were the things which would make the ears of those heard them, to tingle.

1. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Eben-ezer; and the Philistines pitched in
I. SAMUEL, iv.

Aphik. 2. And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines; and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.

And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies. 4. So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from hence the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. 5. And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. 6. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the Lord was come into the camp. 7. And the Philistines were afraid; for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. 8. Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. 9. Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.

The first words which relate to Samuel, that his words came to all Israel, seem not to have any reference to the following story, as if it was by any direction of his, that the Israelites went out against the Philistines; had they consulted him, though but newly initiated as a prophet, it might have stood them in more stead than the ark did; but perhaps the princes of Israel despised his youth, and would not have recourse to him as an oracle, and he did not as yet interpose in public affairs; nor do we find any mention of his name from henceforward, till some years after; (ch. 7. 3.) only his words came to all Israel; that is, people from all parts, that were piously disposed, had recourse to him as a prophet, and advised with him. Perhaps, it is more probable they acted without the advice of Eli, who was generally known and talked of, and all that were serious and observing, compared the events here related, when they came to pass, with that prophecy, and saw it accomplished in them.

Here is,

1. A war entered into with the Philistines, v. 1. It was an attempt to throw off the yoke of their oppression, and would have succeeded better, if they had first repented and reformed, and so begun their work at the right end. It is computed that this was about the middle of the forty years' dominion that the Philistines had over Israel, (Judg. 13. 1.) and soon after the death of Samuel; so Bishop Patrick, who thinks the slaughter he made of the Philistines, might encourage this attempt: but Dr. Lightfoot reckons it forty years after Samuel's death, for so long Eli judged, v. 18.

II. The defeat of Israel in that war, v. 2. Israel, who were the aggressors, were smitten, and had four thousand men killed upon the spot. God had promised that one of them should chase a thousand; but now it is quite the contrary, Israel is smitten before the Philistines. So, the accused wrong, was in the camp, and gave their enemies all the advantage against them, they could wish for.

III. The measures they concerted for another engagement; a council of war was called, and, instead of resolving to fast and pray, and amend their lives, so ill taught were they, (and no wonder, when they had such teachers,) that, 1. They quarrelled with God for appearing against them; (v. 3.) Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us? If they meant this as an inquiry into the cause of God's displeasure, they needed not to go far to find that out; it was plain enough Israel had sinned, though they were not willing to see it and own it; but it rather seems that they expostulate boldly with God about it, are dispelled at what God had done, and dispute it with him. They own the hand of God in their trouble, and at the same time, (and that more truly) "It is we, not God, that are at fault with us," but, instead of submitting to it, they quarrel with it, and speak as those that were angry at him and his providence, and not aware of any just provocation they had given him. "Wherefore shall we, that are Israelites, be smitten before the Philistines? How absurd and unjust is it?" Note, The foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord, (Prov. 19. 3.) and fits himself to be vilely punished; (v. 3.) he did oblige him to appear for them the next time, by bringing the ark into their camp. The elders of Israel were so ignorant and foolish as to propose it, (v. 3.) and the people soon put it into execution; (v. 4.) they sent to Shiloh for the ark, and Eli had not courage enough to oppose it, but sent his ungodly sons, Hophni and Phinehas, along with it, at least permitted them to go, though he knew that wherever they went, they were the image of God wronged with them. Now see here, (1.) The profound veneration they had for the ark. "O send for that, and that will do wonders for us." The ark was, by institution, a visible token of God's presence. God had said that he would dwell between the cherubims, which were over the ark, and were carried along with it; now they thought that, by paying a great respect to this sacred chest, they should prove themselves to be Israelites indeed, and effectively engage God Almighty to appear in their favour. Note, It is common for those that have estranged themselves from the vials of religion, to discover a great fondness for the ritual and external observance of it; for those that even deny the flower of godliness, not only to have, but to have in admiration the form of it. The temple of the Lord is cried up, and the ark of the Lord stickled for, with a great deal of seeming zeal, by multitudes, and effectually engage God Almighty to appear in their favour. And yet indeed they did but make an idol of the ark, and looked upon it to be as much an image of the God of Israel, as those which the heathen worshipped, were of their gods. To worship the true God, and not to worship him as God is, in effect, not to worship him at all. (2.) Their egregious folly in thinking that if they had that in their camp, it would certainly save them out of the hands of their enemies, and bring victory back
to their side. For, [1.] When the ark set forward, Moses prayed, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; well knowing that it was not the ark moving with them, but God appearing for them, that must give them success; and here was no proper means used to engage God to favour them with his presence; what good then would the ark do them, the shell without the kernel? [2.] They were so far from having God’s leave to remove his ark, that he had plainly enough intimated to them in his law, that when they were seated in Canaan, his ark should be settled in the place that he should choose, (Deut. 12. 5, 11.) and that they must come to it, and not to it. How then could they expect any advantage by it, when they had not a just and legal possession of it, nor any warrant to stir it from its place? Instead of honouring God by what they did, they really affronted him. Nay, [3.] If there had been nothing else to invalidate the presumed right of the ark, how could they expect it should bring a blessing, when Hophni and Phinehas were the men that brought it? It would have given too much countenance to their villany, if the ark had done any Kindness to Israel, while it was in the hands of those graceless priests.

IV. The great joy that was in the camp of Israel, when the ark was brought into it; (v. 5.) they proceeded without any thought of it, and yet thought themselves sure of victory, and therefore gave a triumphant shout before the battle, as if the day was without fail their own, intending by this mighty shout to animate themselves and their own forces, and to intimidate their adversaries. Note, Carnal people triumph much in the external privileges and performances of religion, and build much upon them, as if those would infallibly save them in their distresses; but even in the camp, would bring them to heaven, though the world and the flesh be upon the throne in the heart.

V. The consternation which the bringing of the ark into the camp of Israel put the Philistines into. The two armies lay so near encamped, that the Philistines heard the shout the Israelites gave on this great occasion. They soon understood what it was they triumphed in, (v. 6.) and were afraid of the day for battle. It had never been done before in their days. God is come into the camp, and therefore we unto us; (v. 7.) and again, we unto us, v. 8. The name of the God of Israel was formidable even to those that worshipped other gods, and some apprehensions, even the infidels had, of the danger of contending with him. Natural conscience suggests this, that those are in a woful condition, who have God against them; yet see what great impressions the divine presence and the name of the God of Israel was not so much in the camp before the ark came thither; which may very well be excused in them, since the notions the Israelites themselves had of that presence were no better.

"O," say they, "this is a new design upon us, more frightful than all their stratagems, for there has not been such a thing heretofore; this was the most effectual course they could take to dispirit our men, and weaken their hands." 2. When it had been done in the days of old, it had wrought wonders, v. 8. These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. Here they were as much out in their history as in their divinity; the plagues of Egypt were inflicted before the ark was made, and before Israel came into the wilderness; but some confused traditions they had of it. The ark, God’s ordinance in their house, this ark was carried before them, which they attributed, not to Jehovah, but to the ark. Now, say they, Who shall deliver us out of the hands of these mighty gods? Taking the ark for God, as well they might, when the Israelites themselves idolized it. Yet it should seem they scarcely believed themselves, when they spoke thus formally of these mighty gods, but only bantered: for, instead of retreatting, or proposing conditions of peace, which they would have done, had they been really convinced of the power of Israel’s God, they stirred up one another to fight so much the more stoutly; this surprising difficulty did but sharpen their resolution; (v. 9.) Be strong and quit yourselves like men; the commanders inspiring bold and generous thoughts into the minds of their soldiers, when they bid them remember how they had lorded it over Israel, and what an intolerable grief and shame it would be, if they flinched now, and suffered Israel to lord it over them.

10. And the Philistines fought; and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. 11. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

Here is a short account of the issue of this battle. I. Israel was smitten, the army dispersed, and totally routed, not retiring into the camp as before, (v. 2.) when they hoped to rally again, but returning to their tents, every man shifting for his own safety, and making the best of his way home, desiring to make head any more; and thirty thousand were slain in the field of battle, v. 10. Israel was put to the worse. 1. Though they had the better cause, were the people of God, and the Philistines were enemies, yet, the Philistines’ terrors were turned into triumphs, and Israel’s into dishonours. 2. Through they had the ark of God with them. External privileges will secure none that abuse them, and do not live up to them. The ark in the camp will add nothing to its strength, when there is an Achan in it.

II. The ark itself was taken by the Philistines; and Hophni and Phinehas, who, it is likely, kept close to it, and when it was in danger, venturing for the defence of it, because by it they got their living, were both slain, v. 11. To this sad event the Psalmist refers; (Ps. 78. 61, 64.) He delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies’ hands. Their priest fell by the sword. 1. The slaughter of the priests, considering their bad character, was no great loss to Israel, but it was a dreadful judgment upon the house of Eli. The judgment which God had spoken was fulfilled in it; (ch. 2. 34.) This shall be a sign unto thee, an earnest of the judgments threatened, thy two sons shall die both in one day, and so shall all the increase of thy house die in the flower of their age, v. 33. If Eli had done his duty, and put them, as polluted from the priesthood, (Neh. 7. 64.) they might have lived, though in disgrace; but now God takes the work into his own hands, and changes them out of the world by the sword of the unrighteous: The Lord is known by those judgments which he executeth. It is true, the sword devours one as well as another, but these were waited for of the sword, marked for vengeance. They were out of their place; what had they to do in the camp? When
men leave the way of their duty, they shut themselves out of God's protection. But this was not all; they had betrayed the ark, by bringing it into danger, without a warrant from God, and this filled the measure of their iniquities. But, 2. The taking of the ark was a very great judgment upon Israel, a certain token of God's hot displeasure against them. Now they are made to see their folly in trusting to their external privileges, when they had by their wickedness forfeited them, and fancying that the ark would save them, when God was departed from them. Now they are made to reflect, with the utmost regret, upon their own rashness and presumption, in bringing the ark into the camp, and so exposing it; and wish a thousand times they had left it where God had fixed it. Now they are convinced that God will not be prescribed to by vain and foolish men, and that though he has bound us to his ark, he has not bound himself to it, but will rather deliver it into the hands of his sworn enemies, than suffer it to be profaned by his false friends, and countenance their superstition. Let none think to shelter themselves from the wrath of God, under the cloak of a visible profession, for there will be those cast into utter darkness, that have eaten and drunken in Christ's presence.

12. And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head. 13. And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the way-side, watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out. 14. And when he heard the noise of the crying, he said, What meaneth the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli. 15. Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see. 16. And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son? 17. And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines; and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people; and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the ark of God is taken. 18. And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward, by the side of the gate; and his neck brake, and he died; for he was an old man, and heavy: and he had judged Israel forty years.

Tidings are here brought to Shiloh of the fatal issue of their battle with the Philistines. Ill news flies fast. This soon spread through all Israel, every man that fled to his tent, brought it with too plain a proof of it, to his neighbour's: but no place was so near concerned as Shiloh, therefor e an express posted away immediately; as it was a man of Benjamin, the Jews fancy it was Saul: he rent his clothes, and put earth upon his head; by these signs to proclaim to all that saw him as he ran, the sorrowful news, and to show how much himself was affected with it, v. 12. He went straight to Shiloh with it; and here we are told,

I. How the city received it. Eli sat in the gate, v. 13, 18. But the messenger was loath to tell him first, and therefore passed him by, and told it in the city, with all the aggravating circumstances; and now both the ears of every one that heard it, stilled, as was foretold; ch. 3. II. their hearts trembled, and every face gathered blackness. All the city ran out. v. 13. and well they might; for besides that this was a calamity to all Israel, it was a particular loss to Shiloh, and the ruin of that place. For though the ark was soon rescued out of the hands of the Philistines, yet it never returned to Shiloh again; their candlestick was removed out of its place, because they had left their first love, and their city dwindled, and sunk, and came to nothing. Now God forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, they having driven him from them; and the tribe of Ephraim, which had for three hundred and forty years been blessed with the presence of the ark in it, lest the honour, (Ps. 78. 60, 67,) and, some time after, it was transferred to the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved, as it follows there, v. 68, because the men of Shiloh knew not the day of their visitation. This abandoning of Shiloh, Jerusalem is long after reminded of, and bid to take warning, why, see p. 7. 12. God had destroyed Shiloh. From this day, this fatal day, let the desolations of Shiloh be dated; they had therefore reason enough to cry out when they heard that the ark was taken.

II. What a fatal blow was it to old Eli. Let us see,

1. With what fear he expected the tidings. Though old, and blind, and heavy, yet he could not but apprehend it; for he perceived the glory of Israel lay at stake, but placed himself by the way-side, to receive the first intelligence; for his heart trembled for the ark of God, v. 13. His careful thoughts represented to him, what a dishonour it would be to God, and what an irreparable loss to Israel, if the ark fell into the Philistines' hands: with what profane triumphs it would be told in Gath, and published in the streets of Ashkelon. It falls to his lot to see a person whom he considered as of it; Israel had forfeited the ark, (his own sons especially,) and the Philistines would aim at it; and now the threatening comes to his mind, that he should see an enemy in God's habitation; ch. 2. 32. and perhaps his own heart reproached him for not using his authority, to prevent the carrying of the ark into the camp; all these things made him tremble. Note, All good men lay the interest of God's church nearer their hearts, than any secular interest or concern of their own, and cannot but be in pain and fear for them, if, at any time, they are in peril. How can we be easy, if the ark be not safe?

2. With what grief he received the tidings. Though he could not see, he could hear the tumult and crying of the city, and perceived it to be the voice of lamentation and mourning and woe; like a careful magistrate, he asks, What means the noise of this tumult? v. 14. He is told, there is an express come from the army, who relates the story to him very distinctly, and with great confidence, having himself been an eye-witness of it, v. 16, 17. The account of the defeat of the army, and the slaughter of a great number of the soldiers, was very grievous to him as a judge; the tidings of the death of his two sons, to whom he had been so indulgent, and who, he had reason to fear, died impenitent, touched him in a tender part as a father, yet it was not for these that his heart trembled, there is a greater concern upon his spirit, which swallows up the lesser. He does not interrupt the
narrative with any passionate exclamations for his sons, like David for Absalom, but waits for the end of the story, not doubting but that the messenger, being an Israelite, would, without being asked, say something of the ark; and if he could but have said, "Yet the ark of God is safe, and we are bringing that home," his joy for that would have overcome his grief for all the other disasters, and have made him easy; but when the messenger concludes his story with, The ark of God is taken, he is struck with his fall, and, it should seem, he swooned away, fell off his seat, and partly with the fainting, and partly with the fall, he died immediately, and never spoke a word more. His heart was broken first, and then his neck. So fell the High Priest and judge of Israel, so fell his heavy head, when he had lived within two of a hundred years; so fell the crown from his head when he had judged Israel about forty years; thus did his sun go down under a cloud, thus were the folly and wickedness of those sons of his, whom he had indulged, his ruin at last. Thus does God sometimes set marks of his displeasure upon good men in this life, who have misconducted themselves, that others may hear, and fear, and take warning. A man may die miserably, and yet not die eternally; may come to an untimely end, and yet the end be peace. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that Eli died the death of an unrepentant ass, and that death of an ass is to be be reckoned, Exod. 13. 13. Here we must observe, to Eli's praise, that it was the loss of the ark, that was his death, and not the slaughter of his sons. He does, in effect, say, "Let me fall with the ark!" for what pious Israelite can live with any comfort when God's ordinances are removed? Farewell all in this world, even life itself, if the ark be gone.

19 And his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, near to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings, that the ark of God was taken, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her. 20 And about the time of her death, the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not, for thou hast borne a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it. 21 And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: (because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband;) 22 And she said, The glory is departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken.

We have here another melancholy story that carries on the desolations of Eli's house, and the sorrowful feeling which the tidings of the ark's captivity excited. It is concerning the wife of Phinehas, one of those ungrateful sons of Eli, that had brought all this mischief on Israel. It cost her her life, though young, as well as her father-in-law, that was old; for many a green head, as well as many a hoary head, has been brought by sorrow to the grave; it worketh death.

By what is here related of her, it appears,

1. That she was a woman of a very tender spirit. Providence so ordered it, that, just at this time, she was near her time; and our Saviour hath said, How to them that are with child, or give suck in such days as these, Matt. 24. 19. So little joy will there then be in the birth, even of a man child, that it will be said, Blessed are the wombs that bare not,

Luke 23. 29. The amazing news coming at this unhappy juncture, it put her into labour, as great frights or other strong passions sometimes do. When she heard of the death of her father-in-law whom she reverenced, and her husband whom, bad as he was, she loved, but especially of the loss of the ark, she travailed, for her pains came thick upon her; v. 19. and the tidings so seiz'd her spirits, at a time when they needed all possible supports, that though she had strength to bear the child, she, that was the wife of a minute, after, fainting and dried away, being very weak, had no heart to let life go, when she had lost the greatest comforts of her life. Those who are drawing near to that needful hour, have need to treasure up for themselves comforts from the covenant of grace, to balance, not only the usual sorrows, but any thing extraordinary that may add to the grief which they do not foresee. Faith, at such a time, will keep from fainting, Ps. 23. 13.

17 That she was a woman of a very gracious spirit, though matched to a wicked husband. Her concern for the death of her husband, and father-in-law, was an evidence of her natural affection; but her much greater concern for the loss of the ark, was an evidence of her pious and devout affection to God and sacred things. The former helped to hasten her travail, but it appears by her dying words, that the latter lay nearer her heart; (v. 22.) Weeping unto her, Fear not, now the worst is past, for thou hast borne a son, (and perhaps it was her first-born,) but she answered not, neither did she regard it. The sorrows of her travail, if she had had no other, would have been forgotten, for joy that a man child was born into the world, John 16. 21. But what is that joy, (1.) To one that feels herself dying? No joy but that which is spiritual and divine, will in any soul, give true joy to a woman; and how serious a thing to admit the relish of an earthly joy, it is all flat and sapless then. (2.) What is it to one that is lamenting the loss of the ark? Small comfort could she have of a child born in Israel, in Shiloh, when the ark is gone, and is a prisoner in the land of the Philistines. What pleasure can we take in our creature-comforts and enjoyments, if we want God's word and ordinances, especially if we want the comfort of his gracious presence, and the light of his countenance? As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs, to such heavy hearts.

2. This made her give her child a name which should perpetuate the remembrance of the calamity, and her sense of it. She has nothing to say to the child, only it being her province, now that her husband was dead, to name the child, she orders them to call it Ichabod, that is, Where is the glory? Or, Alias for the glory! or, There is no glory; (y. 21.) which she thus explains with her dying lips, (y. 22.) "The glory is departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken. Call the child glorious, for so he is; but the beauty of Israel is gone, and there appears no hope of ever retrieving it; never let the name of an Israelite, much less a priest, carry glory in it any more, now that the ark is taken." Note, (1.) The purity and plenty of God's ordinances and the tokens of his presence in them, are the glory of any people, much more so than their wealth and trade and interest among the nations. (2.) Nothing is more cutting, more killing, to a faithful Israelite,
than the want and loss of these. If God go, the glory goes, and all good goes. Woe unto us, if he depart!

CHAP. V.

It is now time to inquire what becomes of the ark of God; we cannot but think that we shall hear more of that sacred treasure. I should have thought that the next news would have been, that all Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, had gathered together as one man, with a resolution to bring it back, or die in the attempt: but we find not any motion made of that kind, so little was there of zeal or courage left among them. Nay, we do not find that they desired a treaty with the Philistines about the ransom of it, or offered any thing in lieu of it: "It is the ark of God;" and, in those places especially where the ark is mentioned, we are not told to lament the loss of the ark, that have not hardnesse enough to take one step toward the recovery of it, any more than Israel here. If the ark will help itself, it may, for they will not help it. Unworthy they were of the name of Israelites, that could thus tamely part with the glory of Israel. God would therefore take the work into his own hands and plead his own cause, since men would not appear for him. We are told in this chapter, I. How the Philistines triumphed over the ark, (v. 1, 2,) and, II. How the ark triumphed over the Philistines. 1. Over Dagon their god, v. 3–5. 2. Over the Philistines themselves, who were sorely plagued with emeralds, and made weary of the ark; the men of Ashdod first, (v. 6, 7,) then the men of Gath, (v. 8, 9,) and, lastly, those of Ekron, which forced them at length a resolution to send the ark back to the land of Israel; for when God judges, he will overcome.

1. AND the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Eben- ezer unto Ashdod. 2. When the Philistines saw the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. 3. And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again. 4. And when they arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him. 5. Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that came into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.

Here is, 1. The Philistines' triumph over the ark, which they were the more pleased, the more proud, to be now masters of, because, before the battle, they were possessed with a great fear of it, ch. 4. 7. When they had it in their hands, God restrained them, that they did not offer any violence to it; did not break it to pieces, as the Israelites were ordered to do by the idols of the heathen, but showed some respect to it, and carefully carried it to a place of safety. Whether their curiosity led them to open it, and to read what was written with the finger of God on the two tables of stone that were in it, we are not told; perhaps they looked no further than the golden outside, and the cherubins that covered it, like children that are more affected with the fine binding of their Bibles than with the precious matter contained in them. They carried it to Ashdod, one of their five cities, and that in which Dagon's temple was; there they placed the ark of God, by Dagon, v. 2. Either, 1. As a sacred thing, which they designed to pay some religious duty to, in conjunction with Dagon, as the gods of the heathen were never looked upon as averse to partners. Though the nations would not change their gods, yet they would multiply them, and add to them. But they were mistaken in the God of Israel, when, in putting his ark by Dagon's image, they intended to do him honour; for he is not worshipped at all, if he be not worshipped alone. 2. The Lord our God is one Lord. Or, rather, 2. They placed it there as a trophy of victory, in honour of Dagon their god, to whom, no doubt, they intended to offer a great sacrifice, as they had done when they had taken Samson; (Judg. 16. 23, 24.) boasting, that as then they had triumphed over Israel's champion, so now over Israel's God. What a reproach was this to God's great name! What a disgrace to the throne of his glory! Shall the ark, the symbol of God's presence, be a prisoner to Dagon, a dunghill-deity? So it is, because God will show how little account the ark of the covenant is, if the covenant itself be broken and neglected; even sacred signs are not things that either he is tied to, or we can trust to. So it is for a time, that God may have so much the more glory, in reckoning with those that thus affront him, and get him honour upon them. Having punished Israel that betrayed the ark, by giving it into the hands of the Philistines, they next design to have it again, and will fetch it out of their hands again. Thus even the wrath of man shall praise him; and he is bringing about his own glory, even then when he seems to neglect it, Ps. 76. 10. Out of the eater shall come forth meat.

11. The ark's triumph over Dagon. Once more again, Dagon was made to fall before it. If they designed to do honour to the ark, God hereby showed how much more glorious he was. The Philistines took the ark; Dagon accepted it, for he will be worshipped, not with any god, but above all gods. He owes a shame (as Bishop Hall expresses it) to those who will be making matches between himself and Pethai. But they really designed to affront it; and though, for some hours, Dagon stood by the ark, and, it is likely, stood above it, (the ark at its footstool,) yet, the next morning, when the worshippers of Dagon came to see their devotion to their god, they found their triumphing short, Job 20. 5.

1. Dagon, that is, the image, for that was all the god, was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark, v. 3. God had seemed to forget his ark; but see how the psalmist speaks of his appearing, at last, to vindicate his own honour. When he had delivered his strength into captivity, and all seemed going to ruin, then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine, Ps. 78. 65. And therefore he prevented the utter desolations of the Jewish church, because he feared the wrath of the enemy, Deut. 32. 26, 27. Great care was taken in setting up the images of their gods, to fix them; (the prophet takes notice of it, Isa. 41. 7.) He fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved; and again, ch. 46. 2.) and the ark of God triumphed over him in his own dunghill, in his own temple; down he comes before the ark, directly towards it, (though the ark was set on one side of him,) as it were, pointing to the conqueror, to whom he is constrained to yield and do obeisance. Note, The kingdom of Satan will certainly fall before the kingdom of Christ, error before truth, profaneness before godliness, and corruption before grace in the hearts of men, and cannot be overthwarted. When the interests of religion seem to be run down, and ready to sink, yet even then we may be confident that the day of their triumph will come.
come. Great is the truth, and will prevail. Da-
gon, by falling prostrate before the ark of God,
which was a posture of adoration, did, as it were,
direct his worshippers to pay their homage to the
God of Israel, as greater than all gods. See Exod.
13. 11.
3. The priests that found their idol on the floor,
make all the haste they can, before it be known,
to set him in his place again. A sorry silly thing
to make a god of, which, when he was down, wanted
help to get up again; and sottish wretches those
which, that could pray for help from that idol that
needed, and, in effect, implored, their help. How
could they attribute their victory to the power of
Dagon? for they naught could not keep his own
ground before the ark? But they assured Dagon
shall be their god still, and therefore set him up
in his place. Bishop Hall observes hence, It is just
with God, that those who want grace, shall want
wit too; and it is in the power of superstition to
turn men into the stocks and stones they worship. They
that make them, are like unto them. What is it
that the great upholders of the anti-christian king-
dom, made now? Dagon but an image, and labouring
to set him in his place again, and healing the
deadly wound that has been given to the beast;
but if the reformation be the cause of
God, before which it has begun to fall, it shall not
prevail, but shall surely fall before it.
4. The next night Dagon fell the second time, v.
4. They rose early, either, as usual, to make their
addresses to their god, or earlier than usual, being
impatient to know whether Dagon had kept his
standing this night; and, to their great confusion,
they find his case now worse than before; whether
the matter of which the image was made, was apt
to break or no, so it was, that the head and hands
were cut off from the threshold. So that nothing
remained but the stump, or, as the margin reads it,
the fishy part of Dagon; for (as many learned men
conjecture) the upper part of this image was in a
human shape, the lower, in the shape of a fish; as
mermaids are painted. Such strong delusions were
idolaters given up to, so vain were they in their
imaginations, and so wretchedly darkened were
their foolish hearts, as to worship the images, not
only of creatures, but of nonentities, the mere fig-
ments of fancy. Well, the mis-shapen monster is
by this fall made to appear, (1.) Very ridiculous,
and worthy to be despised. An admirable figure
Dagon fashioned all which, when he made him,
and showed how the human part and the fishy
part were artificially put together, which, perhaps,
the ignorant devotees had been made to believe
was done by miracle. (2.) Very impotent, and unwor-
thy to be prayed to, or trusted to; for his losing of
his head and hands, proved him utterly destitute
both of wisdom and power, and for ever disabled
either to hinder or to help them. This they get by
setting Dagon in his place again; for he had not
have let him alone when he was down. But they
can speed no better, that contend with God, and
will set up that which he is throwing down, Mal.
1. 4. God, by this, magnified his ark and made it
honourable, then when they vilified and made it
contemptible. He also showed what will be the
end of all that which is set up in opposition to him;
God exalteth himself, but ye shall be broken to
pieces, Isa. 8. 9.
4. The threshold of Dagon's temple was ever
after looked upon as sacred, and not to be trodden
on, v. 5. Some think that reference is had to this
superstitious usage of Dagon's worshippers, (Zeph.
1. 9.) where God threatens to punish those, who, in
imitation of them, leaped over the threshold. One
would have thought that this incontestable proof of
the ark's victory over Dagon, should have convinc-
ed the Philistines of their folly in worshipping such
a senseless thing, and that from henceforward they
should have paid their homage to the Conqueror;
but, instead of being reformed, they were hardened
in their idolatry, and, as evil men and seducers are
wont to do, became worse and worse. 2 Tim. 3. 13.
Instead of despising Dagon, for the threshold's sake
that beheaded him, they are almost ready to wor-
ship the threshold, because it was the block on
which he was beheaded; and will never set their
feet on that on which Dagon lost his head; shaming
those who tread under foot the blood of the cov-
enant, and trample on things truly sacred. Yet this
piece of superstition would help to perpetuate the
remembrance of Dagon's disgrace; for, with the
custom, the reason would be transmitted to posteri-
ty, and the children that should be born, inquiring
why the threshold of Dagon's temple must not be
trodden on, would be told, that Dagon fell before
the ark of the Lord. Thus God would have ho-
 nour, even out of their superstition. We are not
told that they repaired the broken image; it is prob-
able that they set the ark of God away first, and
afterward they put it up again, and set it in its
place; for, it seems they cannot deliver their souls, nor
say, Is there not a lie in our right hand? Isa. 44. 20.
6. But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod; and he destroyed
them, and smote them with emerods, even
Ashdod, and the coasts thereof. 7. And
when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so,
they said, The ark of the God of Israel
shall not abide with us; for his hand is sore
upon us, and upon Dagon our god. 8.
They sent, therefore, and gathered all the
lords of the Philistines unto them, and said,
What shall we do with the ark of the God
of Israel? And they answered, Let the
ark of the God of Israel be carried about
unto Gath. And they carried the ark of
the God of Israel about thither. 9. And it
was so, that, after they had carried it about,
the hand of the LORD was against the city
with a very great destruction; and he smote
the men of the city, both small and great,
and they had emerods in their secret parts.
10. Therefore they sent the ark of God to
Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of
God came to Ekron, that the Ekonites
cried out, saying, They have brought about
the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay
us and our people. 11. So they sent and
gathered together all the lords of the Philis-
tines, and said, Send away the ark of the
God of Israel, and let it go again to his own
place, that it slay us not, and our people:
for there was a deadly destruction through-
out all the city; the hand of God was very
heavy there. 12. And the men that died
not were smitten with the emerods: and the
city of the dead went up to be healed.

The downfall of Dagon (if the people had made
a good use of it, and had brought it by to re-
pent of their idolatries, and to humble themselves
before the God of Israel, and seek his face) might
have prevented the vengeance which God here
proceeds to take upon them for the indignities done to his ark, and their obstinate adherenee to their idol, in defiance of the plainest conviction: Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see, Isa. 26. 11. And if they will not see the glory, they shall feel the weight, of God's hand, for so the Philistines did; The hand of the Lord was heavy upon them; (v. 6.) and he not only convinced them of their folly, but severely chastised their insolence.

3. He destroyed them, that is, cut many of them off by sudden death, those, we may suppose, that had most triumphed in the captivity of the ark. This is distinguished from the disease with which others were smitten. At Gath, it is called a great destruction, (v. 9.) a deadly destruction, v. 11. And it is expressly said, (v. 12.) that those who were smitten with the emerods, were the men that died not by the other destruction, which, probably, was the pestilence. They boasted of the great slaughter which their sword had made among the Israelites, ch. 4. 10. But God lets them know that though he does not see fit to draw Israel's sword against them, (they were unworthy to be employed,) yet God had a sword of his own, with which he could make a no less dreadful execution among them, if he willed, and his hand take hold on judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies, Deut. 32. 43. Note, The strength of God, his arm, and his Israel, will infallibly be reigned by it at last. If conviction conquer not, destruction shall.

4. Those that were destroyed, he smote with emerods, (v. 6.) in their secret parts, (v. 9.) so grievous, that (v. 12.) the cry went up to heaven; that is, it might be heard a great way off; and perhaps, in the extremity of their pain and misery, they cried, not to Dagon, but to the God of heaven. The punishment of this severe judgment upon the Philistines, describes it thus, that God smote his enemies in the hinder parts, and put them to a perpetual reproach, Ps. 78. 66. God threatens the emerods among the judgments that would be the fruit of the curse, Deut. 28. 27. It was both a painful and shameful disease; a vile disease for vile deserts; by it God would humble their pride, and put contempt upon them, as well as done upon his ark. The disease was epidemic, and, perhaps, among them, a new disease. Ashdod was smitten, and the coasts thereof; the country round. For contempt of God's ordinances, many are weak and sick, and many sleep, 1 Cor. 11. 30.

5. The men of Ashdod were soon aware that it was the hand of God, the God of Israel, v. 7. Thus they were constrained to acknowledge his power and dominion, and themselves within his jurisdiction, and yet they would not renounce Dagon, and submit to him; but rather, now that he touched their bone and their flesh, and in a tender part, they were ready to curse him to his face; and, instead of making their peace with him, and courting the stay of his ark upon better terms, they desired to get clear of it, as the Gadarenes, who, when they had lost their swine, desired Christ to depart out of the country. They would not, when once smart under the judgment of God, would rather, if they were permitted, put him far from them, than enter into covenant and communion with him, and make him their friend. Thus the men of Ashdod resolve, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us.

4. It is resolved to change the place of its imprisonment. A great council was called, and the question proposed to all the lords was, What shall we do with the ark? And, at last, it was agreed, that it should be carried to Gath, v. 8. Some superstitious conceit they had, that the fault was in the place, and that the ark would be better pleased with another lodging, further off from Dagon's temple; and therefore, instead of returning it, as they should have done, to its own place, they contrive to send it to another place. Gath is pitched upon, a place famed for a race of giants, but their strength and stature are no fence against the pestilence and the emerods; the men of that city were smitten, both small and great, (v. 9.) both dwarfs and giants; all alike to God's judgments; none so great as to overtop them, none so small as to be overlooked by them.

5. They were all, at last, weary of the ark, and very willing to be rid of it. It was sent from Gath to Ekron, and, coming by order of council, the Ekronites could not refuse it, but were much exasperated against their great men for sending them such a fatal present; (v. 10.) They have sent it to us, to stay us and our people. The ark had the tables of the law in it; and nothing more welcome to faithful Israelites than the word of God; to them it is a savour of life unto life: but to uncircumscribed Philistines, that persist in enmity to God, nothing more dreadful or unwelcome; to them it is a savour of death unto death. A general assembly is instantly called, to advise about sending the ark again to its own place, v. 11. While they are consulting about it, the hand of God is doing execution; and their concurrence to execute the judgment, does spread it; many drop down dead before them, many more are raging ill of the emerods, v. 12. What shall they do? Their triumphs in the captivity of the ark are soon turned into lamentations, and they are as eager to quit it as ever they had been to seize it. Note, God can easily make Jerusalem a burlenstone to all that have he at it, Zech. 12. 3. Those that fight against God, will soon have enough of it, and, first or last, will be made to know that none ever hardened their hearts against him, and prospered. The wealth that is got by fraud and injustice, especially by sacrilege, that is, robbing God, though swallowed greedily, and rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, must be vomited up again; for till it be, the sinner shall not feel quietness in his belly, Job 20. 15. 20.

CHAP. VI

In this chapter we have the return of the ark to the land of Israel, whither we are now gladly to attend it, and observe, I. How the Philistines dismissed it, by the advice of their priests, (v. 1.11.) with rich presents, to the God of Israel, to make an atonement for their sin, (v. 9.) and yet with a project to bring it back, unless Providence directed the scene, contrary to their inclinations, to go to the land of Israel, v. 8, 9. II. How the Israelites entertained it. 1. With great joy, and sacrifices of praise, v. 12. 18. With an over-bold curiosity to look into it, for which many of them were struck dead, the terror of which moved them to send it forward to another city, v. 19. 20.

1. AND the ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months. 2. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do with the ark of the Lord? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place. 3. And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty: but in any wise return him a trespass-offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you. 4. Then they said, What shall be the trespass-offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden eme-
rods, and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords. 5. Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel; peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land. 6. Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed? 7. Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them: 8. And take the ark of the Lord, and lay it upon the cart: and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him for a trespass-offering, in a coffier by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go. 9. And see, if so goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us.

The first words of the chapter tell us how long the captivity of the ark continued—it was in the country of the Philistines seven months. In the field of the Philistines; so it is in the original; from which some gather that, having tried it in all their cities, and found it a plague to the inhabitants of each, at length, they sent it into the open fields, upon which, mice sprang up out of the ground in great multitudes, and destroyed the corn which was now nearly ripe, and marred the land. With that judgment they were plagued, (v. 5.) and it is not mentioned in the foregoing chapter; so God let them know, that, wherever they carried the ark, so long as they carried it captive, they should find it a curse to them. Cursed shall thou be in the city, and cursed in the field, Deut. 28. 16. But most take it to signify, as we render it, The country of the Philistines. Now, 1. Seven months Israel was punished with the absence of the ark, that special token of God's presence. How bare did the tabernacle look without it! How was the holy city now a desolation, and the holy land a wilderness! A melancholy time, no doubt, it was, to the good people among them, particularly Samuel; but they had this to comfort themselves with, as we have in the like distress, when we are deprived of the comforts of public ordinances, that, wherever the ark is, the Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven, and by faith and prayer we may have access with boldness to him there. We may have God nigh unto us, when the ark is at a distance. 2. Seven months the Philistines were punished with the presence of the ark; so long it was a plague to them, because they would not send it home sooner. Note, Sinners lengthen out their own misery, by obstinately refusing to part with their sins. Egypt's plagues had been fewer than ten, if Pharaoh's heart had not been hardened not to let the people go.

But at length it is determined the ark must be sent back, there is no remedy, they are undone if they detain it. 1. The priests and the diviners are consulted about it, v. 2. They were supposed to be best acquainted both with the rules of wisdom, and with the rites of worship and atonement. And the Israelites being their neighbours, and famed above all people for the institutions of their religion, they had, no doubt, the curiosity to acquaint themselves with their laws and usages; and therefore it was proper to ask them, What shall we do to the ark of Jehovah? All reins fall as regard to their priests, as the men whose life keps the light inside. the Philistines diviners? We have divines, of whom we should inquire, wherewith we shall come before the Lord, and how ourselves before the most high God. 2. They give their advice very fully, and seem to be verul unanamous in it. It was a wonder they did not, as friends to their country, give it, ex officio—officially, before they were asked. 3. They urge it upon them, that it was absolutely necessary to send the ark back, from the example of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, v. 6. Some, it may be, were loath to yield, and were willing to try it out with the ark a while longer, and to them they apply themselves: Wherefore do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? It seems they were well acquainted with the Mosaic history, and could cite precedents out of it. This might use well to make a demonstration of God's judgments upon obstinate sinners, we should by them be warned, not to harden our hearts as they did. It is much cheaper learning by other people's experience than by our own. The Egyptians were forced at last to let Israel go, there're let the Philistines yield in time to let the ark go.

2. They advise, that, when they sent it back, they should send a trespass-offering with it, v. 3. Whatever other confidence they took upon themselves, they knew that the God of Israel was a jealous God, and how strict he was in his demands of sin-offerings, and trespass-offerings, from his own people; and therefore, since they found how highly he represented the affront of holding his ark captive, they with whom he had such a quarrel, must in any wise return him a trespass-offering; and they could not expect to be heeded upon any other terms. Injured justice demands satisfaction; they paid an atonement for their breach of covenant; but when they began to contrive what satisfaction should be, they became wretchedly vain in their imaginations. But those, who, by wilful sin, have imprisoned the truth in unrighteousness, (as the Philistines did the ark,) Rom. 1. 18. may conclude that there is no making of their peace with him whom they have thus injured, but by a sin-offering; and we know but one that can take away sin.

3. They direct, that this trespass-offering should be an acknowledgment of the punishment of their iniquity; by which they might take shame to themselves as conquered and yielding, and guilty before God, and might give glory to the Lord of Israel, as their mighty Conqueror; and most just Avenger, 5. They must make images of the emerods, that is, of the swellings and sores with which they had been afflicted; so making the reproach of that shameful disease, the most lamentable scourge and deed; (Ps. 78. 66.) also images of the mice that had marred the land, owning thereby the almighty power of the God of Israel, who could chastise and humble them, even in the day of their triumph, by such small and despicable animals. These images must be made of gold, the most precious metal, to intimate that they would gladly purchase their peace with the God of Israel at any rate, and would not think it bought too dear with gold, with much fine gold. The golden emerods must be, in number, five, according to the number of the lords, who, it
is likely, were all afflicted with them, and were content thus to own it: it was advised, that the golden mice should be free too; but because they were infested with them, it should seem, upon second thoughts, they sent more of them, according to the number both of the fenced cities and of country villages, v. 18. Their priests remind them, that one plague was on them all; they could not blame one another, for they were all guilty, which they were plainly told, by being all plagued. Their proposal to offer a trespass-offering for their offence, was confusable enough; the reason all this, but to send such things as these for trespass-offerings, was very foreign, and showed them grossly ignorant of the methods of reconciliation appointed by the law of Moses; for there it appears all along, that it is blood, and not gold, that makes atonement for the soul.

4. They encourage them to hope, that thereby they would take an effectual course to get rid of the plague, yet shall be healed, v. 3. For, it seems, the disease obstinately resisted all the methods of cure their physicians had prescribed; "Let them therefore send back the ark, and then," say they, "it shall be known to you, why his hand is not removed from you; that is, by this it will appear, whether it is for your detaining of the ark, that you are thus plagued; for, if it be, upon your delivering of it up, the plague will cease. God has sometimes put such people under such a trial, as by it their refutation would not be their relief; Prove me now hereafter, saith the Lord of hosts, Mal. 3. 10. Hag. 2. 19. Yet they speak doubtfully, (v. 5.) Peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you; as if now they began to think, that the judgment might come from God's hand, and yet not be removed immediately upon the restitution of the ark; however, that was the likeliest way to obtain mercy. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

5. Yet they put them in a way to make a further trial, whether it was the hand of the God of Israel that had smitten them with these plagues or no. They must, in honour of the ark, put it on a new cart or carriage, to be drawn by two milch-cows, that had calves daily suckling them, (v. 7.) unused to draw, and inclined to home, both for the sake of the crib where they were fed, and of the calves they nourished, altogether unsuited with the road that led toward the land of Israel; they must have no one to lead or drive them, but must take their own way, which, in all reason, one might expect, would be home again; and yet, unless the God of Israel, after all the other miracles he has wrought, will work one more, and by an invisible power lead these cows, contrary to their natural instinct and inclination, to the land of Israel, and particular to Beth-shemesh, they will not fail their former opinion, and will believe it was not the hand of God that smote them, but it was a chance that happened to them, v. 8, 9. Thus did God suffer himself to be tempted and prescribed to, after he had been otherwise defeated, by these unscrupulous Philistines. Would they have been content that the honour of Dagon, their god, should have been transferred to Beth-shemesh? They see how willing bad men are to shift over their convictions of the hand of God upon them, and to believe, when they are in trouble, it is a chance that happens to them; and if so, the red has no voice which they are concerned to hear or heed.

10. And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. In. And they laid the ark of the Lord upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods. 12. And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowering as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh.

13. And they of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat-harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it. 14. And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite, and stood there, where there was a great stone; and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt-offering unto the Lord. 15. And the Levites took down the ark of the Lord, and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone: and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed sacrifices, the same day unto the Lord. 16. And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day. 17. And these are the golden emerods which the Philistines returned for a trespass-offering unto the Lord; for Ashdod one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one: 18. And the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fenced cities and of country villages, even unto the great stone of Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the Lord; which stone remaineth unto this day in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite.

We are here told, I. How the Philistines dismissed the ark; (v. 10, 11.) they were made as glad to part with it, as ever they had been to take it; as God had fetched Israel out of the house of bondage, so now he fetched the ark out of its captivity, in such a manner, as that Egypt was glad when they departed, Ps. 105. 38. 1. They received no money or price for the ransom of it, as they hoped to have done, even beyond a king's ransom. Thus it is prophesied of Cyrus, Isa. 45. 13. He shall let go my captives, not for price, nor reward. Nay, 2. They gave jewels of gold, as the Egyptians did to the Israelites, to be rid of it. Thus the ark that was carried into the land of the Philistines, a trophy of their victory, carried back with it trophies of its own, and lasting monuments of the disgrace of the Philistines. Note, God will be no loser in his glory, at last, by the successes of the church's enemies against the ark, but will get him honour from these that seek to do dishonour to him.

II. How the kine brought it to the land of Israel, v. 12. They took the straight way to Beth-shemesh, the next city of the land of Israel, and a priest's city, and turned not aside. This was a wonderful instance of the power of God over the brute creatures, and all things considered, no less than a miracle. That cattle unaccustomed to the yoke should draw so even, so orderly, and still go forward; that without any driver, they should go from home, to
which all tame creatures have a natural inclination, and from their own calves, to which they had a natural affection; that, without any director, they should go the straight road to Beth-shemesh, a city eight miles from Jerusalem, where they might have turned aside to the fields to feed themselves, nor turn back home to feed their calves; they went on lowing for their young ones, by which it appeared that they had not forgotten them, but that nature was sensible of the grievance of going from them; the power of the God of nature therefore appeared so much the greater, in overruling one of the strongest instincts of nature. These two kine, says Dr. Lightfoot, knew their own, their great Owner, (Isa. 1. 3.) whom Hophni and Phinehas knew not; to which I may add, they brought home the ark, to shame the stupidity of Israel that made no attempt to fetch it home. God’s providence is conversant about the motions even of brute creatures, and serve its own purposes by them. The lords of the Philistines, with a suitable retinue, no doubt, went after them, wondering at the power of the God of Israel; and thus they who thought to triumph over the ark, were made to go like menial servants after it.

III. How it was welcomed to the land of Israel.

The men of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat-harvest, v. 13. They were going on with their worldly business, and were in no care about the ark, made no inquiries what was become of it; if they saw it, it is likely they might have had private intelligence of its coming, and would have gone to meet it, and conduct it into their own border. But they were as careless as the people that ceded their own houses, and let God’s house lie waste. Note, God will in his own time, effect the deliverance of his church, not only though it be fought against by its enemies, but though it be neglected by its friends. Some observe, that the returning ark found the men of Beth-shemesh not idling or sporting in the streets of the city, but busy, reaping their corn in the fields, and well employed; thus the tidings of the birth of Christ were brought to the shepherds, when they were keeping their flock by night. The Devil visits idle men with his temptations; God visits industrious men with his favours.

The same invisible hand that directed the kine to the land of Israel, brought them into the field of Joshua, and in that field they stood; some think, for the owner’s sake, on whom, being a very good man, they supposed God designed to put this honour. I rather think it was for the sake of the great stone in that field, which was convenient to put the ark upon, and which is spoken of, v. 14, 15, 18.

Now, 1. When the repeaters saw the ark, they rejoiced; (v. 13.) their joy for that, was greater than the joy of the ark when the young men left their tents to bid it welcome. When the Lord turned again the captivity of his ark, they were like men that dream, then was their mouth filled with laughter, Ps. 126. 1, 2. Though they had not zeal and courage enough to attempt the rescue or ransom of it, yet, when it did come, they bid it heartily welcome. Note, The return of the ark, and the revival of holy ordinances, after days of restraint and trouble, though but of great matter to joy every faithful Israelite.

2. They offered up the kine for a burnt-offering, to the honour of God, and made use of the wood of the cart for fuel; (v. 14.) probably, the Philistines intended these, when they sent them, to be a part of their trespass-offering, to make atonement, v. 3. 7. However, the men of Beth-shemesh looked upon it as proper to make this use of them, because it was by no means fit that ever they should be put to any other use; never shall that cart carry any common thing, that has once carried that sacred symbol of the divine presence: and the kine had been under such an immediate guidance of heaven, that God had, as it were, already laid claim to them; they were servants to him, and therefore must be sacrifices to him; and, no doubt, were accepted, though females, whereas, in strictness, every burnt-offering was to be male.

3. They deposited the ark, with the chest of jewels that the Philistines presented, upon the great stone in the open field; a cold lodging for the ark of the Lord, and a very mean one; yet better so than in Dagon’s temple, or in the hands of the Philistines. It is desirable to see the ark in its habitation in all the circumstances of solemnity and splendor, but better have it upon a great stone, and in the fields of the wood, than be without it. The intrinsic grandeur of instituted ordinances ought not to be diminished in our eyes by the meanness and poverty of the place where they are administered. As the burning of the cart and cows that brought home the ark, might be construed to signify their hopes that it should never be carr ed away again out of the land of Israel, so the setting it upon a great stone might signify their hopes that it should be established again upon a firm foundation. The church is built upon a Rock.

4. They offered the sacrifices of thanksgiving to God, some think, upon the great stone, more probably, upon an altar of earth made for the purpose, v. 15. And the offering was made, when they took the ark for offering at the altar in the court of the tabernacle was dispensed with, and the more easily, because Shiloh was now disgraced; God himself had forsaken it, and the ark, which was its chief glory, they had with them here. Beth-shemesh, though it lay within the lot of the tribe of Dan, yet belonged to Judah, so that this accidental bringing of the ark hither, was an indication of its designed settlement there, in process of time; for when Joshua refused the tabernacle of Joseph, he chose the tribe of Judah, Ps. 78. 67, 68. It was one of those cities which were assigned out of the lot of Judah to the sons of Aaron, Josh. 21. 16. Whither should the ark go, but to a priest’s city? And it was well they had those of that sacred order ready, (for though they are here called Levites, (v. 15.) yet it should seem they were priests,) both to take down the ark, and to offer the sacrifices.

5. The lords of the Philistines returned to Ekron, much affected, we may suppose, with what they had seen of the glory of God, and the zeal of the Israelites, and yet not reclaimed from the worship of Dagon; for how seldom has a nation changed their gods, though they were no gods? Jer. 2. 11. Though they cannot but think the God of Israel glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises, yet they are resolved they will think Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, at least as good as he, and to him they will cleave, however, because he is their’s. Lastly, Notice is taken of the continuance of the great stone in the same place; there it was unto this day; (v. 18.) because it remained a lasting memorial of this great event, and served to support the traditional history, by which it was transmitted to posterity. The fathers would say to the children, This is the place where the ark of God was set, when it came out of the Philistines’ hands; a thing never to be forgotten.”

9. And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men. And the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with...
a great slaughter. 20. And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? and, to whom shall he go up from us? 21. And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the Lord; come ye down, and fetch it up to you.

Here is, 1. The sin of the men of Beth-shemesh. They looked into the ark of the Lord, v. 19. Every Israelite had heard great talk of the ark, and had been possessed with a profound veneration for it, but they had been told, that it was lodged within a vail, and even the High Priest himself might not look upon it but once a year, and then through a cloud of incense. Perhaps, this made many say, (as we are apt to covet that which is forbidden,) what a great deal they would give for a sight of it. Some of these Beth-shemites, we may suppose, for that reason rejoiced to see the ark, (v. 15;) more than for the sake of the public. Yet this did not content them, they might see it, but they would go further, they would take off the covering, which, it is likely, was nailed or screwed on, and look into; under pretence of seeing whether the Philistines had not taken the two tables out of it, or some way damaged them; but really to gratify a sinful curiosity of their own, which intruded into those things that God had thought fit to conceal from them. Notice, it is a great aggravation to God, for vain men to pry into, and meddle with, the secret things which belong not to them, Deut. 29. 29. Col. 2. 18. We were all ruined by an ambition of forbidden knowledge. That which made this looking into the ark a great sin, was, that it proceeded from a very low and mean opinion of the ark. The familiarity they had with it upon this occasion, bred contempt and irreverence. Perhaps, they presumed upon their being priests, but the dignity of the ministerial office will be so far from excusing, that it will aggravate, a careless and irreverent treatment of holy things. They should, by their example, have taught others to keep their distance, and look upon the ark with a holy awe. Perhaps they presumed upon the kind entertainment they had given the ark, and the sacrifices they had now offered to welcome it home with; for this, they thought the ark was indebted to them, and should be allowed to repay themselves with the satisfaction of looking into it. But let no man think that his service done for God, will justify him in any instance of disrespect or irreverence toward the things of God. Or, it may be, they presumed upon the present mean circumstances the ark was in, newly come out of captivity, and unsettled; now that it stood upon a cold stone, they thought they might make free with it; they should never have proceeded so, or have attempted being familiar with it. It is an offence to God, if we deal meanly of his ordinances, because of the meanness of the manner of their administration. Had they looked with an understanding eye upon the ark, and not judged purely by outward appearance, they would have thought that the ark never shone with greater majesty than it did now; it had triumphed over the Philistines, and come out of their hands; the glory of Christ shone with it, more by its own power; had they considered this, they would not have looked into it thus, as a common chest.

2. Their punishment for this sin; He smote the men of Beth-shemesh, many of them, with a great slaughter. How jealous is God for the honour of his ark! He will not suffer it to be profaned; he not deceived, God is not mocked. They that will not fear his goodness, and reverently use the tokens of his grace, shall be made to feel his justice, and sink under the tokens of his displeasure. They that pry into what is forbidden, and come too near to holy fire, will find it at their peril. He smote fifty thousand and seventy men. This account of their number is written, is expressed in a very unusual manner in the original, and is neither improbable that there should be so many guilty, and so many slain, occasions many learned men to question, whether we take the matter right. In the original it is, He smote in (or among) the people, three score and ten men; fifty thousand men. The Syriac and Arabic read it, five thousand and seventy men. The Chaldee reads it, seventy men of the elders, and fifty thousand of the common people. Seventy men as valuable as fifty thousand, because they were priests. Some think the seventy men were the Beth-shemites that were slain for looking into the ark, and the fifty thousand were those that were slain by the ark, in the land of the Philistines. He smote seventy men, that is, fifty out of a thousand; which was one in twenty, a half decimation; so some understand it. The Septuagint reads thus, as we do, he smote seventy men, and fifty thousand men. Josephus says only seventy were smitten.

3. The terror that was struck upon the men of Beth-shemesh, by this severe stroke. They said, as well they might, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? v. 20. Some think, it bespeaks their murmuring against God, as if he had dealt hardly and unjustly with them. Instead of quarrelling with themselves and their own sins, they quarrelled with God and his judgments; as David was displeased, in a case not much unlike, 2 Sam. 6. 8, 9. I rather think it bespeaks their awful and reverent adoration of God, as the Lord God, and a holy Lord God, and as a God before whom none is able to stand. Thus they infer from the tremendous judgment, "Who is able to stand before the God of the ark? To stand before God to worship him, blessed be his name, is not impossible; we are through Christ invited, encouraged, and enabled to do it, but to stand before God, to contend with him, we are not able. Who is able to stand before the throne of his immediate glory, and look full upon it? 1 Tim. 6. 16. Who is able to stand before the tribunal of his inflexible justice, and make his part good there? Ps. 130. 3.—143. 2. Who is able to stand before the arm of his provoked power, and either resist or bear the strokes of it? And so on.

4. Their desire, hereupon, to be rid of the ark; they asked, To whom shall he go up from us? v. 20. They should rather have asked, "How may we make our peace with him, and recover his favour?" Mic. 6. 6, 7. But they begin to be as weary of the ark as the Philistines had been, whereas, if they had treated it with due reverence, who knows, but it might have taken up its residence among them, and all have been blessed, for the ark sake? But thus, when the word of God works with terror on sinners' consciences, they, instead of taking the blame and shame to themselves, quarrel with the word, and put that from them, Jer. 6. 10. They sent messengers to the elders of Kirjath-jearim, a strong city further up in the country, and begged of them to come and fetch the ark up thither, v. 21. They durst not touch it, to bring it to their own city, but thought it a dangerous thing. Thus do foolish men run from one extreme to the other, from presumptuous boldness to slavish shiness. Kirjath-jearim, that is, the city of woods, belonging to Judah; (Josh. 15. 9. 60.) it lay in the way from Beth-shemesh to Shiloah; so that when they sent to them to fetch it, we may suppose they intended that from thence the elders
of Shiloh should fetch it, but God intended otherwise. Thus was it sent from town to town, and no care taken of it by the public; a sign that there was no king in Israel.

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, we have, 1. The eclipsing of the glory of the ark, by its privacy in Kirjath-jearim for many years, v. 1-4. 2. The reason why. For in what public service did Samuel in his public services for the good of Israel, to whom he was raised up to be a judge, and he was the last that bore that character. This chapter gives us all the accounts we have of him, when he was in the prime of his time; for what we had before, was in his childhood, (ch. 2. and 3.) what we have of him after, was in his old age, ch. 8. 1. We have him here active, 1. In the reformation of lewdness from the idolatry, v. 2. 2. In the renewal of religion among them, v. 5. 3. In praying for them against the invading Philistines, (v. 7-9.) over whom, God, in answer to his prayer, gave them a glorious victory, v. 10, 11, 12. 3. In erecting a thankful memorial of that victory, v. 12. 4. In the improvement of that victory, v. 13, 14. 6. In the administration of justice, v. 15.-17. And these were the things for which God was preparing and designating him, in the early vouchsafement of his grace to him.

1. AND the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab, in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord. 2. And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.

Here we must attend the ark to Kirjath-jearim, and then leave it there, to hear not a word more of it, till David fetched it thence, above forty years after, (1 Chron. 13. 6.) except once.

1. We are very willing to attend it thither, for the men of Beth-shemesh have by their own folly made that a burthen, which might have been a blessing; and gladly would we see it among those to whom it will be a savour of life unto life, for in every place where it has been of late, it has been a savour of death unto death.

Now, 1. The men of Kirjath-jearim cheerfully bring it among them; (v. 1.) They came, at the first word, and fetched up the ark of the Lord. Their neighbours, the Beth-shemites, were no better pleased to be rid of it, than they were to receive it, knowing very well that what slaughtered the ark had made at Beth-shemesh, was not an act of arbitrary power, but necessary justice, and they that suffered by it, must blame themselves, not the ark; we may depend upon the word which God hath said, (Jer. 25. 6.) Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt. Note, The judgments of God on those who profane his ordinances, should not make us afraid of the ordinances, but of profaning them, and making an ill use of them.

2. They carefully provide for its decent entertainment among them; as a welcome guest, with true affection, and as an honourable guest, with respect and reverence. (1.) They provide a proper place to receive it. They had no public building to adorn with it, but they lodged it in the house of Abinadab, which stood upon the highest ground, and, probably, was the best house in their city; or, perhaps, the master of it was the most eminent man they had for piety, and best affected to the ark. The men of Beth-shemesh left it exposed upon a stone in the open field, and though it was a city of priests, none of them received it into his house; but the men of Kirjath-jearim, though common Israelites, gave it a house-room, and, no doubt, the best furnished room in the house to which it was brought. Note, [1.] God will find out a resting place for his ark; if some thrust it from them, yet the hearts of others shall be inclined to receive it. [2.] It is no new thing for God’s ark to be thrust into private houses, and his apostles preached from house to house, when they could not have public places at command. [3.] Sometimes priests are ashamed and outdone in religion by common Israelites. (2.) They provide a proper person to attend it; They sanctified Eleazar his son to keep it; not the father, either because he was aged and infirm, or because he had the affairs of his house and family to attend, from which they would not take him off; the son, who, it is probable, was a very pious devout young man, and zealously affected toward the best things; his business was to keep the ark, not only from being seized by malicious Philistines, but from being touched or looked into by too curious Israelites. He was to keep the room clean and decent, in which the ark was, that, though it was in an obscure place, it might not look like a neglected thing, which no man looked after. It does not appear that this Eleazar was of the tribe of Levi, much less of the house of Aaron, nor was it needful that he should, for there was no altar either for sacrifice or incense, only we may suppose that some devout Israelites would come and pray before the ark, and those that did so, he was there ready to attend and assist. For this purpose, they sanctified him, that, by his own consent, they obliged him to make this his business, and to give a constant attendance to it; they set him apart for it in the name of all their citizens. This was irregular, but it was dispensed with, by reason of the present distress. When the ark is but newly come out of captivity, we cannot expect it to be of a sudden in its usual solemnity, but must take things as they are, and make the best of the present.

2. Yet we are very loath to leave it here, wishing it well at Shiloh again, but that is made desolate, (Jer. 7. 14.) however, wishing it at Nob, or Gibon, or wherever the tabernacle and the altars are; but, it seems, it must lie by the way, for want of some public-spirited men, to bring it to its proper place.

1. The time of its continuance here was long, very long; above forty years it lay in these fields of the wood, a remote obscure private place, unfrequented and almost unregarded; (v. 2.) The time that the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim was long, even till David fetched it thence. It was very strange, that, all the time that Samuel governed, the ark was never brought to its place in the holy of holies, an evidence of the decay of holy zeal among them. God suffered it to be so, to punish them for the neglect of the ark when it was in its place; and to show that the great foundation laid upon the ark, was but typical of Christ, and those good things to come, which cannot be moved, Heb. 9. 23.—12. 27. It was a just reproof to the priests, that not one of their order was sanctified to keep the ark.

2. Twenty years of this time were passed, before the house of Israel was sensible of the want of the ark. The Septuagint read it, somewhat more clearly than we do; And it was twenty years, and (that is, when) the whole house of Israel looked up again after the Lord. So long the ark remained in obscurity, and the Israelites were not sensible of the inconvenience, nor ever made an inquiry after it, what was become of it; though, while it was absent from the tabernacle, the token of God’s special presence was wanting, nor could they keep the day of atonement, as it should be kept. They were content with the altars without the ark; so easily
I. Samuel, VII.

I.

1. Better (1.) Taking this preacher; abandon you, you, Mizpeh, 5. Lord themselves ark, time him mg 256 We exhortation, a 10. of of them, began the faithful to prepare performance, 4. of the Israel, if they were Israelites, with only in preparing the heart, directing, disposing, establishing, the heart unto the Lord, 3. "That you must make a solemn business of returning to God, and do it with a serious consideration and a steadfast resolution, for both are included in praying the heart, directing, disposing, establishing, the heart unto the Lord." 3. "That you must be entire for God, for him and no other, serve him only, else you do not serve him at all, so as to please him, 4. That this is the only way, and a sure way, to serve God, and to escape this course, and he will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines; for it was because you forsook him and served other gods, that he delivered you into their hands." This was the purport of Samuel's preaching, and it had a wonderfully good effect; (v. 4.) They put away Balaam and Ashtaroth; not only quitted the worship of them, but destroyed their images, demolished their altars, and quite abandoned them; What have we to do any more with idols? Hos. 13. 8. Isa. 30. 22.

II. He endeavoured to engage them for ever to God and his service. Now that he had them in a good mind, he did all he could to keep them in it.

1. He summons all Israel, at least by their elders, as their representatives, to meet him at Mizpeh, (v. 5.) and there he promised to pray for them. And it was worth while for them to come from the remotest parts of the country, to join with Samuel in seeking God's favour. Note, Ministers should pray for those to whom they preach, that by God's grace would make the preaching effectual. And when we come together in religious assemblies, we must remember, that it is as much our business there to join in public prayers, as it is to hear a sermon. He would pray for them, that, by the grace of God, they might be parted from their idols, and that then, by the providence of God, they might be delivered from the Philistines. Ministers would profit their people more, if they did but pray more for them.

2. They obey his summons, and not only come to the meeting, but conform to the intentions of it, and appear there very well disposed, v. 6. (1.) They drew water, and poured it out before the Lord; signifying, [1.] Their humiliation and contrition, for we have stilled their rage against the Philistines, and split upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; (2 Sam. 14. 14.) so mean, so miserable, before God, Ps. 22. 14. The Chaldee reads it, They poured out their hearts in repentance before the Lord. They wept rivers of tears, and sorrowed after a godly sort; for it was before the Lord, and with an eye to him. [2.] Their earnest prayers and supplications to God, for mercy. The soul is, in prayer, poured out before God, and his people; Ps. 69. 26. [3.] Their heart of thanksgiving, for God's mercy, which Samuel had assured them of. This ceremony was used with that signification at the feast of tabernacles, John 7. 37. 38. and see Isa. 12. 3. Taking it in this sense, it must be read, They drew water after they had fasted. In the close of their humiliation they thus expressed their hope of pardon and reconciliation. (2.) They fasted, abstained from food, afflicted their souls; so express...
ing repentance, and exciting devotion. (3.) They made a public confession, We have sinned against the Lord; so giving glory to God, and taking shame to themselves. And if we thus confess our sins, we shall find our Lord faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

3. Samuel judged them at that time in Mizpeh; that is, he assured them, in God’s name, of the pardon of their sins, upon their repentance, and that God was reconciled to them. It was a judgment of absolution. Or, he received informations against those who did not leave their idols, and proceeded against them according to law. Those that would not judge themselves, he judged. Or, now he settled courts of justice among them, and appointed the terms and circuits which he observed afterward, v. 16. Now he set those wheels a-going; and whereas, before, he acted only as a prophet, now, he began to act as a magistrate; to prevent their relapsing to those sins which now they seemed to have renounced.

7. And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. 8. And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. 9. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord; and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him. 10. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. 11. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car. 12. Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebene-zer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.

Here, I. The Philistines invaded Israel, (v. 7.) taking ammendment from that general meeting for repentance and prayer, as if it had been a rendezvous for war, and if so, they thought it prudent to keep the war out of their own country. They had no just cause for this suspicion; but those that seek to do mischief to others, will be forward to imagine that others design mischief to them. Now see here, 1. How evil sometimes seems to come out of good. The religious meeting of the Israelites at Mizpeh brought trouble upon them from the Philistines, which, perhaps, tempted them to wish they had staid at home, and to blame Samuel for calling them together. But we may be in God’s way; and yet meet with distress; nay, when sinners begin to repent and reform, they must expect that Satan will muster all his force against them, and set his instruments in work to the utmost, to oppose and discourage them. But, 2. How good is, at length, brought out of that evil. Israel could never be threatened more seasonably than at this time, when they were repenting and praying, nor could they have been better prepared to receive the enemy; nor could the Philistines have formed any measures militarily for themselves, than to make war upon Israel at this time, when they were making their peace with God: but God permitted them to do it, that he might have an opportunity immediately of crowning his people’s reformation with tokens of his favour, and of confirming the words of his messenger, who had assured them that, if they repented, he would lend his arm out of the midst of the Philistines. Thus he makes a swiftness of wrath to prepare him, and serves the purposes of his grace to his people, even by the malicious designs of their enemies against them, Mic. 4. 11, 12.

II. Israel cleaves close to Samuel, as their best friend, under God, in this distress, though he was no military man, nor ever celebrated as a mighty man of valour; yet, being afraid of the Philistines, for whom they thought themselves an unequal match, they engaged Samuel’s prayers for them; (v. 8.) Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us. They were here unarmed, unprepared for war, come together to fast and pray, not to fight; prayers and tears therefore being all the weapons many of them are now furnished with, to these they have recourse. And knowing Samuel to have a great interest in heaven, they earnestly beg of him to improve it for them. They had reason to expect that promise, (v. 5.) had promised them deliverance from the Philistines; (v. 3.) and they had been observant of him, in all that which he had spoken to them from the Lord. Thus they who sincerely submit to Christ, as their Lawgiver and Judge, need not doubt of their interest in his intercession. They were very solicitous that Samuel should not cease to pray for them: what military preparations they made, they would make by his means, but let him continue in prayer; perhaps remembering, that when Moses did but let down his hand ever so little, Amalek prevailed. O what a comfort it is to all believers, that our great Intercessor above never ceases, is never silent, for he always appears in the presence of God for us!

III. Samuel intercedes with God for them, and does it by sacrifice, v. 9. He took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering, a whole burnt-offering, to the Lord, and while the sacrifice was in burning, with the smoke of it his prayers ascended up to heaven for Israel. Observe, 1. He made intercession with a sacrifice. Christ intercedes in the virtue of his satisfaction, and in all our prayers we must have an eye to his great obligation, depending upon that for audience and acceptance. Samuel’s sacrifice without his prayer had been an empty shadow, his prayer without the sacrifice had not been so prevalent, but both together teach us, what great things we may expect from God, in answer to those prayers which are made with faith in Christ’s sacrifice. 2. It was a burnt-offering, which was offered purely for the glory of God, so intimating, that the great plea he relied on in this prayer, was taken from the honour of God, “Lord, help thy people now, for thy name’s sake.” When we endeavour to give glory to God, we may hope he will in answer to our prayers, work for his own glory. 3. It was but one sucking lamb that he offered; for it is the integrity and intention of the heart that God looks at, more than the bulk or number of the offerings. The one lamb (typifying the Lamb of God) was more acceptable than thousands of rams or bullocks would have been without faith and prayer. Samuel was no priest, but he was Levite, a prophet; the case was extraordinary, and what he did was by special direction, and therefore was accepted of God. And justly was this reproach put
upon the priests, because they had corrupted them- selves. 12. God gave a gracious answer to Samuel's prayer; (v. 3.) The Lord heard him. He was himself a Samuel, asked of God, and many a Samuel, many a mercy in answer to prayer, God gave him. Sons of prayer should be famous for praying, as Samuel was among them that call upon his name, Ps. 99. 6. The answer was a real answer. The Philistines were discomfited, (v. 10, 11.) totally routed, and that in such a manner as highly magnified the prayer of Samuel, and the name of God, and the war of Israel. 1. The prayer of Samuel was honoured, for at the very time when he was offering up his sacrifice, and his prayer with it, the battle began, and turned immediately against the Philistines. Thus while he was yet speaking God heard, and answered in thunder, Isa. 65. 24. God showed that it was Samuel's prayer and sacrifice that he had respect to, and thereby let Israel know that as in a former engagement with the Philistines he had justly chastised their presumptions confidence in the presence of the ark, on the shoulders of two profane priests, so now he graciously accepted their humble dependence upon the prayer of faith, from the mouth and heart of a pious prophet. 2. The power of God was greatly honoured; for he took the work into his own hand, and discomfited them, not with great hail-stones, which would kill the trees, (Josh. 10. 10.) but with a great thunder which frightened them, and put them into such terror and consternation that they fainted away, and became a very easy prey to the sword of Israel, before whom, being thus confounded, they were smitten. Josephus adds, that the earth quaked under them when first they made the onset, and in many places, opened and swallowed them up; and that, beside the terror of the thunder, their faces and hands were smitten with lightning, which obliged them to shift for themselves by flight. And being thus driven to their heels by the immediate hand of God, (whom they feared not so much as they had feared his ark, ch. 4. 7.) then, 3. Honour was put upon the hosts of Israel; they were made use of for the completing of the victory, and had the pleasure of triumphing over their oppressors; they pursued the Philistines, and won the battle, as soon as they found the fruits of their repentance, and reformations, and return to God! Now that they have thus engaged him for them, none of their enemies can stand before them.

V. Samuel erected a thankful memorial of this victory, to the glory of God, and for the encouragement of Israel; (v. 12.) he set up an Eben-ezer, the stone of help. If ever the people's hard hearts should lose the impressions of this providence, this stone would either revive the remembrance of it, and make them thankful, or remain a standing witness against them for their unthankfulness. 1. The place where this memorial was set up, was the same, where twenty years before, the Israelites were smitten before the Philistines, for that was beside Eben-ezer, ch. 4. 1. The sin which procured that defeat formerly, being pardoned upon their repentance, the pardon was sealed by this glorious victory in the very same place where they then suffered loss; see Hos. 1. 10. 2. Samuel himself took care to set up this monument; he had been instrumental by prayer to obtain the mercy, and therefore he thought himself in a special manner obliged to make this grateful acknowledgment of it. 3. The reason he gives for the name is, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us; in which he speaks thankfully of what was past, giving the glory of his victory to God only, who had added this to all his former favours; and yet he speaks somewhat doubtfully for the future: "Hitherto things have done well, but what God may yet do with us, we know not, that we refer to him; but let us praise him for what he has done." Note. The beginnings of mercy and deliverance are to be acknowledged by us with thankfulness so far as they go, though they be not completely finished; nay, though the issue seem uncertain. Having obtained help from God, I continue hitherto, says blessed Paul. Act 26. 22.

13. So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel, and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. 14. And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites. 15. And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 16. And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places. 17. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the Lord.

We have here a short account of the further good services that Samuel did to Israel. Having parted them from their idols, and brought them home to their God, he had put them into a capacity of receiving further benefits by his ministry. Having prevailed with God, he became also, in other instances, a blessing to them; yet writing it himself, he is brief in the relation. We are not told here, but it appears, 2 Chron. 35. 18, that in the days of Samuel the prophet, the people of Israel kept the ordinance of the passover with more than ordinary devotion, notwithstanding the distance of the Ark, and the desolations of Shiloh. Many good offices, no doubt, he did for Israel; but here we are only told how in some particulars:

1. In securing the public peace; (v. 13.) In his days the Philistines came no more into the coast of Israel, made no inroads or incursions upon them, perceiving that God now fought for Israel, and that his hand was against the Philistines; this kept them in awe, and restrained the remainder of their wrath. Samuel was a protector and deliverer to Israel, not by dint of sword, as Gideon, nor by strength of arm, as Samson, but by the power of prayer to God, and carrying on a work of reformation among the people. Religion and piety are the best securities of a nation.

2. In recovering the public rights, v. 14. By his influence, Israel had the courage to demand the cities which the Philistines had unjustly taken from them, and had long detained; and the Philistines not daring to contend with one that had so great an interest in heaven, temporarily yielded to the demand. Samuel received (some think) even Ekron and Gath, two of their capital cities, though afterward they retook them; others think, some small towns that lay between Ekron and Gath, which were forced out of the Philistines' hands. This they got by their reformation and religion; they got ground of their enemies, and got forward in their affairs. It is added, There was peace between them. (Amorites, that is, the Canaanites, the remains of the natives. Not that Israel made any league with them, but that they were quiet; and not so mischievous to Israel as they had sometimes been.
1. A good and useful man growing old and unfit for service, v. 1, Samuel was old, and could not judge Israel as he had done. He is not reckoned among the judges of ancient times, perhaps not so much; but he was a man beloved, wise in his thoughts and cares when he was a child, which, perhaps, hastened the infirmities of age upon him: the fruits that are first ripe, keep the worst. He had spent his strength and spirits in the fatigue of public business, and now, if he think to shake himself as at other times, he finds he is mistaken, old and slow. These that are in the prime of their time, ought to be busy in doing the work of life; for as they go into years, they will find themselves less disposed to, and less able for it.

2. The children of a good man going to naught, and not treading in his steps. Samuel had given his sons such good hopes of their doing well, and gained such a reputation in Israel, that he made them judges, assistants to him a while, and afterward deputies under him at Beer-sheba, which lay remote from Ramah, v. 2. Probably, the southern counties petitioned for their residence there, that they might not be necessitated to travel far with their causes: we have reason to think that Samuel gave them their commissions, not because they were his sons, (he had no ambition to entail the government upon his family, any more than Gideon and his sons,) but for that such a reputation was of them; for aught that yet appeared, they were men very fit for trust; and Samuel was so proper to ease the aged judge, and take of the burthen off him, as (ceteris paribus—other things being equal) his own sons, who, no doubt, were respected for their good father’s sake, and, having such an advantage at setting out, might soon have been great, if they had been but good. But alas! his sons walked not in his ways; (v. 3.) and when he had been the reverse of his, their relation to so good a man, made that which was their ruin, their honour, was really their disgrace. Degenerate genus oppressibrum—A good extraction is a reproach to him that degenerates from it. Note, Those that have the most grace themselves, cannot give grace to their children. It has often been the grief of good men, to see their posterity, instead of treading in their steps, trampling upon them, and, as Job speaks, marking their path. Nay, many that have been brought up in the way of God, have gone by paths, so that their parents and friends have had great hopes of them, yet afterward have turned aside to by-paths, and been the grief of those of whom they should have been the joy. When Samuel’s sons were made judges, and settled at a distance from him, then they discovered themselves. Thus, (1.) Many that have been well educated, and have conducted themselves well while they were under their parents’ eye, when they have gone abroad into the world, and set up for themselves, have proved bad. Let none therefore be secure, either of themselves or their’s, but depend on divine grace. (2.) Many that have done well in a state of meanness and subjection, have been spoiled by preferment and power. Honours change men’s minds, and, too often, for the worse. It does not appear that Samuel’s sons were so proflane and vicious as Eli’s; yet they were in other respects, they were corrupt judges, they turned aside after lucre, after the mammon of unrighteousness, so the Chaldee reads it. Note, The love of money is the root of all evil. It is pernicious in any, but especially in judges. Samuel had taken no bribes, (ch. 12. 3.) but his sons did, though, no doubt, he warned them against it when he made them judges; and then they perverted judgment, in determining controversies, had an eye to the bribe, not to the law, and inquired who bid
highest, not who had right on his side. It is sad with a people, when the public justice that should do them right, being perverted, does them the greatest wrong.

4. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah. 5. And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. 6. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. 7. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. 8. According to all the works which they have done, since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, whereby they have forsaken me, and served other gods; so do they also unto thee. 9. Now, therefore, henken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. 10. And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king. 11. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you; He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. 12. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. 13. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. 14. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. 15. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. 16. And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. 17. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. 18. And ye shall cry out in that day, because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day. 19. Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel: and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; 20. That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. 21. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord. 22. And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

We have here the starting of a matter perfectly new and surprising, which was, the setting up of kingly government in Israel. Perhaps the thing had been often talked of among them by those that were given to change, and affected that which looked great: but we do not find that it was ever till now publicly proposed and debated. (1) Abimelech by a little better than a titular king, though he is said to reign over Israel; (Judges 9. 22.) and perhaps his fall had for a great while rendered the title of king odious in Israel, as that of Tarquinius did among the Romans; but if it had, by this time the odium was worn off, and some bold steps are here taken toward so great a revolution as that amounted to.

Here is,

1. The address of the elders of Samuel in this matter, v. 4, 5. They gathered themselves together, by common consent, and not in a riotous tumultuous manner, but with respect due to his character: they came to him to his house at Ramah with their address, which contained,

1. A remonstrance of their grievances; in short, Thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways. Many a fairer occasion that people had had to ask a king, when they were oppressed by their neighbours, or embroiled at home, for want of a king in Israel; a small thing will serve factious spirits for a colour to desire a change. (1.) It was true that Samuel was old; but if that made him less able to ride the circuit, and sit long on the bench, yet it made him the more wise and experienced, and, upon that account, the fitter to rule. If he was old, was he not grown old in their service? And it was very unhind, ungrateful, nay, unjust, to cast him off when he was old, who had spent his days in doing them good. God had saved his youth from being despised, (ch. 3. 20.) yet they make his old age so, which should have been counted worthy of double honour. If old people be upbraided with their infirmities, and laid aside for them, let them not think it strange; Samuel himself was so. (2.) It was true that his sons did not walk in his ways; the more was his grief, but they could not say it was his fault; he had not, like Eli, indulged them in their badness, but was ready to receive complaints against them. And if that had been the thing desired, we may well suppose, upon the making out of the charge of bribery against them, he would have superseded their commissions and punished them. But this would not content the elders of Israel, they had another project in their head.

2. A petition for the redress of these grievances, by setting a king over them: Make us a king to judge us like all the nations. Thus far it was well, that they did not rise up in rebellion against Samuel and set up a king for themselves, vi et armis—by force; but they applied themselves to Samuel, God's prophet, and humbly begged of him to do it. But it appears by what follows, that it was a bad motion, and ill made, and was displeasing to God. God might have given them a king chosen after his own heart, when Samuel was dead; but they would anticipate God's counsel, and would have one now that Samuel was old. They had a prophet to judge them, that had immediate correspondence with heaven, and therein they were great and happy above any nation, none having God so nigh unto
them as they had, Deut. 4. 7. But this would not serve, they must have a king to judge them with external pomp and power, like all the nations. A poor prophet in a mantle, though conversant in the visions of the Almighty, looked mean in their eyes, who judged by outward appearance, but a king by a grand show, with his guards and officers of state, would look great; and such a one they must have. They knew it was vain to court Samuel to take upon him the title and dignity of a king, but he must appoint them one. They do not say, "Give us a king that is wise and good, and will judge better than thy sons do," but, "Give us a king," any body that will but make a figure. Thus feebly did the thoughts of the people turn upon the existence of advancing the dignity of their nation to that of their neighbours, did really thrust themselves down from their own excellency, and prostrate their crown by casting it to the ground.

II. Samuel's resentment of this address, v. 6. Let us see how he took it: 1. It cut him to the heart. Probably, it was a surprise to him, and he had not any inclination before of their design, which made it the more grievous. The thing displeased Samuel; not then they upbraided him with his own infirmities, and his children's irregularities; he could but patiently bear what reflected on himself and his own family, but it displeased him when they said, Give us a king to judge us, because that reflected upon God and his honour. 2. It drove him to his knees; he gave them no answer, for the present, but he took some time to consider of what they proposed, and prayed unto the Lord for direction withal, and to do, spreading the case before him, and leaving it with him, and so making himself easy. Samuel was a man much in prayer, and we are encouraged in every thing to make our requests known to God, Phil. 4. 6. When any thing disturbs us, it is our interest, as well as our duty, to show God our trouble, and he gives us leave to be humbly free with him.

III. The instruction God gave him concerning this matter. They that in straits seek to God, shall find him nigh unto them, and ready to direct them. He tells him,

1. That which would be an alloy to his displeasure. Samuel was much disturbed at the motion, it troubled him greatly to see his prophetical office thus slighted, and all the good turns he had done to Israel, thus ungratefully returned; but God tells him, he must not think it either hard or strange. (1.) He must not think it hard, that they had put this slight upon him, for they had herein put a slight upon God himself; "They have not rejected thee only, but they have rejected me; I share with thee in the affection," v. 7. Note, If God interest himself in the indignities that are done us, and the contempts that are put upon us, we may well afford to bear them patiently; nor need we think the worse of ourselves, if for his sake we bear reproach, (Ps. 69. 7.) but we must not think it an honour, Col. 1. 24. Samuel must not complain that they were weary of his government, though just and gentle, for really they were weary of God's government, that was it they disliked; They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. God reigns over the heavens, (Ps. 47. 8.) over all the world, but the government of Israel had hitherto been, in a more peculiar manner than ever any government was, a Theocracy, a divine government, their judges had their call and commission immediately from God, the affairs of their nation were under his peculiar conduct. As the constitution, so the administration, of their government, was by, Thus saith the Lord; this method they were weary of, though it was their honour and safety, above any thing, so long as they kept in with God; they were indeed so much the more exposed to calamities, if they provoked God to anger by sin, and found they could not transgress at so cheap a rate as other nations could, which, perhaps, was the true reason why they desired to stand upon the same terms with the heathen, (2.) If they choose it strange, nor marvellous at the matter, for they do as they always have done, (v. 8.) According to all the works which they have done, since the day that I brought them out of Egypt, so do they unto thee. They had at first been so very respectful and obsequious to Samuel, that he began to hope they were cured of their old stubborn disposition; but now he found himself deceived in them, and must make it appear to them, that what they did was undone to their governors, witness Moses and Aaron; nay, They have forsaken me, and served other gods; the greatness of their crime, in affecting new gods, may make this crime, of affecting new governors, seem little. Samuel might expect they would deal treacherously, for they were called transgressors from the womb, Isa. 46. 8. This had been their manner from their youth up, Jer. 29. 21.

2. He tells him that which was an answer to their demand. Samuel would not have known what to say, if God had not instructed him. Should he oppose the motion, it would bespeak a greater fondness of power and dominion than did become a prophet, and an indulgence of his sons. Should he yield to the motion, it would look like the betraying of his trust, and he would become accessory to all the bad consequences of a change. Aaron sinned in gratifying the people, when they said, Give us a king, and princes, he gave them a king in his anger. See Hos. 13. 10, 11. as he gave quails, Ps. 106. 15—78. 29. God bade Samuel humour them in this matter, (1.) That they might be beaten with their own rod, and might feel, to their cost, the difference between his government, and the government of a king; see 2 Chron. 12. 8. It soon appeared, how much worse their condition was, in all respects, under Saul, than it had been under Samuel. (2.) To prevent something worse, if they were not rather seduced by the flattering advice of those who were generally profane, and perhaps, by some that were profane, it would not have suited with the interest of the king, or the view of his greatness, to make any great noise; but it was as easy as possible to have given them a king in his anger, to gratify them, or universally revolt from their religion, and admit the gods of the nations, that they might have kings like them. Rather than so, let them have a king. [3.] God knows how to bring glory to himself, out of it, and serve his own wise purposes, even by their foolish counsels.

(2.) But he must tell them what, that when they do accept a king, they will have enough of him, and will, when it is too late, repent of their choice. This he must protest solemnly to them; (v. 9.) that, if they would have a king to rule them, as the eastern kings ruled their subjects, they would find the yoke exceedingly heavy. They looked only at the pomp and magnificence of a king, and thought that would make their nation great and considerable among its neighbours, and would gratify the people; he must bid them consider, how they would like to bear the charges of that pomp, and how they would endure that arbitrary power, which the neighbouring kings assumed. Note, Those that set their hearts inordinate upon anything in this world, for the moderating of their desires, ought to consider the inconveniences, as well as conveniences, that will attend it,
and to set the one over against the other in their thoughts. Those that submit themselves to the government, and believe the world are at play, and what hard masters they are, and what a tyranny the dominion of sin is; and yet they will exchange God's government for it.

IV. Samuel's faithful delivery of God's mind to them; (v. 10.) He told them all the words of the Lord, how ill he presented it; that he construed it into a rejecting of him, and compared it with their serving other gods. That he would grant their request, if they bearks from it; and that he would order a king to represent to them the certain consequences of their choice, that they would be such as, if they had any reason left them, and would allow themselves to consult their own interest, would make them withdraw their petition, and beg to continue as they were. Accordingly, he lays before them, very particularly, what would be, not the right of a king in general, but the manner of the king that should reign over them, according to the pattern of the nations, v. 11. Samuel does not speak (as Bishop Patrick expounds it) of a just and honest right of a king to do these things, for his right is quite otherwise described in that part of Moses's law which concerns the king's duty, but such a right as the kings of the nations had then acquired. This shall be the manner of the king, that is, 1. Thus he must support his dignity, at the expense of those who are subjected to him; for he will have the authority to abuse his power, as those that have power are apt to do; and having the militia in his hand, you will be under the necessity of submitting to him.

If they will have such a king as the nations have, let them consider,

(1.) That a king must have a great retinue, abundance of servants to wait on him, grooms to bathe after his chariots, and herds-lads to ride about with him, and footmen to run before his chariots. This is the chief grandeur of princes, and the imaginary glory of great men, to have a multitude of attendant's. And whence must he have those? "Why, he will take your sons, who are free born, have a liberal education, and whom you now have at your own disposal, and will appoint them for himself, v. 11. They must wait upon him, and do his business, in the room of his deceased parents and themselves, must work for him, ear his ground, and reap his harvest, (v. 12.) and count it their preferment too," v. 16. This would be a great change.

(2.) He must keep a great table; he will not be content to dine with his neighbours upon a sacrifice, as Samuel used to do, (ch. 9. 13.) but he must have variety of dainty dishes, forced-meats, and sweet-meats, and delicate sauces; and who must prepare him these? Why, he will take your daughters, the most ingenious and handy of them, whom you hoped to prefer to houses and tables of their own, and, whether you be willing or no, they must be his confectioners, and cooks, and bakers, and the like.

(3.) "He must needs have a standing army, for guards and garrisons; and your sons, instead of being elders of your cities, and living in quiet and honour at home, must be captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and must be disposed of at the pleasure of the sovereign."

(4.) "You may expect that he will have great favourites, whom, having dignified and emboldened, he must enrich, and give them estates suitable to their honour, and which way can he do that, but out of the blood of his inheritance? v. 14. He will take your fields and vineyards, which descended to you from your ancestors, and which you hoped to have left to your posterity after you, even the best of them; and will not only take them to himself, (you could bear that the better,) but he will give them to his servants, who will be your masters, and bear rule over them for which you have laboured. How will you like that?"

(5.) "He must have great revenues to maintain his grandeur and power with; and whence must he have them but from you? He will take the tenth of the fruits of your ground, (v. 15.) and your cattle. v. 17. You think the tenths, the double tenths, which the law of God has appointed for the support of the church, grievous enough, and grudge the payment of them; but, if you have a king, you must issue another tenth out of your estates, which will be levied with more rigour, for the support of the royal dignity. Consider the expense with the magnificence, and whether it will quit cost."

These would be their grievances; and, [1.] They would have none but God to complain to. Once they complained to the prince himself, and were answered, according to the manner of the king, "Your yoke is heavy, and I will add to it, 1 Kings, 12. 11. [2.] When they complained to God, he would not hear them; (v. 18.) nor could they expect that he should, both because they had been deaf to his calls and admonitions, and this trouble, in particular, they had brought upon themselves, by rejecting him, and would not believe, when he told them what would come of it. Note, When we bring ourselves into distress by our own irregularities, our consciences are our guides, and God's words of prayer, and the benefit of divine aids, and, if God be not better to us than we deserve, must have our relief in our own hands, and then it is bad with us.

V. The people's obstinacy in their demand, v. 19, 20. One would think such a representation of the consequences, as this was, coming from God himself, who can neither deceive by his word, nor be deceived in his knowledge, should have prevailed with them to have their request: but they were hearts were upon it, right or wrong, good or evil; "We will have a king over us, whatever God or Samuel say to the contrary; we will have a king, whatever it costs us, and whatever inconvenience we bring upon ourselves or our posterity by it." See their folly. 1. They were quite deaf to reason, and blind to their own interest. They could not answer, "Why would you be governed by a king? He would not be a pattern of prayer, and the benefit of divine aids, and, if God be not better to us than we deserve, must have our relief in our own hands, and then it is bad with us.

"We, in our day, will have this king over us." Could they but have waited ten or twelve years longer, they had had David, a king of God's giving in mercy, and all the calamities that attended the setting up of Saul had been prevented. Sudden resolves and hasty desires make work for a long and leisurely repentance. 3. That which they aimed at in desiring a king, was, not only as before, that they might be like the nations, and levelled with them, above whom God had so far advanced them; but that they might have one to judge them, and to go out before them when they took the field, and to fight their battles. Foolish people, and unwise! Could they ever desire a battle better fought for than the battle of God? Would they not have taken their prayer, and God's thunder? ch. 7. 10. Was victory hereby too sure to them? And were they fond of trying the chance of war at the same uncertainty that others did? So sick, it seems, were they of their privileges,
and what was the issue? Their first king was slain in battle, which none of their judges ever were; so was Josiah, one of the last and best.

VI. The dismissing of them, with an intimation that very shortly they should have what they asked. 1. 

19. They shall choose them a king over the land, the Lord, v. 21. Not but that God perfectly knew it, without Samuel's report; but thus he dealt faithfully between God and Israel, as a prophet, returning the answer to him that sent him; and thus he waited on God for further direction. God is fully acquainted with the state of the case we are in care and doubt about, but he will know it from us. His rehearsing it in the ears of the Lord, intimates that it was done in private for the people were not disposed to join with him in prayer to God for direction in this matter; also it bespeaks a holy familiarity, to which God graciously admits his people; they speak in the ears of the Lord, as one friend whispers with another; their communion with God is meat they have to eat, which the world knows not of; John 4. 32. 2. God gave direction that they should seek a king among themselves, v. 22. Without that, it was impossible they could have been prepared to the choice to Samuel, and, by him, to God, to be put in nomination. Why does not the prince of the tribe of Judah, whoever he is, look a little now, remembering Jacob's entail upon it; (v. 22.) 4. Make them kings, and let them make the best of him, and thank themselves, if that very pomp and power which they are so eager to see their sovereign in, be their plague and bane. So he gave them up to their own hearts' lust, Samuel told them this, but sent them home for the present, every man to his city; for the designation of the person must be left to God, they had now no more to do. We must leave the thing in God's hands; if he sees fit to give them a king, he will have them; and, in the mean time let them keep the peace and expect the issue.

CHAP. IX.

Samuel had promised Israel, from God, that they should have a king; it is strange that the next news is not of candidates setting up for the government, making an interest in the people, or recommending themselves to Samuel, and, by him, to God, to be put in nomination. Why does not the prince of the tribe of Judah, whoever he is, look a little now, remembering Jacob's entail upon that tribe! Is there never a bold aspiring man in Israel, to say, I will be king, if God will choose me? No, none appears; whether it is owing to a culpable mean spiritedness, or a laudable humility, Israel's salvation being, if possible, more needful than what could be paralleled in the history of any kingdom; a crown, such a crown, set up, and nobody bids for it. Most governments began in the ambition of the prince to rule, but Israel in the person of the people prevailed. Any of those elders which petitioned for a king, afterward petitioned to be a king, I should have suspected that person's ambition to have been at the bottom of the motion; but now, (let them have the praise of what was good in them,) it was not so, God having in the law undertaken to choose their king, (Deut. 17. 15.) they all sit still, till they hear from heaven, and that they do in this chapter, which begins the story of Saul, their first king, and, by strange steps of Providence, brings it to Samuel to be anointed privately, and so to be prepared for an election by lot, and a public commendation to the people; which follows in the next chapter. Here is, 1. A short account of Saul's parentage and person, v. 1. 2. A large and particular account of the bringing of him to Samuel, to whom he had been before altogether a stranger. 1. God, by revelation, had bid Samuel expect him, v. 15. 16. 2. God, by providence, led him to Samuel. (1.) Better sent to seek his father's asses, he was at a loss, v. 5. 3. 5. (2.) By the advice of his servant, he determined to consult Samuel, v. 6. 10. (3.) By the direction of the young maidens, he found him out, v. 14. Samuel, being informed of God concerning him, (v. 17.) treated him with respect in the gate, (v. 18. 21.) in the dining room, (v. 22. 24.) and, at length in private, where he gave him this surprising news, that he must be king, v. 25. 27. And these beginnings had been very hopeful and promising, if it had not been that the sin of the people was the spring of this great affair.

1. NOW there was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zorot, the son of Bechoreth, the son of Aphiath, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. 2. And he had a son whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly; and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

We are here told, 1. What a good family Saul was of, v. 1. He was of the tribe of Benjamin; so was the New Testament Saul, who also was called Paul, and he mentions it as his honour, for Benjamin was a favourite, Rom. 11. Phil. 3. 5. This tribe had been reduced to a very small number by the vast war with Gibeah, and much ado there was to pro vide wives for those six hundred men that were the poor remains of it out of that diminished tribe, which is here called, with good reason, the smallest of the tribes of Israel, v. 21. Saul sprang as a root out of a dry ground. That tribe, though fewest in number, was first in dignity, God giving more abundant grace to them, 1 Cor. 12. 24. His father was Kish, a mighty man of power, or, as the margin reads it, in substance; in spirit stout, in body strong, in estate wealthy. The whole lot of the tribe of Benjamin coming to be distributed among six hundred men, we may suppose their inheritances were much larger than their's who were of other tribes; an advantage which somewhat helped to balance the disadvantage of the smallness of their number.

2. What a good figure Saul made, v. 2. No mention is here made of his wisdom or virtue, his learning or piety, or any of the accomplishments of his mind, but that he was a tall, proper, handsome man, that had a good face, a good shape, and a good presence, graceful and well proportioned; among all the children of Israel, there was not a goodlier person than he; and, as if nature had marked him for more eminence than the others, he was taller, by the head and shoulders, than any of the people, the fitter to be a match for the giants of Gath, the champions of the Philistines. When God chose a king after his own heart, he pitched upon one that was not at all remarkable for the height of his stature, or any thing in his countenance, but the innocence and sweetness that appeared there, ch. 16. 7, 12. But when he chose a king after the people's heart, who aimed at nothing so much as stateliness and grandeur, he pitched upon this huge tall man, who, if he had no other good qualities, yet would look great. It does not appear that he excelled in strength, so much as he did in stature; Samson did, and him they slighted, bowed, and betrayed into the hands of the Philistines; justly therefore are they now put off with one, who, though of uncommon height, is weak as other men. They would have a king like the nations, and the nations commonly chose portly men for their kings.

3. And the asses of Kish, Saul's father, were lost: and Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses. 4. And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found them not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and there they were not;
and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found them not. 5. And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us. 6. And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now, let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go. 7. Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we? 8. And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver; that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way. 9. (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet, was beforetime called a Seer.) Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God was.  

Here is,  

I. A great man rising from small beginnings. It does not appear that Saul had any preferment at all, or was in any post of honour or trust, till he was chosen king of Israel. Most that are advanced, rise gradually; but Saul, from the level with his neighbours, stepped at once into the throne, according to that of Hannah. He raiseth up the floor out of the dust, to set them among princes, ch. 2. 8. Saul, it should seem, though he was himself married, and had children grown up, yet lived in his father's house, and was subject to him. Promotion comes not by chance or human probabilities, but God is the Judge.  

II. A great event rising from small occurrences. How low does the history begin! Begin to trace Saul to the crown, we find him first employed as meanly as any we meet with called out to preferment. 1. Saul's father sends him with one of his servants, to seek some asses that he had lost. It may be, they had no way then to give public notice of such a number of asses strayed or stolen out of the grounds of Kish the Benjamite. A very good law that had to oblige men to bring back an ox or ass that went astray, but it is to be feared that was, as other good laws, neglected and forgotten. It is easy to observe here, that they who have, must expect to lose; that it is wisdom to look after what is lost; that no man should think it below him to know he state of his flocks; that children should be forward to serve their parents' interests; Saul readily went to seek his father's asses, v. 5, 4. His taking care of the asses is to be ascribed, not so much to the humility of his spirit, as to the plainness and simplicity of these times. But his obedience to his father in it, was very commendable. Serve thou a man diligent in his business, and dutiful to his superiors, willing to stoop, and willing to take pains? He does, as Saul, stand fair for preferment. The servant of Kish would be faithful only as a servant, but Saul as a son, in his own business, and therefore he sent him with him. Saul and his servant travell far on foot, it is likely, in quest of the asses, but in vain, they found them not. He missed of what he sought, but had no reason to complain of the disappointment, for he met with the kingdom, which he had dreamed of. 2. When he could not find them, he determined to return to his father, (v. 5.) in consideration of his father's tender concern for him; being apprehensive, that if they stayed out any longer, his aged father would begin to fear, as Jacob concerning Joseph, that an evil beast had devoured them, or some mischief had befallen them; "He will leave caring for the asses, as much as he was in care of his other sheep, and take no more thought for them, but the children should take care that they do nothing to grieve or frighten their parents, but be tender of their tenderness. 3. His servant moved, (for it should seem he had more religion in him than his master,) that since they were now at Ramah, they should call on Samuel, and take his advice in this important affair. Observe here,  

(1.) They were close by the city where Samuel lived, and that put it into their heads to consult him; (v. 6.) There is in this city a man of God. Note, Wherever we are, we should improve our opportunities of acquainting ourselves with those that are wise and good. But there are many that will consult a man of God, if he comes in their way, that would not go a step out of their way to get wisdom.  

(2.) The servant spoke very respectfully concerning Samuel, though he had no personal knowledge of him, but by common fame only; He is a man of God, and an honourable man. Note, Men of God are honourable men, and should be so in our eyes. Acquaintance with the things of God, and serviceableness to the kingdom of God, put true honour upon men, and make them great. This was the honour of Samuel, as a man of God, that all he saith, comes surely to pass. This was observed concerning him, when he was a young prophet (ch. 3. 19.) God did let none of his words fall to the ground; and still it held true.  

(3.) They agreed to advise with him concerning the way that they should go, Peradventure he can show us. All the use they would make of the man of God, was, to be advised by him, whether they should return home, or, if there was yet any hope of finding the asses, which way they must go next. How to go forth to employ a prophet about! Had they said, "Let us give up the asses for lost, and now that we are so near the man of God, let us go and learn from him the good knowledge of God, let us consult him how we may order our conversations a right, and inquire the law at his mouth, since we may not have such another opportunity, and then we shall not lose our journey." The prophet said, "If so be as I have said, as became Israelites; but, to make prophecy, that glory of Israel, serve so mean a turn as this, discovered too much what manner of spirit they were of. Note, Most people would rather be told their fortune, than told their duty; how to be rich, than how to be saved. If it were the business of the men of God to direct for the recovery of lost asses, they would be consulted much more than they are now that it is their business to direct for the recovery of lost souls; so preposterous is the care of most men!  

(4.) Saul was thoughtful, what present they should bring to the man of God, what fee they should give him for his advice; (v. 7.) What shall we bring the man? They could not present him, as Jeroboam's wife did Abijah, with leaves and cakes,
listines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. 17. And when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of: this same shall reign over my people.

Here, I. Saul, by an ordinary inquiry, is directed to Samuel, v. 11, 14. Gibeah of Saul was not twenty miles from Ramah where Samuel dwelt, and was near to Mizpeh where he often judged Israel; and yet, it seems, Saul had lived so very privately, and he was so little known that he had never seen Samuel; for when he met him, (v. 18.) he did not know him, so that there was no cause to suspect any secret compact or collusion between them in this matter. I knew him not, says John Baptist concerning Christ, John 1. 31. Yet I do not think it any commendation to Saul, that he was a stranger to Samuel. However, the maid-servants of Ramah, whom they met with at the places of drawing water, could give him and his servant intelligence concerning Samuel; and very particular they were in their directions, v. 12, 13. We should always be ready to give what assistance we can to those that are inquiring after God's prophets, and further them in their inquiries.

Even the maid-servants could tell them, 1. That there was a sacrifice that day in the high place, it being either an ordinary festival, or an extraordinary one; a day of prayer and thanksgiving, with the usual sacrifices were joined. The tabernacle being deprived of the ark, the altar there had not now the reputation it formerly had, nor were they tied to it, as they would be when God had again chosen a place to put his name in; and therefore now other places were allowed. Samuel had built an altar at Ramah, (ch. 7. 17.) and here we have him making use of that altar. 2. That Samuel came that day to the city, either from his circuit, or from his country-seat. He was such a public person, that his motions were generally known. 3. That this was just the time of their meeting to feast before the Lord upon the sacrifice; "About this time you will find him in the street going up to the high place." They knew the hour of the solemn feast. 4. That the people would not eat till Samuel came, not only because he was the worthiest person, and they ought, in good manners, to stay for him, and he was, as we think, the maker of the feast, the sacrifice being offered at his charge, and upon his account; but because, as a man of God, whoever made the feast, he must bless the sacrifice, that is, these parts of the sacrifice which they feasted upon; which may be considered, (1.) As a common meal; and so this is an instance of that great duty of craving a blessing upon our meat before we partake of it. We cannot expect benefit from our food without that blessing, and we have no reason to expect that blessing if we do not pray for it. Thus we must give glory to God as our Benefactor, and own our dependence upon him, and our obligations to him. Or, (2.) As a religious assembly. When the sacrifice was offered, which was the ceremony, Samuel blessed it; that is, he prayed over it, and offered up spiritual sacrifices with it, which were the substance of the others. And afterwards, after the sacrifices were performed, they did eat. Let the soul be served. The feast upon the sacrifice being a sacred rite, it was requisite that it should in a particular manner be blessed, as is the christian eucharist. They feasted, in token of their reconciliation to God by virtue of the sacrifice, and their participation of the benefits of it; and Samuel blessed it, that is, he prayed to God to grace the solemnity
with his special presence, that it might answer those great ends.

Bishop Hall observes, what a particular account these maidens could give of the usages of those sacred feasts, and infers from it, That "there is no small advantage to live in religious places; for we shall be much to blame if all goodness fail beside us."

Saul and his servant followed the directions given them, and very opportunely met Samuel going to the high-place, the synagogue of the city, v. 14. This seemed purely accidental, but the Divine Providence ordered it for the forwarding of this great event. The wise God serves very great and certain purposes, by very small and casual occurrences. A sparrow falls not to the ground without our Father.

II. Samuel, by an extraordinary revelation, is informed concerning Saul. He was a seer, and therefore must see this in a way peculiar to himself.

1. God has told him, the day before, that he would, at this time, send him the man that should serve the people of Israel for such a king as they wished to have, like all the nations, v. 15, 16. He told him in his ear; that is, privately, by a secret whisper to his mind; or, perhaps, by a still small voice, some soft and gentle sounds conveyed to his ear, probably, when he was praying in secret for direction in that and other affairs of the nation. He had spoken in the ears of the Lord, (ch. 8. 21.) and now, God spake in his ear, in token of friendship and familiarity; for he revealed his secret to his servants the prophets, as secrets in their ear, Amos 3. 7. God told him before, that he might not be a surprise to him; and, perhaps, it was in expectation of it, that he appointed the feast and the sacrifice, for the imploring of God's blessing upon this numerous and important affair, though he might keep the particular occasion in his own breast, God having only told it him in his ear. The Hebrew phrase is, He uncovers the ear of Samuel; to which some allude, for the explication of the way of God's revealing himself to us; he not only speaks, but uncovers our ear. We have naturally a covering on our ears, so we cannot perceive what God says; (Job. 33. 14.) but when God will manifest himself to a soul, he uncovers the ear, says Ephhaphatha, Be opened; he takes the veil from off the heart, 2 Cor. 3. 16.

Though God had, in displeasure, granted their request for a king, yet here he speaks tenderly of Israel; for even in wrath he remembers mercy. (1.) He tells them again and again his people; though a peevish and provoking people, yet mine still. (2.) He sends them a man to be a captain over them, that they might not be a body without a head, and to save them out of the hands of the Philistines, which, perhaps, was more than many of them aimed at desiring a king. (3.) He does it with a gracious respect to them and to their cry. I have looked upon my people, and their cry is come unto me. He gratified them with what they cried for, as the tender motherhems the tender child, lest it should break its heart. And (as Bishop Patrick observes) though he would not hear their cry to relieve them against the oppression of their kings, (ch. 8. 18.) yet he was so gracious as to make those kings instruments of their deliverance from the oppression of their neighbours; which was more than they had reason to expect.

2. When Saul came up toward him in the street, God again whispered Samuel in the ear; (v. 17.) Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! Saul being a man of unusual stature, it is natural to think that Samuel fixed his eyes upon him at a distance, and perhaps, looked on the more warily toward him, because the hour was now come, when God would send him the man that should be king of Israel, and he fancied this might be he; but, that he might be fully satisfied, God told him expressly, That is the man that shall reign; (for magistrates are heirs of restraint,) in my people Israel.

18. Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is. 19. And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to-day; and to-morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart. 20. And as for thine assses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel; is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house? 21. And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin wherefore then speakest thou so to me? 22. And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons. 23. And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee. 24. And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! set it before thee, and eat; for unto this time hath it been kept for thee, since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day. 25. And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house. 26. And they arose early: and it came to pass, about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad. 27. And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God.
figure Samuel made, though so great a man: he took not any state, had no attendants, no ensigns of honour carried before him, nor any distinguishing habit, no not when he went to church, but appeared, in all respects, so much a common person, that Saul, though he was told he should meet him, never suspected that it was he; but, as if he looked more like a servant than a prince, he was invited to the seer's house. Thus is great worth oftentimes hid under a very despicable appearance. Samuel knew that it was not the house, but the man, that he wanted, and therefore answered him, "I am the seer, the person you inquire for," v. 19. Samuel knew him before he knew Samuel; thus, though all that are called to the kingdom of glory, are brought to know God, yet first they were known of him, Gal. 4:11.

Now, 1. Samuel obliges him to stay with him till the next day; the greatest part of this day had been spent in sacrificing, and the rest of it was to be spent in holy feasting, and therefore, "To-morrow I will let thee go, and no sooner; now go up before me to the high place; let us pray together, and then we will talk together." Saul had nothing in his mind but to find his asses; but Samuel would take him out of the way here, and dispose him to the exercises of piety; and therefore bids him go to the high place, and go before him, because, it may be, some business obliged Samuel to call by the way.

2. He satisfies him about his ass; (v. 20.) "Set not thy mind on them, be not in further care about them, they are found." By this, Saul might perceive that he was a prophet, that he could give him an answer to the inquiry which he had not yet made, and tell him what he thought; and from thence might infer, If a man of God could do this, much more doth God himself understand our thoughts after off. 3. He surprises him with an intimation of preferment before him, "On whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not a king that they are set upon? and there is never a man in Israel that will suit them so as thou wilt." It does not appear that the country had as yet any eye upon him for the government, because they had left it wholly to God to choose for them; and he does all, as he wished for; and his advancement would be the advancement of his family and relations, as Ahner, and others.

To this strange intimation Saul returns a very modest answer, v. 21. Samuel, he thought, did but banter him, because he was a tall man, but a very unlikely man to be a king; for though the historian says (v. 1.) his father was a mighty man of power, yet he himself speaks diminutively of his tribe and family. "Benjamin, the youngest of Jacob's sons, when grown up to be a man, was called a little one, (Gen. 44:20.) that tribe diminished by the war of Gibeah, and I am a Benjaminite, my family the least; probably, a younger house; not in any place of honour or trust, no not in their own tribe." Gideon had expressed himself thus, Judg. 6:15. An humble disposition is a good presage of preferment.

II. At the public feast; thither Samuel took him and his servant. Though the advancing of Saul would be the deposing of Samuel, yet that good prophet was so far from envying him, or hearing him any ill-will for it, that he was the first and forwardest man to do him honour, in compliance with the will of God. If this be the man whom God has chosen, though he be none of Samuel's particular friends, he is it. Two things belong to the table, nay, to his bosom. We may suppose it was no unseemly kindness to Saul, to give him a meal's meat, for it seems, by what he said, (v. 7.) that all their meat and money were spent. But this was not all, Samuel treats him not as a common person, but a person of quality and distinction, to prepare both him and the people for what was to follow. Two marks of honour he put upon him.

1. He set him in the best place, as more honourable than any other of the guests, to whom he said, Give this man place, Luke 14:9. Though we may suppose the magistrates were there, who in their own city would claim precedence, yet the master of the feast, in order to Samuel and David, whom if he were a king, must be respected as his prime minister of state) sit in the chiefest place, v. 22. Note, Civil respects must be paid to those, who, in civil things, have the precedence given them by the Divine Providence.

2. He presented him with the best dish; which, having had notice from heaven the day before of his coming, (v. 15.) he had designed for him, and ordered the cook to secure for him, when he gave orders for inviting the guests, and making preparation for them. And what should this precious dish be, which was so very carefully reserved for the king-elect? One would expect it should be something very nice and delicate; no, it was a plain shoulder of mutton: (v. 23, 24.) the right shoulder of the peare-offering was to be given to the priests, who were God's receivers: (Lev. 7:22.) the next in honour to that, was the left shoulder, which, probably, was always allotted to those that sat at the upper end of the table, and was wont to be Samuel's mess at other times; so that his giving it to Saul now, was an implicit resignation of his place to him. Some observe a significance in this dish; the shoulder denotes strength, and the breast, which, some think, went with it, denotes affection: he that was king, had the government upon his shoulder, for he must bear the weight of it; and the people in his bosom, for they must be dear to him.

III. What passed between them in private; both that evening and early the next morning, Samuel communed with Saul upon the flat roof of the house, v. 25, 26. We may suppose Samuel now told him the whole story of the people's desire of a king, the grounds of their desire, and God's grant of it; to all which, Saul, living very private, was perhaps a stranger; he satisfied him that he was the person God had chosen, and prepared for it; and whereas Saul would object, that Samuel was in possession, and he would not for all the world take it out of his hands, Samuel, we may suppose, gave him all the assurance he could desire, of his willingness to resign. Early in the morning, he sent him toward home, brought him a part of the way, bade him send his servant before, that they might be private, (v. 27.) and there, as we find in the beginning of the next chapter, he appointed him, and there in showed him the word of the Lord; that is, gave him full satisfaction that he was the person chosen to be king, for he would not jest with that sacred rite. It is by theunction of the Holy Ghost, that Christ, the great Prophet, shows us the word of the Lord; (1 John 2:27.) the same anointing teacheth you of all things.

CHAP. X.

We left Samuel and Saul walking together, probably some private way over the fields down from Ramah, perhaps in the path where he was ravished, ch. 10:9, 10, from Samuel the word of God. Now here we have, I. The anointing of Saul, and then and there, v. 1. The signs Samuel gave him, (v. 2-6.) and instructions, v. 7, 8. II. The accomplishment of those signs to the satisfaction of Saul, v. 9. III. His return again to his own city, v. 10, 11. IV. His public election by lot, and solemn inauguration, v. 17-26. V. His return again to his own city, v. 26. 27. It is a great work that is here doing, the setting up not only of a monarch, but a monarchy itself, in Israel: and therefore in all the advances towards it, much of God is seen.
I. Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance? 2. When thou art departed from me to-day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel’s sepulchre, in the border of Benjamin, at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sowrathethet, saying, What shall I do for my son? 3. Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Beth-el, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine: 4. And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread, which thou shalt receive of their hands. 5. After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place, with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy: 6. And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. 7. And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serce thee; for God is with thee. 8. And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt-offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and show thee what thou shalt do.

Samuel is here executing the office of a prophet, giving Saul full assurance from God that he should be king, as he was afterward, according to these prophecies which went before of him.

1. He anointed him and kissed him, v. 1. This was not done in a solemn assembly, but being done by divine appointment, that made up the want of all external solemnities, nor was it ever the less valid for its being done in private, under a hedge, or, as the Jews say, by a fountain. God’s institutions are great and generous, though the circumstances of their administration be ever so mean and despicable. 1. Samuel, by anointing Saul, assured him that it was God’s act to make him a king, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee? And in token of that, the High Priest was anointed to his office, which signified the conferring of these gifts upon him, that were requisite for the discharge of his office; and the same was intimated in the anointing of kings; for, whom God calls, he qualifies, and that is a good proof of a commission. These sacred anointings, then used, pointed at the great Messiah, or anointed One, the King of the church, and High Priest of our profession, who was anointed with the oil of the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, and above all the priests and princes of the Jewish church. It was common oil, of which Samuel used, and we read not of his blessing it, or praying over it. But it was only a vial of oil that he anointed him with; the vessel brittle, because his kingdom would soon be cracked and broken; and the quantity small, because he had but little of the Spirit conferred upon him, to what David had, who was therefore anointed with a horn of oil, and so were Solomon and Jehu with a box of oil. 2. By kissing him, he assured him of his own approbation of the choice; not only his consent to it, but his complacency in it, though it abridged his power and eclipsed his glory, and the glory of his family. “God has anointed thee,” says Samuel, “to be king, and I am satisfied and very well pleased, in pledge of which, take this kiss.” It was likewise a kiss of homage and allegiance; hereby he bound the choice of him to be king, but his king; and in this sense we are commanded to kiss the Son, Ps. 2.

II. For his further satisfaction, he gives him some hints, which should come to pass immediately, this very day; and they were such as would not only confirm the word of Samuel in general, and prove him a true prophet, but would confirm this word to Saul in particular, that he should be king. 1. He should presently meet with some that would bring him intelligence from home, of the care his father’s house was in concerning him; (v. 2.) these he would meet hard by Rachel’s sepulchre, the first place he directed him to, was Rachel’s sepulchre, the sepulchre of one of his ancestors, for Rachel died in travail with Benjamin; there he must read a lecture of his own mortancy, and now that he had a crown in his eye, must think of his grave, in all which his honour would be laid in the dust. Here two men would meet him, perhaps sent on purpose to look after him, and would tell him the asses were found, and his father was in pain concerning him, saying, What shall I do for my son? He would reckon it happened well that he met with these messengers; and it is good to eye Providence in favourable conjunctures, (though the matter be minute,) and to be encouraged to trust in greater matters.

2. He should next meet with others going to Beth-el, where, it should seem, there was a high place concerning him; saying, and there men were bringing their sacrifices thither, v. 3. 4. It was token for good to one that was designed for the government of Israel, where er he came, to meet with people going to worship God. It is supposd that these kids and loaves, and the bottle of wine, which the three men had with them, were designed for sacrifice, with the meat-offerings and drink offerings that were to attend the sacrifice; yet Samuel tells Saul they would give him two of their loaves, and he must take them. This would look to us now like the relieving of a beggar. Saul must hereafter remember the time when he received
alms, and must therefore be humble and charitable to the poor. But, perhaps, it would then be constned, a fit present for a prince; and as such, Saul must receive it, if he would not be supposed to be such a man by such a know not what they did, nor why they did it, but God put it into their hearts, which made it the more fit to be a sign to him. These two loaves which were the first tribute paid to this new-anointed king, might serve for an admonition to him, not to spend the wealth of his crown in luxury, but still to be content with plain food. Bread is the staff of life.

The most remarkable sign of all would be his joining with a company of prophets that he should meet with, under the influence of a spirit of prophecy which should at that time come upon him. What God works in us by his Spirit serves much more for the confirming of faith, than anything wrought for us by his providence. Here he tells him, v. 5, 6. (1.) Where this would happen, at the hill of God, where there was a garrison of the Philistines; which is supposed to be near Gibeah, his own city, for there was the Philistines' garrison, ch. 13. 3. Perhaps, it was one of the articles of Samuel's agreement with them, that they should have a garrison there, or rather, after they were subdued in the beginning of his time, they got ground again, so far as to force this garrison into that place, and thence God raised up the man that should chastise them. There was a place that was called the hill of God, because of the school of the prophets that was built upon it; and such respect did even Philistines themselves pay to religion, that a garrison of their soldiers suffered a school of God's prophets to live peaceably by them, and did not only not dislodge them, but not restrain or disturb the public exercises of their devotion. (2.) Upon what occasion; he should meet a company of prophets with music before them, prophesying, and with them he should join himself. These prophets were not (as it should seem) divinely inspired to foretell things to come, nor did God reveal himself to them by dreams and visions, but they employed themselves in the study of the law, in instructing their neighbours, and in the acts of piety, especially in praising God, wherein they were wonderfully assisted and enlarged by the Spirit of God. It was happy for Israel, that they had not only prophets, but companies of prophets, who gave them good instructions, and set them good examples, and helped very much to keep up religion among them. Now the word of the Lord was not so precious, as it had been when Samuel was first raised up, who had been instrumental in founding these colleges, or religious houses, whence, it is probable, the synagogues took their rise. What a pity was it that Israel should be weary of the government of such a man, who, though he had not, as a man of war, expelled the Philistines, yet they had been at the high-priest, probably, offering sacrifices to them, they came back singing psalms. We should come from holy ordinances with our hearts greatly enlarged in holy joy and praise. See Ps. 138 5. Saul should find himself strongly moved to join with them, and should be turned thereby into another man from what he had been while he lived in a private capacity. The Spirit of God, by his ordinances, changes men, wonderfully transforms them; Saul, by praising God in the communion of saints, became another man, but whether a new man or no, may be question.

3. He directs him to proceed in the administration of his gift. God should lead him, and as Samuel should advise him. 1. He must follow Providence in ordinary cases; (v. 7.) "Do as occasion shall serve thee. Take such measures as thine own prudence shall direct thee." But, 2. In an extraordinary strait that would hereafter befal him at Gical, and would be the most critical juncture of all other, when he would have the special need of divine aid, he must wait for Samuel to come to him, and must tarry seven days in expectation of him, v. 8. How his failing in this matter proved his fall, we find afterwards, ch. 13. 11. It was a plain intimation to him, that he was upon his good behaviour, and, though a king, must act under the direction of Samuel, and do as he should order him. The greatest of men must own themselves in subjection to God and his word.

9. And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day. 10. And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them. 11. And it came to pass, when all that knew him before time saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets? 12. And one of the same place answered, and said, But who is their father? Therefore it became a proverb, Is Saul also among the prophets? 13. And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place. 14. And Saul's uncle said unto him and to his servant, Whither went ye? And he said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that they were no where, we came to Samuel. 15. And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you. 16. And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not.

Saul has now taken his leave of Samuel, much amazed, we may well suppose, at what had been done to him, almost ready to question whether he was awake or no, and whether it be not a dream. Now here we are told, v. 9. Those signs which Samuel had given him, came to pass very punctually; but that which gave him the greatest satisfaction of all, was this, he found im mediately that God had given him another heart. A new fire was kindled in his breast, such as he had never before been acquainted with; seeking his ass is quite out of his mind, and he thinks of nothing but fighting the Philistines, redressing the grievances of Israel, making laws, administering justice, and providing for the public safety: these are the things that now fill his head. He finds himself raised to such a pitch of boldness and bravery, as he never thought he should have been con-
scions of. He has no longer the heart of a husbandman, that is, low and mean, and narrow, and concerned only about his corn and cattle; but the heart of a statesman, a general, an apostle. When God calls his service, he will make fit for it. If he advance to another station, he will give another heart, to those who sincerely desire to serve him with their power.

II. What occurred when he came near home. They came to the hill, (v. 10.) that is, to Gibeah, or Geba, which signifies a hill; and so the Chaldee here takes it as a proper name; he met with the prophets as Samuel had told him, and the Spirit of God came upon him; strongly and suddenly, so the word signifies; but not so as to rest and abide upon him. It came on, so as to go off quickly: however, for the present, it had a strange effect upon him; for he immediately joined with the prophets in their devotion, and that with as much decorum, and as great a transport of affection, as any of them. He prophesied among them.

Now, 1. His prophesying was publicly taken notice of, v. 11, 12. He was now among his acquaintance, who, when they saw him among the prophets, called one to another to come and see a strange sight. This would prepare them to accept of him as a king, though one of themselves, when they had seen how God had advanced him to the honour of a prophet. The seventy elders prophesied before they were made judges, Num. 11. 25. Now, (1.) They all wondered to see Saul among the prophets. What is this that is come to the son of Kish? Though this school of the prophets was near his father's house, yet he had never associated with them, nor showed them any respect, perhaps had sometimes spoken slightly of them; and now to see him prophesying among them, was a surprise to them, as it was long after, when his namesake, in the New Testament, preached that gospel which he had before persecuted, Acts 9. 21. When God gives another heart, it will soon show itself. (2.) One of them, that was wiser than the rest, asked, "Who is his father, or instructor? Is it not God? Are they not all taught of him? Do they not all owe their gifts to him? And is he limited? Cannot he make Saul a prophet, as well as any of them, if he pleases?" Or, "Is not Samuel their father?" Under God, he was so; and Saul had now lately been with him, by which his servant, he might know. No marvel for him to prophesy, who lay, last night, under Samuel's roof. (3.) It became a proverb commonly used in Israel, when they would express their wonder at a bad man's either becoming good, or, at least, being found in good company, is Saul among the prophets? Note, Saul among the prophets, is a wonder to a proverb. Let not the worst be despised of, yet let not an external show of devotion, and a sudden change for the present, be too much relied on; for Saul among the prophets, was Saul still.

But, 2. His being anointed was kept private. When he had done prophesying, (1.) It should seem he uttered all his words before the Lord, and recommended the affair to his favour, for he went straight to the high place, (v. 13.) to give God thanks for his mercies to him, and to pray for continued mercies. He industriously concealed it from his relations. His uncle, who met with him either at the high place, or as soon as he came home, examined him, v. 14. Saul owned, for his servant knew it, that they had been with Samuel, and that he told them the asses were found, but said not a word of the kingdom, v. 14, 15. This was an instance, [1.] Of his humility; many a one would have been so elevated with this surprising elevation, as to proclaim it upon the house-top. But Saul, though he might please himself with it, in his own breast, did not pride himself in it among his neighbours. The hearts of the kings of glory are well enough pleased that the world knows them not, 1 John 3. 1. [2.] Of his prudence. Had he been forward to proclaim it, he would have been envied, and he knew not what difficulties that might have created him. Samuel had communicated it to him as a secret, and he knows not how to keep counsel. Thus it appears, that he had another heart, a heart fit for government. [3.] Of his dependence upon God. He does not go about to take an interest for himself, but leaves it to God to carry on his own work by Samuel, and, for his own part, sits still, to see how the matter will fall.

17. And Samuel called the people together unto the Lord to Mizpeh; 18. And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you: 19. And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes, and by your thousands. 20. And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. 21. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul, the son of Kish, was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found. 22. Therefore they inquired of the Lord further, if the man should yet come thither. And the Lord answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. 23. And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people, from his shoulders and upward. 24. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king! 25. Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house. 26. And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. 27. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents: but he held his peace.

Saul's nomination to the throne is here made public, in a general assembly of the elders of Israel, the representatives of their respective tribes at Mizpeh. It is probable that this convention of the
states was called as soon as conveniently it might, after Saul was anointed, for if there must be a change in their government, the sooner the better: it might be of bad consequence to be long in the doing. The people being met in a solemn assembly, in which God was, in a peculiar manner, present, (and therefore it is said, they were called together unto the Lord, v. 17.) Samuel acts for God among them.

I. He reproves them for casting off the government of a prophet, and desiring that of a captain. He shows them (v. 18.) how happy they had been under the divine government; when God ruled them he delivered them out of the hand of them that oppressed them, and what would they desire more? Could the mightiest man of valour do that for them, which the Almighty God had done? He likewise shows them (v. 19.) that if God had put up with them, he had saved them out of all their tribulations, by his own power, and by such as he had immediately called and qualified, in desiring a king to save them. He tells them, in plain terms, "Ye have this day rejected your God, ye have, in effect, done it, so he construes it, and he might justly, for your so doing, reject you." They that can live better by sense than by faith, that stay themselves upon an arm of flesh, and trust the Almighty arm, for sake a Fountain of living waters for broken cisterns. And some make their obstinacy in this matter, to be a presage of their rejecting Christ, in casting off whom, they cast off God, that he should not reign over them.

II. He puts them upon choosing their king by lot: he knew whom God had chosen, and had already anointed him, but he knew also the peevishness of that people, and that there were those among them who would not acquiesce in the choice, if it depended upon his single testimony; and therefore that every tribe, and every family of the chosen tribe, might please themselves with having a chance for it, he calls them to the lot, v. 19. Benjamin is taken out of all the tribes, (v. 20.) and out of that tribe Saul the son of Kish, v. 21. By this method it would appear to the people, as it already appeared to Samuel, that Saul was appointed of God to be king, for the disposal of the lot is of the Lord. It would also prevent all disputes and exceptions, for the lot causeth contention to cease, and furieth between the mighty. When the tribe of Benjamin was taken, they might easily foresee that they were setting up a family that would soon be put down again, for dying Jacob had, by the spirit of prophecy, entailed the dominion upon Judah; that is the tribe that must rule as a lion. Benjamin only rovin as a wolf, Gen. 49. 10, 27. Those therefore that knew the scriptures, could not be very fond of doing that which they foresaw must, ere long, be undone again.

III. It is with much ado, and not without further inquiries of the Lord, that Saul is at length produced. When the lot fell upon him, every one expected that it should fall upon his native tribe, the Benjaminites; but, instead of that, none of his friends could find him, (v. 21.) he had hid himself among the stuff, v. 22. So little fond was he now of that power, which yet, when he was in possession of, he could not without the utmost indignation think of parting with. He withdrew, in hopes that, upon his not appearing, they would proceed to another choice, or thus to express his modesty: for, by what had already passed, he knew he must be the man. We may suppose he was at this time really averse to take upon him the government, 1. Because he was conscious to himself of unfitness for so great a trust. He had not been bred up to books, or arms, or courts, and feared he should be guilty of some fatal blunder. 2. Because it would expose him to the envy of his neighbours that were ill affected toward him. 3. Because he understood by what Samuel had said, that the people sinned in asking a king, and it was in anger that God granted their request. 4. Because the affairs of Israel were at this time in a bad posture: the Philistines were strong, the Ammonites threatening, and he must be bold indeed, that will set sail in a storm.

Let the experience of Samuel, that choice well made, which God himself made, would leave no way untreated to find him out, on whom the lot fell. They inquired of the Lord, either by the High Priest, and his breast-plate of judgment, or by Samuel, and his spirit of prophecy; and the Lord directed them where they should find him, hid among the carriages, and thence they fetched him, v. 23. Note, None will find a loss but last by their humility. Honesty, like the shadow, follows those that flees from it, but flees from those that pursue it.

IV. Samuel presents him to the people, and they accept of him. He needed not mount the bench or scaffold, to be seen; when he stood upon even ground with the rest, he topped them all, was seen above them all, for he was taller than any of them by head and shoulders, "Let the Lord judge;" and he was chosen of God: "For the Lord hath chosen for you, just such a one as you wished for; there is none like him among all the people, that has so much majesty in his countenance, and such a graceful stateliness in his mien; he is in the crowd like the cedar among the shrubs. Let your own eyes be judges, is he not a brave and gallant man?" The people hereupon signified their approbation of the choice, and their acceptance of him; they showed and said, Let the king live; that is, let him live, that he may be our prince in health and prosperity. Subjects were wont to testify their affection and allegiance to their prince, by their good wishes, and those turned (as our translation does this) into addresses to God, Ps. 72. 15. Prayer shall be made for him continually, Ps. 20. 1. Samuel had told them, they would soon be weary of their king, but in the mind they are now in, they will never be so; Let him live.

V. Samuel settles the original contract between them, and leaves it upon record, v. 25. He had before told them the manner of the king, (ch. 8. 11.) how he would abuse his power; now he tells them the manner of the kingdom, or rather, the law, or judgment, or constitution, of it; what power the prince might challenge, and the utmost of the property the subject might claim. He fixed the landmark between them that neither might encroach upon the other; let them rightly understand one another at first, and let the agreement remain in black and white, and that will preserve a good understanding between them ever after. The learned Bishop Patrick thinks he now repeated and registered what he had told them, (ch. 8. 11.) of the arbitrary power their kings would assume, that it might hereafter be a witness against them, that they had by the advice of the other; let them rightly understand one another at first, and let the agreement remain in black and white, and that will preserve a good understanding between them ever after.

VI. The convention was dissolved when the solemnity was over; Samuel sent every man to his house. Here were no votes cast, nor, for aught that appears, so much as a motion made, for the raising of money to support the dignity of their new elected king; if therefore he tells them, they must take what they do not think fit to give, (which it was necessary that he should have,) they must thank themselves. They went every man to his house, pleased with the name of a king over them, and Saul went home to Gibeah, to his father's house, not puffed up with the name of a kingdom under him. At Gibeah, he had no palace, no throne, no
I. 

1. There were some so faithful as to attend him, (v. 26.) a band of men whose hearts God had touched. Not the body of the people, but a small company, who, either because they were fond of their own choice of a king, or because they were pleased with God’s choice of this king, or because they had so much more sense than their neighbours, as to conclude, that if he were a king, he ought to be respected accordingly, went with him to Gibeah, as his life-guard. They were those whose hearts God had touched, in this instance, to do their duty. Note, Whatever good there is in us, or is done by us, at any time, it must be ascribed to the grace of God. If the heart bend at any time the right way, it is because he has touched it. One touch is enough, when it is divine. 2. There were others so spiteful as to affront him; children of Belial, men that would endanger no yoke, that would be pleased with nothing that either God or Samuel did; they despised him, (v. 27.) for the meanness of his tribe and family, the smallness of his estate, and privacy of his education; and they said, How shall this man save us? Yet they did not propose any man more likely; nor, whosoever they had, must their salvation come from the man, but from God. They would not join with their neighbours in testifying an affection to him and his government, by bringing him presents, or addressing him upon his accession to the crown. Perhaps those discontented spirits were most earnest for a king, and yet now that they had one, they quarrelled with him, because he was not altogether such a one as themselves. It was reason enough for them not to like him, because others did. Thus differently are men affected to our exalted Redeemer. God hath set him king upon the holy hill of Zion. There is a remnant that submit to him, rejoice in him, bring him presents, and follow him wherever he goes; and they are such whose hearts God has touched, whom he has made willing in the day of his power. But there are others who despise him, who ask, How shall this man save us? They are offended in him, stumble at his external meanness, and they will be broken by it. Lastly, Here is a new step towards the bad conduct of those that were disaffected to his government? He held his peace; margin, He was as though he had been deaf. He was so far from resenting it, that he seemed not to take notice of it. Which was an evidence both of his humility and modesty, and of the mercifulness of his disposition, and also, that he was well satisfied with his title to the crown; for those are commonly most jealous of their honour, and most revengeful of affronts, who would be revenged the most. Christ held his peace, when he was afflicted, for it was the day of his patience; but there is a day of recompense coming.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter, we have the first-fruits of Saul’s government, in the glorious rescue of Jabesh-gilead out of the hands of the Ammonites. Let not Israel thence infer that therefore they did well to ask a king; God could and would have saved them without one; but let them admire God’s goodness, that he did not reject them, when they went to him, and acknowledge his wisdom in the choice of the person, whom, if he did not find fit, yet he made fit, for the great trust he called him to, and enabled, in some measure, to merit the crown by his public service, before it was intrusted to him by the jealous probation. Here is, I. The great extremity to which the city of Jabesh-gilead was reduced, on the other side Jordan, by the Ammonites, v. 1-3. II. Saul’s great readiness to come to their relief, whereby he signalized himself, v. 4-10. III. The interview between Saul and the remnant of Jabesh-gilead, by which God signalized him, v. 11. IV. Saul’s tenderness, notwithstanding this, toward those that had opposed him, v. 12, 13. V. The public confirmation and recognition of his election to the government, v. 14, 15.

1. THEN Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee. 2. And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel. 3. And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days’ respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if there be no man to save us, we will come out to thee. 4. Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices, and wept.

The Ammonites were bad neighbours to those tribes of Israel that lay next them, though descend from the same stock, and, for that reason, dealt civilly with Israel. See Deut. 2. 19. Jephthah, in his time, had humbled them, but now the sin of Israel had put them into a capacity to make head again, and avenge that quarral. The city of Jabesh-gilead had been, some ages ago, destroyed by Israel’s sword of justice, for not appearing against the wickedness of Gibeah; (Judg. 21. 10.) and now being replenished again, probably, by the pietosity of the Ammonites, they are rescued from the commission of being destroyed by the Ammonites, as if some bad fate attended the place. Nahash, king of Ammon, (1 Chron. 19. 1.) laid siege to it. Now here, 1. The besieged beat a parley; (v. 1.) “Make a covenant with us, and we will surrender upon terms, and serve thee.” They had lost the virtues of Israelites, else they had not thus lost the value of Israelites, nor tamely yielded to serve an Ammonite, without one bold struggle for themselves. Had they not broken their covenant with God, and forsaken his service, they needed not thus to have courted a covenant with a Gentile nation, and offered themselves to serve them. 2. The besiegers offer them base and barbarous conditions; they will spare their lives, and take them to be their servants, upon condition that they shall put out their right eyes. v. 2. The Gileadites were content to part with their liberty and estates, for the ransom of their blood; and had the Ammonites taken them at their word, the matter had been so settled immediately, and the Gileadites would not have sent out for relief: but their abject concessions make the Ammonites more insolent in their demands, and they cannot be content to have them their servants, but, (1.) They must make them put out their right eyes, for so the thronging out of an eye would be. (2.) They must disable them for war, and render them
incapable, though not of labour, that would have been a loss to their lords, yet of bearing arms; for in those times they fought with shields in their left hands, which covered their left eye, so that a soldier without his eye was, in effect, blind. (3.) They must put a reproach upon Israel, as weak and cowardly, that would suffer the inhabitants of one of their chief cities be thus miserably used, and not offer to rescue them.

3. The besieged desire, and obtain seven days' time to consider of this proposal, v. 3. If Nahash had not granted them this reprieve, we may suppose the horror of the proposal would have made them desperate, and they would rather have died with their swords in their hands, than have surrendered to such merciless enemies, therefore Nahash, not imagining it possible that, in so short a time, they should have relief, and being very secure of the advantages he thought he had against them, in a bravado, gave them seven days, that the reproach upon Israel, for not rescuing them, might be the greater, and the triumphs the more illustrious. But there was a providence in it, that his security might be his infatuation and ruin.

4. Notice is sent of this to Gibeah. They said they would send messengers to all the coasts of Israel, (v. 3.) which made Nahash the more secure, for that, he thought, would be a work of time, and none would be forward to appear, if they had not one common head; and, perhaps, Nahash had not yet heard of the new elected king; but the messengers, either of their own accord, or by order from their masters, went straight to Gibeah, and not finding Saul within, told their news to the people, who fell a weeping upon it, v. 4. They would sooner lament their brethren's misery and danger, than think of helping them, shed their tears for them, than shed their blood. They wept, as despising to help the men of Jabesh-gilead, and fearing lest, if that frontier city were accorded to, or by order from their masters, went straight to Gibeah, and not finding Saul within, told their news to the people, who fell a weeping upon it, that, with a proverb which can be reddressed, I may help them, and that, if not, I may weep with them. Good magistrates are in pain, if their subjects be in tears.

5. And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What aileth the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh. 6. And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. 7. And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoevercometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out with one consent. 8. And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. 9. And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, To-morrow, by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and showed it to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad. 10. Therefore the men of Jabesh said, To-morrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you. 11. And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.

What is here related, turns very much to the honour of Saul, and shows the happy fruits of that other spirit with which he was endued. Observe here,

I. His humility. Though he was anointed king, and accepted by the people, yet he did not think it below him to know the state of his own flocks, but went himself to see them, and came in the evening, with his servants, after the herd out of the field, v. 5. This was an evidence that he was not puffed up with his advancement, as those are most apt to be, that are raised from a mean estate. Providence had not yet found him business as a king, he left all to Samuel; and therefore, rather than be idle, he would, for the present, apply himself to his country-business again; though the sons of Belial would, perhaps, despise him the more for it; such as were wicked and ungodly would themselves, would think never the worse of him. He had no revenues settled upon him for the support of his dignity, and he was desirous not to be bursomeshone to the people; for which reason, like Paul, he worked with his hands; for if he neglect his domestic affairs, how must he maintain himself and his family? Solomon gives it as a reason why he should look well to their herds, because the crown of the king was to every generation, Prov. 27. 23, 24. Saul's did not, he must therefore provide something surer.

II. His concern for his neighbours. When he perceived them in tears, he asked, "What aileth the people that they weep? Let me know, that, if it is a grievance which can be reddressed, I may help them, and that, if not, I may weep with them." Good magistrates are in pain, if their subjects be in tears.

III. His zeal for the safety and honour of Israel. When he heard of the insolence of the Ammonites, and the distress of a city, a mother in Israel, the Spirit of God came upon him, and put great thoughts into his mind, and his anger was kindled greatly, v. 6. He was angry at the insolence of the Ammonites, angry at the mean and sneaking spirit of the men of Jabesh-gilead, angry that they had not sent him notice sooner of the Ammonites' descent, and the extremity they were likely to be reduced to. He was angry to see his neighbours weeping, when it had been fitter for them to have prepared for war. It was a brave and generous fire that was now kindled in the breast of Saul, and such as became his high station.

V. The authority and power he exerted, upon this important occasion; he soon let Israel know, that, though he was retired to his privacy, he had a care for the public, and knew how to command men into the field, as well as how to drive cattle out of the field, v. 5, 7. He sent a summons to all the coasts of Israel, to show the extent of his power beyond his own tribe, even to all the tribes, and ordered all the military men forthwith to appear in arms at a general rendezvous in Bezek. Observe, 1. His modesty, in joining Samuel in commission with himself; he would not execute the office of a king, without a due regard to that of a prophet. 2. His mildness, in the penalty threaten ed against those that should disobey his orders. He hews a yoke of oxen in pieces, and sends the
pieces to the several cities of Israel, threatening, with respect to him who should decline the public service, not, "Thus shall it be done to him," but, "Thus shall it be done to his men," God had organized a great judgment, (Deut. 28. 31.) Thine ox shall be slain before tine eyes, and shalt not eat thereof. It was necessary that the command should be enforced with some penalty, but this was not near so severe as that which was affixed to the like order by the whole congregation, Judg. 21. 5. Saul wished to show that his government was more gentle than that which they had been under. The effect of this summons was, that the men, or trained bands, of the nation came out as one man, and the reason given is, because the fear of the Lord fell upon them. Saul did not affect to make them fear him, but they were influenced to observe his orders by the fear of God, and a regard to him who had made Saul their king, and them members one of another. Note, Religion and the fear of God will make men good subjects, good soldiers, and good friends to the public interests of their country. They that fear God, will make conscience of their duty to all men, particularly to their rulers.

V. His conduct and prudent proceedings in this great affair, v. 8. He numbered those that came unto him, that he might know his own strength, and how to distribute his forces in the best manner their numbers would allow. It is the honour of princes to know the numbers of their men, but it is more a regard to the king of kings. There is not any number of his armies, Job 25. 3. In this muster, it seems, Judah, though numbered by itself, made no great figure, for as it was one tribe of twelve, so it was but an eleventh part of the whole number, thirty thousand three hundred and thirty; though the rendezvous was at Bezek, in that tribe, they wanted either the numbers, or the courage, or the zeal, that that tribe used to be famous for; so low was it, just before the sepulture was brought into it in David.

VI. His faith and confidence, and (grounded on that) his courage and resolution, in this enterprise. It should seem that those very messengers which brought the tidings from Jabesh-gilead, Saul sent into the country to raise the militia, who would be sure to be faithful and careful in their own business, and them he now sends back to their distressed countrymen, with this information, that it was probable, Samuel encouraged him, "To morrow, by such an hour, before the enemy can pretend that the seven days are expired, you shall have deliverance, (v. 9.) Be you ready to do your part, and we will not fail to do our's. Do you calmly upon the besiegemen, while we surround them." Saul knew he had a just cause, a clear call, and God on his side, and his faith should be as his strength. (v. 10.) To this success, this was good news to the besieged Gileadites, whose right eyes had wept themselves dry for their calamities, and now began to fail with looking for relief, and to ache in expectation of the doom of the ensuing day, when they must look their last; the greater the exigence, the more welcome the deliverance. When they heard it, they were glad, relying on the assurances that were sent them. And the gileadites numbered their men, (v. 11.) The enemies of the nation had numbered them, that next day they would be ready to meet them, which the enemies understood as an intimation that they despaired of relief, and so were made the more secure by it; if they took not care, by sending out scouts, to rectify their own mistake, they must thank themselves if they were surprised, the besieged were under no obligation to give them notice of the help they were assured of.

VII. His industry and close application to this business. If he had been bred up to war, firm in his youth, and had led regiments as often as he had followed droves, he could not have gone about an affair of this nature more dexterously, or more diligently. When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon men, it will make them expert, even without experience. (Job 33. 26.) Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof. It was necessary that the command should be enforced with some penalty, but this was not near so severe as that which was affixed to the like order by the whole congregation, Judg. 21. 5. Saul wished to show that his government was more gentle than that which they had been under. The effect of this summons was, that the men, or trained bands, of the nation came out as one man, and the reason given is, because the fear of the Lord fell upon them. Saul did not affect to make them fear him, but they were influenced to observe his orders by the fear of God, and a regard to him who had made Saul their king, and them members one of another. Note, Religion and the fear of God will make men good subjects, good soldiers, and good friends to the public interests of their country. They that fear God, will make conscience of their duty to all men, particularly to their rulers.

Lastly, To complete his honour, God crowned all these virtues with success. Jabesh-gilead was rescued, and the Ammonites totally routed; he had now the day before him to complete his victory in; and so complete a victory it was, that they which remained, after a great slaughter, were scattered so that two of them were not left together, to encourage or help one another, v. 11. We may suppose that Saul was the more vigorous in this matter, 1. Because there was some alliance between the tribe of Benjamin and the city of Jabesh-gilead. That city had declined joining with the rest of the Israelites to destroy Gibeah, which was then punished as their crime, but, perhaps, was now remembered as their kindness, when Saul of Gibeah came with so much readiness and resolution to relieve Jabesh-gilead. Yet that was not all; two thirds of the Benjamites that then remained, were provided with wives from that city, (Judges 21. 14.) so that most of the mothers of Benjamin were daughters of Jabesh-gilead, for which city Saul, passing a memorable day, was not a particular kindness; and we find they returned his kindness, ch. 31. 11. 12. 2. Because it was the Ammonites' invasion that induced the people to desire a king, (so Samuel says, ch. 12. 12.) so that if he had not done his part in this expedition, he had disappointed their expectations, and had for ever forfeited their respect.

12. And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death. 13. And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel. 14. Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and re new the kingdom there. 15. And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

We have here the improvement of that glorious
victory which Saul had obtained, nor the improvement of it abroad, (though we take it for granted that the men of Jabesh-gilead, having so narrowly saved their right eyes, would with them now discern the opportunity they had of avenging themselves upon these cruel enemies, and disabling them ever to straiten them in like manner again; now shall they be avenged on the Ammonites, for their right eyes condemned, as Samson on the Philistines, for his two eyes put out, Judg. 16. 28.) (but the account here given, is of the improvement of it at home.)

I. The people took this occasion to show their jealousy of the honour of Saul, and their resentment of the indignities done him. Samuel, it seems, was present, if not in the action, (it was too far forwards to march,) yet to warn them when the returned victorious; and to him as judge, the motion was made, (for they knew Saul would not be judge in his own cause,) that the sons of Belial that would not have him to reign over them, should be brought forth and slain, v. 12. Saul's good fortune (as foolish men commonly call it) went further with them to confirm his title, than either his choice by lot or Samuel's anointing of him. They had not courage thus to move for the persecution of those that opposed him, when he himself looked mean, but now that his victory made him look great, now nothing will serve but they must be put to death.

II. Saul took this occasion to give further proofs of his clemency, for, without waiting for Samuel's answer, he himself quashed the motion; (v. 13.) *There shall not a man be put to death this day, no, not those men, those bad men, that had abused him, and therein reflected on God himself: 1. Because it was a day of joy and triumph; *To day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel; and since God has been so good to us all, let us not be harsh one to another. Now that God has made the heart of Israel in general so glad, let us not make sad the hearts of any particular Israelites.* 2. Because he hoped they were by this day's work brought to a temper, were now convinced that this man, under God, could save them: now honoured him whom before they had despised; and, if they be but reclaimed, he is secured from receiving any disturbance by them, and therefore his point is gained; if an enemy be made a friend, that is more to our advantage than to have him slain. And all good princes consider that their power is for edification, not destruction.

III. Samuel took this occasion to call the people together before the Lord in Gilgal, v. 14, 15. 1. That they might publicly give God thanks for their late victory. There they rejoiced greatly, and, that God might have the praise of that which they had the comfort of, they sacrificed to him, as the Giver of all their successes, sacrifices of peace-offerings. 2. That they might confirm Saul in the government. It is only then that it had been yet done, that he might not retire again to the obscurity Samuel would have the kingdom renewed; he would renew his resignation, and the people should renew their approbation, and so, in concurrence with, or rather in attendance upon, the divine nomination, they made Saul king, making it their own act and deed to submit to him.

CHAP. XII.

We left the general assembly of the states together, in the close of the foregoing chapter; in this chapter, we have Saul all alone with himself, when he resigned the government into the hands of Saul. In which, I. He clears himself from all suspicion or imputation of mismanagement, while the administration was in his hands, v. 1. 6. II. He reminds them of the great things God had done for them, and for their fathers, v. 6. 13. III. He sets before them good and evil, the blessings and the curse, v. 14, 15. IV. He awakens them to regard what he said to them, by calling to God for thunder, v. 16. 19. V. He encourages them with hope that all would be well, v. 20. 25. This is his farewell sermon to that august assembly, and Saul's coronation sermon.

1. AND Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. 2. And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and gray-headed; and, behold, my sons are with you; and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. 3. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed; whose ox have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. 4. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand. 5. And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.

Here,

I. Samuel gives them a short account of the late revolution, and of the present posture of their government, by way of preface to what he had further to say to them, v. 1, 2. 1. For his own part, he had spent his days in their service; he began to times to be useful among them, and had continued long so. "I have walked before you, as a guide to direct you, as a shepherd that leads his flock, (Ps. 80. 1.) from my childhood unto this day." Even as he was illuminated with the light of prophecy in his early days, he began to be a burning and shining light to Israel:) "and now my best days are done; I am old and gray-headed," therefore they were the more unkind to cast him off; yet therefore he was the more willing to resign, finding the weight of government heavy upon his stooping shoulders. Old, and therefore the more able to advise them; and the more observant they should be of what he said, for days shall speak, and the multitude of years shall teach wisdom; and there is a particular reverence owing to the aged, especially aged magistrates, and aged ministers. "Old, and therefore not likely to live long; perhaps, may never have an opportunity of speaking to you again, and therefore take all that I have to say on that account." As for his sons: "Behold," (says he,) "they are with you; you may, if you please, call them to an account for anything they have done amiss. They are present with you, and have not, upon this revolution, run their country; they are upon a level with you, subjects to the new king as well as you; if you can prove them guilty of any wrong, you may prosecute them now by a due course of law, punish them, and oblige them to make restitution." 3. As for their new king, Samuel had gratified them in setting him over them; (v. 1.) "I have hearkened to your voice, all that ye said to me, being desirous to please you, if it were possible, and make you easy, though to the discarding of myself and family; and now, will you hearken to me, and take my advice?" The
change was now perfected; 'Behold, the king walketh before you;' (v. 2.) he appears in public, ready to serve you in public business. Now that you have made yourselves like the nations in your civil government, and have cast off the divine administration in that, now take heed lest you make yourselves like the nations in religion, and cast off the worship of the living God.

II. He solemnly appeals to them concerning his own integrity in the administration of the government; (v. 3.) 'Witness against me, whose ox have I taken?' By this he intended, 1. To convince them of the injury they had done him, in setting him aside, when they had nothing amiss to charge him with; his government had no fault, but that it was too costly, too easy, too gentle. Also, the injury they did to themselves, in turning off one that did not so much as take an ox or an ass from them, to put themselves under the power of one that would take from them their fields and vineyards, nay, and their very sons and daughters; (ch. 8. 11.) so unlike would the manner of the king he is to his manners. 2. To preserve his own reputation: they that heard of Samuel's being rejected as he was, would be ready to suspect, that certainly he had done some thing not for his heart's liking, and to plead this as a ground of their being well treated; so that it was necessary for him to make this challenge, that it might appear upon record, that it was not for any iniquity in his hands that he was laid aside, but to gratify the humour of a giddy people, who owned they could not have a better man to rule them, only they desired a bigger man. There is a just debt which every man owes to his own good name, especially men in public stations, which is, to guard against unjust suspicions and suspicions, that we may finish our course with honour, as well as joy.

As he designed hereby to leave a good name behind him, so he designed to leave his successor a good example before him; let him write after his copy, and he will write fair. 4. Samuel designed, in the close of his discourse, to reprove the people, and therefore he begins with a vindication of himself; for he that will, with confidence, tell another of his sin, must see to it, that he himself be clear. Now observe, (1.) What it is that Samuel here acquires himself from. [1.] He had never, under any pretense whatsoever, taken that which was not his own, ox nor ass; had never distracted their cattle for tribute, fines, or forfeitures, nor used their service without paying for it. [2.] He had never defrauded those with whom he dealt, nor oppressed those that were under his power. [3.] He had never taken bribes to pervert justice, nor was ever biased by favour or affection, to give judgment in a cause against his conscience. (2.) How he appeals to those that had slighted him concerning it; 'Here I am; witness against me, if you have any thing to lay to my charge; do it now before the Lord, and the king, the proper judges.' He puts honour upon Saul, by owning himself accountable to him, if he had done any thing wrong. [4.] Upon this appeal, he is honourably acquitted; he did not expect that they should do him honour at parting, though he well deserved it, and therefore mentioned not any of the good services he had done for them, for which they ought to have applauded him, and returned him the thanks of the house; all he desired was, that they should do him justice, and that they did, (v. 4.) readily owning, 1. That he had not committed any thing against his government, nor used his power to their wrong. 2. That he had not made it expensive to them; 'Neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand, for the support of thy dignity.' Like Nehemiah, he did not require the bread of the governor; (Neh. 5. 18.) had not only been righteous, but generous; had coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel, Acts 20. 33. 3. This honourable testimony borne to Samuel's integrity, is left upon record to his honour; (v. 5.) 'The Lord is Witness, who searcheth the heart, and his anointed is witness, who trieth overt acts; said the people agree to it, He is witness.' Note, The testimony of our neighbours, and especially the testimony of our own consciences for us, that we did in our places lived honestly, will be our comfort, under the slights and contempt that are put upon us. Demetrius is a happy man, that has a good report of all men, and of the truth itself; 3 John 12.

6. And Samuel said unto the people, 'It is the Lord that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers out of the land of Egypt.' 7. Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord of all the righteous acts of the Lord, which he did to you and to your fathers. 8. When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place. 9. And when they forgot the Lord their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them. 10. And they cried unto the Lord, and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of your enemies, and we will serve thee.' 11. And the Lord sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe. 12. And when ye saw that Nahash, the king of the children of Ammon, came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us; when the Lord your God was your king. 13. Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired! and, behold, the Lord hath set a king over you. 14. If ye will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you, continue following the Lord your God: 15. But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers.

Samuel, having sufficiently secured his own reputation, instead of upbraiding the people upon it with their unkindness to him, sets himself to instruct them, and keep them in the way of their duty, and then the change of the government would be the less damage to them. 1. He reminds them of the great goodness of God to them, and to their fathers; gives them an abstraction of the history of their nation, that, by the consider
ation of the great things God had done for them, they might be for ever engaged to love him and serve him. 4. “Come,” says he, v. 7. “Stand still, in token of reverence, when God is speaking to you; stand still in token of attention and compen- 
ess of mind, and give me leave to reason with you.” Religion has reason on its side, Isa. 1. 18. The way of love is the way of reason. It is to reason with people; not only to exhort and direct, but to persuade; to convince men’s judgments, and so to gain their wills and affections. Let reason rule men, and they will be good. He reasons of the righteous acts of the Lord; that is, “both the benefits he has bestowed upon you, in performance of his promises, and the punish- 
ments he has inflicted on you for your sins.” His favours are called his righteous acts, (Judg. 5. 11.) because he gives them just to his own honour. He not only puts them in mind of what God had done for them in their days, but of what he had done of old, in the days of their fathers, because the present age had the benefit of God’s former favours. We may suppose that his discourse was much larger than as here related.

1. He reminds them of their deliverance out of Egypt; into that house of bondage Jacob and his father and his brethren. When they were oppressed, they cried unto God, with Moses and Aaron, from mean beginnings, to be their deliverers, and the founders of their state and settlement in Canaan, v. 6, 8.

2. He reminds them of the miseries and calamities which their fathers brought themselves into, by forgetting God, and serving other gods; (v. 9.) they enslaved themselves, for they were sold as crim- 
inals and captives into the hands of oppressors; they exposed themselves to the desolation of war, their neighbours fought against them.

3. He reminds them of their fathers’ repentance and humiliation before God for their idolatries. They said, We have sinned, v. 10. Let not them imitate the sins of their fathers, for, what they had done amiss they had many a time wished undone again; in the day of their distress they had sought unto God, and had promised to serve him, let their children therefore reckon that God at all times, which they found good in bad times.

4. He reminds them of the glorious deliverances God had wrought for them, the victories he had blessed them with, and their happy settlements, many a time, after days of trouble and distress, v. 11. He specifies some of their judges. Gideon and Jephthah; great conquerors in their time; among the rest he mentions Judges, whom we read not of any where else: he might be some eminent person, that was instrumental of salvation to them, though not recorded in the book of Judges; such a one as Shamar, of whom it is said, that he delivered Israel, but not that he judged them, Judg. 3. 31. Per- 
haps, this Bedan guarded and delivered them on one side, at the same time when some other of the judges appeared and acted for them on the other side. Some think it was the same with Jair, so the learned Mr. Poole; others, the same as with Samson, whom was Ben Dan, a son of Dan, of that tribe, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, Be Dan, in Dan, in the camp of Dan. Samuel mentions himself, not to his own praise, but to the honour of God, who had made him an instrument of subduing the Philis- 
tines.

But last, he puts them in mind of God’s late fav-our to the present generation, in gratifying them with a king, when they would prescribe to God, such a one, to save them out of the hand of Nahash king of Ammon, v. 12, 13. Now it appears that that was the immediate occasion of their desiring a king: Nahash threatened them: they moved Samuel to nominate a general: he told them God was Com-

mander-in-chief in all their wars, and they needed no other; what was wanting in them, should be made up by his power; The Lord is your King; but they insisted on it, Nay, but a king shall reign over us. “And now,” said he, “you have a king; a king of your own asking, let that be spoken to your shame; but a king of God’s making, let that be spoken to his honour, and the glory of his grace.” God did not set them off then, when they, in ef- fect, cast him off.

II. He shows them that they were now upon their good behaviour, they and their king; let them not think that they had now cut themselves off from all dependence upon God, and that now, having a king of their own, the making of their own fortunes (as men foolishly call it) was in their own hands; no, still their judgment must proceed from the Lord. He tells them plainly,

1. That their obedience to God would certainly be their happiness; (v. 14.) if they would not revolt from God to idols, nor rebel against him, by break- ing his commandments, but would persevere in their allegiance to him, would fear his wrath, serve his interests, and obey his will, then they and their king should certainly be happy: but observe how the promise is expressed, Then ye shall con- 
tinue, following the Lord; that is, (i.) “Ye shall continue in the way of your duty, which will be your honour and comfort.” Note, To those that are sincere in their religion, God will give grace to persevere in it, those that follow God faithfully, God will enable to continue following him. And observe, Following God is a work that is its own wages. It is the matter of a promise as well as of a precept. (2.) “Ye shall continue under the divine guidance and protection. Ye shall be after the Lord, so it is in the original; that is, “He will go before you to lead and prosper you, and make your way plain; The Lord is with you, while you are with him.”

2. That their disobedience would as certainly be their ruin; (v. 15.) “If ye rebel, think not that your having a king will secure you against God’s judgments, and that now having in this instance made yourselves more mighty than God, you may sell as cheap a rate as they can. No, the hand of the Lord will be against you, as it was against your fathers when they offended him, in the days of the Judges.” We mistake if we think that we can evade God’s justice by shaking off his dominion. If God shall not rule us, yet he will judge us.

16. Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the Lord will do before your eyes. 17. Is it not wheat-harvest to- day? I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king. 18. So Samuel called unto the Lord; and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. 19. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king. 20. And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness; yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve him with all your heart; 21. And turn ye not aside: for
then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain:"
22. For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people.
23. Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: 24. Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done, for you. 25. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

Two things Samuel here aims at:
I. To convince the people of their sin in desiring a king. They were now rejoicing before God, in and with their king, (ch. 11. 15,) and offering to God the sacrifices of praise, which they hoped God would accept of; and this perhaps made them think that there was no harm in their asking a king, but really they had done well in it; therefore Samuel here, in a second person,isNaN(1) and expressed to the Lord his displeasure against them, in the sight of the Lord. Note, Though we meet with prosperity and success in a way of sin, yet we must not therefore think the more favourably of it. They have a king, and if they conduct themselves well, their king may be a very great blessing to them, and yet Samuel shall have them perceive and see that their wickedness is great in asking a king. We must never think well of any thing that God disapproves by his word, though in his providence he seems to smile upon it.

Observe, 1. The expressions of God's displeasure against them for asking a king. At Samuel's word, God sent prodigious thunder and rain upon them, at a season of the year when, in that country, the like was never seen or known before, v. 16. 18. Thunder and rain have natural causes, and sometimes terrible effects. But Samuel made it appear that this was designed by the almighty power of God, on purpose to convince them that they had done very wickedly in asking a king, not only by its coming in an unusual time, in wheat harvest, and this on a fair clear day, when there appeared not to the eye any signs of a storm, but by his giving notice of it before. Had there happened to be thunder and rain at the time when he was speaking to them, he might have improved it for their awakening and conviction, as we may in a like case; but to make it no less than a miracle, before it came, (1.) He spoke to them of it; (v. 16, 17.) Stand and see this great thing. He had bidden them stand and hear, (v. 7.) but because he did not see that his reasoning with them affected them, (so stupid were they and unthinking,) now he bids them stand and see. If what he said in a still small voice did not reach their hearts, nor do any thing which he should attempt to make it reach, it shall be God speaking to them in dreadful claps of thunder, and the great right of his strength. He appealed to this as a sign, "I will call upon the Lord, he shall send thunder; shall send it just now, to confirm the word of his servant, and to make you see that I said true, when I told you that God was angry with you for asking a king." And the event proved him a true prophet of the sign, and wonder came to pass. (2.) He spake to God for it. Samuel called unto the Lord, and, in answer to his prayer, even while he was yet speaking, the Lord sent thunder and rain. By this Samuel made it appear, not only what a powerful influence God has upon this earth, that he could, of a sudden, when natural causes did not work towards it, produce this dreadful rain and thunder, and bring them out of his treasures, (Ps. 135. 7,) but also what a powerful interest he had in heaven, that God would thus hearken to the voice of a man, (Josh. 10. 14,) and answer him in the secret place of thunder, Ps. 81. 7. Samuel, that son of prayer, was still famous for success in prayer.

Now by this extraordinary thunder and rain sent on this occasion, [1.] God testified his displeasure against them in the same way in which he had formerly testified it, and at the prayer of Samuel too, against the Philistines; (ch. 7. 10.) The Lord discomfited them with a great thunder. Now that Israel rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit, he turned to be their Enemy, and fought against them with the same weapons which, not long before, had been employed against their adversaries, Isa. 63. 10. [2.] He showed them their folly in desiring a king, which would greatly deprive them of their own strength, inasmuch as they were more taken away from the arm of God, or from the power of prayer. Could their king thunder with a voice like God? Job 40. 9. Could their prince command such forces as the prophet could by his prayers? [3.] He intimated to them, that how sincere and prosperous soever their condition seemed to be now that they had a king, like the weather in wheat-harvest, yet if God should wish, he could soon change the face of the heavens, and persecute them with his tempest, as the psalmist speaks.

2. The impressions which this made upon the people. It startled them very much, as well it might. (1.) They greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. Though when they had a king, they were ready to think they must fear him only, God made them know that he is greatly to be feared, and his prophets far more so. Not only did they fear in their king, God taught them to rejoice with trembling. (2.) They own their sin and folly in desiring a king; (v. 19.) We have added to all our sins this evil. Some people will not be brought to a sight of their sins by any gentler methods than storms and thunders. Samuel did not extort this confession from them till the matter was settled and the king confirmed, lest it should look as if he designed by it rather to establish himself in the government, than to bring them to repentance. Now that they were flattering themselves in their own eyes, their iniquity was found to be hateful, Ps. 36. 2. (3.) They earnestly begged Samuel's prayers; (v. 19.) Pray for thy servants, that we die not. They were apprehensive of their danger from the wrath of God, and could not expect that he should hear their prayers for themselves, and therefore they entreated Samuel to pray for them. Now they see their need of him whom a while ago they slighted. Thus many that will not have Christ to reign over them, would yet be glad to have him to intercede for them, to turn away the wrath of God. And the time may come, when those that have despised and ridiculed praying people, will value their prayers, and desire a share in them. "Pray" (said they) "to the Lord thy God; we know not how to call him ours, but thou hast any interest in him, improve it for us."
storm. Fear not; though God will frown upon his people, yet he will not forsake them, (v. 22.) for his great name’s sake; do not you forsake him then.” Every transgression in the covenant, though it displease the Lord, yet does not throw us out of covenant, and therefore God’s just rebukes must not drive us from our hopes and mercies. The fixedness of God’s choice is owing to the freeness of it; we may therefore hope he will not forsake his people, because it has pleased him to make them his people. Had he chosen them for their good merits, we might fear he would cast them off for their bad merits: but, choosing them for his name’s sake, for his name’s sake he will not leave them.

2. He is阵 against idolatry; “Turn not aside from God and the covenant which your fathers made,” v. 20. and again, v. 21. “for if ye turn aside from God, whatever ye turn aside to, you will find it is a vain thing, that can never answer your expectations, but will certainly deceive you if you trust to it; it is a broken reed, a broken cistern.” Idols are so, they are vanity and a lie: whatever we make a god of, we shall find it so. Creatures in their own place are good things, but when put in God’s place, they are vain things. Idols could not profit those that sought to them in their wants, nor deliver those that sought to them in their straits, for they were vain, and not what they pretended to be. An idol is nothing in the world, 1 Cor. 8. 4.

3. He comforts them with an assurance that he would continue his care and concern for them, v. 23. They desired him to pray for them; (v. 19.) he might have said, “Go to Saul and put him to pray for you, the king that you have put in my room;” but so far is he from upbarring them with their disrespect to him, that he promises them much more than they asked. (1.) They asked it of him as a favour; he promised it as a duty, and startles at the thought of neglecting it. Pray for you! says he, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in not doing it. Note, It is a sin against God, not to pray for the Israel of God, especially for those of them that are under our charge: and good men are afraid of the guilt of omissions. (2.) They asked him to pray for them at this time, and upon this occasion, but he promises to continue his prayers for them, and not to cease as long as he lived. Our rule is, to pray without ceasing; we sin if we restrain prayer in general, and in particular if we cease praying for the church. (3.) They asked him only to pray for them; but he promises to do more for them, not only to pray for them, but to teach them; though they were not willing to be under his government as a judge, he would not therefore deny them his instructions as a prophet. And they may be sure he would teach them no other than the good and the right way: the right way is certainly the good way; the way of duty, the way of pleasure and profit.

4. He concludes with an earnest exhortation to practical religion and serious godliness, v. 24, 25. The great duty here pressed upon us, is, to fear the Lord. He had said, (v. 20.) “Fear not with a slavish fear,” but here, “Fear the Lord with a filial fear. As the fruit and evidence of this, serve him in the duties of religious worship, and of a godly conversation; in truth and sincerity, and not in show and profession only, but with your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” And two things he urges by way of motive: (1.) That they were bound in gratitude to serve God, considering what great things he had done for them, to engage them for ever to his service. (2.) That they were bound in interest to serve him, considering what great things he would do against them, if they should still do wickedly; “Ye shall be destroyed by the judgments of God, both ye and your king that you are so proud of, and expect so much from; and that will be a blessing to you if you keep in with God.” Thus, as a faithful watchman, he gave them warning, and so delivered his own soul.

CHAP. XIII.

They that desired a king like all the nations, fancied that, when they had one, they should look very great and considerable; but in this chapter we find it proved otherwise. While Samuel was joined in composition with Saul, things went well; (ch. 11. 7.) but now that Saul began to reign alone, all went to decay, and Samuel’s words began to be fulfilled. Ye shall be consumed, both you and your king; for never was the state of Israel further gone in a consumption than in this chapter. 1. Saul appears here a very silly prince. 1. Infatuated in his councils, v. 1-3. 2. Invaded by his neighbours, v. 4-5. 3. Deserted by his soldiers, v. 6-7. 4. Disordered in his own spirit, and sacrificing in confusion, v. 8-10. 5. Chidden by Samuel, v. 11-13. 6. Rejected of God from being a king, v. 14. 7. The people appear here a very miserable people; 1. Diseartened and dispersed, v. 6, 7. 2. Diminished, v. 15, 16. 3. Plundered, v. 17, 18. 4. Disarmed, v. 19, 23. This they got by casting off God’s government, and making themselves like the nations; all their glory departed from them.

1. SAUL reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, 2. Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereas two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent. 3. And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba; and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear. 4. And all Israel heard say, that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal. 5. And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea-shore in multitude: and they came up and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven. 6. When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. 7. And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal; and all the people followed him trembling.

We are not told wherein it was that the people of Israel offended God, so as to forfeit his presence, and turn his hand against them, as Samuel had threatened; (ch. 12. 15.) but doubtless they left God, else he had not left them, as here it appears he did; for,

1. Saul was very weak and impolitic, and did not order his affairs with discretion. Saul was the son of one year, so the first words are in the original a phrase which we make to signify the date of his
I.

And Ii:12. wish and now was him, reach, kept the had nience. ed many; honorary people of considerable; make rant tive like birth:

1. have which the of one 3. vast the of the is, the is, and that which, the word

2. chose him a band of three thousand men, of which he himself commanded two thousand, and his son Jonathan one thousand; (v. 2.) the rest of the people he dismissed to their tents. If he intended these only for the guard of his person, and his honor ary attendants, it was impolitic to have so many; for a standing army, in apprehension of danger from the Philistines, it was no less impolitic to have so few; and, perhaps, the confidence he put in this select number, and his disbarring the rest of that brave army with which he lately beat the Ammonites, (ch. 11. 8, 11.) was looked upon as an affront to the Philistines, and gave them reason to think, he had too little reason he had so few at his call when he had occasion for them. The prince that relies on a particular party, weakens his own interest in the whole community.

2. He ordered his son Jonathan to surprise and destroy the garrison of the Philistines that lay near him in Geba, v. 3. I wish there were no ground for supposing it to have been a violation or infrac tion of some articles with the Philistines, and that we are done treacherously and perfidiously; the reason why I suspect it, is, because it is said, for doing it, Israel was had in abomination, or, as the word is, did stink with the Philistines, (v. 4.) as men void of common honesty, and whose word could not be relied on. If it was so, we will lay the blame, not on Jonathan who did it, but on Saul, his prince and father, who ordered him to do it, and, perhaps, kept him in ignorance of the truth of the matter. Nothing makes the name of Israel so odious to them that are without, so much as the fraud and dishonesty of those that are called by that worthy name. If professors of religion cheat and over reach, break their word, and betray their trust, religion suffers by it, and is had in abomination with the Philistines. Whom may one trust, if not an Israelite? one that, it is expected, should be without 

3. When he had thus exasperated the Philistines, then he began to raise forces, which, if he had act ed wisely, he would have done before. When the Philistines had a vast army ready to pour in upon him, to avenge the wrong he had done them, then was he blowing the trumpet through the land, among a careless, if not a disaffected people, say ing, Lay he heart as much as might fit came to Saul to Gilgal, v. 4. But now the generality, we may suppose, drew back, either in dislike of Saul's politics, or in dread of the Philistines' power, who, if he had summoned them sooner, would have been as ready at his beck as they were when he marched against the Ammonites. We often find that after-wit would have done much better before, and have prevented much incon venience

II. Never did the Philistines appear in such a formidable body as they did now, upon this provocation which Saul gave them; we may suppose they had great assistance from their allies, for, (v. 5.) beside six thousand horse, which, in those times, when horses were not so much used in war as they now are, was a great body, they had an incredible number of chariots, thirty thousand in all. Most of them, we may suppose, were carriages for the bag and baggage of so vast an army, not chariots of war. But their foot was innumerable as the sand of the sea-shore; so jealous were they for the honour of their nation, and so much enraged at the baseness of the Israelites in destroying their garrison. If Saul had had his son Jonathan with him, he would have given the Philistines this provocation, he and his prince might the better have borne this threatening trouble which they had now brought on themselves by their own folly.

III. Never were the people of Israel so faint hearted, so sneaking, so very cowardly, as they were now. Some considerable numbers, it may be come to Saul to Gilgal, but, hearing of the Philistines' numbers and preparations, their spirits sank within them; some think, because they did not find Samuel there with Saul. They that, a while age, were weary of him, and wished for a king, now had small joy of their king, unless they could see him under Samuel's direction. Sooner or later, men will be made to see that God and his prophets are their best friends. Now that they saw the Philistines making war upon them, and Samuel not coming to help them, they know not what to do; men's hearts failed them for fear. And, 1. Some abscended. Rather than run upon death among the Philistines, they buried themselves alive in caves and thickets, v. 6. See what work sin makes; it exposes men to perils, and then robs them of their courage, and dissipates them. A single person, by faith, can say, I will not be afraid of ten thousand; (Ps. s. 6.) but here, thousands of degenerate Israel- cians trembled at the approach of a great crowd of Philistines. Guilt makes men cowards. 2. Others fled, v. 7. They went over Jordan to the land of Gilead, as far as they could from the danger, and to a place where they had lately been victorious over the Ammonites: where they had triumphed, they had hoped to be sheltered. 3. These that stayed with Saul, followed him trembling, expecting no other than to be cut off, and having their hands and hearts very much weakened by the desertion of so many of their troops. And, perhaps, Saul himself, though he had so much honour as to stand his ground, yet had no courage to spare, wherewith to inspire his trembling soldiers.

8. And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. 9. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt-offering to me, and peace-offerings. And he offered the burnt-offering. 10. And it came to pass, that, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt-offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. 11. And Saul said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; 12. Therefore, said I, the Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt-offering. 13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done
foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee; for now would the Lord have established by kingdom upon Israel for ever. 14. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.

Here is,

I. Saul's offence in offering sacrifice before Samuel came. Samuel, when he anointed him, had ordered him to tarry for him seven days in Gilgal, promising that, at the end of those days, he would be sure to come to him, and both offer sacrifices for him, and direct him what he should do. This we had, ch. 10. 8. Perhaps that order, though insertned there, was given him afterward; or was given him as a general rule to be observed in every public congress at Gilgal; or, as is most probable, though not mentioned again, was lately repeated with reference to this particular occasion; for, it is plain that Samuel himself understood it as obliging him from God now to stay till Samuel came, else he would not have made so many excuses as he did, for not staying, v. 11. This order Saul broke; he stayed till the seventh day; yet had not part of his commandment been executed before Samuel died. Perhaps, he began to reproach Samuel as false to his word, careless of his country, and disrespectful to his prince; and thought it more fit that Samuel should wait for him, than he for Samuel. However, 1. He presumed to offer sacrifice without Samuel, and nothing appears to the contrary but that he did it himself, though he was neither priest nor prophet, as if, because he was a king, he might do as he pleased, without any authority or purpose of his own, which King Uzziah paid dear for, 2 Chron. 26. 16, &c. 2. He determined to engage the Philistines without Samuel's directions, though he had promised to show him what he should do. So self-sufficient Saul was, that he thought it not worth while to stay for a prophet of the Lord, either to pray for him, or advise him.

This was Saul's offence, and that which aggraved it, was, (1.) That, for aught that appears, he did not send any messenger to Samuel, to know his mind, to represent the case to him, and to receive fresh directions from him, though he had enough about him that were swift enough of foot at this time. (2.) That when Samuel came, he rather seemed to boast of what he had done, than to repent of it; for he went forth to salute him, as his brother sacrificer, and seemed pleased with the opposition he made to Samuel. God's hand was against him, for Samuel could come according to his word, before the seven days were expired. Thus the offerers of the latter days think the promise of Christ's coming is broken, because he does not come in their time, though it is certain he will come at the set time. (4.) That when he was charged with disobedience, he justified himself in what he had done, and gave no sign at all of repentance for it. It is not sinning that ruins men, but sinning and not repenting; falling and not getting up again. See what excuses he made, v. 11, 12. He would have this act of disobedience pass, [1.] For an instance of his prudence; the people were most of them scattered from him, and he had no other way than this, to keep those with him that remained, and to avoid any thing hurtful to himself. If Samuel neglected the public concerns, he would not. [2.] For an instance of his piety; he would be thought very devout, and in great care not to engage the Philistines till he had by prayer and sacrifice engaged God on his side. "The Philistines," said he, "will come down upon me, before I have made my supplication to the Lord, and then I am undone. What is to be done before I have said my prayers!" Thus he covered his disobedience to God's command, with a pretence of concern for God's favour. Hypocrites lay a great stress upon the external performances of religion, thinking thereby to excuse their neglect of the weightier matters of the law. And yet, lastly, He owns it went against his conscience to do it; I forced myself, and offered a burnt-offering; perhaps boasting that he had broken through his convictions, and got the better of them; or, at least, thinking this exculpated his fault, that he knew he should not have done as he did, but did it with reluctance. Foolish man! to think that God would be well pleased with sacrifices offered in direct opposition both to his general and particular command.

II. The sentence passed upon Saul for this offence: Samuel found him standing by his burnt-offering and his meat offering. He was sent to him with heavy tidings, and let him know that the sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord, much more when he brings it, as Saul did, with a wicked mind. 1. He shows him the aggravations of his crime; and says to this king, Thou art wicked; which it is not for any but a prophet of the Lord to say, Job 34. 18. He charges him with being an enemy to himself and his interest. Thou hast broken the covenant of the Lord, and wilt not serve him any more, or make the sacrifice of the Lord his will have thy own will and way." The sentence is, in effect, the same with Mene tekel. Only now there seems room left for Saul's repentance, upon which this sentence should have been reversed; but, upon the next act of disobedience, it was made irreversible, ch. 15. 29. And now, better a thousand times he had continued in obscurity tending his asses, than to be enthroned and so soon deterioared.

But was not this, hard, to pass so severe a sentence upon him and his house for a single error, and that seemed so small, and in excuse for which he had so much to say? No, The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and does no man any wrong; will be justifed when he speaks, and clear when he judges. By this, (1.) He shows that there is no sin little, because no little God to sin against; but that every sin, is a forrenor, on the heavenly kingdom, for which he stood fast. (2.) He shows, that disobedience to an express command, though in a small matter, is a great provocation; as in the case of our first parents. (3.) He warns us to take heed of our spirits; for that which to men may seem but a small offence, yet to him that knows from what principle, and with what disposition of mind it is done, may appear a heinous crime. (4.) God, in rejecting Saul for an error seemingly little, sets off, as by a Its, the lustre of his mercy, in forgiving such great sins as those of David, Manasseh, and others. (5.) We
are taught hereby, how necessary it is that we wait on our God continually. Saul lost his kingdom for want of two or three hours' patience.

15. And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six hundred men. 16. And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with him, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. 17. And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way that leadeth to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual: 18. And another company turned the way to Bethhoron; and another company turned to the way of the border that looketh to the valley of Zeboim, toward the wilderness. 19. Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel; (for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears;) 20. But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock. 21. Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulter's, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads. 22. So it came to pass, in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul, and with Jonathan his son, was there found. 23. And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.

Here is, 1. Samuel gone in displeasure. Saul has set up for himself, and now he is left to himself; Samuel gat him from Gilgal, (v. 15.) and it does not appear that he either prayed with him, or directed him. Yet, in going up to Gibeah of Benjamin, which was Saul's city, he intimated that he had not quite abandoned him, but waited there to do him a kindness another time. Or, he went to the college of the prophets, there to pray for Saul, when he did not think fit to pray with him. 2. Saul goes after him to Gibeah, and there musters his army, and finds his whole number to be but six hundred men, v. 13, 16. Thus were they for their sin diminished and brought low. The Philistines ravaged the country, and put all the adjacent parts under contribution. The body of their army, or standing camp, as it is called in the margin, (v. 23.) lay in an advantageous pass at Michmash, but thence they sent out three several parties or detachments that took several ways, to plunder the country, and bring in provisions for the army, v. 17, 18. By these the land of Israel was both terrified and impoverished, and the Philistines animated and enriched. This was the sin of Israel brought upon them. Isa. 42. 24. 4. The Israelites that took the field with Saul were unarmed, had only slings and clubs, but not a sword or spear among them all, except what Saul and Jonathan themselves had, v. 19-22. See

here, (1.) How politic the Philistines were, when they had power in their hands, and did what they pleased in Israel; they put down all the smith's shops, transplanted the smiths into their own country, and forbade any Israelite, under severe penalties, to exercise the trade or mystery of working in brass or iron, though they had rich mines of both, and in such plenty, that with them he was to be supplied. 20. Asher, His shoes shall be iron and brass, Deut. 33. 25. This was subtly done of the Philistines, for hereby they not only prevented the people of Israel from making themselves weapons of war by which they would both be disused to military exercises and unburthened when there was occasion, but obliged them to a dependence upon them, even for the instruments of husbandry; they must go to them, if they could, to come on other of their grievances, which were dispersed in the country, to have their iron work done, and no more might an Israelite do than use a file; (v. 20, 21.) and no doubt the Philistines' smiths brought the Israelites long files for work done. (2.) How impolitic Saul was, that did not, in the beginning of his reign, set himself to redress this grievance. Samuel's not doing it, was very excusable, he fought with other artillery; but Saul, that pretended to be a king, like the kings of the nations, to leave his soldiers without swords and spears, and take no care to provide them, especially when he might have done it out of the spoils of the Ammonites whom he conquered in the beginning of his reign, was such a piece of negligence, as could by no means be excused. (3.) How slothful and mean-spirited the Israelites were, that suffered the Philistines thus to impose upon them, and had no thought or spirit to help themselves. It was reckoned very bad with them, when there was not a shield or spear found among forty thousand in Israel; (Judg. 5. 8.) and it was no better now, when there was never an Israelite with a sword by his side, but the king and his son; never a soldier, never a gentleman: surely they were reduced to this, or began to be so, in Samuel's time, for we never find him with a sword or spear in his hand. If they had not been dispirited, they could not have been disarmed, but it was sin that made them naked to their shame.

CHAP. XIV.

We left the host of Israel in a very ill posture, in the close of the foregoing chapter; we saw in them neither wisdom, nor strength, nor goodness, to give us ground to expect that they had a general access to the army of the Philistines; yet here we find that infinitesimal power which works without means, and that infinite goodness which gives without merit, glorified in a happy turn of events. Wherever we see the Lord's workmen, there is power: the man of war, that was an example of the Israelites, and a type of Christ, had a mind that was full of courage and goodness. The Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake, ch. 12. 22. In this chapter, we have, I. The host of the Philistines trampled upon, and triumphed over, by the faith and courage of a man, who was known to his father, (v. 1. . .) with his armour-bearer only, made a brave attack upon them, encouraging himself in the Lord his God, v. 4. . . He challenged them, (v. 8. . .) and, upon their acceptance of the challenge, charged them with such fury, or rather such faith, that he put them to flight, and set them one against another, (v. 13. . .) which gave opportunity to Saul and his forces, with much victory, to blow, and gain a victory, v. 16. . . II. The host of Israel troubled and perplexed by the rashness and folly of Saul, who adjured the people to eat no food till night, which, I. Brought Jonathan into a panic, v. 5. . . 20. II. Was a temptation, when the time of their fast was expired, to eat with the blood, v. 31. . . 35. 3. Jonathan's error, through ignorance, had like to have been his death, but the people rescued him, v. 36. . . III. In the close, we have a general account of Saul's exploits, (v. 47, 48.) and of his family, v. 49. . .
NOW it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison that is on the other side. But he told not his father. 2. And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah, under a pomegranate-tree, which is in Migron: and the people that were with him were about six hundred men; 3. And Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, I-chabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the Lord's priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone. 4. And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. 5. The fore-front of the one was situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah. 6. And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few. 7. And his armour-bearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart. 8. Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto these men, and we will discover ourselves unto them. 9. If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. 10. But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the Lord hath delivered them into our hand; and this shall be a sign unto us. 11. And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves. 12. And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armour-bearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will show you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armour-bearer, Come up after me; for the Lord hath delivered them into the hand of Israel. 13. And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armour-bearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armour-bearer slew after him. 14. And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armour-bearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were a half-acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plough. 15. And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people; the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled; and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling. We must here take notice, I. Of the goodness of God in restraining the Philistines, who had the best armies of stout men in the field, from falling upon that little bandful of timorous trembling people that Saul had with him, whom they would easily have swallowed up at once. It is an invisible power that sets bounds to the malice of the church's enemies, and suffers them not to do that which we should think there is nothing to hinder them from. II. Of the meekness of Saul, who seems here to have been quite at a loss, and unable to help himself. 1. He pitched his tent under a tree, and had but six hundred men with him, v. 2. Where were now the three thousand men he had chosen, and put such a confidence in? ch. 13. 2. Those whom he trusted too much to, failed him when he most needed them. He durst not stay at Gibeah, but got into some obscure place, in the uttermost part of the city, under a pomegranate tree, under Rimmon, so the last time, v. 3. 3. He would not get near Gibeah, in the caves of which these six hundred Benjamites that escaped, hid themselves, Judg. 20. 47. Some think that Saul took shelter there, so mean and abject was his spirit, now that he was fallen under God's displeasure, every hour expecting the Philistines upon him, and, thereby, the accomplishment of Samuel's threatening, ch. 15. 14. Those can never think themselves safe, that see themselves cast out of God's protection. 2. Now he sent for a priest, and the ark; a priest from Shiloh, and the ark from Kirjath-jearim, v. 3. 18. Saul had once offended by offering sacrifice himself; (ch. 13. 9.) now he resolves never to fall into that error again, and therefore sends for a priest, and hopes to compromise the matter with God Almighty by a partial reformation, as many do, whose hearts are unchanged. Samuel, the Lord's prophet, had forsoaked him, but he thinks he can make up that loss, by commanding Ahiah, the Lord's priest, to attend him, and he will not make him stay for him nor reprove him, as Samuel had done, but will do just as he bids him, v. 18, 19. Many love to have just such ministers as will be what they would have them to be, and prosper smooth things to them; and their lowering of them because they are priests, they hope, will alone for their enemy to those ministers that stand faithfully and plainly with them. He will also have the ark brought, perhaps, to upbraid Samuel, who, in the days of his government, for aught that appears, had not made any public use of it; or in hopes that that would make up the deficiency of his forces; one would have supposed, that they could never have brought the ark into the camp again, since the last time, v. 18, when it was said, to save them, but did itself fall into the Philistines' hands. But it is common for those that have lost the substance of religion, to be most fond of the shadows of it, as here is a deserted prince courting a deserted priest. III. Of the bravery and piety of Jonathan, the son of Saul, who was much fitter than the father to wear the crown. A great imp (says Bishop Hall) "out of a crab stock." 1. He resolved to go incognito—unknown to any one, into the camp of the Philistines; he did not acquaint his father with his design, for he knew he would forbid him; nor the people, for he knew they would all discourage him; and because he resolved not to heed their objections, he resolved not to hear them, nor ask their advice, v. 1, 3. Nor had he so great an opinion of the priest, as to consult him,
but, being conscious of a divine impulse putting him upon it, he threw himself into the mouth of danger, in hopes of doing service to his country. The way of access to the enemies' camp is described (v. 4, 5) to be peculiarly difficult, and their natural intrenchments seemed impregnable; yet that does not discourage him: the strength and sharpness of the rocks do but harden and whet his resolutions. General views may be suggested by opposition and take pleasure in breaking through it.

2. He encouraged his armour-bearer, a young man that attended him, to go alone with him in this daring enterprise; (v. 6.) "Come, and let us put our lives in our hands, and go over to the enemies' garrison, and try what we can do to put them into confusion." See whence he draws his encouragements. (1.) They are uncircumcised, and have not the seal of the covenant in their flesh, as we have not. Fear not, we shall do well enough with them, for they are not under the protection of God's covenant, as we are, cannot call him their's, as we can, by the sign of circumcision." If such as are enemies to us, are also strangers to God, we need not fear them. (2.) "God is able to make us too victorious over their unnumbered regiments. There is no restraint to the Lord, no limitation to the Holy One, but it is by many or by few." This is a truth easily granted in general, that it is all alike to Omnipotence, what the instruments are by which it works; and yet it is not so easy to apply it to a particular case: when we are but few and feeble, then to believe that God can not only save us, but save by us, this is an instance of faith, which, wherever it is, shall obtain a good report. Let this strengthen the weak and hearten us to do our part, though it be pleasing with God for the enforcing of our petitions, and with ourselves for the silencing of our fears, It is nothing with God to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power, 2 Chron. 14. 11. (3.) "Who knows, but he that can use us for his glory, will do it? It may be the Lord will work for us, work with us, work a sign or miracle for us;" so the Chaldees. We may encourage ourselves with hope, that he will work for us, though we have not ground on which to build an assurance. An active faith will venture far in God's cause upon an, It may be. His armour-bearer, or esquire, as if he had learned to carry, not his arms only, but his heart, promised to stand by him, and follow him wheresoever he went, v. 7. We have reason to think that Jonathan felt a divine impulse and impression, putting him upon this bold adventure, in which he was encouraged by his servant's concurrence, though danger was so great which he ran upon, that he had rather tempted God, than trusted him. And perhaps, he had an actual regard to that word of Joshua, (ch. 23. 10.) One man of you shall chase a thousand, borrowed from Moses, Deut. 32. 50.

3. How bold soever his resolution was, he resolved to follow Providence in the execution of it, which he believed, would guide him with its course. (Ps. 32. 8.) and which therefore he would carefully attend, and take hints of direction from.

See, (1.) How he put himself upon Providence, and resolved to be determined by it. "Come," (says he to his confidant,) "we will discover ourselves to the enemy, as those that are not afraid to look them in the face, (v. 8.) and then, if they be so cautious as to bid us stand, we will advance no further, taking that for thereby intimating of Providence, that God will not be adverse to our enterprise, but that he prepares, as well as we, to give them a warm reception: (v. 9.) but if they be so presumptuous as to challenge us, and the first sentinel we meet with bids us march on, we will push forward, and make as brisk an onset, assuredly gathering from thence that it is the will of God we should act offensively, and then, not doubting but he will stand by us," (v. 10.) and upon this issue he puts it, firmly believing, as we all should, (1.) That God has the governing of the hearts and tongues of all men, even of those that know him not, nor have any regard to him, and serves his own purposes by them, though they mean not so, neither doth their heart approve their actions, yet God could discover his mind to him if he pleased, and would do so, because he depended upon him, as surely by the mouth of a Philistine, as by the mouth of a priest. (2.) That God will, some way or other, direct the steps of those that acknowledge him in all their ways, and seek unto him for direction, with full purpose of heart to follow his conduct. Sometimes we find most comfort in that which is least our own doing, and into which we have been led by the unexpected, but well observed, turns of Providence.

(2.) Providence gave him the sign he expected, and he answered the signal. He and his armour-bearer did not surprise the Philistines when they were asleep, but discovered themselves to them by day-light, v. 11. The guards of the Philistines, (1.) Disarmed them, upbraided them with the cowardice of many of their people, and looked upon them as a contemptible branch of the meekers, (2.) The Hebrews came forth out of their holes. If some of Christ's soldiers play the coward, others that play the man, may, perhaps, be upbraided with it. (2.) They defied them; (v. 12.) Come, and we will show you a thing; as if they came like children to gaze about them; but meaning, as Goliath, (ch. 17. 44.) that they would give them as meat to the fowls of the air. They bantred them, not doubting but to make them return, and now (v. 13,) though they had nothing to cover him, nor any but his own armor to second him, nor any human probability of any thing but death before him.

4. The wonderful success of this daring enterprise. The Philistines, instead of falling upon Jonathan, to slay him, or take prisoner, fell before him, (v. 13.) unaccountably, upon the first blow he gave. They fell; that is, (1.) They were many of them slain by him and his armour-bearer; (v. 14.) twenty Philistines fell presently. It was not so much the name of Jonathan, that made them yield so tamely, though some think that he was become terrible to them, since he smote one of their garrisons, (ch. 13. 3.) but it was God's right hand, and his arm, that got him this victory.

(2.) The rest were put to flight, and fell upon one another, (v. 15.) There was a trembling in the host. There was no visible cause for fear, they were so numerous, bold, advantageously posted; the Israelites had fled before them, not an enemy made head against them, but one gentleman and his man, and yet they shook like an aspen-leaf; the consternation was general, they all trembled, even the soldiers; those that had been most bold and foremost shared in the common fright, the joints of their knees were a trembling against another, and yet none of them could tell why, or wherefore; it is called a trembling of God, so the original phrase is, signifying, not only, as we render it, a very great trembling which they could not resist, nor reason themselves clear of, but that it was
16. And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another. 17. Then said Saul unto the people that were with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armour-bearer were not there. 18. And Saul said unto Abiah, Bring hither the ark of God: (for the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel.) 19. And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that was in the host of the Philistines went on and increased; and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand. 20. And Saul and all the people that were with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture. 21. Moreover, the Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp from the country round about, even they also turned to be with the Israelites that were with Saul and Jonathan. 22. Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle. 23. So the Lord saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven.

We have here the prosecution and improvement of the wonderful advantages which Jonathan and his armour-bearer gained against the Philistines.

I. The Philistines were, by the power of God, set against one another. They melted away like snow before the sun, and went on beating down one another, v. 16. for every man's sword was against his fellow, v. 20. When they fled for fear, instead of turning back upon those that chased them, they reckoned those only their enemies that stood in their way, and treated them accordingly. The Philistines were very secure, because all the swords and spears were in their hands, Israel had none, except what Saul and Jonathan had; but now God showed them the folly of that confidence, by making their own swords and spears the instruments of their destruction, and more fatal in their own hands, than if they had been in the hands of Israel. See the like done, Judg. 7. 22. 2 Chron. 20. 23.

II. The Israelites were hereby animated against them.

Notice was soon taken of it by the watchmen of Saul, those that stood sentinel at Gibeah; (v. 16.) they were awed, and every one of them went into great confusion, and that a great slaughter was made among them, and yet, upon search, they found none of their own forces absent, but only Jonathan and his servant, (v. 17.) which, no doubt, greatly animated them, and assured them that it could be no other than the Lord's doing, when there was no more of man's doing than what those two could do against a great host.

2. Saul began to inquire of God, but soon desisted. His spirit was not come down so far as to allow him to consult with Samuel, though, it is probable, he was near him; for we read, (ch. 13. 15.) that he was come to Gibeah of Benjamin; but he called for the ark, (v. 18.) desiring to know whether he should be attacked by the Philistines, and what was to be done upon the disorder they perceived them to be in. Many will consult God about their safety, that would never consult him about their duty. But perceiving by his scouts that the noise in the enemy's camp in creased, he commanded the priest that officiated, to break off abruptly, "Withdraw thine hand," for when Joshua was actually engaged with Amalek, Moses continued still to lift up his hands. It is rather a prohibition to his inquiring of the Lord, either, (1.) Because now he thought he did not need an answer, the case was plain enough. And yet the more evident it was that God did all, the more reason he had to inquire whether he would give him leave to do any thing. Or, (2.) Because now he would not stay for an answer; he was in such haste to fight a falling enemy, that he would not stay to make an end of his devotions, nor hear what answer God would give him. A little thing will divert a vain and carnal mind from religious exercises. He that believeth will not make such haste as this, nor reckon any business so urgent, as not to allow time to take God along with him.

3. He, and all the little force he had, made a valiant and determined, and, in the end, successful attack upon the enemy: and all the people were cried together, so the word is, v. 20. for want of the silver trumpets, wherewith God appointed them to sound an alarm in the day of battle, Numb. 10. 9. They summoned them together by shouting, and their number was not so great, but that they might soon be got together. And now they seem bold and brave, when the work is done to their hands. Our Lord Jesus has conquered our spiritual enemies, routed and dispersed them, so that we are cowards indeed, if we will not stand to our arms, when it is only to pursue the victory and divide the spoil.

4. Every Hebrew, even those from whom one would least have expected it, now turned his hand against the Philistines. 1. Those that had deserted, and gone over to the enemy, and were among them, fought against them; v. 21. some think, they were such as had been taken prisoners by them, and now they were as goads in their sides: it rather seems, that they went in to them voluntarily, but, now that they saw them falling, recovered the hearts of Israelites, and did valiantly for their country. 2. Those that had run their colours, and hid themselves in the mountains, returned to their posts, and joined in with the pursuers, v. 22. hoping, by their great zeal and officiousness now that the danger was over and the victory sure, to atone for their former cowardice. It was not much to their praise to appear now, but it would have been more to their reproach if they had not appeared. Those are remiss and faint-hearted indeed, that will not act in the cause of God, when they see it victorious as well as righteous.

Thus all hands were at work against the Philistines, and every man as many as he could; without sword or spear; yet it is said, v. 23. it was the Lord that saved Israel that day. He did it by them, for without him they could do nothing. Salvation is of the Lord.
And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food. 25. And all they of the land came to a wood, and there was honey upon the ground. 26. And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath. 27. But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in a honey-comb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened. 28. Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straightly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food this day. And the people were faint. 29. Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey; 30. How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to-day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines? 31. And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmac to Ajalon: and the people were very faint. 32. And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground: and the people did eat them with the blood. 33. Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the Lord, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day. 34. And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay them here, and eat; and sin not against the Lord in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew them there. 35. And Saul built an altar unto the Lord: the same was the first altar that he built unto the Lord.

We have here an account of the distress of the children of Israel, in even the days of their triumphs. Such allays are all present joys subject to! and such obstructions does many a good cause meet with, even when it seems most prosperous, through the management of instruments.

I. Saul forbade the people, under the penalty of a curse, to taste any food that day, v. 24. Here we will suppose, 1. That as king he had power to put his soldiers under this interdict, and to bind it on with a curse; and therefore they submitted to it, and God so far owned it, as to discover, by the lot, that Jonathan was the delinquent that had meddled with the accursed thing; (though ignorantly,) on which account, God would not be at that time merited of them. 2. That he did it with a good intention, lest the people, who perhaps had been kept for some time at short allowance, when they were plenty of victuals in the deserted camp of the Philistines, should fall greedy upon the spoil, and lose time in pursuing the enemy, and some of them, it may be, glut themselves to that degree, as not to be fit for any more service that day. To prevent this, he forbade them to taste any food, and laid himself, it is likely, under the same restraint. And yet his making this severe order was, (1.) Impolitic, and very unwise; for if it gained time, it lost strength for the pursuit. (2.) It was impious and disobedging to the people, and worse than muzzling the mouth of the ox, when he treads out the corn. To forbid them to feast had been commendable, but to forbid them so much as to taste, though so hungry, was barbarous. (3.) It was impious to enforce the prohibition with a curse and an oath. Had he no penalty less than an anathema, wherewith to support his military discipline? Death for such a crime had been too much, but especially death with a curse. Though superiors may chide and correct, they may not curse their inferiors; our rule is, Bless, and curse not. When David speaks of an enemy he had that loved cursing, perhaps he meant Saul, Ps. 109. 17, 18.

II. The people observed his order, but it had many inconveniences attending it. 1. The soldiers were contented; for in their pursuits of the enemy, it happened that they went into gardens of wild honey, that it dropped from the trees upon the ground; the Philistines having perhaps, in their flight, broken in upon the honey-combs, for their own refreshment, and left them running. Canaan flowed with honey, and here is an instance of it. They sucked honey out of the rock, the flinty rock; Deut. 32. 13. yet, for fear of the curse, they did not take it. They might have eaten the honey, but the name of Israelites, that can deny themselves and their own appetites, even when they are most craving, and the delights of sense most tempting, for fear of guilt and a curse, and the table becoming a snare. Let us never feed ourselves, much less feast ourselves, without fear. 2. Jonathan fell under the curse through ignorance. He heard not of the charge his father had given; for, having committed the lines, the chase, and therefore might justly be looked upon as exempted from the charge, and not intended in it. But it seems it was taken for granted, and he himself did not object against it afterward, that it extended to him, though absent upon so grand an occasion. He, not knowing any peril in it, took up a piece of a honey-comb, upon the end of his staff, and sucked it, v. 27. and was sensibly refreshed by it; his eyes were enlightened; (2.) hid him himself through hunger and faintness; it made his countenance look pleasant and cheerful, for it was such as a stander-by might discern, v. 29. See how mine eyes have been enlightened. He thought no harm, nor feared any, till one of the people acquainted him with the order, and then he found himself in a snare. Many a good son has been thus entangled and distressed, more ways than one, by his own brain. He was an incurable sinner; for his part, lost the crown he was heir to, by his father's folly, which, it may be, this was an ill omen of. 3. The soldiers were faint, and grew feeble in the pursuit of the Philistines. Jonathan foresaw this would be the effect of it, their spirits would flag, and their strength would fail, for want of sustenance. Such is the nature of our bodies, that they soon grow unfit for service, if they be supplied with fresh recruits. Daily work cannot be done without daily bread, which therefore our
Father in heaven graciously gives us. It is bread that strengthens man's heart; therefore Jonathan reas ned very well. If the people had eaten freely, there had been much greater slaughter, (v. 36.) but, as it was, they were very faint, too much fatigued, so the Chaldee, and began to think more of their meat than of their work. 4. The worst effect of all, was, that, at evening, when the restraint was taken off, and they returned to their food again, they were so greedy and eager upon it, that they ate the flesh with the blood, expressly contrary to the law of God, v. 32. Two hungry meals, we say, make the third a glutton; it was so here. They would not stay to have their meat either duly killed, for they slew them upon the ground, and did not hang them up, as they used to do, that the blood might all run out of them, or duly dressed, but fell greedily upon it, before it was half boiled, or half roasted, v. 32. Saul, being informed of it, reproved them for the sin, v. 33. Ye have transgressed; but did not, as he should have done, reflect upon himself as having been accessory to it, and having made the Lord's people to transgress.

To put a stop to this irregularity, Saul ordered them to set up a great stone before him, and let all that had cattle to kill, for their present use, bring them thither, and kill them under his eye upon that stone, v. 33. and the people did so, v. 34. so easily were they restrained and reformed when their prince took care to do his part. If magistrates would but use their power as they might, people would be made better than they are, with more ease than is imagined.

Lastly, On this occasion Saul built an altar, v. 35. that he might offer sacrifice, either by way of acknowledgment of the victory they had obtained, or by way of atonement for the sin they had been guilty of. The same was the first altar that he built, and perhaps the rolling of the great stone to kill the beasts on, reminded him of converting it into an altar, else he had not thought of it. Saul was turning aside from God, and yet now he begins to build altars, being most zealous (as many are) for the form of godliness then when he was denying the power of it. See Hos. 8. 14. Israel has forgotten his Maker, and built his altars in the hasty stones, v. 6. He began to build that altar; he laid the first stone, but was so hasty to pursue his victory, that he could not stay to finish it.

36. And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God. 37. And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day. 38. And Saul said, Draw ye near hither all the chief of the people; and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day: 39. For, as the Lord liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But there was not a man among all the people that answered him. 40. Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee. 41. Therefore Saul said unto the Lord God of Israel, Give a perfect lot. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped. 42. And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken. 43. Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and, lo, I must die. 44. And Saul answered, God do so, and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan. 45. And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not. 46. Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place.

Here is, I. Saul's boasting against the Philistines; he proposed, as soon as his soldiers had got their suppers, to pursue them all night, and not leave a man of them, v. 36. Here he showed much zeal, but little discretion; for his army, thus fatigued, could as ill spare a night's sleep, as a man could. But it is common for rash and foolish men, to consider no body but themselves, and, so they may but have their humour, not to care what hardships they put upon those that are under them. However, his people were so obsequious to their king, that they would by no means oppose the motion, but resolved to make the best of it, and, if he will go on, they will follow him. Do whatsoever seemeth good to thee. Only the priest thought it convenient to go with them, and counsel with them; and then made known to himself, whom he might go with, and who might supply them with provisions, that were broken off abruptly, v. 19. and to consult the oracle, Let us draw hither unto God. Princes and great men have need of such about them, as will thus be their remembrancers, wherever they go, to take God along with them. And when the priest proposed it, Saul could not, for shame, reject the motion, but asked counsel of God, (v. 37.) Shall I go down after the Philistines? And shall I speed? 38. If his finding Saul on his son Jonathan: and the rest of this paragraph is wholly concerning him; for while he is prosecuted, the Philistines made their escape. We know not what mischief may ensue upon one rash resolve.

1. God, by giving an intimation of his displeasure, but Saul upon searching for an accused thing. When, by the priest, he consulted the oracle to answer him not, v. 37. Note, When God denies our prayers, it concerns us to inquire what the sin is that has provoked him to do so. Let us see where the sin is, (v. 38.) for God's ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, but it is sin that separates between us and him. If God turns away our prayer, we have reason to suspect it is for some iniquity regarded in our hearts, which we are concerned to find out, that we may put it away, may mortify it, and put it to death. Saul swears by his Maker, that whatever sin the Achan that troubled the camp, by eating the forbidden fruit, should certainly die, though it were Jonathan himself; that is, though ever so dear to himself and the people, little thinking that Jonathan was the man; (v. 39.)
"He shall surely die; the curse shall be executed upon him." But none of the people answered him; that is, none of those who knew Jonathan had broken the order, would inform against him.

2. Jonathan was discovered by lot to be the offender. Saul would have cast lots between himself and Jonathan on the one side, and the people on the other, perhaps, because he was as confident of Jonathan's innocence in this matter, as of his own, v. 40. The people, seeing him in a heat, durst not gainsay anything he proposed, but acquiesced. "Do as seemeth good unto thee." Before he cast lots, he prayed that God would give a perfect lot; (v. 41.) that is, make a full discovery of this matter, and that he would show the innocent. This was with an air of impartial justice. Judges should desire that truth may come out, whoever may suffer by it. Lots should be cast with prayer, because they are a solemn appeal to Providence, and by them we beg of God to direct and determine us; (Acts 1:26.) for which reason some have condemned games, that depend purely upon lot or chance, as making too bold with a sacred thing. Jonathan at length was taken; (v. 42.) Providence designing hereby to countenance and support a lawful authority, and to put an honour upon the administration of public justice in general, reserving another way to bring off one that had done nothing worthy of death.

3. Jonathan ingenuously confesses the fact, and Saul, with an angry curse, passes sentence upon him. Jonathan denies not the truth, nor goes about to conceal it, only he thinks it hard that he must die for it, v. 43. He might very fairly have pleaded his invincible ignorance of the law, or have insisted upon his merit, but he submitted to the necessity with a great and generous mind, "God's and my father's will be done;" thus he showed as much valor in receiving the messengers of death himself, as in sending them among the Philistines. It is as brave to yield in some cases, as it is in most cases to fight. Saul is not mollified by his filial submission, nor the hardness of his case; but as one that affected to be thought firm to his word, and much more to his oath, even then when it bound him hardest, with another imprecation he gives judgment upon Jonathan; (v. 44.) God do so, and more also to me, if I do not execute the law upon thee, for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan. (1.) He did come in the name of God, without consulting the oracle; Jonathan had a very good plea in arrest of the judgment; what he had done was not malum in se—bad in itself; and as for the prohibition of it, he was ignorant of that, so that he could not be charged with rebellion or disobedience. (2.) He did it in fury. Had Jonathan been worthy to die, yet it had become a judge, much more a father, to pass sentence with tenderness and compassion, such a sentence on such a head as his, and God perfectly divested of all humanity and natural affection. Justice is debased, when it is administered with wrath and bitterness. (3.) He backed it with a curse upon himself, if he did not see the sentence executed; and this curse did return upon his own head; Jonathan escaped, but God did so to Saul, and more also; for he was rejected of God, and made an anathema. Let none upon any occasion do, in the name of God, what is contrary to the law, lest the law say Amen to them, and make their own tongues to fall upon them, Ps. 64. 8. He that rolleth this stone, it will return upon him. Yet we have reason to think that Saul's bowels yearned toward Jonathan, so that he really punished himself, and very justly, when he seemed so severe upon Jonathan. God made him feel the smart of his own rash edict, which might make him fear being again guilty of the like. By all these vexations accidents, God did likewise correct him for his presumption, in offering sacrifice without Samuel. An expedition so ill begun, could not end without some rebukes.

4. The people rescued Jonathan out of his father's hands, but Hither they had expressed themselves very observant of Saul, what seemed good to him they acquiesced in; (v. 36, 40.) but when Jonathan is in danger, Saul's word is no longer a law to them, but with the utmost zeal they oppose the execution of his sentence, "Shall Jonathan die? That blessing, that darling, of his country? Shall that life be sacrificed to a punctilio of law and honour, which was so bravely exposed for the public service, and to which owe our lives and triumphs? No, we will never stand by, and see him thus treated, whom God delights to honour." It is good to see Israelites zealous for the protection of those whom God has made instruments of public good. Saul had sworn that Jonathan should die, but they oppose their oath to his, and swear he shall not die; As the Lord liveth, there shall not only not his head, but not a hair of his head fall to the ground: they did not refuse him by violence, but by reason and resolution; and Josephus says, they made their prayer to God, that he might be loosed from the curse. They plead for him, that he hath wrought with God this day; that is, he has owned God's cause, and God has owned his endeavours, and therefore his life is too precious to be thrown away upon a nicety. We may suppose, Saul had not so perfectly forgotten the relation of a father, but that he was willing enough to have Jonathan rescued, and well contented to have that done, which yet he would not do himself; and he that knows the heart of a father, knows not how to blame him.

Lastly, The design against the Philistines is quashed by this incident; (v. 46.) Saul went up from following them, and so an opportunity was lost of completing the victory. When Israel's shields are clashing together, the public safety and service suffer by it.

47. So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them. 48. And he gathered a host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoilt them. 49. Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchi-shua: and the names of his two daughters were these; the name of the first-born Merab, and the name of the younger Michal: 50. And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host was Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle: 51. And Kish was the father of Saul; and Ner, the father of Abner, was the son of Abiel. 52. And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him.

Here is a general account of Saul's court and camp.

1. Of his court and family. The names of his sons and daughters, v. 49. and of his wife, and his
cousin-german that was general of his army, v. 50. There is mention of another wife of Saul's, 2 Sam. 21. 8. Rizpah, a secondary wife, and of the children he had by her.

2. Of his camp and military actions. (1) How he leived his army; when he saw any strong valiant man, that was remarkably fit for service, he took him unto him, v. 32. as Samuel had told them the manner of the king would be; (ch. 8. 11.) and if he must have a standing army, it was his prudence to fill it up with the eldest men he could make choice of. (2) How he employed his army; he guarded his country against the insults of its enemies on every side, and prevented their incursions, v. 47, 48. It is supposed that he acted only defensively against those that used to invade the borders of Israel, and whithersoever he turned himself, as there was occasion, he vexed them, by checking and disappointing them. But the enemies he struggled most with, were the Philistines, with them he had sore war, all his days, v. 32. He had little reason to be proud of his royal dignity, nor had any of his neighbours cause to envy him, he had little enjoyment of himself after he took the kingdom. He could not vex his enemies without some vexation to himself, such thorns are crowns quilted with.

CHAP. XV.

In this chapter, we have the final rejection of Saul from being king, for his disobedience to God's command, in not utterly destroying the Amalekites. By his wars and victories, he hoped to magnify and perpetuate his own name and honour, but, by his mismanagement of them, he ruined himself, and laid his honour in the dust. Here is, 1. The commission God gave him to destroy the Amalekites, with a command to do it utterly, v. 1 - 3. II. Saul's preparation for this expedition, v. 4 - 6. III. His success, and partial execution of this commission, v. 7 - 9. IV. His examination before Samuel, and sentence past upon him, notwithstanding the many frivolous plea's he made to excuse himself, v. 10 - 31. V. The slaying of Agag, v. 32, 33. VI. Samuel's final farewell to Saul, v. 34, 35.

1. SAMUEL also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. 2. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. 3. Now go, and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. 4. And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telin, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. 5. And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley. 6. And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. 7. And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. 8. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. 9. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

Here,

I. Samuel, in God's name, solemnly requires Saul to be obedient to the command of God, and plainly intimates that he was now about to put him upon a trial, in one particular instance, whether he would be obedient or not, v. 1. And the making of this so expressly the trial of his obedience, did very much aggravate his disobedience. 1. He reminds him of what God had done for him. "The Lord sent me to anoint thee, to be a king." God gave thee the power, and therefore he expects thou shouldst use thy power for him. He put honour upon thee, and now thou must study how to do him honour. He made thee king over Israel, and now thou must plead Israel's cause, and avenge their quarrells. Thou art advanced to command Israel, but know that thou art a subject to the God of Israel, and must be commanded by him. Men's preferment, instead of discharging them from their obedience to God, obliges them so much the more to obey. Samuel had himself been employed to anoint Saul, and therefore was the fitter to be sent with these orders to him. 2. He tells him, in general, that, in consideration of this, what ever God commanded him to do, he was bound to do it. Now therefore hearken to the voice of the Lord. Note, God's favours to us lay strong obligations upon us, to obey him to the full. This we must render, Ps. 116. 12.

II. He appoints him a particular piece of service, in which he must now show his obedience to God, more than in any thing he had done yet. Samuel promises God's authority to the command, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the Lord of all hosts, of Israel's hosts: he also gives him a reason for the command, that the severity he must use might not seem hard. "I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, v. 2. God had an ancient and inveterate war with the Amalekites, for the injuries they did to his people Israel, when he brought them out of Egypt: we have the story, Exod. 17. 8, &c. and the crime is aggravated, Deut. 25. 18. he basely smote the hindmost of them, and feared not God; God then swore that he would have war with Amalek from generation to generation, and that, in process of time, he would utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek; that is the work that Saul is now appointed to do, v. 3. "Go, and smite Amalek. Israel is now strong, and the measure of the iniquity of Amalek is now full; now go and make a full riddance of that devoted nation." He is expressly commanded to kill and slay all before him, both man and woman, infant and suckling, and not spare them out of pity; ox and sheep, camel and ass, and not spare them out of covetousness. Note, 1. Injuries done to God's Israel, will certainly be reckoned for sooner or later, especially the opposition given them, when they are coming out of Egypt. 2. God often bears long with those that are marked for ruin. The sentence past, is not executed speedily. 3. Though he bear long, he will not bear always. The year of recompense for the controversy of Israel, will come at last. Though divine vengeance strikes slow, it strikes sure. 4. The longer judgment is delayed, the more severe it is when it comes. 5. God chooses out instruments to do his work, that are fittest for it. This was bloody work, and therefore Saul must do it, that was a rough and severe man.
III. Saul hereupon musters his forces, and makes a descent upon the country of Amaleck; it was an immense army that he brought into the field, (v. 4.) two hundred thousand footmen. When he was to engage the Philistines and the success was hazardous, he had but six hundred attending him; (ch. 13. 15.) but now that he was to attack the Amalekites, by express order from heaven, in which he was sure of victory, he had thousands at his call. But whatsoever it was at other times, it was not now for the honour of Judah, that their forces were numbered by themselves, for their quota was scandalously short, (v. 6.) and this was the reason, but the twentieth part of the whole, for they were but ten thousand, when the other ten tribes (for I except Levi) brought into the field two hundred thousand. The day of Judah's honour drew near, but was not yet come. Saul numbered them in Telaim, which signifies lambs. He numbered them like lambs, so the vulgar Latin; numbered them by the paschal lambs, so the Chaldee, allowing, to ten a lamb, a way of numbering used by the Jews in the latter times of their nation. Saul drew all his forces to the city of Amaleck, that city was their metropolis, (v. 5) that he might provoke them to give him battle.

IV. He gave friendly advice to the Kenites, to separate themselves from the Amalekites, among whom they dwelt, while this execution was in doing, v. 6. Herein he did prudently and piously follow the direction Samuel gave him. The Kenites were of the family and kindred of Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, a people that dwelt in tents, which made it easy to them, upon every occasion, to remove to other lands not appropriated; many of them, at this time, dwelt among the Amalekites, where, though they dwelt in tents, they were fortified by nature, for they put their tent in a rock; and as it was not possible they could live anywhere, Saul affected fastnesses, Numb. 24. 21. Balaam had there foretold, that they should be wasted; (v. 22.) however, Saul must not waste them. But, 1. He acknowledges the kindness of their ancestors to Israel, when they came out of Egypt. Jethro and his family had been very helpful and serviceable to them in their passage through the wilderness, had been to them instead of eyes, and had been their memory and their helper as posterity in many ages after. Thus a good man leaves the divine blessing for an inheritance to his children's children; those that come after us, may be repaying the benefit of our good works, when we are in our graves. God is not unrighteous to forget the kindness shown to his people; but they shall be remembered another day, at furthest in the great day, and recompensed in the resurrection of the just. I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; God's remembering the kindness of the Kenites' ancestors, in favour to them, at the same time when he was punishing the injuries done by the ancestors of the Amalekites, helped to clear the righteousness of God in that dispensation. If he entail favours, why may he not entail frowns? He esposes his people's cause, so as to bless those that bless them; and therefore as to curse those that curse them, Numb. 24. Gen. 13. 3. They cannot require the kindness, nor avenge the injuries, done them, themselves, but God will do both. 2. He desires them to remove their tents from among the Amalekites; Go, depart, get you down from among them. When destroying judgments are abroad, God will take care to separate between the precious and the vile, and to hide the meek of the earth in the day of his anger. It is impossible, and beyond the power of God's enemies, and it is our duty and interest to come out from among them, lest we share in their sins and plagues, Rev. 18. 4. The Jews have a saying, Woe to the wicked man, and woe to his neighbour.

V. Saul prevailed against the Amalekites, for it was rather an execution of condoned malefactors, than a war with contending enemies; the issue could not be dubious when the one was just, and the call so clear; He smote them, (v. 7.) utterly destroyed them, v. 8. Now they paid dear for the sin of their ancestors; God sometimes days up iniquity for the children. They were idolaters, and were guilty of many other sins, for which they deserved to be punished under the wrath of God. Yet when God would reckon with them, he fastened upon the sin of their ancestors in abusing his Israel, as the ground of his quarrel. Lord, how unsearchable are thy judgments, yet how incontestable is thy righteousness!

VI. Yet he did his work by halves, v. 9. 1. He spared Agag, because he was a king like himself; and, perhaps, in hope to get a great ransom for him. 2. He spared the best of the cattle, and destroyed only the refuse, that was good for little. Many of the people, we may suppose, made their escape, and took their effects with them into other countries, and therefore we read of Amalekites after this, but that could not be helped; it was Saul's fault, that he did not destroy such as came to his hands, and were in his power. That which was now destroyed, was, in effect, sacrificed to the justice of God, as the God whom we rejoice belongeth; and for Saul to think the torn and the sick, the lame and the lean, good enough for that, while he reserved for his own fields, and his own table, the firstlings and the fat, was really to honour himself more than God.

10. Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, 11. It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night. 12. And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal. 13. And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord. 14. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? 15. And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. 16. Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. 17. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? 18. And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be con-
him up a triumphal arch, or some monument of his victory, at Carmel, a city in the mountains of Judah, seeking his own honour more than the honour of God, for he set up this place (or hand, as the word is) for himself: he had more need to have been repenting of his sin and making his peace with God, than boasting of his victory. 2. That he had marched in great state to Gilgal, for that seems to be intended in the expression, he is gone out and passed on, and gone down, with a great deal of pomp and parade. There Samuel gave him the meeting.

(1.) Saul makes his boast to Samuel of his obedience, because that was the thing by which he was now to signalize himself; (v. 13.) "Blessed be thou of the Lord, for thou sentest me upon a good errand, in which I have had great success, and I have fulfilled thy command; and if I have done very likely, if his conscience had not flown in his face at this time, and charged him with disobedience, he would not have been so forward to proclaim his obedience; for by this he hoped to prevent Samuel's reproving him. Thus sinners think, by justifying themselves, to escape being judged of the Lord; whereas the only way to do that, is, by judging ourselves. They that boast most of their reputation, are mostly suspected of partiality and hypocrisy in it.

(2.) Samuel convicts him by a plain demonstration of his disobedience. "Hast thou performed the commandment of the Lord? What means then the bleating of the sheep," v. 14. Saul would needs have it thought that God Almighty was wonderfully beholden to him for the good service he had done; but Samuel shows him that God was so far from being a debtor to him, that he had given him occasion of action against him, and produces for evidence the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen, which, perhaps, Saul appointed to bring up the rear of his triumph, but Samuel appeals to them as witnesses against him; he need not go far to disprove him. The noise the cattle made, like the rust of the silver, (Jam. 5. 3.) would be a witness against him. Note, It is no new thing for the plausible professions and protestations of hypocrites to be contradicted and disproved by the most plain and undeniable evidence. Many boast of their obedience to the command of God; but what mean then their indulgence of the flesh, their love of the world, their passion and uncharitableness, and their neglect of holy duties, which witness against them? (2.) Saul insists upon his own justification against this charge, v. 15. The fact of which he devey, the sheep and oxen were brought from the Amalekites. But, [1.] It was not his fault, for the people spared them; as if they durst have done it without the express orders of Saul, when they knew it was against the express orders of Samuel. Note, Those that are willing to justify themselves, are commonly very forward to condemn others, and to lay the blame upon any rather than take it to themselves. Sin is always laid upon another; but if we observe the way in which this is done, we shall not easily be disappointed. It is a sorry subterfuge of an impetuous heart that will not confess its guilt, to lay the blame on those that were either tempted, or partners, or only followers in it. [2.] It was with a good intention; "It was to sacrifice to the Lord thy God; he is thy God, and thou wilt not be against any thing that is done, as this, for his honour." This was a false plea for his sake; and he did not take away their own profit in sparing the cattle: but if it had been true, it had been frivolous, for God hates robbery for burnt-offering; God appointed these cattle to be sacrificed to him in the field, and therefore will give to those no thanks that bring them to be sacrificed at his altar; for he will be served in his own way, and according to the rule he himself has pre-
scribed. Nor will a good intention justify a bad action.

(4.) Samuel overrules, or rather overlooks, his plea, and proceeds, in God's name, to give judgment against him. He premises his authority; what he was about to say was, what the Lord had said to him; (v. 15.) otherwise he would have been far from passing so severe a censure upon him. Those who complain that their ministers are too harsh with them, should remember he is God's servant, and this is God's word. He is simple but merciful, and must say as they are hidden; and therefore be willing, as Samuel himself was here, that they should say so; he delivers his message faithfully.

[1.] He reminds him of the honour God had done him in making him king; (v. 17.) when he was little in his own sight, God regarded the lowness of his state, and rewarded the lowliness of his spirit. Note, Those that are advanced to honour and wealth, ought often to remember their mean beginnings, that they may never think highly of themselves, but always study to do great things for the God that has advanced them. [2.] He lays before him the plainness of the orders he was to execute, v. 18. The Lord sent thee on a journey; so easy was the service, and so certain the success, that it was rather to be called a journey, than a war; the work is a journey, Ps. 126. 2; a journey of mercy, Hagg. 2. 7. He was sent to Amalek, to war against him, and set aside the consideration of his own profit, so far as to have destroyed all that belonged to Amalek, he would have been no loser by it at last, nor have gone this warfare on his own charges; God would, no doubt, have made it up to him, so that he should have no need of spoil. And therefore, [5.] He shows him how inexusable he was, in aiming to make a handle of this expedition, and to陇e the himself of doing it, v. 19. Wherefore then didst thou fly upon the spoil, and convert that to thine own use, which was to have been destroyed for God's honour? See what evil the love of money is the root of; but see what is the sinfulness of sin, and that in it which above any thing else makes it evil in the sight of the Lord: it is disobedience; thou didst not obey the voice of the Lord. [6.] Saul repeats his vindication of his action, that though through contention of conviction, he resolved to abide by it, v. 20, 21. He denies the charge, v. 20. Yea, I have obeyed, I have done all I should do; for he had done all which he thought he needed to do, so much wiser was he in his own eyes than God himself; God bade him kill all, and yet he puts in among the instances of his obedience, that he had brought Agag alive, which he thought was as good as if he had killed him. Thus his carnal, selfish hearts think to excuse themselves from God's commandments with their own equivalents. He insists upon it, that he has utterly destroyed the Amalekites themselves, which was the main thing intended: but as to the spoil, he owns it should have been utterly destroyed; so that he knew his Lord's will, and was under no mistake about the command; but he thought that would be willful waste; the cattle of the Midianites was taken for a prey in Moses's time, Num. 31. 22, 23. And why not the cattle of the Amalekites now? Better it should be a prey to the Israelites, than to the fowls of the air and the wild beasts; and therefore he connived at the people in carrying it away; but it was their doing, and not his; and besides, it was for sacrifice to the Lord here at Gilgal, whether they were now bringing them. See what a hard thing it is to convince the heart of obedience to their sin, and to strip them of their fig-leaves.

(5.) Samuel gives a full answer to his apology, since he did insist upon it, v. 22, 23. He appeals to his own conscience, Has the Lord as great de-

light in sacrifices as in obedience? Though Saul was not a man of any great acquaintance with religion, yet he could not but know this; [1.] that nothing is so pleasing to God as obedience, no, not sacrifice and offering, and the fat of rams. See here what we should aim at and endeavour in all the exercises of religion, even acceptance with God, that he may delight in what we do. If God be well pleased with us and our services we are happy, we have gained ourselves a name, and it is not a question Mark. 16. 20. But if not? Is. 1. 11. Now, here we are plainely told, that humble, sincere, and conscientious obedience to the will of God, is more pleasing and acceptable to him than all burnt-offering and sacrifices. A careful conformity to moral precepts recommends us to God more than all ceremonial observances. Mic. 6. 6. 8. Hos. 6. 6. Obedience is enjoined by the eternal law of nature, but sacrifice only by a positive law; obedience was the law of innocence, but sacrifice supposes sin come into the world, and is but a feeble attempt to take that away which obedience would have prevented. God is more glorified, and self more denied, by obedience than by sacrifice. It is much easier to bring a bullock or lamb to be burnt upon the altar, than to bring every high thought into obedience to God, and the will subject to his will. Obedience is the glory of God; and man's idolatry, and pride is the glory of God; and man's idolatry, and pride is the glory of God; and man's idolatry, and pride is the glory of God; and man's idolatry, and pride is the glory of God; and man's idolatry, and pride is the glory of God; and man's idolatry, and pride is the glory of God; and man's idolatry, and pride is the glory of God; and man's idolatry, and pride is the glory of God; and man's idolatry, and pride is the glory of God. Obedience was that thing which nothing is so provoking to God as disobedience, setting up our wills in competition with his. This is here called rebellion and stubbornness, and is said to be as bad as witchcraft and idolatry, v. 23. This is as bad to set up other gods, as to live in disobedience to the true God. They that are governed by their own corrupt inclinations, in opposition to the command of God, do, in effect, consult the Teraphims, (as the word here is for idolatry,) and the devillers. It was disobedience that made us all sinners; Rom. 5. 19. and this is the malignity of sin, that it is the transgression of the law, and consequently it is enmity to God, Rom. 8. 7. Saul was a king, but if he disobey the command of God, his royal dignity and power will not excuse him from the guilt of rebellion and stubbornness. It is not the rebellion of the people against their prince, but of a prince against God, that is this commandment. Lastly, He reads his doom, in short, "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, hast despised it, so the Chaldee, hast made nothing of it, so the Seventy, hast cast off the government of it; therefore he has rejected thee, despised and made nothing of thee, but cast thee off from being king, He that made thee king has determined to unmake thee again." Those are unfit and unworthy to rule over men, who are not willing that God should rule over them.

24. And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words; because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. 25. Now, therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord. 26. And Samuel said unto Saul, will not return with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. 27. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. 28. And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath
given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou. 29. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent. 30. Then he said, I have sinned; get honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God. 31. So Samuel turned again after Saul: and Saul worshipped the Lord.

Saul is at length brought to put himself into the dress of a penitent; but it is too evident, that he excusing himself, of a penitent, and is not one indeed. Observe,

1. How poorly he expresses his repentance. It was with much ado that he was made sensible of his fault, and not till he was threatened with being deposed; that touched him in a tender part, then he began to relent, and not till then; when Samuel told him he was rejected from being king, then he said, I have sinned, v. 24. His confession was not from a pious and godly heart, but excited by the rack, and forced from him.

We observe here, several bad signs of the hypocrisy of his repentance, and that it came short even of Ahab's.

1. He made his application to Samuel only, and seemed most solicitous to stand right in his opinion, and to gain his favour. He makes a little god of him, only to preserve his reputation with the people, because they all knew Samuel to be a prophet, and the man that had been the instrument of his preferment. Thinking it would please Samuel, and be a sort of bribe to him, he puts it into his confession, I have transgressed the commandments of the Lord, and thy word; as if he had been in God's stead, v. 24. David, though convinced by the ministry of Nathan, yet in his confession, has his eye to God alone, not to Nathan; (Ps. 31. 4.) Against thee, only, have I sinned: but Saul, ignorantly enough, confesses his sin as a transgression of Samuel's word; whereas his word was no other than a declaration of the commandment of the Lord. He also applies to Samuel for forgiveness. (v. 25.) I pray thee, pardon my sin; as if any could forgive sin but God only. Those wretchedly deceive themselves, who when they are fallen into scabrous sin, think it enough to make their peace with the church and their ministers, by the show and plausible profession of repentance, without taking care to make their peace with God by the sincerity of it. The most charitable construction we can put upon this of Saul here, is, to suppose that he looked upon Samuel as a sort of mediator between him and God, and intended an address to God in his application to him: however it was very weak.

2. He excused his fault even in the confession of it, and that is never the fashion of a true penitent; (v. 24.) "I did it, because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." We have reason enough to think that it was purely his own doing, and not the people's; however, if they were forward to do it, it is plain, by what we have read before, that he knew how to keep up his authority among them, and did not stand afraid of them. So Samuel, and frivolous, whatever he pretended, he did not really fear the people: but it is common for sinners, in excusing their faults, to plead the thoughts and workings of their own minds, those being things, which, how groundless soever, no man can disprove; but they forget that God searcheth the heart.

3. All his care was to save his credit, and preserve his interest in the people, lest they should revolt from him, or at least despise him; therefore he courts Samuel with so much earnestness (v. 25.) to turn again with him, and assist in a public thanksgiving for the victory; very importunate he was in this matter, as when he laid hold on the skirts of his mantle to detain him (v. 27.) Not that he cared for Samuel, but he feared if Samuel forsake him, the people would do so too. Many seem zealously affected to good ministers and good people, only for the sake of their own interest and reputation, while in heart they hate them. But his expression was very gross when he said, (v. 30.) I have sinned, yet honour me, I pray thee, before my people. Is this the language of a penitent? No, but the contrary; "I have sinned, and thou, me rather, too; and no man can laethe me so much as I laethe myself." Yet how often do we meet with the copies of this hypocrisy of Saul! It is very common for those who are convinced of sin, to show themselves very solicitous to be honoured before the people. Whereas he that has lost the honour of an innocent, can pretend to no other than that of a penitent, and it is the honour of a penitent to take shame to himself.

II. How little he got by these thin shows of repentance. What point did he gain by them?

1. Samuel repeated the sentence passed upon him, so far was he from giving him any hopes of the repeal of it, v. 26. The same with v. 25. He that covers his sins, shall never prosper, Prov. 28. 13. Samuel refused to turn back with him, but turned aside to go to the city, v. 27. He observed the impression he made upon the first view, he thought it altogether unfit for him so far to countenance one whom God had rejected, as to join with him in giving thanks to God for a victory, which he was made to serve rather Saul's covetousness than God's glory. Yet afterward he did turn again with him; (v. 31.) upon further thoughts, and, probably, by divine direction, either to prevent a mutiny among the people, or perhaps, not to detest the name of Saul, which is preserved for him. And so the Lord would not reject him, when he had been brought to offer sacrifice in his stead. (v. 32.) He is not said Samuel presided in that worship, but to do justice on Agag, v. 22.

2. He illustrated the sentence by a sign, which Saul himself, by his rudeness, gave occasion for. When Samuel was turning from him, he tore his clothes to detain him, (v. 27.) so loath was he to part with the prophet: but Samuel put a construction upon the act, which Saul did not; and, which he could do; he made it to signify the rending of the kingdom from him; (v. 28.) and that, like this, was his own doing. "He hath rent it from thee, and given it to a neighbour better than thou." namely, to David, who afterward, upon an occasion, cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, (ch. 24. 4.) upon which Saul said, (v. 20.) I know that thou shalt surely be king: perhaps remembering this sign, the tearing of the skirt, Saul's mantle. (v. 30.)

3. He ratified it by a solemn declaration of its being irreversible: v. 29. The Strength of Israel will not lie: The Eternity, or Victory of Israel, so some read it: The Holy One, so the Arabic: The most noble One, so the Syriac: the triumphant King of Israel, so Bishop Patrick: "He is determined to depose thee, and he will not change his purpose. He is not a man that he should repent. He is not a man that he should repent. Men are fickle and alter their minds, feeble and cannot effect their purposes; something happens which they could not foresee, by which their measures are broken; but with God it is not so. God has sometimes repented of the evil which he thought to have done, upon the sinner's repenting; but here repentance
32. Then said Samuel, Bring you hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites: and Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.

33. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.

34. Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul. 35. And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

Samuel, as a prophet, is here set over kings, Jer. 1. 10.

I. He destroys king Agag, doubtless, by such special direction from heaven, as none now can pretend to. He hewed Agag in pieces: some think he only ordered it to be done; or, perhaps he did it with his own hands, as a sacrifice to God's injured justice; v. 33, and sacrifices used to be cut in pieces. Now observe in this,

1. How Agag's present vain hopes were frustrated. He came delicately, in a stately manner, to show that he was a king, and therefore to be treated with respect; or, in a soft effeminate manner, as one never used to hardship, that could not set the sole of his foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy. Deut. 28. 56. to move compassion: and he said, "Surely, now that the heat of the battle is over, the bitterness of death is past," v. 32. Having escaped the sword of Saul, that man of war, he thought he was in no danger from Samuel, an old prophet, a man of peace. Note, (1.) There is bitterness in death, it is terrible to nature. Surely death is bitter, so divers versions read those words of Agag; as the Seventy read the former clause. He came trembling: death will dismay the stoutest heart. (2.) Many think the bitterness of death is past, when it is not so; they put that evil day far from them, which is very near. True believers may, through grace, say this, upon good grounds, though death be not past, the bitterness of it is, O death, where is thy sting?

2. How his former wicked practices were now punished. Samuel calls him to account, not only for the sins of his ancestors, but his own sins, Thy sword hath made women childless, v. 33. He trod in the steps of his ancestor's cruelty, and those under him, it is likely, did the same; justly therefore is all the righteous blood shed by Amalek, required of this generation, Matth. 23. 36. Agag, that was delicate and luxurious himself, was cruel and barbarous to others: we commonly see that those who are indulgent of their appetites, are not less indulgent of their passions. But blood will be reckoned for; even kings must account to the King of kings for the guiltless blood they shed; no cause to be shown was that crime of king Manasseh, which the Lord would not pardon, 2 Kings 24. 4. See Rev. 13. 10.

II. He deserts king Saul; takes leave of him, v. 34. and never came any more to see him, v. 35. to advise or assist him in any of his affairs, because Saul did not desire his company, nor would he be advised by him. He looked upon him as rejected of God, and therefore he forsook him: though he might sometimes see him accidentally, as ch. 19. 24. yet he never came to see him out of kindness or respect. Yet he mourned for Saul, thinking it a very lamentable thing, that a man who stood so fair for great things, should ruin himself so foolishly. He mourned for the bad state of the country, to which Saul was 1 kely to have been so greatly blessing, but now would prove a curse and a plague. He mourned for his everlasting state, having no hopes of bringing him to repentance: when he wept for him, it is likely he made supplication, but the Lord had repented that he had made Saul king, and resolved to undo that work of his, so that Samuel's prayers prevailed not for him. Observe, We must mourn for the rejection of sinners, 1. Though we withdraw from them, and dare not converse familiarly with them. Thus the prophet determines to leave his people and go from them, and yet to keep day and night for them, Jer. 9. 1, 2. 2. Though they do not mourn for themselves, Saul seems unconcerned at the tokens of God's displeasure which he lay under, and yet Samuel mourns day and night for him. Jerusalem was secure when Christ wept over it.

CHAP. XVI.

At this chapter begins the story of David, one that makes as great a figure in the sacred story, as almost any of the worthies of the Old Testament; one that both with his sword and with his pen served the honour of God and the interests of Israel, as much as most ever did, and was as illustrous a type of Christ. Here, I. Samuel is appointed and commissioned to anoint a king among the sons of Jesse at Beth-lehem, v. 1. 5. II. All his elder sons are passed by, and David the youngest is pitched upon and anointed, v. 6. 13. III. Saul growing melancholy, David is pitched upon to relieve him by music, v. 14. 23. Thus small are the beginnings of that great man.

1. And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go; I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons. 2. And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the Lord said, Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord. 3. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee. 4. And Samuel did that which the Lord spake, and came to Beth-lehem: and the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably? 5. And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord; sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

Samuel was retired to his own house in Ramah, with a resolution not to appear any more in public business, but to add to himself wholly to the instructing and training up the sons of the prophets, over whom he presided, as we find, ch. 19. 20. He promised himself more satisfaction in young prophets than in young princes; and we do not find that, to his dying day, God called him out to any public action relating to the state, but only here to anoint David.
I. Samuel

I. God reproveth him for continuing so long to mourn for the rejection of Saul. He does not blame him for mourning on that occasion, but for exceeding in his sorrows. 

2. How long wilt thou mourn for Saul? v. 1. We do not find that he mourned at all for the setting aside of his own family, and the despoiling of his own sons; but for the rejecting of Saul and his seed he mourns without measure. For the former was done by the people's foolish discontent, this by the righteous wrath of God. Yet he must find time to recover himself, and not go mourning to his grave. 1. Because God has rejected him, and he ought to acquiesce in the divine justice, and forget his affection to Saul; if God will be glorified in his ruin, Samuel ought to be satisfied. Besides, to what purpose should he weep? The decree is gone forth, and all his prayers and tears cannot prevail for the reversing of it, 2 Sam. 12. 22, 23. 2. Because Israel shall be no loser by it, and Samuel must prefer the public welfare before his own private affection to his friend. "Mourn not for Saul, for I have provided me a king." The people provided them a king and he proved bad, now I will provide me one, a man after my own heart. See Ps. 89. 20. If Saul and his sons be rejected, Israel shall not be as sheep having no shepherd; I have another in store for them, let thy joy of him swallow up thy grief for the rejected prince." 

II. He sends him to Beth-lehem, to anoint one of the sons of Jesse, a person, probably, not unknown to Samuel. Fill thine horn with oil. Saul was anointed with a glass vial of oil, scanty and brittle, David with a horn of oil, which was more plentiful and durable; hence we read of a horn of salvation in the house of his servant David, Luke 1. 69. 

III. Samuel objects the peril of going on this errand; (v. 2.) If Saul hear it he will kill me. By this it appears, I. That Saul was grown very wicked and outrageous since his rejection, else Samuel would not have mentioned this. What imperty would he not be guilty of, who durst kill Samuel? 2. That Samuel's faith was not so strong as one would have expected, else he had not thus feared the rage of Saul. Would not he that sent him, protect him and bear him out? But the best men are not perfect in their faith, nor will fear be wholly cast out any where on this side heaven. But this may be understood as Samuel's desire of direction from heaven how to manage this matter prudently, so as not to expose himself, or any other, more than necessary, 

IV. God orders him to cover his design with a sacrifice. Say, I am come to sacrifice; and it was true he did, and it was proper that he should, when he came to anoint a king, ch. 11. 15. As a prophet, he might sacrifice when and where God appointed him; and it was not at all inconsistent with the laws of truth, to say, he came to sacrifice, when really he did so, though he had also a further end, which he thought fit to conceal. Let him give notice of a sacrifice too, (by his ἄντρο, who, here, is the principal man of the city,) and his family to come to the feast upon the sacrifice; and, says God, I will show thee what thou shalt do. Those that go about God's work in God's way, shall be directed step by step, wherever they are at a loss, to do it in the best manner.

V. Samuel went accordingly to Beth-lehem, not in person, or with any retainer, only a servant to lead the horn. Yet the elders of Beth-lehem trembled at his coming, fearing it was an indication of God's displeasure against them, and that he came to denounced judgment on the iniquities of the place; guilt causes fear. Yet indeed it becomes us to stand in awe of God's messengers, and to tremble at his word; or, they feared it might be an occasion of Saul's displeasure against them, for, probably, they knew how much he was exasperated at Samuel, and feared he would pick a quarrel with them for entertaining him. They asked him, "Comest thou peaceably? Art thou in peace thyself and not flying from Saul? Art thou at peace with us, and not come with any message of wrath?" We should all covet earnestly to stand upon good terms with God's prophets, and desire to hear the word of God, or their prayers, against us. When the Son of David was born King of the Jews, all Jerusalem was troubled, Matth. 2. 3. Samuel kept at home, and it was a strange thing to see him so far from his own house; they therefore concluded it must needs be some extraordinary occasion that brought him, and feared the worst till he satisfied them; (v. 5.) "I come peaceably, for I come to sacrifice, not to be a message of wrath between you and God, but with the methods of peace and reconciliation; and therefore you may bid me welcome, and need not fear my coming; therefore sanctify yourselves, and prepare to join with me in the sacrifice, that you may have the benefit of it." Note, Before solemn ordinances there must be a solemn preparation. When we are to offer spiritual sacrifices, it concerns us, first, to be in a state of peace with God, and with one another, as well as with the world, and renewing the dedication of ourselves to God, to sanctify ourselves. When our Lord Jesus came into the world, though men had reason enough to tremble, fearing that his errand was to condemn the world, yet he gave full assurance that he came peaceably, for he came to sacrifice, and he brought his offering along with him; a body hast thou prepared me; let us sanctify ourselves, that we may have an interest in his sacrifice." Samuel said, "I come peaceably, for I come to sacrifice." Note, Those that come to sacrifice, should come peaceably; religious exercises must not be performed tumultuously. 

VI. He had a particular regard to Jesse and his sons, for with them his private business lay, with which it is likely, he acquaintance Jesse at his first coming, and took up his lodging at his house. He spoke to all the elders to sanctify themselves, but he sanctified Jesse, and his sons, by praying with them and instructing them. Perhaps he had acquaintance with them before, and it appears, ch. 20. 29. (where we read of the sacrifices that family had,) that it was a devout religious family. Samuel assisted them in their family preparations for the public sacrifice, and, it is probable, chose out David, and anointed him, at the family solemnities, before the sacrifice, yet was not the sacrifice offered till he was recognized. Perhaps he offered private sacrifices, like Job, according to the number of them all, (Job 1. 5.) and under colour of that, called for them all to appear before him. When signal blessings are coming into a family, they ought to sanctify themselves. 

6. And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him. 7. But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. 8. Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this. 9. Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this. 10. Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass
before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The \textit{LORD} hath not chosen these. 11. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. 12. And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the \textit{LORD} said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. 13. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of \textit{the L ORD} came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

If the sons of Jesse were told that God would provide himself a king among them, as he had said, (v. 1.) we may well suppose they all made the best appearance they could; and each hoped he should be the man; but here we are told, They sent and brought him in, passed by, who stood fairest for the preferment. Eliab, the eldest, was privately presented first to Samuel, probably none being present but Jesse only, and Samuel thought he must needs be the man; (v. 6.) Surely this \textit{is the L ORD's} anointed. The prophets themselves, when they spake from under the divine direction, were as liable to mistake as other men; as Nathan, 2 Sam. 7, 9. But God rectified the prophet's mistake, by a secret messenger to his mind. (v. 7.) \textit{Look not on his countenance.} It was strange that Samuel, who had been so wretchedly disappointed in Saul, whose countenance and stature recommended him as much as any man's could, should be so forward to judge of a man by that rule. When God would please the people with a king, he chose a proper man, but when he would have one after his own heart, he should not be chosen by the outside; men judge by the sight of the eyes, but God does not; (Isa. 11. 3.) \textit{The L ORD looks on the heart; that is, 1. He knows it.} We can tell how men \\textit{look,} but he can tell what they \textit{are.} Man looks on the \textit{eyes,} so the original word is, and is pleased with the liveliness and sprightliness that appear in them; but God looks on the heart, and sees the thoughts and intents of that. 2. He judges of men by it. The good disposition of the heart, the holiness and goodness of that, recommend us to God, and are in \textit{his sight of great price.} (1 Pet. 3, 4.) not the majesty of the \textit{look,} or the strength and stature of the body; let us reckon that to be true beauty which is within, and judge of men, as far as we are capable, by their minds, not their \\textit{mien}. When Eliab was set aside, Abinadab and Shammah, and, after them, four more of the sons of Jesse, seven in all, were presented to Samuel, as likely for his purpose; but Samuel, who now attended more carefully than he did at first to the divine direction, laid them all by, \textit{The L ORD hath not chosen these.} v. 8--10. Men dispose of their honours and estates to their sons, according to their seniority of age, and priority of birth, but God does not. \textit{The elder shall serve the younger.} Had it been left to Samuel, or Jesse, to make the choice, one of these had certainly been chosen; but God will magnify his sovereignty in passing by some that were most promising, as well as in fastening on others that were less so.

II. How David at length was pitched upon. He was the youngest of all the sons of Jesse; his name signifies \textit{beloved,} for he was a type of the beloved Son. Observe, 1. How he was now employed. He was in the fields, \textit{keeping the sheepr.} (v. 11.) and was left there, though there was a sacrifice and a feast at his father's house. The youngest are commonly the fondlings of the family, but, it should seem, David was least set by of all the sons of Jesse; either they did not discern, or did not duly value, the excellent gift. Many are of such a great genius, buried in obscurity and contempt, that it is those whom men despise, and gives abundant honour to that part which lacked. The son of David was he whom men despised, the stone which the builders refused, and yet has a name above every name. David was taken from following the ewes, to feed Jacob, (Ps. 78, 71.) as Moses from keeping the flock of Jethro; an instance of his humility and industry, both of which God delights to put honor upon. We should think a military life, but God saw a pastoral life, (which gives advantage for contemplation and communion with heaven,) the best preparative for kingly power, at least for those graces of the Spirit, which are necessary to the due discharge of that trust which attends it. David was keeping sheep, though it was a time of sacrifice; for there is mercy that takes place of sacrifice.

2. How he was presented to Samuel. "We will not sit down to meat," (perhaps it was not the feast upon the sacrifice, but a common meal,) "till he come hither: for if all the rest be rejected, this must be he." He that was designed not to sit at table at all, is now stayed for as the principal guest. If God will exalt them of low degree, who can hinder?

3. What appearance he made when he did come. Notice was taken of his clothing; no doubt that was according to his employment, mean and coarse, as shepherds' costs commonly are, and he did not change his clothes as Joseph did; (Gen. 41. 14.) but he had a very honest look, not stately, as Sam's, but sweet and lovely, he was ruddy, of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to, (v. 12.) that is, he had a clear complexion, a good eye, and a lovely face; the features extraordinary, and something in his looks that was very charming. Though he was so far from using any art to help his beauty, that his employment exposed it to the sun and wind, yet nature kept its own, and, by the sweetness of his aspect, gave manifest indications of an amiable temper and disposition of mind. Perhaps his modest blush, when he was brought before Samuel, and received by him with surprising respect, made him look much the handsomer.

4. The anointing of him. The Lord told Samuel in his car, (as he had done, ch. 9, 15.) that this was he whom he must anoint, v. 12. Samuel objects not to the meanness of his education, his youth, or the little respect he had in his own family, but, in obedience to the divine command, took his horn of oil, and anointed him, (v. 13.) signifying thereby,

(1.) A divine designation to the government, after the death of Saul, of which here he gave him a full assurance. Not that he was at present invested with the royal power, but it was entailed upon him, to come to him in due time. (2.) A divine communication of gifts and graces, to fit him for the government, and to make him a type of him who was to be the Messiah, the anointed One, who received the spirit, not by measure, but \textit{without measure.} He is said to be anointed in the midst of his brethren, who yet, possibly, did not understand it as a designation to the government, and therefore did not envy David, as Joseph's brethren did him; because they saw no further marks of dignity put upon him, no, not so much as a coat of divers colours. But Bishop Patrick reads it, \textit{He anointed him from the}
midst of his brethren, that is, he singled him out from the rest, and privately anointed him, but with a charge to keep his own counsel, and not to let his own brethren know it, as by what we find (ch. 17. 28.) it should seem, Eliab did not. It is computed that David was now about twenty years old; if so, his troubles by Saul lasted ten years, for he was thirty years old when Saul died. Dr. Lightfoot reckons him to be about twenty-five, and that his troubles lasted but five years.

5. The happy effects of this anointing, the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward, v. 13. The anointing him was not an empty ceremony, but a divine power went along with that instituted sign, and he found himself immediately advanced in wisdom and courage, and decorous for the public, with all the qualifications of a prince, though not at all advanced in his outward circumstances. This would abundantly satisfy him that his election was of God. The best evidence of our being predestinated to the kingdom of glory, is, our being sealed with the Spirit of promise, and our experience of a work of grace in our hearts. Some think that his courage, by which he slew the lion and the bear, and his extraordinary skill in music, were the effects and evidences of the Spirit's coming upon him. However, this made him the sweet psalmist of Israel, 2 Sam. 23. 1. Samuel, having done this, went to Ramah in safety, and we never read of him again but once, (ch. 19. 18.) till we read of his death; now he retired to die in peace, since his eyes had seen the salvation, even the sceptre brought into the tribe of Judah.

14. But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. 15. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. 16. Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man who is a cunning player on a harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. 17. And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. 18. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him. 19. Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep. 20. And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul. 21. And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour-bearer. 22. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight. 23. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

We have here Saul falling, and David rising.

I. Here is Saul made a terror to himself; (v. 14.) The Spirit of the Lord departed from him. He having forsaken God and his duty, God, in a way of righteous judgment, withdrew from him those assistances of the good Spirit with which he was directed, animated, and encouraged in his government and wars. He lost all his good qualities. This was the effect of his rejecting God, and an evidence of his being rejected by him. Now God took his mercy from Saul, (as it is expressed, 2 Sam. 7. 15.) for when the Spirit of God was withdrawn from him, all good goes. When men grieve and quench the Spirit, by wilful sin, he departs, and will not always strive. The consequence of this was, that an evil spirit from God troubled him. They that drive the good Spirit away from them, do of course become a prey to the evil spirit. If God and his grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us. The Devil, by the divine permission, troubled and terrified Saul, by means of the corrupt humour of his body, and passions of his mind. He grew fretful, and peevish, and discontented; timorous and suspicious, ever and anon starting and trembling; he was sometimes, says Josephus, as if he had been chocked or strangled, and a perfect demoniac by fits. This made him unfit for business, precipitate in his counsels, the contempt of his enemies, and a barthen to all about him.

II. Here is David made a physician to Saul, and by that means brought to court; a physician that helped him against the worst of diseases, when none else could. David was newly anointed privately to the kingdom; it would be of use to him to go to court, and see the world: it is here brought about for him, without any contrivance of his own or his friends. Note, Those whom God designs for any service, his providence shall concur with his grace to prepare and qualify them for it.

Saul is disannointed; his servants have the honesty and courage to tell him what his distemper was; (v. 15.) An evil spirit, not by chance, but from God, and his providence, troubled thee. Now,

1. The means they all advise him to for his relief, was, music; (v. 16.) Let us have a cunning player on a harp, and David to attend his sound. His better friends had been to him, if they had advised him, since the evil spirit was from the Lord, to give all diligence to make his peace with God by true repentance, to send for Samuel to pray with him, and to intercede with God for him; then might he not only have had some present relief, but the good spirit would have returned to him. But their project is to make him merry, and so cure him. Many whose consciences are convinced and startled, are for ever ruined by such methods as these, which drown all care of the soul in the delights of sense. Yet Saul's servants did not amiss to send for music, as a help to cheer up the spirits, if they had but withal sent for a prophet to give him good counsel. And (as Bishop Hall observes) it was well they did not send for a witch or diviner, by his enchantments to cast out the evil spirit. Some demoniacal wicked practice of some that have worn the christian name, who consult the Devil in their distresses, and make hell their refuge. It will be no less a miracle of divine grace, if these who thus agree with Satan, ever break off from him again.

2. One of his servants recommended David to him, as a fit person to be employed in the use of these means, little imagining that he was the man whom Samuel meant, when he told Saul, a neighbour of his, better than he, should have the King-
1. And therefore matters, designed is therefore sent court or allayed ed Saul's before brought to Providence the mind, and cunning in playing, but a man of courage and conduct, a mighty valiant man, and prudent in matters, fit to be further preferred, and (which crowned his character) the Lord is with him. By this it appears, that though David, after he was anointed, returned to his country-business, and there remained on his head no marks of the oil, so careful was he to keep that secret, yet the workings of the Providence of the oil, could not be hid; and so made him shine in obscurity, so that all his neighbours observed with wonder the great improvements of his mind on a sudden. David, even in his shepherd's garb, is become an oracle, a champion, and every thing that is great. His fame reached the court soon, for Saul was inquisitive after such young men, ch. 14. 52. When the Spirit of God comes upon a man, he will make his face to shine.

3. David is hereupon sent for to court. And it seems,

(1.) His father was very willing to part with him, sent him very readily, and a present with him to Saul; (v. 20.) the present was, according to the usage of those times, bread and wine, (compare ch. 10. 3, 4.) therefore acceptable, because expressive of the homage and allegiance of him that sent. Probably, it was, who knew what his son David was, designed far, was aware that Providence was here-in fitting him for it, and therefore he would not force Providence by sending him to court uncalled, yet he followed Providence very cheerfully, when he saw it plainly putting him in the way of preference. Some suggest, that when Jesse received that message, Send me David thy son, he began to be afraid that Saul had got some intimation of his being anointed, and determined to drive him from his asylum; therefore Jesse sent a present to pacify him; but it is probable, that the person, whoever he was, that brought the message, gave him an account on what design he was sent for.

(2.) Saul became very kind to him, (v. 21.) loved him greatly, and designed to make him his armour bearer, and (contrary to the manner of the king, ch. 8. 11.) got his father's leave to keep him in his service. (v. 22.) Let David, I pray thee, stand before me. And good reason he had to respect him, for he did him a great deal of service with his music, v. 23. His instrumental music with his harp is the only kind mentioned, but it should seem by the account Josephus gives of it, that he added vocal music to it, and sung hymns, probably divine hymns, songs of praise, to his harp. David's music was Saul's physic. [1.] Music has a natural tendency to compose and exhilarate the mind, when it is disturbed and saddened. Elishua used it for the calming of his spirits, 2 Kings 3. 15. On some it has a greater influence and effect than on others, and, probably, Saul was one of those. Not that it charmed the evil spirit, but it made his spirit sedate, and allayed those tumults of the animal spirits, by which the Devil had advantage against him. The beams of the sun (it is the learned Rocharp's comparison cannot be cut with a sword, quenched with water, or blown out with wind, but, by closing the window-shutters, they may be kept out of the chamber. Music cannot work upon the Devil, but it may shut up the passages by which he had access to the mind.

[2.] David's music was extraordinary, and in mercy to him, that he might gain a reputation at court, as one that had the Lord with him. God made his performance in music more successful, in this case, than that of others would have been. Saul found, even after he had conceived an enmity to David, that no one else could do him the same service, (ch. 19. 9, 10.) which was a great aggravation of his outrage against him. It is pity that music, which may be so serviceable to the good temper of the mind, should ever be used. We are to the sun of vanity and luxury, and made an occasion of drawing the heart away from God and serious things; if that be to any the effect of it, it drives away the good Spirit, not the evil Spirit.

CHAP. XVII.

David is the man whom God now delights to honour, for he is a man after his own heart. We read in this chapter, how Providence made him famous in the court; we read in this chapter, how Providence made him much more famous in the camp, and, by both means, fitted him for the throne to which he was designated. In the court he was only Saul's physician, but in the camp, Israel's champion, there he fairly fought, and beat Goliath of Gath. In the story observe, I. What a figure Goliath made, and how daringly he challenged the armies of Israel, v. 1.-11. II. What a mean figure David made, when Providence brought him to the army, v. 12.-30. III. The unparalleled bravery wherewith David undertook to encounter this Philistine, v. 31.-39. IV. The pious resolution with which he attacked him, v. 40.-47. V. The glorious victory he obtained over him with a sling and a stone, and the advantage which the Israelites therein took, v. 48.-51. VI. The great notice which was hereupon taken of David at court, v. 55. 58.

1. NOW the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephesdamim. 2. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines.

3. And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them. 4. And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. 5. And he had a helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. 6. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. 7. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him. 8. And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am not I a Philistine, and you servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. 9. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. 10. And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day: give me a man, that we may fight together. 11. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the
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Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.

It was not long ago that the Philistines were soundly beaten, and put to the worse, before Israel, and would have been totally routed, if Saul's rashness had not prevented; but here we have them making head again. Observe, 

1. How they defied Israel with their armies, v. 1. They made a descent upon the Israelites' country, and possessed themselves, as it should seem, of some part of it, for they encamped in a place which be-longed to Judah. Israel's ground had never been footing for Philistine armies, if Israel had been faithful to their God. The Philistines (it is probable) had heard that Samuel had fallen out with Saul, and for this reason, and because he had continued to make this attempt for the retrieving of the credit they had lately lost. The enemies of the church are watchful to take all advantages, and they never have greater advantages, than when her protectors have provoked God's Spirit and prophets to leave them. Saul mustered his forces, and faced them, v. 2, 3. And now we must take notice, 1. That evil spirit, for the present, had left Saul, ch. 16. 23. David's harp having given him some relief, perhaps, the alarms and affairs of the war prevented the return of the distemper. Business is a good antidote against melancholy. Let the mind have something without to fasten on, and employ itself about, and it will be less in danger of prey ing upon itself. God, in mercy to Israel, suspended the judgment if a while; for how distracted must the affairs of the public have been, if, at this juncture, the prince had been distracted? 2. That David, for the present, was returned to Beth-lehem, and had left the court, v. 15. When Saul had no further occasion to use him for the relief of his distemper, though, being anointed, he had a very good private reason, and, having a grant of the place of Saul's armour-bearer, he had a very plausible pretence to have continued his attendance, as a retainee to the court, yet he went home to Beth-lehem, and returned to keep his father's sheep; this was a rare instance, in a young man that stood so fair for preferment, of humility, and affection to his parents. He knew better than most do, how to come down again after he had begun to rise, and strangely preferred the retirements of a pastoral life before all the pleasures and gaieties of the court. None more fit for honour than he, nor that deserved it better, and yet none more desirous of it.

II. How they defied Israel with their champion Goliath, whom they took as proud of, as he was of himself, hoping by him to recover their reputation and dominion. Perhaps the army of the Israelites was superior in number and strength to that of the Philistines, which made the Philistines determine a battle, and stand by with their design rather to put the issue upon a single combat, in which, having such a champion, they hoped to gain the victory. Now concerning this champion, ob serve,

1. His prodigious size. He was the son of the sons of Anak, who at Gath kept their ground in Joshua's time, (Josh. 11. 22.) and kept up a race of giants there, of which Goliath was the head, and it is apparent, by the proportions of the largest. He was in height six cubits and a span, v. 4. The learned bishop Cumberland has made it out, that the scripture cubit was above twenty-one inches, (above three inches more than our half-yard,) and a span was half a cubit, by which computation, Goliath wanted but eight inches of four yards in height, eleven feet and four inches.

es. A monstrous stature, and which made him very formidable, especially if he had strength and spirit proportionable.

2. His armour; art, as well as nature, made him terrible. He was well furnished with defensive armours, v. 5, 6. A helmet of brass on his head, a coat of mail, made of brass plates laid over one another, like the scales of a fish; and because his legs would not bear him upon the back of an ordinary man, he wore brass boots, and a large corselet of brass about his neck. The coat is said to weigh five thousand shekels, and a shekel was half an ounce avoirdupois. A vast weight for a man to carry, all the other parts of his armour being proportionable. But some think it should be translated, not the weight of the coat, but the value of it, was five thousand shekels; so much it cost. This defensive armour was all upon the precedent, of which the description only is here described, v. 7. It was like a weaver's beam; his arm could manage that, which an ordinary man could scarcely heave. His shield only, which was the lightest of all his accoutrements, was carried before him by his esquire, probably, for state; for he that was clad in brass, little needed a shield.

3. His challenge. The Philistines having chosen him for their champion, to save themselves from the hazard of a battle, he here throws down the gauntlet, and bids defiance to the armies of Israel, v. 8-10. He came into the valley that lay between the camps, and his voice, probably, being as much stronger than other people's as his arm was, he cried so as to make them all hear him. Give me a man, that we may fight together. He looks upon himself with admiration, because he was so much taller and ponderous than all about him; his heart (says Bishop Hall) nothing but a lump of proud flesh. He looks upon Israel with disdain, because they had none among them of such a monstrous bulk, and defies them to find a man among them, bold enough to enter the lists with him. (1.) He upbraids them with their folly in drawing an army together, "Why are ye come to set the battle in array? How dare you oppose the mighty Philistines?" Or, "Why should the two armies engage, when the controversy may be sooner decided, with only the expense of one life, and the hazard of another?" (2.) He offers to put the war entirely upon the issue of the duel he proposes; "If your champion kills me, we will be your servants; if I kill him, you shall be our." This (says Bishop Patrick) was only a bravado, for no nation would be willing thus to venture its fate and its army, when there was a single man who was incapable; notwithstanding Goliath's stipulation here, when he was killed, the Philistines did not stand to his word, nor submit themselves servants to Israel. When he boasts, I am a Philistine, and you servants to Saul, he would have it thought a great piece of condescension in him, who was a chief ruler, to enter the lists with an Israelite; for he looked on them as no better than slaves. The Chaldee paraphrase brings him in, boasting that he was just such a man, that had killed Hophni and Phinehas, and taken the ark prisoner; but that the Philistines had never given him so much as the command of a regiment in recompense of his services, whereas Saul had been made king for his services: "Let him therefore take up the challenge." 4. The terror this struck upon Israel; (v. 11.) Saul and all Israel were greatly afraid. The people would not have been dismayed, but that they observed Saul's courage failed him; and it is not to be expected, that if the leader be a coward, the followers should be bold. We found before, when the spirit of the Lord came upon Saul, (ch. 11. 6.) none could be more daring, more forward, to answer the challenge of Nahash the Ammonite; but now
that the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him, 

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even the big looks and big words of a single Philis- 
tine made him change colour. But where was Jon-
athan all this while? Why did he not accept the 
challenge, who, in the late war, had so bravely en-
gaged a whole army of Philistines? Doubtless, he 

felt not himself stirred up of God to it, as he did 
then. As the best, so the bravest men, are no more 
than what God makes them. Jonathan must now 
sit still, because the honour of engaging Goliath is 
reserved for David. In great and good actions, the 
wind of the Spirit blows when and where he listeth. 

Now the pious Israelites lament their king’s breach with Samuel.

12. Now David was the son of that Eph-
rahite of Bethlehem-Judah, whose name 
was Jesse; and he had eight sons: and the 
man went among men for an old man in the 
days of Saul. 13. And the three eldest 
sons of Jesse went and followed Saul to the 
battle: and the names of his three sons that 
got to the battle were Eliab the first-born; 
and next unto him, Abinadab; and the 
third, Shammah. 14. And David was the 
youngest: and the three eldest followed 
Saul. 15. But David went and returned 
from Saul to feed his father’s sheep at Beth-
lehem. 16. And the Philistine drew near 
morning and evening, and presented himself 
forty days. 17. And Jesse said unto David 
his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah 
of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, 
and run to the camp to thy brethren: 18. 
And carry these ten cheeses unto the cap-
tain of their thousand, and look how thy 
brethren fare, and take their pledge. 19. 
Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Is-
rael, were in the valley of Elah, fighting 
with the Philistines. 20. And David rose 
up early in the morning, and left the sheep 
with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse 
had commanded him: and he came to the 
trench as the host was going forth to the 
fight, and shouted for the battle. 21. For 
Israel and the Philistines had put the battle 
in array, army against army. 22. And Da-
vid left his carriage in the hand of the keep-
er of the carriage, and ran into the army, 
and came and saluted his brethren. 23. 
And as he talked with them, behold, there 
came up the champion, (the Philistine of 
Gath, Goliath by name,) out of the armies 
of the Philistines, and spake according to the 
same words: and David heard them. 
24. And all the men of Israel, when they 
saw the man, fled from him, and were sore 
afraid. 25. And the men of Israel said, 
Have ye seen this man that is come up? 
surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it 

shall be, that the man who killeth him, the 
knight will enrich him with great riches, and 

will give him his daughter, and make his fa-
ther’s house free in Israel. 26. And David 
spoke to the men that stood by him, saying, 

What shall be done to the man that killeth 
this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach 
from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised 
Philistine, that he should defy the armies of 
the living God? 27. And the people an-
swered him after this manner, saying, So 
shall it be done to the man that killeth him. 
28. And Eliab, his eldest brother, heard when 
he spake unto the men; and Eliab’s anger was 
kindled against David, and he said, Why 
camest thou down hither? and with 
whom hast thou left those few sheep in the 
wilderness? I know thy pride, and the 
naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art 
cometh down to see the battle. 29. And David 
said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause? 
30. And he turned from him toward another, and spoke 
after the same manner: and the people an-
swered him again after the former manner.

Forty days the two armies lay encamped facing 
one another, each advantageously posted; but nei-
ther forward to engage. Either they were parley-
ing, and treating of an accommodation, or waiting 
for recruits; and perhaps there were frequent 
skirmishes between small detached parties. All 
this while, twice a day, morning and evening, did 
the insulting champion appear in the field, and re-
peat his challenge; his own heart growing more and 
more proud for his not being answered, and the 
people of Israel more and more timorous; while 
God designed hereby to ripen him for destruction, 
and to make Israel’s deliverance the more illus-
rious. All this while, David is keeping his father’s 
sheep, but at the end of forty days, Providence 
brings him to the field, to win and wear the laurel, 
which no other Israelite dares venture for.

We have in these verses,

I. The present state of his family. His father 
was old, v. 12, he went among men for an old man, 
was taken notice of for his great age, above what 
was usual at that time, and therefore was excused 
from public services, and went not in person to the 
wars, but sent his sons; he had the honours paid 
him that were due to his age, his hoary head was a 
crown of glory to him. David’s three elder breth-
ren, who perhaps envied his place at the court, got 
their father to send him home, and let them go 
to the camp, where they hoped to signalize them-
sewes, and eclipse him; (v. 13, 14.) while David 
himself was in far from being on public services, 
he had done his prince, or ambitious of further 
preference, that he not only returned from court to 
the obscurity of his father’s house, but to the care, 
and toil, and (as it proved, v. 34.) the peril of 
keeping his father’s sheep. It was the praise of this 
humility, that it came after he had the honour of a 
courtier; and the reward of it, that it came before 
the honour of a courtier; before honour is humility. 
Now he had that opportunity of meditation and 
prayer, and other acts of devotion, which fitted him 
for what he was destined to, more than all the mili-
tary exercises of that inglorious camp could do.

II. The orders his father gave him to go visit his 
brothers in the camp. He did not himself ask 
leave to go, to satisfy his curiosity, or to gain ex-
perience and make observations; but his father sent 
him on a mean and homely errand, which any of
his servants might have done. He must carry some bread and cheese to his brethren, ten loaves with some parched corn for themselves, (v. 17.) and ten cheeses, which it seems, he thought too good for them, but might be acceptable as a present to their colonel, v. 18. David must still be the drudge of the family, though he was to be the greatest ornament of it. He had not so much as an ass, at command, to carry his load, but must take it on his back, and yet run to the camp. Jesse, we thought, was privy to his being anointed, and yet industriously kept him thus mean and obscure, probably, to hide him from the eye of suspicion and envy, knowing that he was anointed to a crown in reversion. He must observe how his brethren fared, whether they were not reduced to short allowance, now that the encampment continued so long, that, if need were, he might send them more provisions. And he must take their pledge, that is, if they had pawned any thing, he must redeem it; take notice of their company, so some observe, whom they associate with, and what sort of life they lead; perhaps David, like Joseph, had formerly brought to his father their evil report, and now he sends him to inquire concerning their manners. See the care of pious parents about their children when they are abroad from them, especially in places of temptation; they are solicitous how they conduct themselves, and particularly what company they keep. Let the children of the virtuous receive accordingly, remembering, that, when they are from under their parents' eye, they are still under God's eye.

III. David's dutiful obedience to his father's command. His prudence and care made him be up early, v. 20, and yet not to leave his sheep without a keeper, so faithful was he in a few things, and therefore the fitter to be made ruler over many things. Though, it seems, he thought too good for them, he pretended to command. God's providence brought him to the camp very seasonably, when both sides had set the battle in array, and, as it should seem, were more likely to come to an engagement than they had yet been, all the forty days, v. 21. Both sides were now preparing to fight. Jesse little thought of sending his son to the army, just at this critical hour; nor was it then wise, in the circumstances of actions and affairs, so as to serve his designs of securing the interests of Israel, and advancing the man after his own heart. Now observe here,

1. How brisk and lively David was, v. 22. Whatever articles he brought, he honestly took care of, and left them with those that had the charge of the bag and baggage; but though he had come a long journey with a great load, he ran into the army, to see what was doing there, and to pay his respects to his brethren. Seeest thou a man thus diligent in his business? He is in the way of preferment, he shall stand before kings.

2. How bold and daring the Philistine was, v. 23. Now that the armies were drawn out into a line of battle, he appeared first to renew his challenge, vainly imagining that he was in the eager chase of his own glory and triumph, whereas really he was but courting his own destruction.

3. How timorous and faint-hearted the men of Israel were. Though they had, for forty days together, been used to his haughty looks and threatening language, and, having seen no execution done by either, might have learned to despise both; yet, upon his approach, they fled from him and were sore afraid, v. 24. One Philistine could never thus have chased a thousand Israelites, and put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock, being treacherously forsaken by them, had justly sold them and shut them up, Deut. 32. 30.

4. How high Saul bid for a champion. Though he was the tallest of all the men of Israel, and, if he had not been so, while he kept close to God, might himself have taken up the gauntlet which the insolent Philistine threw down, Jethro the priest of the Lord being departed from him, he durst not do it, nor press Jonathan to do it: but whoever will do it, shall have as good pre furnish as he can give him, v. 25. If the hope of wealth and honour will prevail with any man to expose himself so far, as it is proclaimed, that the bold adventurer, if he come hither shall marry the king's daughter, and have a good portion with her, but he, the son of that woman, whether he come off or no, his father's house shall be free in Israel, from all toll, tribute, custom, and services to the crown; or shall be ennobled, and advanced to the peersage.

5. How much concerned David was to assert the honour of God and Israel against the impudent challenges of this champion. He asked what reward was promised to him that should slay this Philistine, v. 26. Though he knew already; not because he was ambitious of the honours, but because he would have it taken notice of, and reported to Saul, how much he resented the indignity hereby done to Israel and Israel's God. He might have presumed so far upon his acquaintance and interest at court, as to have gone himself to Saul to offer his service; but his modesty would not let him so presume. But he would be content to be one of his son's proverbs, Not put forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men; (Prov. 25. 6.) yet his zeal put him upon that method which, he hoped, would bring him into this great engagement. Two considerations, it seems, fired David with a holy indignation. (1.) That the challenger was one that was uncircumcised, a stranger to God, and out of covenant with him. (2.) That the man thus coming against the living God devoted to him, employed by him and for him, so that the affronts done to them, reflected upon the living God himself, and that he cannot bear. When therefore some had told him, what was the reward proposed for killing the Philistine, (v. 27.) he asked others, (v. 30.) with the same resentment, which he expected would at length come to Saul's ear.

6. How he was humbled, and discouraged by his elder brother Eliab, who, taking notice of his forwardness, fell into a passion upon it, and gave David very abusive language, v. 28. Consider it,

(1.) As the fruit of Eliab's jealousy. He was the eldest brother and David the youngest; and, perhaps, it had been customary with him (as it is with too many elder brothers) to trample upon him, and take every occasion to chide him. But those who thus exalt themselves over the younger, perhaps live to see themselves, by a righteous providence, abased, and those whom they were abusive to, exalted. Time may come when the elder may serve the younger. But Eliab was now vexed that his younger brother should speak these bold words against the Philistine which he himself durst not say. He knew what honour David had had already in the court, and if he could only conduct himself well in the camp, (from which he thought he had found means effectually to seclude him, v. 15.) the glory of his elder brother would be eclipsed and stained; and therefore, (such is the nature of jealousy,) he would rather that Goliath should triumph over Israel, than that David should be the man that should triumph over him. Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who can stand before envy, especially the envy of a brother, which Jonathan, the son of Joseph, and David here, experienced the keenness of? See Prov. 18. 19. It is very ill-favoured language that Eliab here gives him; not only unjust
and unkind, but, at this time, basely ungrateful; for David was now sent by his father, as Joseph by his, on a kind visit to his brethren. Eliab intended, in what he said, not only to grieve and discourage David himself, and quench that noble fire which he perceived glowing in his breast, but to represent him to those about him as an idle proud lad, not fit to be taken notice of. He gives them to understand that his business was only to keep sheep, and falsely insinuates that he was a careless, unfaithful, shepherd; though he had left his charge in good hands, v. 20, yet he must tauntingly be asked, with whom hast thou left those few sheep? Though he came down now to the camp in obedience to his father and Kindness to his brethren, and Eliab knew it, yet this is turned to his reproach; "Thou art come down, not to do any service, but to gratify thy rash and envious passions, and to look about thyself, and from thence he will infer the pride and naughtiness of his heart, and pretends to know it as certainly as if he were in his bosom. David could appeal to God concerning his humility and sincerity, (Ps. 17. 3-15.) and at this time gave proofs of both, and yet could not escape this hard character from his own brother. See the folly, absurdity, and wickedness, of his proud and envious passion; how groundless its jealousies and suspicions are, how unfit its characters, how injurious its representations, how bitter its invectives, and how indecent its language. God, by his grace, keep us from such a spirit! (2.) As a trial of David's meekness, patience, and constancy; a short trial it was, and he approved himself well in it: for, [1.] He bore the provocation with admirable temper; v. 29. What have I now done? What fault have I committed, for which I should thus be chidden? Is there not a cause for me coming to the camp, when my father sent me? Is there not a cause, for my resenting the injury done to Israel's honour by Goliath's challenge? He had right and reason on his side, and knew it, and therefore did not render railing for railing, but with a soft answer turned away his brother's wrath. This conquest of his own passion was, in some respects, more honourable than that of Goliath. He that hath rule over his own spirit, is better than the mighty. It was no time for David to quarrel with his brother, when the Philistines were upon them. The more threatening the church's enemies are, the more forbearing her friends should be with one another. [2.] He broke through the discouragement with admirable resolution. He would not be driven off from his thoughts of engaging the Philistines by the ill-will of his brother. Those that undertake great and public services, must not think it strange if they be discomfited and opposed by those from whom they had reason to expect support and assistance; but must humbly go on with their work, in the face not only of their enemies' threats, but of their friends' slights and suspicions.

31. And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul; and he sent for him. 32. And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him: thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. 33. And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. 34. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; 35. And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. 36. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. 37. David said, moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee. 38. And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put a helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. 39. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.

David is at length presented to Saul for his champion, (v. 31.) and he bravely undertakes to fight the Philistine; (v. 32.) Let no man's heart fail because of him: it would have reflected too much upon the valour of his prince, if he had said, Let not thy heart fail; therefore he speaks generally, Let no man's heart fail. A little shepherd, come but this morning from keeping sheep, has more courage than all the mighty men of Israel, and encourages them. Thus does God often send good words to his Israel, and do great things for them, by the weak and foolish things of the world. David only desires a commission from Saul to go and fight with the Philistine, but says nothing to him of the reward he had proposed, because that was not the thing he was ambitious of, but only the honour of serving God and his country, nor would he seem to question Saul's generosity.

Two things David had to do with Saul; I. To get clear of the objection Saul made against his undertaking. "Alas," says Saul, "thou hast a good heart to it, but art by no means an equal match for this Philistine: to engage with him is to throw away a life which may better be reserved for more agreeable services: thou art but a youth, rash and inconsiderate, weak and unversed in arms; he is a man that hath the head and hand of a man, a sword of war, trained up and inured to it from his youth, (v. 33.) and how canst thou expect but that he will be too hard for thee?"

David, as he had answered his brother's passion with meekness, so he answered Saul's fear with faith, and gives a reason of the hope which was in him, that he should conquer the Philistine to the satisfaction of Saul. We have reason to fear that Saul had not been acquainted with, or regard to, the word of God, and therefore David, in reasoning with him, fetched not his arguments and encouragements from thence, how much soever he had an eye to that in his own mind: but he argues from experience; though he was but a youth, and never in the wars, yet perhaps he had done as much as the killing of Goliath came to; for he had had, by divine assistance, spirit enough to encounter, and strength enough to subdue, a lion once, and another time a bear, that robbed him of his lambs: (v. 34-36.) to these he compares this uncircumcised Philistine, looks upon him as much a ravenous beast as either of them, and therefore doubts not but to deal as easily with him; and hereby gives Saul to understand...
stand, that he was not so unex-erienced in hazard-ous conflicts, as he took him to be.

1. He tells his story like a man of spirit; he is not ashamed of the attack on his father's sheep, which his brother had just now upbraided him with; so far is he from concealing it, that from his employment as a shepherd, he fetches the experience that now animated him. But he lets those about him know that he was no ordinary shepherd. Whatever our profession or calling is, be it ever so mean, we should labour to excel in it, and do the business of it in the best manner.

2. (1.) He approved himself very careful and tender of his flock, though it was not his own, but his father's. He could not see a lamb in distress but he would venture his life to rescue it. This temper made him fit to be a king, to whom the lives of his subjects should be dear, and their blood precious, (Ps. 72. 14,) and fit to be a type of Christ the good Shepherd, who gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom, (Isa. 40. 11,) and who not only ventured, but laid down his life for the sheep. Thus too was David fit to be an example to ministers, with the utmost care and diligence to watch for souls, that they be not a prey to the roaring lion. (2.) He approved himself very bold and brave in the defence of his flock. This was that which he was now concerned to give proof of, and better evidence could not be demanded of this! Only servant not only rescued the lambs, but, to revenge the injury, slew both the lion and the bear.

3. He applies his story like a man of faith. He owns (v. 37.) it was the Lord that delivered him from the lion and the bear; to him he gives the praise of that great achievement, and from thence he infers, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. The lion and the bear were enemies one of the other, and it was in defence of my own interest that I attacked them; but this Philistine is an enemy to God and Israel, defies the armies of the living God, and it is for their honour that I attack him. Note, (1.) Our experiences ought to be approved by us, as our encouragements to trust in God, and venture in the way of duty. He that has delivered, does and will. (2.) By the care which common Providence takes of the inferior creatures, and which it gives them to live in, we may be encouraged to depend upon that special Providence which surrounds the Israel of God. He that sets bounds to the waves of the sea and the rage of wild beasts, can and will restrain the wrath of wicked men. St. Paul seems to allude to this of David; (2 Tim. 4. 17, 18.) 'I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion, and therefore, I trust, the Lord shall deliver me.' And perhaps David here takes some of the story of Samson, and encouraged himself with it; for his slaying of a lion was a happy presage of his many illustrious victories over the Philistines in single combat.

Thus David took off Saul's objection against his undertaking, and gained a commission to fight the Philistine, with which Saul gave him a hearty good wish; since he would not venture himself, he prayed for him that would, Go, and the Lord be with thee: a good word, if it was not spoken customarily, and in a formal manner, as too often it is.

If. But David has somewhat to do likewise, to get clear of the armour wherewith Saul would, by all means, have him dressed up, when he went upon this great action; (v. 38.) He armed David with his armour; not that which he wore himself, the disproportion of his stature would not admit that, but such as he kept in his armoury; little thinking that he on whom he now put his helmet and coat of mail must shortly inherit his crown and robe. David being not yet resolved which way to attack his enemy, girded on his sword, not knowing, as yet, but he should have occasion to make use of it; but he found the armour would but incumber him, and would be rather a burden than his defence, and therefore he desires leave of Saul to put them off again; I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them, that is, ‘I have never been accustomed to such accoutrements as these.' We may suppose Saul's armour to be very fine and very firm; but what good would it do David, if it were not fit, or if he knew not how to manage himself in it? Hence he proposes that him at things above their education and usage, and covet the attire and armour of princes, forget that that is the best for us, which we are fit for and accustomed to; if we had our desire, we should wish to be in our own coat again, and should say, 'We cannot go with these;' we had therefore better go without them.

40. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine. 41. And the Philistine came on, and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him. 42. And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. 43. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field. 45. Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. 46. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. 47. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.

We are now coming near this famous combat, and have in these verses, the preparations and remonstrances made on both sides.

I. The preparations made on both sides for the encounter. The Philistine was already fixed, as he had been daily for the last forty days; well might he go with his armour, for he had sufficiently proved it. Only we are told, (v. 41.) that he came on and drew near; a signal, it is likely, being given that his challenge was accepted, and, as if he distrusted his helmet and coat of mail, a man went before him, carrying his shield; for his own hands are full with his sword and spear, v. 45. But what
arms and ammunition is David furnished with? Truly none but what he brought with him as a shepherd; no breast-plate, or corselet, but his plain shepherd's coat; no spear, but his staff; no sword or bow, but his sling; no quiver, but his scrip; nor any arrows, but, instead of them, five smooth stones picked out of the brook, v. 40. By this it appeared that his confidence was purely in the power of God, by faith in his own strength, and in the providence of his own, and that, now at length, he who put it into his heart to fight the Philistine, put it into his head with what weapons to do it.

II. The conference which precedes the encounter. In which observe,

1. How very proud Goliath was. (1.) With what scorn he looked upon his adversary, v. 42. He looked upon labour, expecting to meet some tall strong man; but when he saw what a man he met with whom he was to engage, he disdained him, thought it below him to enter the lists with him, fearing that the contemptibleness of the champion he contended with would lessen the glory of his victory. He took notice of his person, that he was but a youth, not come to his strength, ruddy and of a fair countenance, fitter to accompany the virgins of David in their dances, (if mixed dancing was then in use,) than to lead on the host of Israel in their battles. He took notice of his array with great indignation; (v. 43.) "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with smite? Dost thou think to beat me as easily as thou dost thy shepherd's dog?" (2.) With what confidence he presumed upon his success. He cursed David by his gods, imprecating the impotent vengeance of his idols against him, thinking it those shot-balls thrown about him would secure him success; and therefore, in confidence of that, he darts his menaces, as if threatening words would kill; (v. 44.) "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air; it will be a tender and delicate feast for them." Thus the security and presumption of fools destroy them.

2. How very pious David was. His speech savours nothing of ostentation, but God is all in all in it, v. 45-47.

(1.) He derives his authority from God. "I come to thee, by warrant and commission from heaven, in the name of the Lord, who has called me to, and animated me for, this undertaking; who, by his universal providence, is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts; and therefore has power to do what he pleases; and, by the special grace of his covenant, is the God of the armies of Israel, and therefore has this command, and will so employ his power for their protection, and against those who have impiously defied them." The name of God David relied on, as Goliath did on his sword and spear. See Ps. 29. 7. —18. 10. 11.

(2.) He depends for success upon God, v. 46. David speaks with as much assurance as Goliath had done, but upon better ground; it is his faith that says, "This is the Lord which delivereth the into my hand; and not only thy carcasse, but the carcasses of the host of the Philistines, shall be given to the birds and beasts of prey."

(3.) He devotes the praise and glory of all to God. He did not, like Goliath, seek his own honour, but the honour of God; not doubting but by the success of this action, [1.] All the world should be made to know that there is a God, and that the God of Israel is a living and true God, and all other pretended deities are vanity and a lie. [2.] All Israel (whom he calls not this army, but this assembly, or church, because they were now religiously attending the going of their God and King, as they used to do in the sanctuary) all Israel shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear, (v. 47.) but can, when he pleases, save without either and against both, Ps. 46. 9. David addresses himself to this combat rather as a priest that was going to offer a sacrifice to the justice of God, than as a soldier that was going to engage an enemy of his country.

48. And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. 49. And David put his hand into his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. 50. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David. 51. Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled. 52. And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou came to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron: and the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron. 53. And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they spoiled their tents. 54. And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem: but he put his armour in his tent. 55. And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell. 56. And the king said, Inquire thou whose son the stripling is 57. And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand. 58. And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Beth-lehemite.

Here is, 1. The engagement between the two champions, v. 48. To this engagement, (1.) The Philistine advanced with a great deal of state and gravity: if he must encounter a pignym, yet it shall be with the magnificence of a giant and a grandee. This is intimated in the manner of expression. He arose, and came, and drew nigh, like a stalking mountain, overlaide with brass and iron, to meet David. (2.) David advanced with no less activity and cheerfulness, as one that aimed more to do execution, than to make a figure; he hasted, and ran, being lightly clad, to meet the Philistine. We may imagine with what tenderness and compassion the Israelites saw such a pleasing youth as this, throwing himself into the mouth of destruction; but he knew whom he had believed, and for whom he acted.

I. SAMUEL, XVII.
I. SAMUEL, XVIII.

2. The fall of Goliath in this engagement. He was in no haste, because in no fear, but confident that he should soon at one stroke cleave his adversary's head: but while he was preparing to do it solemnly, David did his business effectually, without and not by stone with sword, shot into the forehead, and, in the twinkling of an eye, fetched him to the ground, v. 49. He knew there were famous slingers in Israel, (Judg. 20. 16.) yet was either so forgetful or presumptuous, as to go with the beaver of his helmet open, and thither, to the only part left exposed, not so much David's art, as God's providence, directed the stone, and brought it with such force that it sunk into his head, notwithstanding the impudence with which his forehead was brazened. See how frail and uncertain life is, even then when it thinks itself best fortified, and how quickly, how easily, and with how small a matter, the passage may be opened for life to go out and death to enter. Goliath himself has not power over the spirit to retain the spirit, Eccl. 8. 8.

Let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor the armed man in his armour. See how God resists the proud, and pours contempt upon those that bid defiance to him and his people. None ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered. One of the rabbins thinks, that when Goliath said to David, Come, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air, he drew up his head so hastily, that his helmet fell off; and so left his broad forehead a fair mark for David. To complete the execution, he drew the sword, and cut off his head, and put it upon his spear; of this he made a trophy for David, and with it cut off his head, v. 51. What need had David to take a sword of his own? His enemy's sword shall serve his purpose, when he has occasion for one. God is greatly glorified, when his proud enemies are cut off with their own sword, and he makes their own tongues to fall upon them, Ps. 64. 8. David's victory over Goliath was typical of the triumphs of Christ, and of David over Satan and all the hosts of darkness, with whom he spoiled, and made a show of them openly; (Col. 2. 15.) and we through him are more than conquerors.

3. The defeat of the Philistines' army hereupon, They relied wholly upon the strength of their champion, and therefore, when they saw him slain, they did not, as Goliath had offered, throw down their shields and be gone; but they pursued him down into Israel (v. 9.) but took flight, being wholly dispirited, and thinking it to no purpose to oppose one before whom such a mighty man was fallen: they fled, (v. 51.) and this put life into the Israelites; they shouted and pursued them, v. 52. David, it is probable, leading them on in the pursuit, even to the gates of their own cities. In their return from the chase, they seized all their baggage, plundered them of their garments, (v. 53.) and enriched themselves with the spoil.

4. David's disposal of his trophies, v. 54. He brought the head of the Philistine to Jerusalem, to be a terror to the Jebusites, who held the stronghold of Zion: it is probable that he carried it in triumph to other cities; his armour he laid up in his tent; only the sword was preserved behind the ephod in the tabernacle as consecrated to God, and a memento of the victory was to remain there; (21. 19.)

5. The notice that was taken of David. Though he had been at court formerly, yet, having been for some time absent, (v. 15.) Saul had forgotten him, being melancholy and mindless, and little thinking that his musician should have spirit enough to be his champion; and therefore, as if he had never seen him before, he asked whose son he was. Abner was a stranger to him, but brought him to Saul himself; (v. 37.) and he gave a modest account of himself, v. 58. And now he was introduced to the court with much greater advantages than before; in which he owned God's hand performing all things for him.

CHAP. XVIII.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we left David in triumph; now in this chapter we have, I. The improvement of his triumphs; he soon became. 1. Saul's constant attendant, v. 2. 2. Jonathan's covenant friend, v. 1, 3, 4. 3. The darling of his country, v. 5, 7, 16. II. The allays of his triumphs. v. 26-29. Saul's enmity; David performed his conditions bravely, (v. 26-27.) and grew to be more and more esteemed, v. 28-30. Still David is rising, but (as all that aim at the crown of life must expect) he had a great deal of difficulty and opposition to grapple with.

1. And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 2. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. 3. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. 4. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his girdle. And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war; and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

David was anointed to the crown, to take it out of Saul's hand, and over Jonathan's head; and yet here we find this.

I. That Saul, who was now in possession of the crown, reposed a confidence in him, God so ordering it, that he might by his preference at court be prepared for future service. Saul now took him home with him, and would not suffer him to return again to his retirement, v. 2. And David having signalized himself above the men of war, in taking up the challenge which they declined, Saul set him over the men of war; (v. 5.) not that he made him general. Abner was in that post, but perhaps captain of the life-guard; or, though he was youngest, he ordered him to have the precedence, in recompense of his great services. He employed him in the affairs of government; and David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, showing himself as dutiful as he was bold and courageous. Those that hope to rule, must first learn to obey. He had approved himself to Jesse his father, and now a dutiful servant to Saul his master; those that are good in one relation, it is to be hoped will be so in another.

II. That Jonathan, who was heir to the crown, entered into covenant with him: God so ordering it, that David's way might be the clearer, when his rival was his friend.

1. Jonathan conceived an extraordinary kindness and affection for him, v. 1. When he had made an end of speaking to Saul, he fell perfectly in love.
with him. Whether it refers to his conference with Saul before the battle, (ch. 17. 34-37.) or to that after, (v. 18.) in which he spake much more as if that were set down, is uncertain.

But in both David expressed himself with so much prudence, modesty, and piety, such a felicity of expression, with so much boldness and yet so much sweetness, and all this so natural and unaffected, and the more surprising because of the disadvantages of his education and appearance, that the soul od Jonathan was immediately knit unto the soul of David. Doubtless the man of whom David emptied himself on a Philistine army with the same faith and bravery that David had now attacked a Philistine giant: so that there was between them a very near resemblance of affections, dispositions, and counsels, which made their spirits unite so easily, so quickly, so closely, that they seemed but as one soul in two bodies. None had so much reason to dislike David as Jonathan had, because he was to put him by the crown, yet none regards him more. Those that are governed in their love by principles of wisdom and grace, will not suffer their affections to be alienated by any secular regards or considerations: the greater thoughts will swallow up and overrule the lesser.

2. He testified his love to David by a generous present he made him, v. 4. He was concerned to see so great a soul, though lodged in so fair a body, yet depressed and unadorned, and David a shepherd, and not a soldier; therefore he stripped himself of them to dress David up a soldier, and not a shepherd, and therefore takes care to put him speedily into the habit of a courtier, for he gave him a robe, and of a soldier, for he gave him, instead of his staff and sling, a sword and bow, and, instead of his shepherd's scrip, a girdle, either a belt or a sash; and, which made the present much more obliging, they were the same that he himself had worn, and (as a presage of what would follow,) he enriched himself of them to enrich David in them. Saul's would not fit him, but Jonathan's did; their bodies were of a size, a circumstance which well agreed with the suitableness of their minds. When Saul put those marks of honour on David, he put them off again, because he would first earn them, and then wear them; but now that he had given proofs of the spirit of a prince and soldier, he was not ashamed to wear the habits of a prince and soldier. David is seen in Jonathan's clothes, that all may take notice he is Jonathan's second self. Our Lord Jesus had thus showed his love to us, that he stripped himself to clothe us, emptied himself to enrich us; nor he did more than Jonathan, he clothed himself with our rags, whereas Jonathan did not put on David's.

3. He endeavoured the perpetuating of his friendship so entirely satisfied were they in each other, even at the first interview, that they made a covenant with each other, v. 3. Their mutual affection was sincere; and he that bears an honest mind steriles not at assurances. True love desires to be constant. Those who love Christ as their own souls, will be willing to join themselves to him in an everlasting covenant.

II. That both court and country agree to bless him: so entirely satisfied that they agree in their favours; yet David was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also (which was strange) in the sight of Saul's servants, v. 5. The former cordially loved him, the latter could not for shame but caress and compliment him. And it was certainly a great instance of the power of God's grace in David, that he was able to bear all this respect and honour flowing in upon him as suddenly, with our eyes lifted up above these measure. That these clasp so fast, have need of good heads and good hearts: it is harder to know how to abound, than how to be abased.

6. And it came to pass, as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music.

7. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? 9. And Saul eyed David from that day and forward. And it came to pass, on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house; and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. 11. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

Now begin David's troubles, and they not only tread on the heels of his triumphs, but take rise from them; such is the vanity of that in this world which seems greatest.
sign that the Spirit of God is departed from men, if they be peevish in their resentments of affronts, envious and suspicious of all about them, and ill-natured in their conduct; for the wisdom from above never proceeds from such a mind.

III. In his fury he aimed to kill David, v. 9, 10. Jealousy is the rage of a man; it made Saul outrageous against David, and impatient to get him out of the way.

1. His fits of phrenzy returned upon him. The very next day after he conceived malice against David, the evil spirit from God, that had formerly haunted him, seized him again. Those that indulge themselves in envy and uncharitableness, give place to the Devil, and prepare for the re-entry of the unclean spirit, with seven others more wicked. Where envy is, there is confusion. Saul pretended a religious ecstasy; he prophesied in the midst of the house; that is, he had the gestures and notions of a prophet, and humoured the thing well enough to decoy David into a snare, and that he might be fearless of any danger, and off his guard; and, perhaps, designing, if he could but kill him, to impute it to a divine impulse, and to charge it upon the spirit of prophecy with which he seemed to be animated; but really it was a hellish fury that actuated him.

2. David, though advanced to a much higher post of honour, disdained not, for his master's service, to return to his harp; he played with his harp, as at other times. Let not the higher think any thing below them, whereby they may do good, and be serviceable to those they are obliged to.

3. He took this opportunity to endeavour the death of David. A sword in a madman's hand is a dangerous thing, especially such a madman as Saul was, that was mad with malice. Yet he had a javelin in his dart in his hand, with which he projected and endeavoured to slay David; not in a sudden passion, but deliberately: I will smite David to the wall with it; with such a desperate force did he throw it. Justly does David complain of his enemies, that they hated him with a cruel hatred, Ps. 25. 19. No life is thought too precious to be sacrificed to malice. If a grateful sense of the great service David had done to the public could not assuage Saul's fury, what would he think he should have allowed himself to consider the kindness he was now doing to himself, relieving him, so as no one else could, against the worst of troubles. Those are possessed with a devilish spirit indeed, that render evil for good. Compare David, with his harp in his hand, aiming to serve Saul, and Saul, with his javelin in his hand, aiming to slay David; and observe the sweetness and usefulness of God's persecuted people, and the bruithess and barbarity of their persecutors. The blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul, Prov. 29. 10.

4. David happily avoided the blow twice, namely, now, and afterwards, ch. 19. 10. He did not throw the javelin at Saul again; he withdrew, not fighting, but flying, for his own preservation. Though he had both strength and courage enough, enough of all right, to make resistance and revenge the injury, yet he did no more than secure himself, by getting out of the way of it. David, no doubt, had a watchful eye upon Saul's hand, and the javelin in it, and did as bravely in running from it, as he did lately in running upon Goliath. Yet his safety must be ascribed to the watchful eye of God's providence upon him, saving his servant from the hurtful sword; and by this narrow escape it seemed he was designed for something extraordinary.

12. And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul. 13. Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand: and he went out and came in before the people. 14. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him. 15. Wherefore, when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. 16. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them. 17. And Saul said to David, Behold, my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife; only be thou valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles: for Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him. 18. And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king? 19. But it came to pass, at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife. 20. And Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. 21. And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son-in-law in the one of the twain. 22. And Saul commanded his servants, saying, Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now, therefore, be the king's son-in-law. 23. And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed? 24. And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David. 25. And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. 26. And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law: and the days were not expired. 27. Wherefore David arose, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son-in-law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife. 28. And Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daug
ter, loved him. 29. And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually. 30. Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

Saul had now, in effect, proclaimed war with David; he began in open hostility, when he threw the javelin at him; now we are told, how his enmity proceeded, and how David received the attack of it.

I. See how Saul expressed his malice against David.

1. He was afraid of him, v. 12. Perhaps he pretended to be afraid that David would do him mischief, to force his way to the crown. Those that design ill against others, are commonly willing to have it thought that others design ill against them; but David's withdrawing, (v. 11.) was a plain evidence that he was far from such a thought. However, he really stood in awe of him, as Herod feared John, Mark 6. 20. Saul was sensible he had lost the favourable presence of God himself, and that David had it, and for this reason, he feared him. Note, Those are truly great and good, who are reverenced by those that have God with them. The more wisely David behaved himself, the more Saul feared him, v. 15. and again, v. 29. Men think the way to be feared, is, to hector and threaten, which makes them feared by fools only, but despised by the wise and good; whereas the way to be both feared and loved, feared by those to whom we would wish to be a terror, and loved by those to whom we would wish to be a delight, is, to behave ourselves. Wisdom makes the face to shine, and commands respect.

2. He removed him from court, and gave him a regiment in the country, v. 13. He made him captain over a thousand, that he might be under his eye, because he hated the sight of him; and that he might not secure the interest of the courtiers. Yet herein he did impolitically; for he gave David an opportunity of ingraining himself in the people, who therefore loved him, (v. 16.) because he went out and came in before them; that is, he presided in the business of his country, civil as well as military, and gave universal satisfaction.

3. He stirred him up to take all occasions of quarrelling with the Philistines and engaging them, (v. 17.) insinuating to him, that hereby he would do good service to his prince, Be thou valiant for me; and good service to his God, Fight the Lord's battles; and a kindness to himself too, for hereby he would qualify himself for the honour he designed him, which was to marry his eldest daughter to him. This he had merited by killing Goliath, for it was promised by proclamation to him that should do that exploit; (ch. 17. 25.) but David was so modest, as not to demand it, and now, when Saul proposed it, it was with design of mischief to him, to make him venture upon hazardous attempts, saying in his heart, Let the hand of the Philistines be upon him, hoping they would sometime or other be the death of him, yet how could he expect this, when he saw that God was with him?

4. He did what he could to provoke him to discontent and mutiny, by breaking his promise with him, and giving his daughter to another, when the time was come that she should have been given to him, v. 19. This was as great an affront as he could possibly put upon him, and touched him both in his honour and in his love: he therefore thought David's resentments of it would break out in some indecency or other, in word or deed, which might give him an advantage against him, to take him off by course of law. Thus evil men seek mischief.

5. When he was disappointed in this, he preferred him his other daughter, (who it seems had a secret kindness for David, v. 20.) but with this design, that she might be a snare to him, v. 21. (1.) Perhaps he hoped that she would, even after her marriage to David, take part with her father against his husband, and give him an opportunity of doing him an unkindness. However, (2.) The condition of the marriage, he hoped, would be his destruction; for (so zealous will Saul seem against the Philistines) the conditions of the marriage must be, that he killed a hundred Philistines, and, as proofs that those he had slain were uncircumcised, he must bring in their foreskins cut off; this would be a just reproach upon the Philistines, who hated circumcision, as it was an ordinance of God; and perhaps David, in doing this, would the more exasperate them against him, and make them seek to be revenged on him, which was the thing that Saul desired and designed, much more than to be avenged on the Philistines: For Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines, v. 25. See here, (1.) What cheats bad men put upon themselves, who think they will hurt others, except when the evil spirit was actually upon him, to aim at David's life himself, for even he could not but conceive horror at the thought of murdering such an innocent and excellent person; but he thought that to expose him to the Philistines had nothing bad in it; Let not my hand be upon him, but the hand of the Philistines; whereas the malicious design against him was as truly murder as God's was, and he had hands to execute it. (2.) What cheats they put upon the world. Saul pretended extraordinary kindness for David, even then when he aimed at his ruin, and was actually plotting it: Thou shalt be my Son-in-law, says he, (v. 21.) notwithstanding he hated him implacably. Perhaps David refers to this, when (Ps. 55. 21.) he speaks of his enemy, as one whose soul was smoother than oil, and gave him an opportunity in his heart. It is probable that Saul's employing his servants to persuade David to enter into a treaty of a match with his daughter Michal, (v. 22.) arose from an apprehension that either his having cheated him about his elder daughter, (v. 19.) or the hardness of the terms he intended now to propose, would make him decline it.

II. See how David conducted himself, when the tide of Saul's displeasure ran thus high against him.

1. He behaved himself wisely in all his ways, v. 14. He perceived Saul's jealousy of him, which made him very cautious and circumspect in every thing he said and did, and careful to give no offence. He did not complain of hard measure, nor make himself the head of a party, but managed all the affairs he was intrusted with, as one that must it his business to do real service to his king and country, looking upon that to be the end of his preferment. And then the Lord was with him to give him success in all his undertakings. Though he conducted Saul's ill-will by it, yet he obtained God's favour. Compare this with Ps. 101. 2. where it is David's promise, I will behave myself wisely; and that promise he here performed; and it is his prayer, O! when wilt thou come unto me? And that answer, the Lord was with him. However blind Fortune may seem to favour fools, God will own and bless those that behave them selves wisely.
good services to Israel. When the princes of the Philistines began to move towards another war, David was ready to oppose them, and behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul, v. 36. The law dispersed with men from going to war the third year after they were married, (Deut. 24. 5.) but David loved his country too well to make use of that dispensation. Many that have showed themselves forward to serve the public when they have been in pursuit of preferment, have declined it when they have gained their point; but David acted from more generous principles.

Lastly, observe how God brought good to David out of Saul’s projects against him. 1. Saul gave him his daughter Michal to be his wife, but, in this respect, that marriage was a kindness to him, that his being Saul’s son-in-law, made his succeeding him much the less invidious, especially when so many of his sons were slain with him, ch. 31. 2. Saul thought, by putting him upon dangerous services, to have him taken off, but that very thing confirmed his interest in the people; for the more he did against the Philistines, the better they loved him, so that his name was much set by, (v. 30.) which would make his coming to the crown the more easy. Thus God makes even the wrath of man to praise him, and serves his designs of kindness to his own people by it.

CHAP. XIX.

Immediately after David’s marriage, which should have secured him Saul’s affections, we find his troubles coming upon him faster than ever, and Saul’s enmity to him the cause of all. His death was vowed, and four fair escapes of his from the lawful sword of Saul, we have an account of in this chapter. The first by the prudent mediation of Jonathan, v. 1. 7. The second by his own quickness, v. 8. 10. The third by Michal’s fidelity, v. 11. 17. The fourth by Samuel’s protection, and a chance, for the present, wrought upon Saul, v. 18. 24. Thus God has many ways of preserving his people. Providence is never at a loss.

1. And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David. 2. But Jonathan, Saul’s son, delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee. Now, therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself: 3. And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee. 4. And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good. 5. For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou savest it, and didst rejoice; wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause? 6. And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul swore, As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain. 7. And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan showed
him all those things: and Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as in times past.

Saul and Jonathan appear here in their different characters, with reference to David.

I. Never was enemy so unreasonably cruel as Saul. He spake to his son and all his servants, that they should kill David, v. 1. His projects to take him off, had failed, and therefore he proclaims him an outlaw, and charges all about him, upon their allegiance, to take the first opportunity to kill David. It is strange that he was not ashamed thus to avow his malice, when he could give no reason for it; and that, knowing that all his servants loved him, for so he had said himself, (ch. 18. 22.) he was not afraid of provoking them to rebel by this bloody order. Either malice was not then so politic, or justice was not so corrupted, as it has been since, or else Saul would have had him indicted, and have summoned witnesses to swear treason against him, and so have had him taken off, as Na-both was, by colour of law; but there is least danger from this undesign'd malice. It was strange that he who knew how well Jonathan loved him, should expect him to kill him; but he thought, because he was heir to the crown, he must needs be as envious at David as himself was. And Providence ordered it thus, that he might befriend David in the day of his affliction.

II. Never was friend so surprisingly kind as Jonathan, A friend in need is a friend indeed; such a one Jonathan was to David. He not only continued to delight much in him, though David's glory eclipsed his, but bravely appeared for him now that the stream ran so strong against him. He took care for his present security, by letting him know his danger; (v. 2.) Take heed to thyself, and keep thy hand from harm: Jonathan knew not but some of the servants might be either so obsequious to Saul, or so envious at David, as to put the orders into execution which Saul had given, if they could light on David.

2. He took pains to pacify his father and reconcile him to David. The next morning, he ventured to commune with him concerning David; (v. 3.) not so easily, either because he observed Saul to be drunk, and so was not to be spoken to, or because he hoped that, when he had slept upon it, he would himself revoke the order, or because he could not have an opportunity of speaking to him till morning. His intercession for David was, (1.) Very prudent. It was managed with a great deal of the meekness of wisdom; and he showed himself faithful to his friend by speaking good of him, though he was in great danger of incurring his father's displeasure by it. A rare instance of valuable friendship! He pleads, [1.] The good services David had done to the public, and particularly to Saul; His work has been to thee-ward very good, v. 4. Witness the relief he had given him against his distemper with his harp, and his bold encounter with Goliath, that memorable action, which did, in effect, save Saul's life and kingdom; he appeals to himself concerning that, Thou thy hand against me, and didst rejoice. In that, and other instances, it appeared that David was a favourite of Heaven and a friend to Israel, as well as a good servant to Saul, for by him the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel; so that to order him to be slain, was not only base ingratitude to so good a servant, but a great affront to God, and a great injury to the public. [2.] He pleads his innocence: though he had formerly done many good offices, yet if he had now been chargeable with any crimes, it had been another matter, but he has not sinned against thee; (v. 4.) his blood is innocent, (v. 5.) and if he be slain, it is without cause. And Jonathan had therefore reason to protest against it, because he could not entail any thing upon his family more pernicious than the guilt of innocent blood. (2.) His intercession, being so heartfelt, was prevalent. God inclined the heart of Saul to hearken to the voice of Jonathan. Note, We must be willing to hear reason, and to take all reproof and good advice even from our inferiors; parents from their own children. How forcible are right words! Saul was, for the present, so far convinced of the unreasonableness of his enmity to David, that, [1.] He recalled the bloody warrant for his execution; (v. 6.) As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain. Whether Saul swore here with due solemnity or no, does not appear; perhaps he did, and the matter was of such moment as to deserve it, and of such uncertainty as to need it; but, at other times, Saul swore rashly and profanely, which made the sincerity of this oath justly questionable: for it may be feared that those who can so far jest with an oath as to make a by-word of it, and prostitute it to a trifle, have not such a due sense of the obligation of it, but that, to serve a turn, they will prostitute it to a lie. Some suspect that Saul said and swore this with a malicious design to bring David within his reach again, intending to take the first opportunity to slay him: but as bad as Saul was, we can scarcely think so ill of him; and therefore we suppose that he spake as he thought, for his present, but the convictions soon wore off, and his corruptions prevailed and triumphed over them.

[2.] He renewed the grant of his place at court. Jonathan brought him to Saul, and he was in his presence as in times past, (v. 7.) hoping that now the storm was over, and that his friend Jonathan would be instrumental to keep his father always in this good mind.

8. And there was war again: and David went out and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him. 9. And the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand. 10. And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul’s presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.

Here,

I. David continues his good services to his king and country. Though Saul had required him evil for good, and even his usefulness was the very thing for which Saul envied him, yet he did not therefore retire in sulleness, and decline public service. Those that are ill paid for doing good, yet must not be weary in well-doing, remembering what a bountiful Benefactor our heavenly Father is, even to the froward and unthankful.

Notwithstanding the many affronts Saul had given to David, yet we find him, (1.) As boldly as ever in his front for the service of his country. The war broke out again with the Philistines, which gave David occasion again to signalize himself: it was with a great deal of bravery that he charged them; he came off victorious, slaying many, and putting the rest to flight. (2.) As cheerful is ever in using his harp for the service of his prince. When Saul was disturbed with his former fits of melancholy, David played with his hand, v. 9. He might have pledged that that was a piece of ser
vice now below him; but an humble good man will think nothing below him by which he may do good. He might have objected the danger he was in the last time he did this office for Saul, ch. 18. 10. But he had learned to render good for evil, to trust God with his safety in the way of his duty. See how David was affected when his enemy was sick; (Ps. 33. 13, 14.) which, perhaps, refers to Saul's sickness.

2. Saul continues his malice against David. He that but the other day had sworn by his Maker, that he should not be slain, now endeavours to slay him himself. So inanible, so incurable, is the enmity of the heart of the serpent against that of the woman; so deceitful and desperately wicked is the heart of man without the grace of God, Jer. 17. 9. The fresh honours David had won in this last war with the Philistines, instead of extinguishing Saul's ill-will to him, and confirming his reconciliation, revived his envy and exasperated him yet more. And when he indulged this wicked passion, no marvel that the evil spirit came upon him; (v. 9.) for when we let the sun go down on our wrath, we give place to the devil, (Eph. 4. 26, 27.) we make room for him and invite him. Discomposure of mind, though helped forward by the agency of Satan, commonly owe their original to men's own sins and follies. Saul's fear and jealousy made him a torment to himself, so that he could not sit in his house without a javelin in his hand, pretending it was for his preservation, but designing it for David's destruction; for he endeavoured to kill him to the wall, running at him so violently, that he struck the javelin into the wall, v. 10. So strong was the devil in him, so strong his own rage and passion. Perhaps he thought, if he had killed him now, he had been excusable both before God and man, as being non compos mentis—not right in his mind, and that it would have been imputed to his distraction. But God cannot be deceived by pretences, whatever men may be.

3. God continues his care of David, and still watches over him for good. Saul missed his blow; David was too quick for him and fled, and by a kind providence escaped that night. To these preservations, among others, David often refers in his Psalms, when he speaks of God being his Shield and Buckler, his Rock and Fortress, and delivering his soul from death.

11. Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to-night, to-morrow thou shalt be slain. 12. So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped. 13. And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth. 14. And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick. 15. And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him. 16. And when the messengers were come in, behold, there was an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster. 17. And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?

Here is

1. Saul's further design of mischief to David. When he had escaped the javelin, supposing he went straight to his own house, as indeed he did, he sent some of his guards after him to lay wait at the door of his house, and to assassinate him in the morning as soon as he stirred out, v. 11. Josephus says, the design was to seize him, and to hurry him before a court of justice that was ordered to condemn him, and put him to death, as a traitor; but we are here told, it was a shorter way they were to take with him, they were ordered to slay him. Well might David complain that his enemies were bloody men, as he did in the Psalm which he penned at this time, and upon this occasion, (Ps. 59.) when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him. See v. 2, 3, and 7. He complains that swords were in their lips.

12. David's wonderful deliverance out of this danger; Michal was the instrument of it, whom Saul gave to him to be a snare to him, but she procured his protector and helper; often is the devil out-shot with his own bow. How Michal came to know the danger he was in, does not appear; perhaps she had notice sent from court, or, rather, was herself aware of the soldiers about the house, when they were going to bed, though they kept so still and silent, that they said, Who doth hear? as David takes notice of this in that Psalm, v. 7. She, knowing her father's great indignation at David, soon suspected the design, and besmirched herself for her husband's safety.

1. She got David out of the danger. She told him how imminent the peril was, (v. 11.) To morrow thou wilt be slain. She told him, as Josephus paraphrases it, that if the sun saw him there next morning it would never see him more; and then she told him a way of escape. David himself was better versed in the art of fighting than of flying, and had it been lawful, it would have been easy for him to have cleared his house, by dint of sword, from those that haunted it, but Michal let him down through a window, (v. 12.) all the doors being guarded; and so he fled and escaped. And now it was, that, either in his own breast before he went, or in the hiding-place to which he fled, he penned the fifty-ninth Psalm, which is ordered to sing in the morning, and at that time his mind was composed, and, in this great danger, his faith was strong and fixed on God; and whereas the plot was to slay him in the morning, he speaks there with the greatest assurance, (v. 16.) I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning.

2. She practised a deception upon Saul and those whom he employed to be the instruments of his cruelty. When the doors of the house were opened in the morning, and David did not appear, the messengers would search the house for him; and did so. But Michal told them he was sick in bed, (v. 14.) and if they would not believe her, they might see; for (v. 13.) she had put a wooden image in the bed, and wrapt it up close and warm as if it had been David asleep, and not in a condition to be spoken to; the goat's hair about the image was to resemble David's hair, and the wood, his body. Michael can by no means be justified in telling a lie, and covering it thus with a cheat; God's truth needed not her lie: but she intended hereby to keep Saul in suspense for a while, that David might have time to secure himself, not doubting but those messengers would pursue him, if they found he was gone. The messengers had so much humanity as not to offer him any disturbance, when they heard he was sick; for to them that are in that
misery, pity should be shown; but Saul, when he heard it, gave positive orders that he should be brought to him, sick or well: (v. 15.) Bring him to me in the bed that I may slay him. It was base and barbarous thus to triumph over a sick man; and to saw the death of one who, for aught he knew, was dying by the hand of nature. So earnestly did he thirst after his blood, and so greedy was his revenge, that he could not be pleased to see him dead, unless he himself was the death of him; though a while ago he said, Let not mine hand be upon him. Thus when men lay the reins on the neck of their passions, they grow more and more outrageous. When the messengers were sent again, the cheat was discovered, v. 16. But by this time it was to be hoped that David was safe, and therefore Michal was not then much concerned at the discovery. Saul chid her for helping David to escape; (v. 17.) Why hast thou deceived me so? What a base spirit was Saul of, to expect that, because Michal was his daughter, she must therefore betray her own husband to him unjustly! Ought she not to forsake and forget her father and her father's house, to cleave to her husband? Those that themselves will be held by no bonds of reason or religion, are ready to think that others should as easily break those bonds. In answer to Saul's chiding, Michal is not so careful of her husband's reputation as she had been of his person, when she makes this her excuse, He said, Let me go; why should I kill the? As her insinuating that she should have hindered his flight, was false, (it was she that put him upon it and furthered it,) so it was an unjust unworthy reflection upon him, to suggest that he threatened to kill her, if she would not let him go, and might confirm Saul in his rage against him. David was far from being so barbarous a man and so imperious a husband, so brutish in his resolves, and so haughty in his menaces, as she here represented him. But David suffered both from friends and foes, and so did the Son of David.

18. So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him: and he and Samuel went and dwelt in Nainoth. 19. And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Nainoth in Ramah. 20. And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Saul fell standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. 21. And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also. 22. Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Socho: and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold, they be at Naioth in Ramah. 23. And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah. 24. And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day, and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets!

Here is,
1. David's place of refuge. Being got away in the night from his own house, he fled not to Bethlehem to his relations, or to any of the cities of Israel that had caressed and cried him up, to make an interest in them for his own preference, but ran straight to Samuel, and told him all that Saul had done to him, v. 18. 1. Because Samuel was the man that had given him assurance of the crown; and his faith in that assurance now beginning to fail, and he being ready to say in his haste, (or, in his flight, as some read it, Ps. 116. 11.) All men are liars, ("not only Saul that promised me my life, but Samuel also that promised me the throne,") whither should he go but to Samuel, for encouragement, in this day of distress, as would support his faith? In flying to Samuel, he made God his Refuge, trusting in the shadow of his wings; where else can a good man think himself safe? 2. Because Samuel, as a prophet, was best able to advise him what to do in this day of his distress. In the Psalm he penned the night before, he had lifted up his prayer to God; and now he takes the first opportunity of waiting upon Samuel, to receive direction and instruction from God. If we expect answers of peace to our prayers, we must have our ears open to God's word, v. 3. Because with Samuel there was a college of prophets with whom he might join in praising God, and the pleasure of that would be the greatest relief imaginable to him in his present distress, he met with little rest or satisfaction. He took the advice of his own counsel, and seek it in Samuel's church. And, doubtless, what little pleasure is to be had in this world, they have it, that live a life of communion with God; so that David retired in the time of trouble, Ps. 27. 4. 6.
2. David's protection in this place. He and Samuel went and dwelt (or lodged) in Naioth, where the school of the prophets was, in Ramah, in a privileged place, for the Philistines them, to not disturb that meeting, ch. 10. 10. But Saul, having notice of it by some of his spies, (v. 19,) set officers to seize David, v. 20. When they did not bring him, he sent more; when they returned not, he sent the third time; (v. 21.) and hearing no tidings of these, he went himself, v. 22. So impatient was he in his thirst after David's blood, so restless to compass his design against him, that he gave an order to one of his山县 to slay him, that he could not perceive that David was under the special protection of Heaven. It was below the king, to go himself on such an errand as this; but persecutors will stoop to any thing, and stick at nothing, to gratify their malice. Saul lays aside all public business to hunt David. How was David delivered, now that he was just ready to fall (like his own lamb formerly) into the mouth of the lion! As he delivered his lamb, by saying the lion, or as Elijah was delivered, by consuming the messengers with fire from heaven, but by turning the lions for the present into lambs.

1. When the messengers came into the congregation where David was among the prophets, the Spirit of God came upon them, and they prophesied: that is, they joined with the rest in praising God. It is not improbable that their lives were seized. And thus, (1.) God secured David: for either they were put into such an ecstasy by the spirit of prophecy, that they could not think of any thing else, and so forgot their errand, and never minded David; or they were by it put, for the present, into so great a frame, that they could not entertain the thought of doing so bad a thing. (2.) He put an honour upon them, by making them the prophets, and the communion of saints, and showed how he can, when he pleases, strike an awe upon the worst of men, by the tokens of his presence in the assemblies
of the Faithful, and force them to acknowledge, that God is with them of a truth, 1 Cor. 14. 24, 25. See also the benefit of religious societies, and what good impressions may be made by them on minds that seemed unapt to receive such impressions. And where may the influence of the Spirit be expected, but in the congregations of the saints? (3.) He magnified his power over the spirits of men that made the heart not merely, but mightily, can manage both to serve his own purposes. Balaam prophesied of the happiness of Israel, whom he would have cursed; and some of the Jewish writers think these messengers prophesied of the advancement of David to the throne of Israel.

2. Saul himself was likewise seized with the spirit of prophecy, before he came to the place. Had he would have thought that so bad a man as he had been in no danger of turning into a prophet; yet, when God will take this way of protecting David, even Saul is no sooner come (as Bishop Hall expresses it) within smell of the smoke of Naioth, but he prophesies, as his messengers did, v. 23. He stripped off his royal robe and warlike habiliments, because they were either too fine, or too heavy, for this service, and fell into a trance, as it should seem, or medium, which continued all that day and night. The saints at Damascus were delivered from the rage of the New Testament Saul, by a change wrought on his spirit, but of another nature from this. This was only amazing, but that sanctifying. This for a day, that for ever. Note, Many have great gifts, and yet no grace; prophesy in Christ's name, and yet are disowned by him, Matt. 7. 22. Now the proverb recurs, Is Saul among the prophets? See ch. 10. 12. Then it was different from what it had been, but now contrary. He is rejected of God, and actuated by an evil spirit, and yet among the prophets.

CHAP. XX.

David, having several times narrowly escaped Saul's fury, begins now to consider at last, whether it were not necessary for him to retire into the country, and take up arms in his own defence. But he will not so dare a thing, without consulting his faithful friend Jonathan; how that was done, and what passed between them, we know not, but we have an assurance of supernatural love, as we had in the chapter before of unnatural hatred. 1. David complains to Jonathan of his present distress, and engaged him to be his friend, v. 1.-8. II. Jonathan faithfully continues to grace, and give him intelligence how his father stood affected to him, and renews the covenant of friendship with him, v. 9-23. III. Jonathan, upon trial, finds, to his grief, that his father was implacably enraged against David, v. 24.-34. IV. He gives David notice of this, according to the appointment between them, v. 35.-42.

1. AND David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life? 2. And he said unto him, God forbid: thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing, either great or small, but that he will show it me; and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so. 3. And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that, I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death. 4. Then said Jonathan unto David, Whosoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee. 5. And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to-morrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat; but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field until the third day at even. 6. If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me, that he might run to Beth-lehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family. 7. If he say thus, It is well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him. 8. Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the Lord with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me myself; for why shouldst thou bring me to thy father?

Here,

1. David makes a representation to Jonathan of his present troubles. While Saul lay bound by his trance at Naioth, David escaped to the court, and got to speak with Jonathan. And it was happy for him, that he had such a friend at court, when he had such an enemy on the throne. If there be those that hate and despise us, let us not be disturbed at that, for there are those also that love and respect us; God hath set the one against the other, and so must we. Jonathan was a friend that loved at all times; loved David as well now in distress, and bid him as welcome into his arms, as he had done when he was in his triumph; (ch. 18. 1.) and he was a brother that was born for adversity, Prov. 17. 17. Now, 1. David appeals to Jonathan himself concerning his innocency, and he needed not say much to him for the proof of that, only desires him, that if he knew of any just offence he had given his father, he would tell him, that he might humble himself, and beg his pardon. What have I done? v. 1. 2. He endeavours to convince him, that, notwithstanding his innocency, Saul sought his life. Jonathan, from a principle of filial respect to his father, was very loth to believe that he designed, or would ever do, so wicked a thing, v. 2. He the rather hoped so, because he knew nothing of any such design; and he had usually been more privy to all his counsels. Jonathan, as became a dutiful son, endeavoured to cover his father's shame, as far as was consistent with justice and fidelity to David. Charity is not forward to think evil of any, especially of a parent, 1 Cor. 13. 5. David therefore gives him the assurance of an oath concerning his own danger; swears the peace upon Saul, that he was in fear of his life by him; "As the Lord liveth, that which nothing more sure in that, as thy soul liveth, than which nothing more certain to thee; whatever thou thinkest, there is but a step between me and death," v. 3. And as for Saul's concealing it from Jonathan, it was easy to account for that, he knew the friendship between him and David; and therefore, though in other things he advised with him, yet not in that. None more fit than Jonathan to serve him in every design that was just and honourable; and now he knew him to be a man of more virtue than to be his confidant in so base a design as the murder of David.

II. Jonathan generously offers him his service; (v. 4.) Whosoever thou desirest, he needed not insert the provision of lawful and honest, (for he knew David too well to think he would ask any thing that...
was otherwise,) I will even do it for thee.

1. The method of trial he proposes, was very natural, and would certainly discover how Saul stood affected to him. The two next days, Saul was to dine publicly, upon occasion of the solemnities of the new moon, when extraordinary sacrifices were offered, and feasts made upon the sacrifices. Saul was rejected of God, and the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him, and yet he kept up his observance of the holy feasts. There may be the remains of external devotion, where there is nothing but the ruins of real virtue. At these solemn feasts, Saul had either all his children to sit with him, and David had a seat as one of them; or all his great officers, and David had a seat as one of them. However it was, David resolved his seat should be empty (and that it never used to be at a sacred feast) those two days, (v. 5.) and he would abscond till the solemnity was over, and put it upon this issue; if Saul admitted an excuse for his absence, and dispensed with it, he would conclude he had changed his mind, and was reconciled to him; but if he resented it, and was put into a passion by it, it was easy to conclude he designed him a mischief, since it was certain he did not love him so well as to desire his presence for any other end, than he might have an opportunity to do him a mischief, v. 7.

2. The excuse he desires Jonathan to make, for his absence, we have reason to think, was true; that he was invited by his elder brother to Beth-lehem, his own city, to celebrate this new moon with his relations there, because beside the monthly solemnity, in which they held communion with all Israel, they had now a yearly sacrifice, and a holy feast upon it, for all the family, v. 6. They kept a day of thanksgiving in their family for the comforts they enjoyed, and a prayer, for the continuance of them. By this it appears that the family David was of, was a very religious family, a house that had a church in it.

3. The arguments he uses with Jonathan, to persuade him to do this kindness for him, are very pressing. v. 8, 9. That he had entered into a league of friendship with him, and it was Jonathan's own proposal. Thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the Lord with thee. (2.) That he would by no means urge him to espouse his cause, if he was not sure that it was a righteous cause; "If there be iniquity in me, I am so far from desiring or expecting that the covenant between us should bind thee to be a confederate with me in that iniquity, or release thou me from it," and would that thy hand may be first upon me: *slay me thyself*." No honest man will urge his friend to do a dishonest thing for his sake.

9. And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee? 10. Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly? 1. And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field. 12. And Jonathan said unto David, O Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to-morrow any time, or the third day, and behold, if there be good towards David, and I then send not unto thee, and show it thee, 13. The Lord do so and much more to Jonathan; but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will show it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father. 14. And thou shalt not only while yet I live show me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not: 15. But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. 16. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the Lord even require it at the hand of David's enemies. 17. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul. 18. Then Jonathan said to David, To-morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty. 19. And when thou hast stayed three days, then shalt thou go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel. 20. And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. 21. And behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the Lord liveth. 22. But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way: for the Lord hath sent thee away. 23. And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the Lord be between thee and me for ever.

Here, 1. Jonathan protests his fidelity to David in his distress. Notwithstanding the strong confidence David had in Jonathan, yet, because he might have some reason to fear that his father's influence, and his own interest, should make him war, or grow cool toward him, Jonathan thought it requisite solemnly to renew the professions of his friendship to him: (v. 9.) "Far be it from thee to think that I suspect thee of any crime, for which I should either slay thee myself, or deliver thee to my father; no, if thou hast any jealousy of that, come, let us go into the field," v. 11. He does not challenge him to the field to fight him for an affront, but to fix him in his friendship. He faithfully promises him that he would let him know, upon trial, he found his father affected toward him, and would make the matter neither better nor worse than it was. "If there be good toward thee, I will show it thee, that thou mayest be easy: (v. 12.) if evil, I will send thee away, that thou mayest be safe;" (v. 13.) and thus would help to deliver him
from the evil, if it were real, and from the fear of evil, if it were but imaginary. For the confirmation of his promise, he appeals to God, 1. As a witness; (v. 12.) "O Lord God of Israel, thou knowest I mean sincerely, and think as I speak." The strength of his passion made the manner of his speaking concise and abrupt. 2. As a judge; "The Lord do so, and much more, to Jonathan, v. 13. If I be deceitfully, or break my word with my friend:" he expresses himself thus solemnly, that David might be abundantly assured of his sincerity. And thus God has confirmed his promises to us, that we might have strong consolation, Heb. 6. 17, 18. Jonathan adds to his protestations his hearty prayers, "The Lord be with thee, to protect and prosper thee, as he has been formerly with my father, though now he be withdrawn." This in some degree affirms his belief that David would be in his father's place, and his good wishes that he might prosper in it better than his father now did.

II. He provides for the entail of the covenant of friendship with David upon his posterity; (v. 14-16.) he engages David to be a friend to his family when he was gone; (v. 15.) "Thou shalt promise that thou wilt not cut off thy kindness from my house, even from the day thou didst speak of a natural affection he had to his children, whom he desired it might go well with when he was gone, and for his future welfare he desired to improve his present interest. It also bespeaks his firm belief of David's advancement, and that it would be in the power of his hand to do a kindness or unkindness to his seed; for, in process of time, the Lord would cut off his enemies, Saul himself not excepted: then "Do thou cut off the kindness from my house, nor enge my father's wrongs upon my children." The house of David must likewise be bound to the house of Jonathan from generation to generation; he made a covenant (v. 16.) with the house of David. Note, True friends cannot but covet to transmit to their's after them their mutual affections. Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not. This kindness, 1. He calls the kindness of the Lord, because it is such kindness as the Lord shows to those whom he takes into covenant with himself; for he is a God to them, and to their seed; they are beloved for their father's sake. 2. He secures it by an imprecation, v. 16. The Lord requires it at the hand of David's seed, (for of David himself he had no suspicion,) if they prove so far David's enemies, as to deal wrongfully with the posterity of Jonathan, David's friend, and did not continue the kindness he had towards David, his should hereafter be tempted, for the clearing and confirming of their title to the throne, to do by his seed, as Abimelech had done by the sons of Gideon; (Jud. 9. 5.) and this he would effectually prevent: but the reason given (v. 17.) why Jonathan was so earnest to have the friendship entailed, is purely generous, and has nothing of self in it; it was because he loved him as he loved his own soul, and preferred him above all others, and himself above him. David, though now in disgrace at court, and in distress, was as amiable in the eyes of Jonathan as ever he had been; so pure were the principles on which his friendship was built. Having himself sworn to David, he caused David to swear to him, and (as we read it) to swear again, which David consented to; (for he bears an honest mind, and is not an assurance to swear without his love to him, which he looked upon as a sacred thing. Jonathan's heart was so much upon it, that, when they parted this time, he concludes with a solemn appeal to God, The Lord be with thee and me for ever; (v. 23.) that is, "God himself be judge between us and our families for ever, if on either side this league of friendship be violated." It was in remembrance of this covenant, that David

was kind to Mephibosheth, 2 Sam. 9. 7.—21. 7. It will be a kindness to ourselves and our's, to secure an interest in those whom God favours, and to make his friends ours.

III. He settles the method of intelligence, and by what signs and tokens he would give him notice how his father stood affected toward him. He would take it for a signal of safety, and at least the second day, of the new moon, and would be inquired after, v. 18. On the third day, by which time he would be returned from Beth-lehem, he must be at such a place, (v. 19.) and Jonathan would come toward that place with his bow and arrows to shoot for diversion; (v. 20.) would send his lad to fetch his arrows, and if they were shot short of the lad, David must take it for a signal of safety, and not be afraid to show his head; (v. 21.) but if he shot beyond the lad, it was a signal of danger, and he must shift for his safety, v. 22. This expedient he fixed upon, lest he should not have the opportunity, which yet it proved he had, of talking with him, and making the report by word of mouth.

24. So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat down to eat meat. 25. And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty. 26. Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought; Something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean. 27. And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to-day? 28. And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Beth-lehem: 29. And he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother he hath commanded me to be there: and now if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table. 30. Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? 31. For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die. 32. And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done? 33. And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. 34. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day
of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

Jonathan is here effectually convinced of that which he was so loath to believe, that his father had an implacable enmity to David, and would certainly be the death of him if it were in his power; and that he had done very dear himself for the conviction.

I. David is missed from the feast on the first day, but nothing is said of him. The king sat upon his seat, to feast upon the peace-offerings, as at other times, v. 25. and yet had his heart as full of envy and malice against David as it would hold: he should first have been reconciled to him, and then come and offered his gift; but, instead of that, he had invited this feast, so as to drink the blood of David. What an abomination was that sacrifice, which was brought with such a wicked mind as this! Prov. 21. 27. When the king came to take his seat, Jonathan arose, in reverence to him, both as his father and as his sovereign; every one knew his place, but David's was empty. It did not use to be so. None more constant than he in attending holy duties; nor had he been absent now, but that he must have come in the peril of his life, self-precipitated, urged to withdraw. In imminent peril present opportunities may be waved, nay, we ought not to throw ourselves into the mouth of danger. Christ himself absconded often, till he knew that his hour was come. But that day Saul took no notice that he missed David, but said within himself, Surely he is not clean, v. 26. Some ceremonial pollution has befallen him, which forbids him to eat of the holy things. till he be washed; he had washed his clothes, and bathed his flesh in water, and been unclean until the even. Saul knew what conscience David made of the law, and that he would rather keep away from the holy feast, than come in his uncleaness. Blessed be God, no uncleaness is now a restraint upon us, but what we may by faith and repentance be washed from in the fountain opened, Ps. 26. 6.

II. He is inquired for the second day, v. 27. Saul asked Jonathan, who he knew was his confidant, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meet? He was his own son by marriage, but he calls him in disdain, the son of Jesse. He asks for him, as if he were not pleased that he should be absent from a religious feast; and so it is an example to masters of families to see to it, that those under their charge be not absent from the worship of God, either in church or prayer in the family. It is a bad thing for us, except in case of necessity, to omit any duty of statedly attending on God in solemn ordinances. Thomas lost a sight of Christ by being once absent from a meeting of the disciples. But that which displeased Saul, was, that thereby he missed the opportunity he expected, of doing David a mischief.

III. Jonathan makes his excuse, v. 28, 29. 1. That he was absent upon a good occasion; keeping the feast in the peril of his life, self-precipitated, by his elder brother, who was now more respectful to him than he had been, (ch. 17. 28.) and that he was gone to pay his respects to his relations, for the keeping up of brotherly love; and no master would deny a servant liberty to do that at proper times. He pleads, 2. That he did not go without leave, humbly asked and obtained from Jonathan, who, as his superior officer, was proper to be applied to for it. Thus he represents David, as not wanting in any instance of respect and duty to the government.

IV. Saul, hereupon, breaks out into a most extravagant passion, and rages like a lion disappointed of his prey. David was out of his reach, but he falls foul upon Jonathan for his sake; (v. 30, 31.) gave him base language, not fit for a gentleman, a prince, to give to any man, especially to his own son, heir apparent to his crown, a son that served him, the greatest stay and ornament of his family, before a deal of company, at a feast, when all should be in good humour, at a sacred feast, by which all irregular passions should be mortified and subdued; yet he does in effect call him, 1. A bastard: Thou son of this woman. Here, according to the foolish and filthy language of men's brutish passion now-a-day, Thou son of a whore. He tells him he was born to the confusion of his mother; that is, he had given the world cause to suspect that he was not the legitimate son of Saul, because he loved him whom Saul hated, and supported him who would be the destruction of their family. 2. A traitor: Thou son of fierce rebellion, so the word is, thou son of an implacable rebel. At other times, he reckoned no counsellor or commander that he had, more trusty and well-beloved than Jonathan; yet now, in his passion, he represents him as dangerous to his crown and life. 3. A fool: Thou hast chosen the son of Jesse for thy friend, to thine own confusion, for while he lives, thou shalt never be established. Jonathan indeed did wisely and well for himself and family, to keep David, whom Saul loved, from being drowned with all Saul's other children, and from being fixed to the throne; yet, for this he is branded as most impolitic. It is good taking God's people for our people, and going with those that have him with them; it will prove to our advantage at last; however for the present it may be thought a disparagement, and a prejudice to our secular interest. It is probable that Saul knew that David was anointed to the kingdom, by the same hand that anointed him, and then Jonathan out himself; was the fool, to think to defeat the counsels of God. Yet nothing will serve him but David must die, and Jonathan must fetch him to execution. See how ill Saul's passion looks, and let it warn us against the indulgence of any thing like it in ourselves. Anger is madness, and he that hates his brother, is a murderer.

V. Jonathan is sorely grieved, and put into disorder by his father's barbarous passion; and the more, because he had with him his son, his trusty counsellor. He was troubled for his father, that he should be such a brute; troubled for his friend, whom he knew to be a friend of God, that he should be so basely abused: he was grieved for David, v. 34. and troubled for himself too, because his father had done him shame; and though most unjustly, yet he must submit to it. One would pity Jonathan, to see how he was put, 1. Into the peril of sin. Much need was there of wisdom and good man to have kept his temper, upon such a provocation as this. His father's reflections upon himself he made no return to; it becomes inferiors to bear with meekness and silence the contumels put upon them in wrath and passion. When thou art the anvil, lie thou still. But his downing David to die, he could not bear; to that he replied with some heat, (v. 32.) Wherefore shall he be put to death? He was saying, that as a generous spirit can never be more easily bear to be abused themselves, than to hear their friends abused. 2. Into the peril of death. Saul was now so outrageous, that he threw a javelin at Jonathan, v. 33. He seemed to be in great care (v. 31.) that Jonathan should be established in his kingdom, and yet now he himself aims at his life. What fools, what savage beasts, and worse, does anger make men? How necessary it is to keep ourselves without anger, and to give way rather than let anger have the upper hand. Jonathan was fully satisfied that evil was determined against David, which put him out of frame exceedingly: he rose from table, thinking it high time, when his life was struck at, and would eat no meat; for they were not to eat of the holy things in their mourning. All the guests, we may suppose, were disconnected,
and the mirth of the feast spoiled. *He that is cruel, troubles his own flesh,* Prov. 11. 17.

35. And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him. 36. And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. 37. And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee? 38. And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. 39. But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter. 40. And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry them to the city. 41. And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. 42. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

Here is,

1. Jonathan's faithful performance of his promise to give David notice of the success of his dangerous experiment. He went at the time and to the place appointed, (v. 35.) within sight of which he knew David lay hid; sent his foot-boy to fetch his arrows, which he would shoot at random; (v. 36.) gave David the fatal signal, by shooting an arrow beyond the lad; (v. 37.) Is not the arrow beyond thee? That word [beyond] David knew the meaning of better than the lad. Jonathan dismissed the lad, who knew nothing of the matter, and finding the coast clear, and no danger of a discovery, he presumed upon one minute's personal conversation with David after he had bid him flee for his life.

2. The most sorrowful parting of these two friends, who, for aught that appears, never came together again but once, and that was by stealth in a wood, ch. 23. 16. (1.) David addressed himself to Jonathan with the reverence of a servant rather than the freedom of a friend; he fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times, as one deeply sensible of his obligations to him for the good services he had done him. (2.) They took leave of each other with the greatest affection imaginable, with kisses and tears; they wept on each other's neck till David exceeded, v. 41. The separation of two such faithful friends was equally grievous to them both, but David's case was the more deplorable: for when Jonathan was returning to his family and friends, David was leaving all his comforts, even those of God's sanctuary, and therefore his grief exceeded Jonathan's; or, perhaps, it was because his temper was more tender, and his passions stronger. (3.) They referred themselves to the covenant of friendship that was between them, both of them comforting themselves with that in this mournful separation. "we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, for ourselves and our heirs, that we and they will be faithful and kind to each other from generation to generation." Thus we are at home in the body and absent from the Lord, this is our comfort, that he has made with us an everlasting covenant.

CHAP. XXI.

David has now quite taken leave, both of Saul's court, and of his camp, and bid farewell to his alter ego,—his other self, the beloved Jonathan; and from henceforward to the end of this book, he is looked upon and treated as an outlaw, and proclaimed a traitor; we still find him shifting from place to place for his own safety, and Saul pursuing him. His troubles are very particularly related in this and the following chapters, not only to be a key to the Psalms, but that he might be, as other prophets, an example to the saints, in all ages, of suffering affliction, and of patience; and, especially, that he might be a type of Christ, who, being anointed to the kingdom, humbled himself, and was therefore highly exalted. But the example of the suffering Jesus was a copy without a blot, that of David was not so; witness the records of this chapter, where we find David in his flight. I. Imposing upon Ahimelech the priest, to get from him both victuals and arms, v. 1.-9. II. Imposing upon Achish, king of Gath, by disguising himself mad, v. 10.-16. Justly are troubles called temptations, for many are by them drawn into sin.

1. THEN came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee? 2. And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The King hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business wherabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place. 3. Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present. 4. And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. 5. And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel. 6. So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the show-bread, that was taken from before the Lord, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away. 7. Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord; and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul. 8. And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, be
cause the king's business required haste. 9. And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give it me.

Here, I. David, in distress, flies to the tabernacle of God, now pitched at Nob, supposed to be a city in the tribe of Benjamin. Since Shiloh was forsaken, the tabernacle often remained, though the ark still remained at Kirjath-jearim. Hither David came in his flight from Saul's fury, (v. 1.) and applied himself to Ahimelech the priest. Samuel the prophet could not protect him, Jonathan the prince could not; he therefore has recourse next to Ahimelech the priest. He foresees he must now be an exile, and therefore comes to the tabernacle. 1. To take an affecting leave of it, for he knows not when he shall see it again, and nothing will be more affective to him in his banishment than his distance from the house of God, and his restraint from public ordinances, as appears by many of his Psalms. He had given an affectionate farewell to his friend Jonathan, and now applies to this Ahimelech the like to the tabernacle. 2. To inquire of the Lord there, and to beg direction from him in the way of duty and safety; his case being difficult and dangerous. That this was his business, appears ch. 22. 10. where it is said that Ahimelech inquired of the Lord for him, as he had done formerly, v. 15. It is a great comfort to us in a day of trouble, that we have a God to go to, to whom we may open our case, and from whom we may ask and expect direction. II. Ahimelech the priest is surprised to see him so poor an equipage; having heard that he was fallen into disgrace at court he looked shy upon him, as most are apt to do upon their friends when the world frowns upon them. He was afraid of incurring Saul's displeasure by entertaining him, and to notice how mean a figure he now made to what he used to make. Why art thou alone? He had some with him, (as appears, Mark 2. 26.) but there were only his own servants; he had none of the courtiers, no persons of quality with him, as he used to have at other times, when he came to inquire of the Lord. He says, (Ps. 42. 4.) he was wont to go with a multitude to the house of God; and, having now but two or three with him, Ahimelech might well ask, Why art thou alone? He that was suddenly advanced from the solitude of a shepherd's life to the crowds and hurries of the camp, is now as soon reduced to the desolate condition of an exile, and is alone like a sharrow on the house-top. Such changes are there in this world, and so uncertain are its smiles! Those that are courted to-day, may be deserted to-morrow. II. David, under pretence of being sent by Saul upon public services, solicits Ahimelech to supply his present wants, v. 2. 3. Here David did not have like himself; he told Ahimelech a gross untruth, that Saul had ordered him business to despatch; that his attendants were dismissed to such a place, that he was charged to observe secrecy, and therefore durst not communicate it, no not to the priest himself. It was all false. What shall we say to this? The scripture does not conceal it, and we dare not justify it: it was ill done, and proved of bad consequence, for it occasioned the death of the priests of the Lord, as David reflected upon it afterward with regret, ch. 22. 22. It was needless for him thus to dissemble with the priest, for we may suppose, that if he had told him the truth he would have sheltered and relieved him as readily as Samuel did, and would have known the better how to advise him, and inquire of God for him. People should be free with their faithful ministers. David was a man of great faith and courage, and yet now both failed him, and he fell thus fatally through fear and cowardice, and both owing to the weakness of his faith. Had he trusted God aright, he would not have used such a sorry sinful shift as this for his own preservation. It is written not for our imitation, no, not in the greatest straits, but for our consolation, let him that heareth say, Behold he did best he fall; and let us all pray daily, Lord, lead us not into temptation. Let us all take occasion from this to lament, 1. The weakness and in firmity of good men; the best are not perfect on this side of heaven. There may be true grace, where yet there are many failings. 2. The wickedness of bad times, which forces good men into such straits as prove temptations too strong for them. Oppressors may be wise men do foolishly.

Two things David begged of Ahimelech, bread and a sword. (1.) He wanted bread, five loaves, v. 3. Travelling was then troublesome, when men generally carried their provisions with them, having little money, and no public houses, else David had not now been to seek for bread. It seems David had disposed away the seed of the righteous, begging bread, occasionally, it seems, as Ps. 37. 15, 16.

Now, [1.] The priest objected that he had none but hallowed bread, show-bread, which had stood a week on the golden table in the sanctuary, and was taken thence for the use of the priests and their families, v. 4. It seems the priests kept no good house, but wanted either a heart to be hospitable, or rather provisions wherewith. Ahimelech thinks that the young men that attended David might not eat of this bread, unless they had for some time abstained from women, even from their own wives: this was required at the giving of the law; (Exod. 19. 13.) but otherwise we never find this made the matter of any ceremonial purity on the one side, or pollution on the other. And therefore the priest here seems to be over-nice, not to say superstitious.

[2.] The priest pleads that he and they that were with him, in this case of necessity, might lawfully eat the hallowed bread, for they were not only able to answer his terms of keeping from women for three days, but that the vessels, that is, the bodies, of the young men were holy, being possessed in sanctification and honour at all times; (1 Thess. 4. 4, 5.) and therefore God would take particular care of them, that they wanted not necessary supports, and would relieve his priest to do so. And being thus holy things were not forbidden to them. Poor and pious Israelites were, in effect, priests to God, and rather than be starved, might feed on the bread which was appropriated to the priests. Believers are spiritual priests, and the offerings of the Lord shall be their inheritance; they eat the bread of their God. He pleads that the bread is in a manner consecrated. He knew that what was holily used of it, was over; especially (as Paul margin reads it) when there is this day other bread (hot, v. 6.) sanctified this day in the vessel, and put in the room of it upon the table. This was David's plea, and the Son of David approves it, and shows from it that mercy is to be preferred to sacrifice. That ritual observances must give way to moral duties; and that that may be done in a case of an actual providential necessity, which may not otherwise be done. He brings it to justify his disciples in
plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, for which the Pharisees censured them, Matt. 12, 3, 4.

[3.] Ahimelech hereupon supplies him. He gave him hallowed bread; (v. 6.) and some think that it was about this that he inquired of the Lord, ch. 22. 10. As a faithful servant, he would not dispose of his Master's property without his master's leave. This bread, we may suppose, was the more agreeable to David for its being hallowed, so precious were all sacred things to him. The show-bread was but twelve loaves in all, yet out of this he gives David five; (v. 3.) though he had no more in the house; but he trusted in Providence.

(2.) He wanted a sword. Persons of quality, though officers of the army, did not then wear their swords constantly as now they do, else surely David had not been without one; it was a wonder that Jonathan did not furnish him with his, as he had done, ch. 18. 4. However, it happened that he had now no weapons with him, the reason of which he pretends to be, because he came away in haste, v. 8. Those that are furnished with the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith, cannot be disarmed of them, nor need they, at any time, to be at a loss. But that David had not the swords of his officers of their warfare were not carnal; there was not a sword to be found about the tabernacle, but the sword of Goliath, which he laid up behind the ephod, as a monument of the glorious victory David obtained over him; probably, David had an eye to that, when he asked the priest to help him with a sword; for that being mentioned, O says he, there is none like that, give it me, v. 9. He could not use Saul's armour, for he had not proved it; but this sword of Goliath he had made trial of, and done execution with; by this it appears that he was well grown in strength and stature, that he could wear and wield such a sword as that. God had taught his hands to war, so that he could do wonders, Ps. 18. 34. Two things we may observe concerning this sword. [1.] That God had graciously given it him, as a pledge of his singular favour; so that, whenever he drew it, nay, whenever he looked upon it, it would be a great support to his faith, by bringing to mind that great instance of the particular care and countenance of the divine providence. Experiences are great encouragements. [2.] That he had gratefully given it back to God, dedicating it to him and to his honour, as a token of his thankfulness; and now in his distress it stood him greatly in stead. Note, What we devote to God's praise, and serve him with, is most likely to redound, one way or other, to our own comfort and benefit. What we gave, we have from him.

Thus was David well furnished with arms and victuals; but it fell out very unhappily, that there was one of Saul's servants then attending before the Lord, Doeg by name, that proved a base traitor, both to David and to Ahimelech. He was by birth an Edomite; and the high priests, except to the Jewish religion, to get the preference he now had under Saul, yet he retained the ancient and hereditary eminence of Edom to Israel. He was master of the herds, which, perhaps, was then a place of as much honour as master of the horse is now. Some occasion or other he had at this time to wait on the priest, either to be purified from some pollution, or to pay some vow; but whatever his business was, it is probable it was to get his sword of Goliath. He attended, and could not help it, but he was sick of the service, smitten at it, and said, What a weariness is it? Mal. 1. 13. He would rather have been any where else than before the Lord, and therefore, instead of minding the business he came about, was plotting to do David a mischief, and to be avenged on Ahimelech for detaining him. God's sanctuary could never secure itself from such wolves in sheep's clothing. See Gal. 2. 4.

10. And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. 11. And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands! 12. And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath. 13. And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard. 14. Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me? 15. Have I need of madmen, that ye have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?

David, though king elect, is here an exile; designed to be master of vast treasures, yet had been just now begging his bread; anointed to the crown, and yet here forced to run his country: thus do God's providences sometimes seem to run counter to his promises, for the trial of his people's faith, and the glorifying of his name, in the accomplishment of his counsels, notwithstanding the difficulties that lay in the way. Here is,

1. David's flight into the land of the Philistines, where he hoped to be hid, and to remain, undiscovered, in the court or camp of Achish, king of Gath, v. 10. Israel's darling is necessitated to quit the land of Israel, and he that was the Philistines' great enemy, (upon I know not what inducements,) goes to seek for shelter among them. It should seem that as, though the Israelites loved him, yet the king of Israel had personal enmity to him, which obliged him to leave his own country; so, though the Philistines hated him, yet the king of Gath had a personal kindness for him, valuing his merit, and, perhaps, the more for his killing Goliath of Gath, who, it may be, had been his friend to David. To him David now went directly, as to one he could confide in; (as afterward, ch. 27. 2, 3.) and Achish would have now protected him, but that he was afraid of disobliging his own people by it. God's persecuted people have often found better usage from the Philistines than from Israelites, in the Gentile theatres than in the Jewish synagogues: the king of Judah imprisoned Jeremiah, and the king of Babylon set him at liberty.

2. The disgust which the servants of Achish took at his being there, and the complaint of it to Achish; (v. 11.) "Is not this David? Is not this he that has triumphed over the Philistines? Witness that burthen of the song which was so much talked of; Saul has slain his thousands, but David, this very man, his ten thousands. Nay, is not this he that (if our intelligence from the land of Israel be true) is, or is to be, the king of the land? As such he must be an enemy to our country; and is it safe or honourable for us to protect or entertain such a man?" Achish perhaps, had intimated to them, that it would be policy to entertain David, because he was now an enemy to Saul, and he might be hereafter a friend to them; it is common for the outlaws of a nation to be sheltered by the enemies of that
nation; but the servants of Achish objected to his politics, and thought it not at all fit that he should stay among them.

The fright which this put David into. Though he had some reason to put confidence in Achish, yet, when he perceived the servants of Achish jealous of him, he began to be afraid that Achish would be obliged to deliver him up to them, and he was sore afraid; (v. 12.) and perhaps he was the more apprehensive of his own danger, when he was thus discovered, because he wore Goliath’s sword, which, we may suppose, was well known to him, and which he had been taught or told that they would cut off his head, as he had cut off Goliath’s with it. David now learned by experience what he had taught us, (Ps. 118. 9.) that it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes. Men of high degree are a lie, and if we make them our hope, they may prove our fear. It was at this time that David penned the fifty-sixth Psalm, (Michtam, a golden psalm,) when the Philistines took him in Gath, where having showed before God his distresses, he resolves, (v. 3.) what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee; and therefore (v. 11.) will not be afraid what man can do unto me, no not the sons of the giant.

4. The course he took to get out of their hands. He feigned himself mad; (v. 13.) he used the gestures and fashions of a natural fool, or one that was gone out of his wits; supposing they would be ready to entertain him, and so CHANGE HIM IN THE STREET. It was not so. He fell into, and the troubles he was now in, had driven him distracted. This dissimulation of his cannot be justified; it was a mean thing thus to disparage himself, and inconsistent with truth thus to misrepresent himself, and therefore not becoming the honour and sincerity of such a man as David: yet it was not a downright lie, and it was like a stratagem in war, by which he imposed upon his enemies for the preservation of his own life. What David did here in pretence, and for his own safety, which made it partly excusable, drunkards do really, and only to gratify a base lust; they make fools of themselves, and change their behaviour; their words and actions commonly are either as silly and ridiculous as an idiot’s, or as furious and outrageous as a madman’s, which has often made many of the worst men of sense and honour should allow themselves in it.

5. His escape by this means, v. 14, 15. I am apt to think Achish was aware that the delirium was but counterfeit, but, being desirous to protect David, as we find afterwards he was very kind to him, even when the lords of the Philistines favoured him not, (ch. 28. 1. 2.—29. 6.) he pretended to his servants, that he really thought he was mad, and therefore did not reason whether it was David or no; or, if it were, they needed not fear him, what harm could he do them now that his reason was departed from him? They suspected that Achish was inclined to entertain him; “Not I,” says he, “he is a madman, I’ll have nothing to do with him, you need not fear that I should employ him, or give him any countenance. Have I need of madmen? (I have done good service against all the Philistines, and therefore now I am to be employed against you.)” But perhaps he shows him no kindness, but then you shall do him no hurt, for if he be a madman, he is to be pitied.” He therefore drove him away, as it is in the title of Ps. 34, which David penned upon this occasion, and an excellent Psalm it is, and shows, that he did not change his spirit when he changed his behaviour, but even in the greatest difficulties and hurries his heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord; and he concludes that Psalm with this assurance, “that none of them that trust in God shall be desolate, though they be, as he now was, solitary and distressed; persecuted but not forsaken.”

Chap. XXII.

David being driven from Achish, returns into the land of Israel to be haunted by Saul. I. David sets up his standard in the cave of Adullam; entertains his relations, (v. 1.) lists soldiers, (v. 2.) but removes his aged parents to a more quiet settlement, (v. 3, 4.) and has the prophet Gad for his counsellor, v. 5. II. Saul resolves to pursue him, and find him out, complains of his servants and Jonathan, (v. 6.—8.) and finding by Doeg’s information that Ahimelech had been kind to David, he ordered him and all the priests that were with him, eighty-five in all, to be put to death, and all that belonged to them destroyed; (v. 9.—19.) from the barbarous execution of which sentence, Abiahalar escaped to David, v. 20., 22.

1. David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father’s house heard it, they went down thither to him. 2. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men. 3. And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab; and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you till I know what God will do for me. 4. And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold. 5. And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth.

Here, 1. David shelters himself in the cave of Adullam, v. 1. Whether it was a natural or artificial fastness, does not appear; it is probable that the access to it was so difficult, that David thought himself able, with God’s sword, to resist all the forces of Saul, and therefore buried himself alive in it, while he was waiting to see (as he says here, v. 3.) what God would do with him. The promise of the kingdom implied a promise of preservation to it, and yet David used proper means for his own safety, else he had tempted God. He did not do any thing that aimed to destroy Saul, but only to secure himself. He that might have done good service to his country as a judge or general, is here shut up in a cave, and thrown by as a vessel in which there was no pleasure. We must not think it strange, if sometimes shining lights be thus eclipsed and hid under a bushel. Perhaps the apostle refers to this instance of David, among others, when he speaks of some of the Old Testament worthies that wandered in deserts, in dens and caves of the earth, 2. Pet. 2. It was at this time that David penned the 142nd Psalm, which is entitled, A prayer when he was in the cave; and there he complains that no man would know him, and that refuge failed him, but hopes that shortly the righteous should compass him about.

2. Thither his relations flocked to him, his brethren and all his father’s house, to be protected by him, to give assistance to him, and to take their lot with him in his troubles, and heart, for adversity. Now Joab and Abiahal, and the rest of his relations, came to him, to suffer and venture with him, in hopes shortly to be advanced with him; and they were so. The first three of his worthies were those
stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites, will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds; 8. That all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that showeth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or showeth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day? 9. Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. 10. And he inquired of the Lord for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine. 11. Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Abitub, and all his father's house, the priests that were in Nob: and they came all of them to the king. 12. And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I am, my lord. 13. And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day? 14. Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house? 15. Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? be it far from me. Let not the king impute any thing unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more. 16. And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou and all thy father's house. 17. And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the Lord; because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not show it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the Lord. 18. And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. 19. And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.

We have seen the progress of David's troubles; now here we have the progress of Saul's wickedness. He seems to have laid aside the thoughts of
all other business, and to have devoted himself wholly to the pursuit of David. He heard, at length, by the common fame of the country, that David was discovered, that is, that he appeared publicly, and enlisted men in his service; and hereupon he called all his servants about him, and sat down under a tree, or grove, in the high place at Gibeath, with his spear in his hand for a sceptre; intimating the force by which he designed to rule, and the present temper of his spirit, or its distemper rather, which was to kill all that stood in his way.

In this bloody court of inquisition, I. Saul seeks for information against David and Jonathan, v. 7, 8. Two things he was willing to suspect, and desirous to see proved, that he might wreak his malice upon two of the best and most excellent men he had about him. (1.) That his servants David and Jonathan did lie in wait for him, and seek his life, which was utterly false. He really sought David's life, and therefore pretended that David sought his life, though he could not charge him with any overt act that gave the least umbrage or suspicion. (2.) That his son Jonathan stirred him up to do so, and was confederate with him in compassing and imagining the death of the king. This also was notoriously false. A league of friendship there was between Jonathan and Saul, but no conspiracy in any evil thing; none of the articles of their covenant carried any mischief to Saul. If Jonathan had agreed, after the death of Saul, to resign to David, in compliance with the revealed will of God, what harm would that do to Saul? Yet thus the best friends to their prince and country have often been odiously represented as enemies to him; even Christ himself, and so too had as it were Jonathan. He took it for granted that Jonathan and David were in a plot against him, his crown and dignity, and is displeased with his servants that they do not give him information of it, supposing that they could not but know it; whereas really there was no such thing. See the nature of a jealous malice, and its pitiful arts to extort discoveries of things that are not. He looks upon all about him as his enemies, because they do not just say as he says, and do those things (1.) That they were very unkindly disposed, and acted against the interest both of their tribe, (for they were Benjamites, and David, if he were advanced, would bring the honour into Judah which was now in Benjamin,) and of their families; for David would never be able to give them such rewards as he had for them, of fields and vineyards, and such preferment, to be colonels and captains. (2.) That there were no faithful: 'You have shamed me. What a continual agitation and torment are they in that way give rise to a spirit of jealousy! If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked' (Prov. 29, 12.) that is, they seem to be so in his eyes. (3.) That they were very unkind. He thought to work upon their good nature with that word. 'There is none of you that is so much as sorry for me, or solicitous for me, as some read it. By these expressions stirred up to act in this manner, as the instruments of his malice, that they might take away his suspicions of them.

II. Though he could not learn any thing from his servants against David or Jonathan, yet he got information from Doeg, against Ahimelech the priest. 1. An indictment is brought against Ahimelech by Doeg, and he himself is evidence against himself, v. 9, 10. He, however, would not have given this information, if Saul had not extorted it. For he had been very forward to it, he would have done it sooner: but now he thinks they must be deemed traitors, if none of them be accusers, and therefore tells Saul what kindness Ahimelech had shown to David, which he himself happened to be an eye-witness of. He had inquired of God for him, (which the priest used not to do but for public persons and about public affairs,) and he had furnished him with bread and a sword. All this was true: but it was not the whole truth; he ought to have told Saul further, that David had made Ahimelech believe he was then going upon the king's business; so that what service he did to David, he did on Saul's account; but Saul, and this would have proved Ahimelech, whom Saul had in his power, and would have thrown all the blame upon David, who was cut off of his reach.

2. Ahimelech is seized, or summoned rather to appear before the king, and upon this indictment he is arraigned. The king sent for him and all the priests, and most probably attended the sanctuary, whom he supposed to be aiming at and tormenting him, cut being conscious of any guilt, and therefore not apprehensive of any danger, came all of them to the king, (v. 11.) and none of them attempted to make an escape, or to flee to David for shelter, as they would have done, now that he had set up his standard, if they had been as much in his interest as Saul suspected they were. Saul arraigns him himself with the utmost disdain and indignation; (v. 12.) 'Hear now, thou soul of Abiathar, who seekest by his name, much less giving him his title of distinction. By this it appears that he had cast off the fear of God, that he showed no respect at all to his priests, but took a pleasure in affronting them and insulting over them. Ahimelech holds up his hand at the hand in these words, 'Here I am, my lord, ready to hear my charge, knowing I have done no wrong.' He does not demur to the jurisdiction of Saul's court, nor insist upon an exemption as a priest, no, not though he were a High Priest, to which office, that of the judge, or chief magistrate, had not long since been annexed; but Saul having now the sovereignty vested in him, in things pertaining to the king, even the High Priest lowers himself to a level with common Israelites. Let every soul be subject (even clergymen) to the higher powers.

3. His indictment is read to him, v. 13. That he, a false traitor, had joined himself with the son of Jesse in a plot to depose and murder the king. 'His design' (says Saul) 'was to rise up against me, and thou didst assist him with victuals and arms.' See what bad constructions the most innocent actions are liable to; how unsafe they are, that live under a tyrannical government, and how we have to be thankful for the happy constitution and administration of the government we are under.

4. To this indictment he pleads Not guilty; (v. 14, 15.) he owns the fact, but denies that he did it traitorously or maliciously, or with any design against the king. He pleads that he was so far from knowing of any quarrel between Saul and David, that he really thought it had been his duty to show favor at court as ever he had been. Observe, He does not plead that David had told him an untruth, and with that had imposed upon him, though really it was so, because he would not proclaim the weakness of so good a man, no not for his own vindication, especially to Saul, who sought all occasions against him; but he insists upon the settled reputation David had, as the most faithful of men. Though the king had put upon him in marrying his daughter to him, he could not have been the cause of it, for he had reposed in him; he goes at thy bidding, and is honourable in thy house, and therefore any one would think it a meritorious piece of service to the crown, to show him respect, so far from apprehending it to be a crime. He pleads that he had
been wont to inquire of God for him, when he was sent by Saul upon any expedition, and did it now as innocently as ever he had done it. He protests his abhorrence of the thought of being in a plot against the king; *Be it far from me, I mind my own business, and meddle not with evil.* He begs the king's favour, *Let him not impute any crime to us;* and concludes with a declaration of his innocency, *Thy servant knew nothing of all this.* Could any man plead with more evidences of sincerity? Had he been tried by a jury of honest Israelites, he had certainly been acquitted, for who can find any fault in him? But, 

Heavenly judges give judgment against him; (v. 16.) Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, as a rebel, thou and all thy father's house. What could be more unjust? I saw under the sun, the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, Eccl. 3. 16. (1.) It was unjust that Saul should himself alone, give judgment in his own cause, without any appeal either to judge or prophet, to his privy council, or to a council of war. (2.) That so fair a plea should be overruled or rejected without any reason given, or any attempt to disprove the allegations of it, but purely with a high hand. (3.) That sentence should be passed so hastily and with so much precipitation; the judge taking no time himself to consider of it, nor allowing the prisoner any time to move in arrest of judgment. (4.) That the sentence should be passed not only on Ahimelech himself, but upon every person accused by Doeg, but on all his father's house. (5.) That crime was alleged: must the children be put to death for the fathers? (5.) That the sentence was pronounced in passion, not for the support of justice, but for the gratification of his brutal rage.

6. He issues out a warrant (a verbal warrant only) for the immediate execution of his bloody sentence. (1.) He ordered his footmen to be the executioners of this sentence, but they refused, v. 17. Hereby he intended to put a further disgrace upon the priests; they may not die by the hands of his men of war, (as 1 Kings 2. 29.) or his usual ministers of justice, but his footmen must triumph over them, and wash their hands in their blood. (1.) Never was the command of a prince more barbarously given; Turn, and stay the priests of the Lord, and they are spoken with such an air of impuentity, as can scarce be endured. He seemed to forget their sacred office and relation to God, and take no notice of that, it had intimated some regret that men of that character should fall under his displeasure; but to call them the priests of the Lord then, when he ordered his footmen to cut their throats, looked as if, upon that very account, he hated them. God having rejected him, and ordered another to be anointed in his room, he seems well pleased with this opportunity of being avenged on the priests of the Lord, since God himself was out of his reach. What wickedness will not the evil spirit hurry men to, when he gets the dominion? He alleges, in his order, that which was utterly false, and unproved to him, that they knew when David fled; whereas they knew nothing of the matter. (2.) He was the command of a prince more honourably disposed: had he not given them more sense and grace than their master. Though they might expect to be turned out of their places, if not punished and put to death for their refusal, yet, come on what they would, they would not offer to fall on the priests of the Lord, such a reverence had they for their office, and such a conviction of their innocence. 

(2.) He ordered Doeg (the accuser) to be the executioner, and he did it. One would have thought that the footmen's refusal should have awakened Saul's conscience, and he should not have insisted upon the doing of a thing so barbarous as that, his footmen started at the thought of it. But his mind was blinded and his heart hardened, and if they will not do it, the hands of the witness shall be upon them, Deut. 17. 7. The most bloody tyrants have found out instruments of their cruelty as barbarous as themselves: Doeg is no sooner commanded to fall upon the priests, than he does it willingly enough, and, meeting with no resistance, slays with his own hand (for aught that appears) on that same day eighty-five priests that were of the age of ministration, between twenty and fifty, for the word of God, and perhaps appeared at this time before. Some of their habits and were slain in them. This (one would think) was enough to satiate the most blood-thirsty; but the horse-leech of persecution still cries, "Give, give." Doeg, by Saul's order no doubt, having murdered the priests, went to their city Nob, and put all to the sword there, (v. 19.) men, women, and children, and the cattle too. Barbarous cruelty, and such as one cannot think of without horror! Strange, that ever it should enter into the heart of man to be so impious, so inhuman! We may see in this, [1.] The desperate wickedness of Saul, when the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him. Nothing so vile, but they may be hurried to it, who have provoked God to give them up to their hearts lusts. He that was so compassionate as to spare Agag and the cattle of the Amalekites, in disobedience to the command of God, and now, with unrelenting bowels, sees the priests of the Lord murdered, and nothing spared of all that belonged to them. For that sin, God left him to this. [2.] The accomplishment of the threatenings long since pronounced against the house of Eli; for Ahimelech and his family were descendants from him. Though Saul was unrighteous in doing this, yet God was righteous in permitting it; now God performed against Eli that, at which the earth and them that heard it, must needs tingle, as he had told him that he would judge his house for ever, ch. 3. 11-13. No word of God shall fall to the ground. [3.] This may be considered as a great judgment upon Israel, and the just punishment of their desiring a king before the time God intended them one. How deplorable was the state of religion at this time in Israel! It had long been in obscurity, yet it was some comfort to them, that they had the altar, and priests to serve at it; but now to see their priests wretching in their own blood and the heirs of the priesthood too, and the city of the priests made a desolation, so that the altar of God must needs be neglected for want of attendants, and this by the unjust and cruel order of their own king, to satisfy his brutal rage—this could not be worse than the heart of all pious Israelites, and make them wish a thousand times, they had been satisfied with the government of Samuel and his sons. The worst enemies of their nation could not have done them a greater mischief.

20. And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David. 21. And Abiathar showed David that Saul had slain the Lord's priests. 22. And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house. 23. Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard.
I. THE ESCAPE OF ABIATHAR THE SON OF AHIMELECH.

2. David's resentment of the melancholy tidings he brought. He gave David an account of the bloody work Saul had made among the priests of the Lord, (v. 21.) as the disciples of John, when their master was beheaded, and told Jesus, Matth. 14. 12. And David greatly lamented the calamity itself, but especially his being accessory to it; he exclaimed upon the death of all the persons of thy father's house, v. 22. Note, It is a great trouble to a good man, to find himself any way an occasion of the calamities of the church and ministry. David knew Doeg's character so well, that he feared he would do some such mischief as this, when he saw him at the sanctuary. I knew he would tell Saul. He calls him Doeg the Edomite, because he retained the heart of an Edomite, though, by embracing the profession of the Jewish religion, he had put on the mask of an Israelite.

3. The protection he granted to Abiathar. He perceived him to be terrified, as he had reason to be, and therefore bade him not fear, he would be as careful for him as for himself; With me thou shalt be in safeguard, v. 23. David, having now time to recollect himself, speaks with assurance of his own safety, and promises that Abiathar should have the full confidence of his heart, and be his special friend. I have promised to the Son of David, that God will hide him, all the days of his life, (Isa. 49. 2.) and with him, all that are his, may be sure that they shall be in safeguard, Ps. 91. 1. David had now not only a prophet, but a priest, a High Priest, with him, to whom he was a blessing, and they to him, and both a happy omen of his success. Yet it appears, (by ch. 28. 6.) that Saul had a High Priest too, for he had a Urien to execute the office; yet he preferred Zadok as the father of Zadok, of the family of Eleazar; (1 Chron. 6. 8.) for even those that hate the power of godliness, yet will not be without the form. It must not be forgotten here, that David at this time penned the 52d Psalm, as appears by the title of that Psalm, wherein he represents Doeg not only as malicious and spiteful, but as false and deceitful: because though he said, for the substance of it, true, yet he put false colours upon it, with a design to do mischief: yet even then, when the priesthood was become as a withered branch, he looks upon himself as a green olive tree in the house of God, v. 8. In this hurry and distraction that David was continually in, yet he found both time and a heart for communion with God, and found comfort in it.

CHAP. XXIII.

Saul, having made himself drunk with the blood of the priests of the Lord, is here, in this chapter, seeking David's life, who appears here doing good, and suffering ill. It is the same time. Here is, I. The providence God did to his king and country, in rescuing the city of Keilah out of the hands of the Philistines, v. 1-6. II. The danger he was thereby brought into from the malice of the prince he served, and the treachery of his officers, that he feared; and his deliverance, by divine direction, from that danger, v. 7-15. III. David in a wood, and his friend Jonathan visiting him there and encouraging him, v. 16-18. IV. The information which the Ziphites brought to Saul of David's haunts, and the expedition of Saul in pursuit of him, v. 19-25. V. The narrow escape David had of falling into his hands, v. 26-29. Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of them all.

1. THEN they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshing-floors. 2. Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the Lord said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah. 3. And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? 4. Then David inquired of the Lord yet again. And the Lord answered him, and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand. 5. So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. 6. And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand.

Now we find why the prophet Gad (by divine direction, no doubt) ordered David to go into the land of Judah; (ch. 22. 5.) it was, that since Saul neglected the public safety, he might take care of it, notwithstanding the ill treatment that was given him; for he must render good for evil, and therein be a type of himself, who not only ventured his life, but laid down his life, for them that were his enemies.

1. Tidings are brought to David, as to the patron and protector of his country's liberties, that the Philistines had made a descent upon the city of Keilah, and plundered the country thereabouts, v. 1. Probably, it was the departure both of Gad and David from Saul, that encouraged the Philistines to make this incursion. When princes begin to persecute God's people and ministers, let them expect no other than vexation on all sides. The way for any country to be quiet, is, to let God's church be quiet in it: if Saul fight against David, the Philistines shall fight against his country.

2. David is forward enough to come in for their relief, but is willing to inquire of the Lord concerning it. Here is an instance, (1.) Of David's generosity and public-spiritedness. Though his head was only a head and hands only hands, his heart had enough to do, with the little force he had, to secure himself, yet he was concerned for the safety of his country, and could not sit still to see that ravaged; nay, though Saul, whose business it was to guard the borders of his land, hated him and sought his life, yet he was willing, to the utmost of his power, to serve him and his interests against the common enemy. David bravely opposed the thought of sacrificing the common welfare to his private revenge. Those are unlike to David, who sullenly declined to do good, because they have not been so well considered as they deserved for the services they have done. (2.) Of David's piety and regard to God. He inquired of the Lord by the prophet Gad; for it should seem by v. 6. that Abiathar came not to him with the ephod till he was in Keilah. His inquiry is, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? He inquires both concerning the duty,
whether he might lawfully take Saul's work out of his hand, and act without a commission from him; and concerning the event, whether he might safely venture against such an enemy as the Philistines had, with such a handful of men at his feet, and such a dangerous enemy as Saul was, at his back. It is our duty, and will be our ease and comfort, whatever happens, to acknowledge God in all our ways, and to seek direction from him.

3. God appointed him, once and again, to go against the Philistines, and promised him success; Go, and smite the Philistines, v. 2. His men opposed it, v. 3. No sooner did he begin to have soldiers of his own, than he found it hard enough to manage them. They objected, that they had enemies enough among their own countrymen, they needed not to make the Philistines their enemies. Their hearts failed them, when they only apprehended themselves in danger from Saul's band of pursuers, much more when they came to engage the Philistine armies. To satisfy them therefore, he inquired of the Lord again, and now received, not only a full commission, which would warrant him to fight, though he had no orders from Saul, (Arise, go down to Keilah,) but also a full assurance of victory; I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand, v. 4. This was enough to animate the greatest coward he had in his regiment.

4. He went, accordingly, against the Philistines, routed them, and rescued Keilah; (v. 5.) and, it should seem, he made a sallet into the country of the Philistines, for he carried off their cattle by way of reprisal for the wrong they did to the men of Keilah, in robbing their threshing-floors. Here notice is taken, (v. 6.) that it was while David remained in Keilah, after he had cleared it of the Philistines, that Abiathar came to him with the ephod in his hand, that is, the High Priest's ephod, in which the Urim and Thummim were. It was a great comfort to David, in his banishment, that when he could not go to the house of God, he had some of the choicest treasures of that house brought to him, the High Priest, and the breast-plate of judgment.

7. And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars. 8. And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. 9. And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod. 10. Then said David, O Lord God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for his sake. 11. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the Lord said, He will come down. 12. Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the Lord said, They will deliver thee up. 13. Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah: and he forbore to go forth.

Here is,

I. Saul contriving within himself the destruction of David. 7. He heard that he was come to Keilah; and did he not know what brought him thither? Was it not told him that he had bravely relieved Keilah, and delivered it out of the hands of the Philistines? This, one would think, should have put Saul upon considering what honour and dignity should be done to David for this. But instead of that he catches at it as an opportunity of doing him a mischief. An ungrateful wretch he was, and far unworthy to have any service or kindness done him. Well will David complain of his enemies, that they rewarded him brought for good, and that for his love they were his adversaries, Ps. 35. 12—109. 4. Christ was used thus basely, John 10. 32. Now observe, 1. How Saul abused the God of Israel, in making his providence to patronise and give countenance to his malicious designs, and from thence promising himself success in them. God hath delivered him into my hand; as if he, who was rejected, must know, in this instance, owned and favoured by him, and David infatuated. He vainly triumphs before the victory, forgetting how often he had had fairer advantages against David than he had now, and yet missed his aim. He impiously connects God with his cause, because he thought he had gained one point. Therefore doth David pray, (Ps. 140. 8.) Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked; further not his wicked device, lest they exalt themselves. We must not think that one smiling providence either justifies an unrighteous cause, or secures its success. 2. How Saul abused the Israel of God, in making them the servants of his malice against David. He called all the people together to war, and they must with all speed march to Keilah, pretending to oppose the Philistines, but intending to besiege David and his men; concealing that design, for it is said, (v. 9.) he secretly practised mischief against him. Miserable is that people, whose prince is a tyrant, for while some are sufferers by his tyranny, others (which is worse) are made servants to it, and instruments of it.

II. David consulting with God concerning his own preservation. He knew, by the information brought to him, that Saul was plotting his design, (v. 9.) and therefore applies himself to his great Protector for direction. No sooner is the ephod brought to him, than he makes use of it, Bring hither the ephod. We have the scriptures, those lively oracles, in our hands, let us take advice from them in doubtful cases: "Bring hither the Bible." David's address to God, upon this occasion, is, 1. Very solemn and pertinent. Twice he calls God, the Lord God of Israel, and twice calls himself his servant, v. 10, 11. Those that address God, know their distance, and who they are speaking to. 2. Very particular and express. His representation of the case is so, v. 10. "Thy servant has certainly heard on good authority" (for he would not call for the ephod upon every idle rumour) "that Saul has a design upon Keilah;" he does not say, "to destroy me," "to waste the city!" (as he had lately done the city of Nob) "for my sake." God seems more solicitous for their safety than for his own, and David will expose himself anywhere, rather than they shall be brought into trouble by his being among them. Generous souls are thus minded. His queries upon the case are likewise very particular. God allows us to be so in our addresses to him; "Lord, direct me in this matter, about which I am now at a less." He does indeed invert the due order of his queries, but God in his answer puts him into method. That
question should have been put first, and was first answered, "Will Saul come down, as thy servant has heard?" "Yea," says the oracle, "he will come down; he has resolved it, is preparing for it, and will do it, unless he hear that thou hast quitted the town." "Well, but if he do come down, will the men of Keilah stand by me in holding the city against him, or will they open the gates, and deliver me into his hand?" If he had asked the men (that is, the magistrates or elders) of Keilah themselves, what they would do in that case, they could not have told him, not knowing their own minds, nor what they should do when it came to the fight, much less which way the superior vote of their council would carry it; or they might have told him they would protect him, and yet afterward have betrayed him; but God could tell them infallibly: "When Saul besieges their city, and demands of them that they surrender thee into his hands, how fond soever they now seem of thee, as their saviour, they will deliver thee up, rather than stand the shock of Saul's fury." Note, (1.) God knows all men better than they know themselves, knows their strength, what is in them, and what they will do, if they come into such and such circumstances. (2.) He therefore knows not only what will be, but what would be if it were not prevented; and therefore knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and how to render to every man according to his works.

David having thus fair notice given him of his danger, quitted Keilah, v. 13. His followers were now increased in number to six hundred; with these he went out, not knowing whither he went, but resolving to follow Providence, and put himself under its protection. This broke Saul's measures; he thought God had delivered him into his hand, but it proved that God delivered him out of his hand, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. When Saul heard that David was escaped from Keilah, he for bare to go forth with the body of the army, as he intended, (v. 8.) and resolved to take only his own guards, and go in quest of him. Thus does God baffle the design of his people's enemies, and turn their counsels headlong.

14. And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph: and Saul sought him every day; but God delivered him not into his hand. 15. And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood. 16. And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. 17. And he said unto him, Fear not; for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee: and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. 18. And they two made a covenant before the Lord. And David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

Here is,

I. David abounding. He abode in a wilderness, in a mountain, (v. 14.) in a wood, (v. 15.) We must here, 1. Commend his eminent virtues, his humility, modesty, fidelity to his prince, and patient attendance on the providence of his God, that he did not draw up his forces against Saul, fight him in the field, or surprise him by some stratagem or other, and so evade his own quarrel and that of the Lord's priests upon him, and put an end to his own troubles, and the calamities of the country under his tyrannical government. No, he makes no such attempt. He keeps God's way, waits till God's time, and is content to secure himself in woods and wildernesses, though with some it might seem a reproach to that courage for which he had been famous. But, 2. We must also lament his hard fate, that an innocent man should be thus terrified, and put in fear of his life; that a man of honour should be thus disgraced, a man of merit thus recompensed for his services, and a man that delighted in the service of God and his country, should be debased from both, and wrapt up in obscurity. What shall we say to this? Let it make us think the worse of this world, which often gives such bad treatment to its best men: let it reconcile even great and active men to privacy and restraint, if Providence make that their lot, for it was David's: and let it make us long for that kingdom, where goodness shall for ever be in glory, and life, and honour, and the righteous shall shine as the sun.

II. Saul hunting him as his implacable enemy. He sought him every day, so restless was his malice, v. 14. He sought his life no less, so cruel was his malice, v. 15. As it had been from the beginning, it was now, and will be. He that is born after the flesh, persecuteth him that is born after the spirit, Gal. 4, 29.

II. God defending him as his powerful Protect or. God delivered him not into his hand, as Saul hoped; (v. 7.) and unless God had delivered him into his hand, he could not prevail against him, John 19, 11.

IV. Jonathan comforting him, as his faithful friend. True friends will find out means to get together; David, it is likely, appointed time and place for this interview, and Jonathan observed it, though he exposed himself by it to his father's displeasure, and, had it been discovered it might have cost him his life. True friendship will not shrink from danger, but can easily venture; will not shrink from condescension, but can easily stoop, and exchange a palace for a wood, to serve a friend. The very sight of Jonathan was reviving to David; but beside that, he said that to him, which was very encouraging.

As a faithful friend, he directed him to God, the Foundation of his confidence, and the Fountain of his comfort. He strengthened his hand in God. David, though a strong believer, needed the help of his friends, for the perfecting of what was lacking in his faith; and herein Jonathan was helpful to him, by reminding him of the promise of God, the holy oil wherewith he was anointed, the presence of God with him hitherto, and the many experiences he had had of God's goodness to him. Thus he strengthened his hands for action, by encouraging his heart, not in the creature, but in God. Jonathan was not in a capacity of doing anything to strengthen him, but he assured him God would.

2. As a self-denying friend, he takes a pleasure in the prospect of David's advancement to that honor which was his own overthrow; (v. 17.) "Thou shalt live to be king, and I shall think it preferment enough to be next thee, near thee, though under thee, and will never pretend to be a rival with thee." This resignation which Jonathan made to David of his title, would be a great satisfaction to him, and make his way much the more clear. This, he tells him, Saul knew very well; Jonathan having sometimes heard him say as much. But, though it appears, what a wicked man Saul was, to persecute one whom God favoured; and what a foolish man he was, in thinking to prevent that which God had determined, and which would certainly come
to pass. How could he disannul what God had pur-
poused? 3. As a constant friend, he renewed his league of
friendship with him; they two made a covenant now,
this third time, before the Lord, calling him to wit-
ness to it, v. 18. True love takes delight in repeating
its engagements, giving and receiving fresh as-
surances of the firmness of their friendship. Our
covenant with God should be often renewed, and
therein our communion with him kept up. Da-
vid and Jonathan now parted, and never came to-
gether again, that we find, in this world; for Jon-
athan said what he wished, not what he had ground
to expect, when he promised himself that he should
be next to David in his kingdom.

19. Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to
Gibeath, saying, Doth not David hide him-
self with us in strong holds in the wood, in
the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south
of Jeshimon? 20. Now therefore, O king,
come down, according to all the desire of
thy soul to come down; and our part shall
be to deliver him into the king's hand. 21.
And Saul said, Blessed be ye of the Lord;
for ye have compassion on me. 22. Go, I
pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his
place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him
there: for it is told me that he dealeth
very subtly. 23. See therefore, and take
knowledge of all the lurking-places where
he hideth himself, and come ye again to me
with the certainty, and I will go with you:
and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land,
that I will search him out throughout all the
thousands of Judah. 24. And they arose,
and went to Ziph before Saul: but David
and his men were in the wilderness of Maon,
in the plain on the south of Jeshimon. 25.
Saul also and his men went to seek him.
And they told David: wherefore he came
down into a rock, and abode in the wilder-
ness of Maon. And when Saul heard that,
he pursued after David in the wilderness of
Maon. 26. And Saul went on this side of
the mountain, and David and his men on
that side of the mountain: and David made
haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul
and his men compassed David and his men
round about to take them. 27. But there
came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Hasthe,
and come; for the Philistines have in-
vaded the land. 28. Wherefore Saul ret-
turned from pursuance after David, and went
against the Philistines: therefore they call-
ed that place Selah-hammah-lekoth. 29. And
David went up from thence, and dwelt in
strong holds in En-gedi.

Here, 1. The Ziphites offer their services to Saul, and
betray David to him, v. 19, 20. He was sheltering
himself in the wilderness of Ziph, (v. 14, 15,) put-
ting the more confidence in the people of that coun-
try, because they were of his own tribe. They had
reason to think themselves happy, that they had an
opportunity of serving one, who was the ornament
of their tribe, and was likely to be much more so:
who was so far from plundering the country, or
giving it any disturbance with his troops, that he
was ready to protect it, and do them all the good
offices that there was occasion for. But, to ingrate-
ate themselves with Saul, they went to him, and
not only informed him very particularly where
David quartered, (v. 19,) but invited him to come
with his forces, and joined to their own, and
promised to deliver him into his hand, v. 20.
Saul had not sent to examine or threaten them, but
of their own accord, and even without asking a re-
ward, (as Judas did, What will ye give me?) they
proffer to betray David to him, who, they knew,
thirsted after his blood.

2. Saul thankfully receives their information, and
gladly lays hold on the opportunity of uniting God
in their wilderness, in hopes to make a prey of him
at length. He intimates to them how kindly he
took it; (v. 21.) Blessed be ye of the Lord, (so near
is God to his mouth, though far from his heart,)
for ye have compassion on me. It seems he looked
upon himself as a miserable man and an object of
pitey; his own envy and ill nature made him so, else
he might have been easy, and have needed no man's
compassion. He likewise had no concern that the
generality of his people showed for him: “You have
compassion on me, which others have not.” Saul
gives them instructions to search more particularly
for his haunts, (v. 22.) “For,” says he, “I hear he
deals very subtilely,” representing him as a man crafty
to do mischief, whereas all his subtilty was to secure himself. It was
strange that he did not go down with them imme-
diately, but he hoped, by their means, to set his
game with the more certainty, and thus Divine
Providence gave David time to shift for himself.
But the Ziphites had laid their spies upon all the
places where he was likely to be discovered, and
therefore Saul might come and seize him, if he was
in the land, v. 23. Now he thought himself sure
of his prey, and pleased himself with the thoughts of
decouraging it.

The next peril that David was now brought
into. Upon intelligence that the Ziphites had be-
trayed him, he retired from the hill of Hachilah
to the wilderness of Maon, (v. 24,) and at this time he
penned the 54th Psalm, as appears by the title,
wherein he calls the Ziphites strangers, though
they were Israelites, because they used him bar-
barously; but he puts himself under the divine
protection. “Behold, God is my Helper, and
then shall I be well.” Saul, having got intelligence
of him, pursued him closely, (v. 25,) till he came so
near him, that there was but a mountain between
them; (v. 26.) David and his men on the one side
of the mountain flying, and Saul and his men on the other
side pursuing; David in fear, and Saul in hope.
But this mountain was an emblem of the Divine
Providence coming between David and the de-
feater, like the cloud or pillar of cloud the Is-
ilites and the Egyptians; David was concealed by
this mountain, and Saul confounded by it. David
now flies as a bird to his mountain, (Ps. 11. 1.) and finds
God to him as the shadow of a great rock. Saul
hoped with his numerous forces, to enclose David,
and compass him in and his men; but the ground
did not prove convenient for his design, and so it
failed. A new name was given to the place in re-
membrance of this, v. 28. Selah-hammah-lekoth,
the rock of division, because it divided between
Saul and David.

4. The deliverance of David out of this danger.
Providence gave Saul a diversion when he was just
ready to lay hold on David; notice was brought
him that the Philistines were invading the land,
I.

And it came to pass, when Saul was returning from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of En-gedi. 2. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. 3. And he came to the sheepe-cotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet; and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. 4. And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. 5. And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. 6. And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord. 7. So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way. 8. David also rose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

Here,

I. Saul renews his pursuit of David, v. 1, 2. No sooner is he come home safe from chasing the Philistines, in which it should seem he had good success, than he inquires after David to do him mischief. It is a mifter to pursue him, when his very presence makes one stand in awe of him. 

II. Providence brings Saul alone into the same cave wherein David and his men had hid themselves, v. 3. In those countries there were very large coves in the sides of the rocks or mountains, partly natural, but, probably, much enlarged by art, for the sheltering of sheep from the heat of the sun; hence we read of places where the flocks did rest at noon, (Cant. 1. 7.) and this cove seems to be spoken of as one of the sheep-cotes. In the sides of this cave David and his men remained; perhaps not all his men, the whole 600, but only some few of his particular friends, the rest being disposed of in similar retirements. Saul, passing by, turned in himself alone, not in search of David, (for, supposing him to be an aspiring ambitious man, he thought him to rather climbing with the wild goats upon the rocks, than retiring with the sheep into a cave,) but thither he turned aside to cover his head, until he could come to Saul, and sez his state, and perform his duty. Saul now lay at his mercy, and it was easy to imagine how little mercy he should find with Saul, and therefore what little reason he had to show mercy to him. "By all means, say his servants, "give him the fatal blow now." See how apt were to misunder-

III. David's servants stir him up to kill Saul, now that he had so far an opportunity to do it, v. 4. They remind him that this was the day which he had long looked for, and which God had spoken to him in general, when he was anointed to the kingdom, which should put a period to his troubles, and open the passage to his advancement. Saul now lay at his mercy, and it was easy to imagine how little mercy he should find with Saul, and therefore what little reason he had to show mercy to him. "By all means, say his servants, "give him the fatal blow now." See how apt were to misunder-

IV. David cut off the skirt of his robe, but soon repented that he had done that; his heart smote him for it, v. 5. though he did Saul no real hurt, and
served David for a proof that it was in his power to have killed him; (v. 11) yet, because it was an affront to Saul's royal dignity, he wished he had not done it. Note, It is a good thing to have a heart within us, smiting us for sins that seem little; it is a sign that conscience is awake and tender, and will be the means of preventing greater sins.

V. He reasons strongly both with himself and with Saul against doing Saul any hurt. 1. He reasons with himself: (v. 6.) The Lord forbid that I should do this thing. Note, Sin is a thing which it becomes us to start at, and to resist the temptations to, not only with resolution, but with a holy indignation. He considers Saul now, not as his enemy, and the only person that stood in the way of his preferment, for then he would be induced to hearken to the temptation, but as God's anointed, that is, the person whom God had appointed to reign as long as he lived, and who, "as such, was under the particular protection of the divine law; and as his master, to whom he was obliged to be faithful. Let servants and subjects learn hence to be dutiful and loyal, whatever hardships are put upon them, 1 Pet. 2. 18. 2. He reasons with his servants. He suffered them not to rise against Saul. v. 7. He had not only not to do this himself, but he would not suffer those about him to do it. Thus did he render good for evil to him from whom he had received evil for good; and was herein both a type of Christ, who saved his persecutors, and an example to all Christians, not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.

VI. He follows Saul out of the cave, and though he would not take the opportunity to slay him, yet he wisely took the opportunity, if possible, to slay his enmity, by convincing him that he was not such a man as he took him for. 1. Even in showing his hand, he testified that he had an honourable opinion of Saul. He had too much reason to believe that, let him say what he would, Saul would immediately be the death of him, as soon as he saw him, and yet he bravely lays aside that jealousy, and thinks Saul, so far as only not to be a man of sense as to hear his reasoning, when he had so much to say in his own vindication, and such fresh and sensible proofs to give of his own integrity. 2. His behaviour was very respectful, he stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself, giving honour to whom honour was due, and teaching us to order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our superiors, even to those that have been most injurious to us.

9. And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? 10. Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord hath delivered thee to-day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee; but mine eye spared thee: and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the Lord's anointed. 11. Moreover, my father, see; yea, see the skirt of thy robe in mine hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou hastest my soul to take it. 12. The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. 13. As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. 14. After whom is the king of Israel come out? After whom dost thou pursue? After a dead dog, after a flea? 15. The Lord therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

We have here David's warm and pathetic speech to Saul, wherein he endeavours to convince him that he did him a great deal of wrong in persecuting him thus, and to persuade him therefore to be reconciled.

1. He calls him father; (v. 11.) for he was not only, as king, the father of his country, but he was, in particular, his father-in-law. From a father one may expect compassion, and a favourable opinion. For a prince to seek the ruin of any of his good subjects, is as unnatural as for a father to seek the ruin of his own children.

2. He lays the blame of his rage against him upon his evil counsellors; Wherefore hearest thou men's words? v. 9. It is a piece of respect owing to crowned heads, if they do amiss, to charge it upon those about them, who either advised them to it, or should have advised them against it. David had reason enough to think that Saul persecuted him purely from his own envy and malice, yet he here very supposes that others put him on to it, and made him believe that David was his enemy, and sought his hurt. Satan, the great accuser of the brethren, has his agents in all places, and particularly in the courts of those princes that encourage them and give ear to them, who make it their business to represent the people of God as enemies to Caesar and hurtful to kings and princes, that being thus dressed up in bear skins, they may be "bearded." 3. He solemnly proclaims his own innocence, and that he was far from designing any hurt or mischief to Saul, "There is neither evil nor transgression in my hand, v. 11. I am not chargeable with any crime, nor conscious of any guilt, and, had I a window in my breast, thou mightest through it see the sincerity of my heart in this protestation. I have not sought against thee, (however I have sinned against God;) yet thou hastest my soul," that is, "my life." Perhaps it was about this time, that David penned the seventh Psalm, concerning the business of Cush the Benjamite, that is, Saul, as some think, wherein he appeals to God, (v. 3. 5.) If there be iniquity in my hand, then let the enemy persecute my soul and take it; putting in a parenthesis, with reference to the story of this chapter. Yet, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy.

4. He produces undeniable evidence to prove the falseness of the suggestion upon which Saul's malice against him was grounded; David was charged with seeking Saul's hurt; "See," says he, "yea, see the skirt of my robe;" (v. 11.) let this be a witness for me, and an unexceptionable witness it is: It is the mark of a man's heart, when I am accused of, I had now had thy head in my hand, and yet the skirt of thy robe, for I could as easily have cut off that as this." To corroborate this evidence, he shows him, (1.) That God's providence had given him an opportunity to do it. The Lord delivered thee, very surprisingly, to-day into mine hand; whence many a one would have gathered an intimation, that it was the will of God he should do this. Perhaps the determining blow to him whose neck lay so fast for him. When Saul had but a very small advantage against David, he cried out, God has delivered him into my hand, (ch. 23. 7.) and resolved to make the best of that advantage; but David did not so. (2.) That
his counsellors and those about him had earnestly put him on to do it. Some bad: me kill thee. He had blamed Saul for hearkening to men's words, and justly; for says he, if I had done so, thou hadst not been alive now." (3.) That it was upon a good principle, that he refused to do it; not because his attendants were at hand, who, it may be, would have prevented his death, but not by the fear of them, but by the fear of God, that he was restrained from it; "He is my Lord, and the Lord's anointed, whom I ought to protect, and to whom I owe faith and allegiance, and therefore I said, I will not touch a hair of his head. Such a happy command he had of himself, that his nature, in the midst of the greatest provocation, was not suffered to rebel against his principles.

In his fixed resolution never to be his own avenger. The Lord avenge me of thee; that is, "deliver me out of thy hand; but, whatever comes of it, my hand shall not be upon thee;" (v. 12. and again, v. 13.) as saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked. The wisdom of the ancients is transmitted to posterity by their proverbial sayings: many such we receive by tradition from our forefathers, and the contents of them are very much directed by this, "As the old saying is." Here is one that was in use in David's time, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked; that is, (1.) Men's own iniquity will ruin them at last. So some understand it. Forward furious men will cut their own throats with their own knives. Give them rope enough, and they will hang themselves. In this sense it cannot be very fitly as a reason why his hand should not be upon him. (2.) Bad men will do bad things; according as men's principles and dispositions are, accordingly will their actions be: this suits the connexion. If David had been a wicked man, as he was represented, he would have done this wicked thing; but he durst not, because of the fear of God. Or thus: Whatever injuries bad men do us, (which we are not to wonder at; he that lies among thorns, must expect to be scratched,) yet we must not return them; never render railing for railing: though wickedness proceed from the wicked, yet let it not therefore proceed from us by way of retaliation. Though the dog bark at the sheep, the sheep does not bark at the dog. See Isa. 52. 6-8.

6. He endeavours to convince him, that as it was a bad thing, so it was a mean thing, for him to give chase to such an accursed one as David was. "If I would do it, I could not, with all this care and force? A dead dog; a flea; one flea; so it is in the Hebrew. It is below so great a king to enter the lists with one that is so unequal a match for him, one of his own servants, bred a poor shepherd, now an exile; neither able nor willing to make any resistance. To conquer him would not be to his honour, to attempt it was his ruin. If Saul had consulted his own reputation, he would slight such an enemy, (supposing he were really his enemy,) and would think himself in no danger from him. David was so far from aspiring, that he was, in his own account, as a dead dog; Mephibosheth thus calls himself, 2 Sam. 9. 8. This humble language would have wrought upon Saul, if he had any spark of generosity in him; and if Saul had considered the law of God, by which he could not violate the life, that he had laid his victim low. What credit would it be to Saul to trample upon a dead dog? What pleasure could it be to him to hunt a flea, a single flea? Which, (as some have observed,) if it be sought, is not easily found, if it be found, not easily caught, and if it be caught, is a poor prize, especially for a prince. Aspida non est his Maria. The eagle does not dart upon flies. David thinks Saul had no more reason to fear him, than to fear a flea-bite.

7. He once and again appeals to God as the righteous judge; (v. 12. and v. 15.) The Lord judge between me and thee. Note, The justice of God is the refuge and comfort of oppressed innocence. If men wrong us, God will right us, at furthest, in the judgment of the great Day. With him David leaves his cause, and so rests satisfied waiting his time to appear for him.

16. And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. 17. And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. 18. And thou hast showed this day how thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as, when the Lord had delivered me unto thine hand, thou killedst me not. 19. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? Wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. 20. And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. 21. Swear now therefore unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. 22. And David sware unto Saul, and Saul went home: but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

Here is,

I. Saul's penitent reply to David's speech. It was strange that he had patience to hear him out, considering how outrageous he was against him, and how cutting David's discourse was: but God restrained him and his men; and we may suppose Saul struck with amazement at the singularity of the event, and much more when he found how much he had lain at David's mercy. His heart must have been more softened than a stone, if this had not affected him.

1. He melted into tears; and we will not suppose them to be counterfeit, but real expressions of his present concern at the sight of his own iniquity, so plainly proved upon him. He speaks as one quite overcome with David's kindness; Is this thy voice, my son David? And, as one that relented at the thought of his own folly and ingenuity, he lifted his voice and wept, v. 16. Many mourn for their sins, that do not truly repent of them; weep bitterly for them, and yet continue in love and league with them.

2. He ingenuously acknowledged David's integrity, and his own iniquity; (v. 17.) Thou art more righteous than I. Now God made good to David that word which he had spoken, viz. that he would henceforth magnify his righteousness as the light, Ps. 37. 6. They who take care to keep a good conscience, may leave it to God to secure them the credit of it. This fair confession was enough to prove David innocent, (even his enemy himself being judge,) but not enough to prove Saul himself a true penitent. He should have said, Thou art righteous, but I am wicked, but the utmost he will own is this, Thou art more righteous than I. Bad men will commonly go no further than this in their
confessions; but they will own they are not so good as some others are; there are that are better than they, and more righteous. He now owns himself under a mistake concerning David; (v. 18.) "I have shown this day that thou hast dealt well with me." We are too apt to suspect others to be worse affected towards us than really they are, and than perhaps they are proved to be; when, afterward, our mistake is discovered, we should be forward to recall our suspicions, as Saul does here.

3. He prays God to recompense David for this his generous kindness to him. He owns that David's sparing him, while he had in his power was an uncommon and an unparalleled instance of tenderness to an enemy; no man would have done the like; and therefore, either because he thought himself not able to give him a full recompense for so great a favour, or, because he found himself not inclined to give him any recompense at all, he turns over to God for his pay; The Lord reward thee good, v. 19. Poor beggars can do no less than pray for the blessing of God he finds it necessary to ask it of HIMSELF to give it to him.

4. He prophesies his advancement to the throne; (v. 20.) I know well that thou shalt surely be king. He knew it before, by the promise Samuel had made him of it, compared with the excellent spirit that appeared in David, which highly aggravated his sin and folly, in persecuting him as he did; he had as much reason to say, concerning David, as David concerning himself, How canst thou say among thyself, Who is like to David the Lord's anointed? But now he knew it by the interest he found he had in the people, the special providence of God in protecting him, and the generous kingly spirit he had now given a proof of in sparing his enemy. Now he knew it; that is, that now he was in a good temper, he was willing to own that he knew it, and to submit to the conviction of it. Nete, Sooner or later, God will force even those that are of the synagogue of Satan, to know and own those that he has loved, and to worship before their feet; for so it is promised, Rev. 3. 9. This acknowledgment which Saul made of David's incontestable title to the crown, was a great encouragement to David himself, and a support to his faith and hope.

5. He binds David with an oath, hereafter to show the same tenderness of his seed, and of his name, that he had shown towards his power; and David had more reason to oblige Saul by an oath that he would not destroy him, yet he insists on that; (if the laws of justice and honour would not bind him, an oath would not;) but Saul knew David to be a conscientious man, and would think his interests safe, if he could get them secured by his oath. Saul, by his disobedience, had ruined his own soul, and never took care by repentance to prevent themselves, but Saul went on in it very strongly, so that his name might not be destroyed, nor his seed cut off. However, David sware unto him, v. 22. Though he might be tempted, not only in revenge, but in prudence, to extirpate Saul's family, yet he binds himself not to do it, knowing that God could and would establish the kingdom to him and his, without the use of such bloody methods. This oath he after his death, renewed; he made it to his son, Solomon, to be a philosbeth, and executed those as traitors, that slew Ish-bosheth. The hanging up of several of Saul's posterity, to atone for the destruction of the Gibonites, was God's appointment, not David's act, and therefore not the violation of this oath.

II. Their parting in peace. 1. Saul, for the present, let fall the persecution; he went home convinced, but not converted; ashamed of his envy to David, yet retaining in his breast that root of bitterness; vexed that, when at last he had found David, he could not at that time find in his heart to destroy him, as he had designed. God has many ways to tie the hands of persecutors, when he does not turn their hearts. 2. David's rage for his own safety; he knew Saul too well to trust him, and therefore got him up into the hold. It is dangerous venturing upon the mercy of a reconcile enemy. We read of those who believed in Christ, and yet he did not commit himself to them, because he knew all men. They that like David are innocent as doves, must thus like him be wise as serpents.

CHAP. XXV.

We have here some intermission of David's troubles by Saul. Providence favoured him with a breathing time, and yet this chapter gives us instances of the troubles of David; it seems to be over, we must not be secure; a storm may arise from some other point, as here to David. I. Tidings of the death of Samuel could not but trouble him, v. 1. But, II. The abuse he received from Nabal is more largely recorded in this chapter. 1. The character of Nabal, v. 2, 3. 2. The humble request sent to him, v. 4-9. 3. His churlish answer, v. 10-11. 4. David's angry resentment of it, v. 12, 13, 14, 15. Abigail's prudent care to prevent the mischief it was likely to bring upon her family, v. 14-20. 6. Her address to David to pacify him, v. 23, 31. 7. David's favourable reception of her, v. 32, 33. 8. The death of Nabal, v. 36, 38. 9. Abigail's marriage to David, v. 39, 44.

AND Saul died: and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

We have here a short account of Samuel's death and burial.

Though he was a great man, and one that was admirably well qualified for public service, yet he spent the latter end of his days in retirement and obscurity: not because he was superannuated, for he knew how to preside in a college of the prophets, (ch. 19. 20.) but because Israel had rejected him, for which God thus justly chastised them, and because his desire was to be quiet, and to enjoy himself and his God in acts of devotion, now in his advanced years; and in this desire God graciously indulged him. Let old people be willing to rest themselves, though it look like burying themselves alive.

2. Though he was a fast friend to David, for which Saul hated him, as also for dealing plainly with him; yet he died in peace, even in the worst of the days of Saul's tyranny, who, he sometimes feared, would kill him, ch. 16. 2. Though Saul loved him not, yet he feared him, as Herod did John: and feared the people, for all knew him to be a prophet. Thus is Saul restrained from hurting him.

3. All Israel lamented him; and they had reason, for they had all a loss in him. His personal merits commanded this honour to be done him at his death; his former services to the public, when he joined Israel, made this respect to his name and memory, not just debt; it had been very ungrateful to have withheld it. The sons of the prophets had lost the founder and president of their college, and whatever weakened them was a public loss: but that was not all; Samuel was a constant intercessor for Israel, prayed daily for them; (ch. 12. 23.) if he go, they part with the best friend they have. The loss is the more grievous at this juncture, when Saul is grown so outrageous, and seem to have no help; and the Israelites lamented Samuel's death the more bitterly, be-
cause they remembered against themselves their own sin and folly in rejecting him, and desiring a king. Note, (1.) Those have hard hearts, who can bury their faithful ministers with dry eyes; who are not sensible of the loss of those who have prayed for them, and taught them the way of the Lord. (2.) When God’s providence removes our relations and friends from us, we ought to be humbled for our misconduct toward them, while they were with us.

4. They buried him not in the school of the prophets at Nainoth, but in his own house, or perhaps in the garden pertaining to it, at Ramah, where he was born.

5. David, hereupon, went down to the wilderness of Paran, retiring, perhaps, to mourne the more solemnly for the death of Samuel. Or, rather, because now that he had lost so good a friend, who was (and he hoped would be) a great support to him, he apprehended his danger to be greater than ever, and therefore withdrew to a wilderness, out of the limits of the land of Israel; and now it was, that he dwelt in the tents of Kedar, Ps. 120. 3. In some parts of this wilderness of Paran, Israel wandered when they came out of Egypt; the place would bring to mind God’s care concerning them, and David might improve that for his own encouragement, now in his wilderness state.

2. And there was a man in Moab whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. 3. Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail; and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance; but the man was churlish, and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb. 4. And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep. 5. And David sent out ten young men; and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. 6. And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. 7. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now, thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. 8. Ask thy young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes; for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. 9. And when David’s young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words, in the name of David, and ceased. 10. And Nabal answered David’s servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. 11. Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearsers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?

Here begins the story of Nabal.

1. A short account of him, who and what he was, v. 2, 3. A man we should never have heard of, if there had not happened some communication between him and David. Observe, 1. His name: Nabal; a fool, so it signifies. It was a wonder that his parents would give him that name, as it was ill omen of what proved to be his character. Yet indeed we all of us deserve to be so called, when we come into the world; for Man is born like the wild ass’s colt, and foolishness is bound up in our hearts. 2. His family: he was of the house of Caleb, but was indeed of another spirit. He inherited Caleb’s estate; for Maon and Carmel lay near Hebron, which was given to Caleb; (Josh. 15. 54, 55.—14, 14.) but he was far from inheriting his virtues. He was a disgrace to his family, and then it was no honour to him. Degenerantigeniusofficiorum.—A good extraction is a reproach to him who degenerates from it. The Seventy, and some other ancient versions, read it appositively; not, He was a Calebite. He was a dogged man, of a currish disposition, surly and snappish, and always snarling. He was as a Saracen—a man that was a cynic. His wealth was very great, that is, very rich; for riches make men look great in the eye of the world; otherwise, to one that takes his measures aright, he really looked very mean. Riches are common blessings, which God often gives to Nabals, to whom he gives neither wisdom nor grace. 4. His wife: Abigail; a woman of great understanding. Her name signifies, the joy of her father; yet he could not prize her, nor feel the joy of her; for Abigail’s, ever so great, such a husband, inquiring more after his wealth, than after his wisdom. Many a child is thrown away upon a great heap of the mire of worldly wealth; married to that and to nothing else that is desirable. Wisdom is good with an inheritance, but an inheritance is good for little without wisdom. Many an Abigail is tied to a Nabal, and if it be so, be her understanding, like Abigail’s, ever so great, it will be little enough for her exercises. 5. His character: he had no sense either of honor or honesty: not of honour, for he was churlish, cross, and ill-humoured; not of honesty, for he was evil in his doings, hard, and oppressive, and a man that cared not what fraud and violence he used in getting and saving, so he could but get and save. This is the character given of Nabal by Him who knows what every man is.

II. David’s humble request to him, that he would send him some victuals for himself and his men.

1. David, it seems, was in such distress, that he would be glad to be beholden to him, and did, in effect, come a begging to his door. What little reason have we to value the wealth of this world, when so great a man as Nabal was niggardly, and so great a sinner David was, suffers want! Once before, we had David begging his bread, but then it was of Ahimelech the High Priest, to whom one would not grudge to stoop. But to send a begging to Nabal, was what such a spirit as David had, could not admit without some reluctancy; yet if Providence bring him to these straits, he will not say, that to beg is base. Yet God is able to make a blessing.

2. He chose a good time to send to Nabal, when he had many hands employed about him in shearing his sheep, for whom he was to make a plentiful entertainment, so that good cheer was stirring. Had he been at another time, Nabal would have pretended he had nothing to spare, but now he could not have that excuse. It was usual to make feasts at their sheep-shearings, as appears from
Absalom's feast on that occasion; (2 Sam. 13. 24.) for wool was one of the staple commodities of Canaan.

3. David ordered his men to deliver their message to him with a great deal of courtesy and respect; "Go to Nabal, and greet him in my name." Tell him I sent you to present my service to him, to add to what the servants had already said. He puts words in their mouths; (v. 6.) Thus shall ye say to him that liveth; (our translators add, in prosperity;) as if those lives indeed, that live as Nabal did, with abundance of the wealth of this world about them; whereas, in truth, those that live in pleasure, are dead while they live, 1 Tim. 5. 6. This was, methinks, too high a compliment to pass upon Nabali, to call him the man that liveth; v. 7. and so rule his near kindred, as in God's favour is life, not in the world's smiles: and by the rough answer he was well enough served, for this too smooth address to such a muck-worm. Yet his good wishes were very commendable; "Peace be to thee; all good both to soul and body; Peace to thy house and to all that thou hast." Tell him I am a hearty well-wisher to his health and prosperity. He bids them call him his master. He regarded in vain, as scripture speaks, this are and estate. David honoured him as a father, and therefore hoped to receive some fatherly kindness from him.

4. He pleaded the kindness which Nabal's shepherds had received from David and his men; and one good turn requires another. He appeals to Nabai's own servants, and shows that when David's soldiers were quartered among Nabai's shepherds, (1.) They did not hurt them themselves; did them no injury, gave them no disturbance, were not a terror to them, nor took any of their lambs out of their flock. Yet, considering the character of David's men, men in distress, and debt, and contentious, and the scarcity of provisions in his camp, it was not without a great deal of care and good management, that they were kept from plundering. (2.) They protected them from being hurt by any others. David himself does but intimate this, for he would not boast of his good offices; neither was there ought missing unto them. v. 7. But Nabai's servants, to whom he appealed, went further; (v. 16.) They were a wall unto us both by night and day. David's soldiers were a guard to Nabai's shepherds, when the bands of the Philistines robb'd the threshing-floors, (ch. 23. 1.) and would have robbed the sheep-folds. From that liveth, v. 7. We inquire how he does, and how he is, and what he is doing. David's care and solicitude for his kindred, and therefore let us find favour in thine eyes. Those that have shown kindness, may justly expect to receive kindness.

5. He was very modest in his request. Though David was anointed king, he insists not upon royal dainties, but "Give whatsoever comes to thy hand, and we will be thankful for it." Beggars must not be despised. They that deserve to have been served first, will now be glad of what is left. They plead, We come in a good day, a festival, when not only the provision is more plentiful, but the heart and hand are usually more open and free, than at other times: when much may be spared, and yet not be missed. He demands it not as a debt, either by way of tribute, as he was king, or by way of contribution, as he was a general, but as a boon to a beggar and a servant. David called himself his son, and asked bread, and a fish, but, in stead thereof, he gave him a stone, and a scorpion; not only denied him, but abused him. If he had not thought fit to send him any supplies for fear of Ahimelech's f. t.e., who paid dear for his kindness to David, yet he might have given a civil answer, and made the denial as modest as the request was. But, instead of that, he falls into a passion, as pious men are apt to do, when they are asked for anything, thinking thus to cover one sin with another, and by abusing the poor to excuse themselves from relieving them. But God will not thus be dealt with. 1. He speaks scornfully of David, as an insignificant man, not worth taking notice of. The Philistines could say of him, This is David the king of the land, that 8io to his ten thousands; (ch. 21. 17.) yet he was justly called his near kindred, and those that live in God's favour. Does he take on him to say that he does not know him, or not know him to be a man of any merit or distinction? Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? He could not be ignorant how much the country was obliged to David for his public services, but his narrow soul thinks not of paying any part of that debt, nor so much as acknowledge it; he speaks of David as an inconsiderable man, obscure, and not worth the notice of a great prince, if great men and great merit be thus disgraced.

2. He upbraids him with his present distress, and takes occasion from it to represent him as a bad man, that was fitter to be set in the stocks for a vagrant than to have any kindness shown him. How naturally does he speak the curialh cloven-th of those that hate to give alms! There be many servants walk-a-days, (as if there had been none such in former days,) that break every man from his murrer; suggesting that David was one of them himself. "He might have kept his place with his master Saul, and then he need not have sent to me for provisions." Also that he entertained and harboured those that were fugitives like himself. It would make one's blood rise, to hear so great and good a man as David was, thus vilified and reproached by such a base cur as Nabai was; But the vile person will speak villany, Isa. 52. 5-7. If men bring themselves into straits by their own folly, yet they are to be pitied and helped, and not trampled upon and starved. But David is reduced to this distress, not by any fault, nor any indiscretion, of his own, but purely by the good services he had done to his country, and the honours which his God had put upon him; and yet he is represented as one of the multitude. Wherein we must be careful to hear such reproaches and misrepresentations of us with patience and cheerfulness, and make us easy under them, that it has often been the lot of the excellent ones of the earth. Some of the best men that ever the world was blest with, were countenanced as the off-scouring of all things, 1 Cor. 4. 13.

3. He insists much upon the property he had in the provision of his table, and will by no means allow any body to share in them. "It is my bread and my flesh, yes, and my water too," (though aqua communis aquarium—water is every one's property,) "and it is prepared for my shearsers," priding himself in it, that it was all his own; and who denied it? Who offered to dispute his title? But this, he thinks, will justify him in keeping it all to himself, and giving David none; for may he not do what he will with his own, and dispose of it as he thinks fit, if we think we are absolute lords of what we have, and may do what we please with it. No, we are but stewards, and must use it as we are directed, remembering it is not our own, but his that entrusted us with it. Riches are the zalophous, (Luke 16. 12.) they are another's, and we ought not to talk much of their being our own.

12. So David's young men turned their
way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings. 13. And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword, and David also girded on his sword; and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff. 14. But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he hailed on them. 15. But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: 16. They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping sheep. 17. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.

Here is

I. The report to David of the abuse Nabul had given to his messengers; (v. 12.) They turned their way; they showed their displeasure as became them to do, by breaking off abruptly from such a churl, but prudently governed themselves so well, as not to render railing for railing, nor to call him as he deserved, much less to take by force what ought of right to have been given them, but came and told David—let him do as he thought fit. Christ's servants, when they are thus abused, must leave it to him to plead his own cause, and wait till he appear in it. The servant showed his lord what affronts he had received, but did not return them, Luke 14. 21.

II. David's hasty resolution, hereupon. He girded on his sword, and ordered his men to do so too, to the number of four hundred, v. 15. And when he said, we are told, v. 21, 22. 1. He repented of the kindness he had done to Nabul, and locks upon it as thrown away upon him. He said, "Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness; I thought to have obliged him, and made him my friend, but I see it is to no purpose. He has no sense of gratitude, nor is he capable of receiving the impressions of a good turn, else he could not have used me thus. He hath requited me evil for good."

But when we are thus requited, we should not repent of the good we have done, nor be backward to do good another time. God is kind to the evil and unthankful, and why may not we? 2. He determined to destroy Nabul, and all that belonged to him, v. 22. Here David did not act like himself. His resolution was bloody, to cut off all the males of Nabul's house, and spare none, man, nor woman, child. The ratification of his resolution was passionate; so, and more also, do God (he was going to say to me, but that would better become Saul's mouth (ch. 14. 44.) than David's, and therefore he decently turns it off.) to the enemies of David. Is this thy voice, O David? Can the man after God's own heart speak thus unadvisedly with his lips? Has he been so long in the school of affliction, that he should have learned patience, and yet so passionate? Is this he who used to be dumb and deaf when he was reproached, (Ps. 38. 13.) who, but the other day, spared him who sought his life, and yet now will not spare any thing that belongs to him who had only put an affront upon his messengers? He who, at other times, used to be calm and considerate, is now put into such a heat by a few hard words, that he will not think for them but the blood of a whole family. Lord, what is man? What are the best of men, when God leaves them to themselves to try them, that they may know what is in their hearts! From Saul, David expected injuries, and against these he was prepared, and stood upon his guard, and so kept his temper; but from Nabal he expected kindness, and against this he was not prepared, by a sudden and unexpected attack, put him for the present into disorder. What need have we to pray, Lord, lead us not into temptation.

III. The account given of this matter to Abigail, by one of the servants, who was more considerate than the rest, v. 14. Had this servant spoken to Nabal, and showed him the danger he had exposed himself to, by his own rudeness, he would have said, "Servants are now-a-days so saucy, and so apt to prescribe, that there is no enduring them;" and, it may be, would have turned him out of doors. But Abigail, being a woman of good understanding, took cognizance of the matter, even from her servant who, 1. Did David right, in commending him and his men for their civility to Nabal's servants; (v. 15, 16.) The men were very good to us, and when they were themselves exposed, we kept protected, and we were a wall unto us." They who do that which is good, one way or other, shall have the praise of the same. Nabal's own servant will be a witness for David, that he is a man of honour and conscience, whatever Nabal himself says of him. And, 2. He did Nabul no wrong in condemning him for his rudeness to David's messengers.

He railed on them, v. 14. He flew upon them, so the word is, with an intolerable rage: "You they, "it is his usual practice; (v. 17.) He is such a son as Belial, so very morose and untractable, that a man cannot speak to him, but he flies into a passion immediately," Abigail knew it too well herself. 3. He did Abigail and the whole family a kindness, in making her sensible what was likely to be the consequence. He knew David so well, and was so convinced of the reason to this affront, and, perhaps, had bad information of David's orders to his men to march that way; for he is very positive evil is determined against our master and all his household; himself, among the rest, would be involved in it. Therefore he desires his mistress to consider what was to be done for their common safety. They could not resist the force David was to bring down upon them, nor had they courage to come to Saul to protect them, something therefore must be done to pacify David.

18. Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses. 19. And she said unto her servants, Go on before me: behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal. 20. And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them. 21. (Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fel-
low bath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he had requited me evil for good. 22. So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him, by the morning light, any that pisseth against the wall.) 23. And when Abigail saw David, she hasted and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, 24. And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be; and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. 25. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. 26. Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. 27. And now this blessing, which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord. 28. I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. 29. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. 30. And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel, 31. That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.

Wisdom in such a case as this, was better than weapons of war. 1. It was her wisdom, that what she did, she did quickly, and without delay; she made haste, v. 18. It was no time to trifle or linger, when all was in danger. They that desire conditions of peace, must send when the enemy is yet a great way off, Luke 14. 32. 2. It was her wisdom, that what she did, she did herself, because, being a woman of great address and very happy address, she knew better how to manage it than any servant she had. The virtuous woman will herself look well to the ways of her household, and not devolve it wholly upon others. Abigail must endeavour to atone for Nabal's faults, now that he had been two ways rude to David's messengers, and in them to David. 1. He had denied them the provender for their oxen. 2. He had given them very provoking language. Now, I. By a most generous present, Abigail atones for his denial of their request. If Nabal had given them what came next to hand, they had gone away thankful; but Abigail prepares the very best the house afforded, and abundance of it, (v. 18.) according to the usual entertainments of the times. They give only broth, bread, and figs, which were their dries sweetmeats. Nabal grudged them water, but she took two bottles (casks or rundlets) of wine, loaded her asses with these provisions, and sent them before; for a gift pacifieth anger, Prov. 21. 14. Jacob thus pacified Esau. When the instruments of the churl are evil, the liberal devise liberal things, and loses nothing by it; for by liberal things shall he stand, Isa. 62. 7, 8. Abigail not only lawfully, but laudably, disposed of all these goods of her husband's, without his knowledge, even when she had reason to think that if he had known, he would not have consented to it; because it was not to gratify her own pride, or vanity, but for the necessary defence of him and his family, which otherwise had been inevitably ruined. Husbands and wives, for their common good and benefit, have a joint-interest in their worldly possessions; but if either waste, or unduly spend any way, it is robbing the other. II. By a most obliging demeanour, and charming speech, she atones for the abusive language which Nabal had given them. She met David upon the march, big with resentment, and meditating the destruction of Nabal; (v. 20.) but with all possible expressions of complaisance and respect she humbly begs his favour, and solicits it self as an token of the offence. Her demeanour was very submissive; she bowed herself to the ground before David, v. 23. and fell at his feet, v. 24. Yielding pacifies great offences. She puts herself into the place and posture of a penitent, and of a petitioner, and was not ashamed to do it, when it was for the good of her house, in the sight both of her own servants, and of David's soldiers. She humbly begs of David that he will grieve for the husband, Let the handmaid speak in thine audience. But she needed not thus to bespeak his attention and patience; what she said was sufficient to command it; for certainly nothing could be more fine or more moving. No topic of argument is left untouched, every thing is well placed, and well expressed, most pertinently and pathetically urged and improved to the best advantage, with such a force of natural rhetoric as cannot easily be paralleled.

1. She speaks to him all along with the deference and respect due to so great and good a man; calls him My lord over and over, to expiate her husband's crime in saying, "Who is David?" She does not upbraid him with the heat of his passion, though he deserved to be reproved for it; nor does she tell him how ill it became his character: but endeavours
to soften him, and bring him to a better temper; not doubting but that then his own conscience would upbraud him with it.

2. She takes the blame of the ill treatment of his messengers upon herself; "Upon me, my lord, upon me, let this iniquity be, v. 24. If thou wilt be angry, be angry with me, rather than with my poor husband, and look upon it as the trespass of thy handmaid." v. 28. Sour and ill manners are not how much others suffer for their evil temper, but the spirits can be content to suffer for the faults of others. Abigail here discovered the sincerity and strength of her conjugal affection, and concern for her family: whatever Nabal was, he was her husband.

3. She excuses her husband's fault by imputing it to his natural weakness and want of understanding; "I saw not the young men, else they should have had a better answer, and should not have gone without their errand" intimating hereby, that though her husband was foolish, and unfit to manage his affairs himself, yet he had so much wisdom as to be ruled by her, and take her advice.

4. She pleads her own ignorance of the matter; "I saw not the young men, else they should have had a better answer, and should not have gone without their errand" intimating hereby, that though her husband was foolish, and unfit to manage his affairs himself, yet he had so much wisdom as to be ruled by her, and take her advice.

5. She takes it for granted that she had gained the point already, perhaps, perceiving by David's countenance, that he began to change his mind; (v. 26.) Seeing the Lord hath withholden thee. She depends not upon her own reasonings, but God's grace, to mollify him, and doubts not but that grace would work powerfully upon him; and then, "Let all thine enemies be as Nabal:" that is, if thou forgoest to avenge thyself, no doubt, God will avenge thee on him, as he will on all other thine enemies." Or it intimates that it was below him to take vengeance on so weak and impotent an enemy as Nabal was, who, as he would do him no kindness, so he could do him no hurt, for he needed to wish no more concerning his enemies, than that they might be as useful to Nabal as Nabal was. Perhaps she refers to his sparing of Saul, when, in the other day, he had him at his mercy. "Didst thou forbear to avenge thyself on that lion that devoted thee, and wilt thou shed the blood of this dog that can but bark at thee?" The very mentioning of what he was about to do, to shed blood, and to avenge himself, was enough to work upon such a tender and gracious spirit as David had; and it should seem, by his reply, (v. 35.) that he had perswaded him.

6. She makes a tender of the present she had brought, but speaks of it as unworthy of David's acceptance; and therefore desirès it might be given to the young men that followed him, (v. 27.) and particularly to those ten that were his messengers to Nabal, whom he had treated so rudely.

7. She applauds David for the good services he had done against the common enemies of his country, the glory of which great achievements, she hoped, he would not stain by any personal revenge. My lord fighteth the battles of the Lord against the Philistines, and therefore he will leave it to God to fight his battles against those that affront him. "Evil hath not been found in thee all thy days, (v. 28.) thou never yet didst wrong to any of thy countrymen, (though persecuted as a traitor,) and therefore thou wilt not begin now, nor do a thing which Saul will improve for the justifying of his malice against thee."

8. She foretells the glorious issue of his present troubles. "It is true, a man pursues thee, and seeks thy life," (she names not Saul, out of respect to his present character as a king;) "but thou needest not look with so sharp and jealous an eye upon every one that affronts thee; for all these storms that now ruffle thee, will be blown over shortly." She speaks it with assurance, (1.) That God would keep him safe; The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; that is, God shall hold thy soul in life, (as the expression is, Ps. 66. 9.) as we hold these things tight which are bundled up, or which are precious to us, (Ps. 116. 15.) Thy soul shall be treasured up in the bundle of life with the Lord our God. (2.) That God would make him victorious over his enemies. Their souls he shall sling out, v. 29. The stone is bound up in the sling, but it is in order to be thrown out again: so the souls of the godly shall be bundled up, and then, for the benefit of the world, the wicked souls of the wicked as tares for the fire. (3.) That God would settle him in wealth and power; The Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house, and no enemy thou hast can hinder it; therefore forgive this trespass; that is, "show mercy as thou hast hoped to find mercy. God will make thee great, and it is the glory of great men to pass by offences." She desires him to consider how much more comfortable it would be to him in the reflection to have forgiven this affront than to have revenged it, v. 30. 31. She reserves this argument for the last, and a very powerful one with so good a man: That the less he indulged his passion, the more he consulted his peace and the repose of his own conscience, which every wise man will be tender of. (1.) She cannot but think, that if he should avenge himself, it would extend to a greater than the affront, because of his offence of heart to him. Many have done that in a heat, which they have a thousand times wished undone again. The sweetness of revenge is soon turned into bitterness. (2.) She is confident that if he pass by the offence, it will afterward be no grief to him; but, on the contrary, it would yield him unspokeable satisfaction that his wisdom and grace had got the better of his passion. Note, When we are tempted to sin, we should consider how it will appear in the reflection. Let us never do any thing for which our own conscience will afterward have occasion to upbraid us, and which we shall look back upon with regret. My heart shall not reproach me.

Lastly, she recommends herself to his favour; When the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid, as one that kept thee from doing that which would have disgraced thine honour, disquieted thy conscience, and made a blot in thine history. We have reason to remember those with respect and gratitude, who have been instrumental to keep us from sin.
32. And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: 33. And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand. 34. For in very deed, as the Lord God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened, and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal, by the morning light, any that pisseth against the wall. 35. So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house: see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear, Prov. 25. 12. Abigail was a wise reprover of David's passion, and he gave an obedient ear to the reproof, according to his own principle, (Ps. 141, 5.) Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness. Never was such an admonition either better given, or more taken.

1. David gives God thanks for sending him this happy check in a sinful way; (v. 32.) Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me. Note, (1.) God is to be acknowledged in all the kindnesses that our friends do us either for soul or body. Whoever meets us with counsel, direction, comfort, caution, or seasonable reproof, we must see God sending them. (2.) We ought to be very thankful for those happy providences which are means of preventing sin.

2. He gives Abigail thanks for interposing so opportunely between him and the mischief he was about to do; Blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, v. 33. Most people think it enough, if they take a reproof patiently; but we meet with few that will take it thankfully, and will commend those that reproach them. It is a favor of God, and accept it as such. Abigail did not rejoice more that she had been instrumental to save her husband and family from death, than David repented that she had been instrumental to save him and his men from sin.

3. He seems very apprehensive of the great danger he was in, which magnified the mercy of his deliverance. (1.) He speaks of the sin as very great. He was coming to shed blood, a sin which he had, prevalently, a great horror of; and so, in his prayer, Deliver me from blood-guiltiness; he was coming to avenge himself with his own hand, and that is stepping into the throne of God, who has said, Vengeance is mine I will repay. The more heinous any sin is, the greater mercy it is to be kept from it. He seems to aggravate the evil of his design with this, that it would have been an injury to so wise and good a woman, as Abigail; God has kept me back from hurting thee, v. 34. Or, perhaps, at the first sight of Abigail, he was conscious of a thought to do her a mischief for offering to oppose him; and therefore reckons it a great mercy that God gave him patience to hear her speak. (2.) He speaks of the danger of his falling into it, as very imminent; Except thou hadst hastened, the bloody execution had been done. The nearer we were to the commission of sin, the greater was the mercy of a seasonable restraint. Almost gone, (Ps. 73, 2) and yet upheld.

4. He dismissed her with an answer of peace, v.

35. He does, in effect, own himself overcome by her eloquence; "I have hearkened to thy voice, and will not prosecute the intended revenge, for I have accepted thy person; am well pleased with thee, and what thou hast said." Note, (1.) Wise and good men will hear reason, and let that rule them, though it come from those that are every way their inferiors, and though their passions are up, and their spirits provoked. (2.) Oaths cannot bind us to that which is sinful. David had solemnly vowed the death of Nabal; he did ill to make such a vow, but he had done worse if he had performed it. (3.) A wise and faithful reproof is often better taken, and speeds better than we expected: such is the hold God has of men's consciences. See Prov. 28. 25.

36. And Abigail came to Nabal: and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light. 37. But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. 38. And it came to pass, about ten days after, that the Lord smote Nabal, that he died. 39. And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the Lord, that hath pleased the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the Lord hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife. 40. And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spoke unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee to take thee to him to wife. 41. And she arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord. 42. And Abigail hastened, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife. 43. David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives. 44. But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which was of Gallim.

We are now to attend Nabal's funeral, and Abigail's wedding.

I. Nabal's funeral. The apostle speaks of some that were twice dead, Jude 12. We have here Nabal thrice dead, though but just now wonderfully rescued from the sword of David, and delivered from so great a death; for the preservations of wicked men, are but reservations for some further sorer strokes of divine wrath. Here is,

1. Nabal dead drunk, v. 36. Abigail came home, and, it should seem, he had so many people, and so much plenty about him, that he neither missed her, nor the provisions she took to David; but she found him in the midst of his jollity, little thinking how
near he was to ruin, by one whom he had foolishly made his enemy. Sinners are often most secure, when they are most in danger, and destruction is at the door. Observe, (1.) How extravagantly he was in the entertainment of his company; He held a feast like the feast of a king, so magnificent and abundant, though his guests were but his shepherders. This abundance might have been allowed, if he had considered what God gave him his estate for, not to look great with, but to do good with. It is very unmindful for these things are most niggardly in any act of piety or charity, to be most profuse in gratifying a vain humour or a base lust. A mite is grudged to God and his poor; but, to make a fair show in the flesh, gold is lavished out of the bag. If Nabal had not answered to his name, he would never have been thus secure and jovial, till he had inquired whether he was safe from David's resentments; but (as Bishop Low-Elsey supposed) that are carnal men, that give themselves over to their pleasures, before they have taken any care to make their peace with God. (2.) How sottish he was in the indulgence of his own brutish appetite; He was very drunk. A sign he was Nabal, a fool, that could not use his plenty without abusing it; could not be present with his friends without making a beast of himself. There is not a surer sign that man has been created for God that he rebukes it and doth not stay the hand at a little he has, than drinking to excess. Nabal, that never thought he could bestow too little in charity, never thought he could betow too much in luxury. Abigail finding him in this condition, (and probably, those about him little better, when the master of the feast set them so bad an example,) she had enough to do to set the disordered house to rights a little, but told Nabal nothing of what she had done with reference to David. She had been privy to what David, of his danger or of his deliverance; for, being drunk, he was as incapable to hear reason, as he was to speak it. To give good advice to those that are in drink, is to cast pearls before swine; it is better to stay till they are sober.

2. Nabal died with melancholy, v. 57. Next morning, when he was come to himself a little, his wife told him how near to destruction he had brought himself, and his family, by his own rudeness: and with what difficulty she had interposed to prevent it; and, upon this, his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. Some suggest, that the expense of the satisfaction made to David, by the present Abigail brought him, broke his heart; it seems rather, that the apprehension he now had of the danger he had narrowly escaped, put him into a consternation, and deserved his spirits, so that he could not recover it. He grew sullen, and said little, ashamed of his own folly, and put out of countenance by his wife's wisdom. How is he changed! His heart over-night merry with wine, next morning heavy as a stone; so deceitful are carnal pleasures; so transient the laughter of the fool; the end of that which is heaviness. Drunkards are sometimes sad, when they reflect upon their own folly. Joy and glee, it is just with God, (Says Bishop Hall,) that they who live without grace, should die without comfort; nor can we expect better, while we go on in our sins. Here is no lamentation made for Nabal; he departed without being lamented; every one signified that the country would be well off, if it never sustained a greater loss. David when he heard the news of his death, gave God thanks for it, v. 59. He blessed God, (1.) That he had kept him from killing him; Blessed be the Lord, who hath kept his servant from evil. He rejoices that Nabal died a natural death, and not by his hand. We should take all occasions to mention and magnify God's goodness to us, in keeping us from sin. (2.) That he had taken the work into his own hands, and had vindicated David's honour, and not suffered him to go to God's judgment, by giving him to receive from him: hereby his interest would be confirmed, and all would stand in awe of him, as one for whom God fought. (3.) That he had thereby encouraged him, and all others, to commit their cause to God, when they are any way injured, with an assurance that, in his own time, he will right them, if they sit still, and leave it to him.

II. Abigail's wedding. David was so charmed with the beauty of her person, and the uncommon prudence of her conduct and address, that, as soon as was proper, after he heard she was a widow, he informed her of his attachment to her, (v. 39.) not doubting, but that she who approved herself so good a wife to so bad a husband as Nabal was, would much more make him a good wife; and, having taken notice of her respect to him, and her confidence of his coming to the throne, 1. He desired her to join him in this; 2. He desired her to come to him to come himself. 2. She received the address with great modesty and humility, (v. 41.) reckoning herself unworthy of the honour, yet having such a respect for him, that she would gladly be one of the poorest servants in his family, to wash the feet of the other servants. None so fit to be preferred as those that can thus humble themselves. 3. She agreed to the proposal, was engaged to David, took a retinue with her agreeable to her quality, and she became his wife, v. 42. She did not upbraid him with his present distresses, and ask him how he could maintain her, but valued him, (1.) Because she knew he was a very good man. (2.) Because she believed he would, in due time, be a very great man; she married him in faith, not questioning but that, though now he had not a house of his own that he durst bring her to, yet he was so used to God's promises to him that would at length be fulfilled. Thus they who join themselves to Christ, must be willing now to suffer with him, believing that hereafter they shall reign with him.

Lastly. On this occasion, we have some account of David's wives. 1. One that he had lost before he married Abigail; Michal, Saul's daughter, his first, and the wife of his youth, to whom he promised, if she would have been so to him; but Saul had given her to another, (v. 44.) in token of his displeasure against him, and disclaiming the relation of a father-in-law to him. 2. Another that he married beside Abigail, (v. 45.) and, as should seem, before her, for she is named first, ch. 27. 3. David was carried away by the corrupt custom of those times; but from the beginning it was not so, nor is it now that Messiah would to him would at length be fulfilled. Thus they who join themselves to Christ, must be willing now to suffer with him, believing that hereafter they shall reign with him.

CHAP. XXVI.

David's troubles from Saul here begin again, and the clouds return after the rain, when one would have hoped the storm had blown over, and the sky had cleared up on that.
side: but, after Saul had owned his fault in persecuting David, and David was not only considered as the crown of his victories, but as so perfectly lost as he to all sense of honour and virtue. 1. The Ziphites informed him where David was, (v. 1.) and, thereupon, he marches out with a considerable force in quest of him, v. 2, 3. II. David gained intelligence of his motions, (v. 4.) and took a view of the camp, v. 5. III. He and one of his men ventured into his camp in the night, and found him and all his guards fast asleep, v. 6, 7. IV. David, though much urged to do it by his companions, would not take away Saul’s life: but only carried off his spear and his cruse of water, v. 8, 9. V. He produced those as a further witness for him, that he did not design any ill to Saul, and, therefore, designed no ill to himself: v. 10. Thus Saul was hereby convinced of his error, and once more let fall the persecution, v. 21, 22. The story is much like that which we had, ch. 24. In both, David is delivered out of Saul’s hand, and Saul out of David’s.

1. AND the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon? 2. Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph. 3. And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah which is before Jeshimon, by the way: but David abode in the wilderness; and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. 4. David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed. 5. And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him. Here, I. Saul gets information of David’s motions, and acts offensively. The Ziphites came to him, and told him where David now was: in the same place where he was when they formerly betrayed him, (ch. 19.) But through their repentance, (though they had not enlightened David) Saul had given them intimation, underhand, that he continued his design against David, and would be glad of their assistance: if not, they were very officious to Saul, aware of what would please him, and very malicious against David, to whom they despair of ever reconciling themselves, and therefore they stirred up Saul (who needed no such spur) against him, v. 1. For ought we know, Saul would have continued in the same good mind that he was in, (ch. 24. 17.) and would not have given David this fresh trouble, if the Ziphites had not put him on. See what need we have to pray to God, that, since we have so much of the tinder of corruption in our own hearts, the sparks of temptation may be kept far from us, lest, if they come together, we be set on fire of hell. Saul readily caught at the information, and went down with an army of 3000 men, to the bottom of the valley, v. 2. I. Saul gets information of David’s motions, and acts defensively. He did not march out to meet and fight him; he sought only his own safety, not Saul’s ruin; therefore he abode in the wilderness, (v. 3.) putting thereby a great force upon himself, and curtailing the bravery of his own spirit by a silent retirement, showing more true valour than he could have done by an irregular resistance. (1.) He had spies who ascertained him of Saul’s descent; that he was come in very deed; (v. 4.) for he would not believe that Saul would have dealt so basely with him, till he had the utmost evidence of it. (2b) He observed with his own eyes how Saul was encamped, v. 5. He came toward the place where Saul and his men had pitched their tents, so near as to be able, undiscovered, to take a view of their entrenchments, probably, in the dusk of the evening.

6. Then answered David, and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee. 7. So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster; but Abner and the people lay round about him. 8. Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now, therefore, let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time. 9. And David said to Abishai, Desist him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless? 10. David said furthermore, As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle and perish. 11. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord’s anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go. 12. So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul’s bolster; and they got them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awakened; for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them.

Here is, I. David’s bold adventure into Saul’s camp in the night, accompanied only by his kinsman Abishai, the son of Zeruiah. He proposed it to him and to another of his confidants, (v. 6.) but the other declined it, either as too dangerous an enterprise, or, at least, was content that Abishai, who was forward to it, should run the risk of it rather than himself. Whether David was prompted to do this by his own courage, or by an extraordinary impression upon his spirits, or by the oracle, does not appear; but, like Gideon, he ventured through the guards, with a special assurance of divine protection. II. The posture he found the camp in. Saul lay sleeping in the trench, or as some read it, in his chariot; and in the midst of his carriages, with his spear stuck in the ground by him, to be ready if his quarters should be beaten up, (v. 7.) and all the soldiers, even those that were appointed to stand sentinel, were fast asleep, v. 12. Thus were their eyes closed and their hands bound, for a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them; something extraordinary there was in it, that they should all be asleep together, and so fast asleep, that David
and Abishai walked and talked among them, and yet none of them stirred. Sleep, when God gives it his beloved, is their rest and refreshment; but he can, when he pleases, make it to his enemies their imprisonment. Thus are the stout hearted spoiled; they have slept their sleep, and none of the men of might have found their hands, at thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, Ps. 76. 5, 6. It was a deep sleep from the Lord, who has the command of the powers of nature, and makes them to serve his purposes as he pleases. When God will disable or destroy, he does it with judgment and wisdom. Abishai: How helpless do Saul and all his forces lie! All, in effect, disarmed and chained, and yet nothing is done to them; they are only rocked asleep. How easily can God weaken the strongest, before the wisest, and baffle the most watchful! Let all his friends therefore trust him, and all his enemies fear him. 11. Abishai's request to David for a commission to despatch Saul with the spear that stuck at his bolster, which (now that he lay so fair,) he undertook to do at one blow, v. 8. He would not urge David to kill him himself, because he had declined before, when he had a like opportunity; but he begged earnestly that he would give him leave to do it, pleading that he was his enemy, not only cruel and implacable, but false and perfidious, whom no reason warranted to be trusted. I prefer your going he, and God had now delivered him into his hand, and did, in effect, bid him strike. The last adventure he had of this kind, was indeed but accidental, when Saul happened to enter the cave with him at the same time; but in this there was something extraordinary: the deep sleep that was fallen on Saul, and all his guards; was manifestly from the Lord, so that it was a special providence which gave him this opportunity; he ought not therefore to let it slip.

IV. David's generous refusal to suffer any harm to be done to Saul, and in it, a resolute adherence to his principles of loyalty, v. 9. David charged Abishai not to destroy him; would not only not do it himself, but permit another to do it. And he gave two reasons for it. 1. It would be a sinful affront to God's ordinance. Saul was the Lord's anointed king of Israel, by the special approbation and nomination of the God of Israel; the power that was; and to resist him was to resist the ordinance of God, Rom. 13. 2. No man could do it and be guiltless; the thing he feared, was guilt, and his concern respected his innocence more than his safety. 2. It would be a sinful anticipation of God's Providence; God had sufficiently showed him, in Nahib's case, that, if he left it to him to do him right, he would do it in the time. Encouraged therefore by his experience, in that instance, he resolves to wait till God shall think fit to avenge him on Saul, and he will by no means avenge himself; (v. 10.) The Lord shall smite him, as he did Nahib, with some sudden stroke, or he shall die in battle, (as it proved he did soon after,) or, however, his day shall come to die a natural death, and David will contentedly wait till then, rather than force his way to the promised crown by any indirect methods. The temptation indeed was very strong; but if he yield, he sins against God, and therefore he resists the temptation with the utmost resolution; (v. 11.) "The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed; no, I will never do it, nor suffer it to be done." Thus bravely does he protect his conscience to his interest, and trust God with the issue.

V. The improvement he made of this opportunity, for the further evidence of his own integrity. He and Abishai carried away the spear and curse of water which Saul had by his bed-side, (v. 12.) and, which was very strange, none of all the guards were aware of them; if a physician had given them the strongest opiate or stupefying dose, they could not have been faster locked up with sleep. Saul's spear which he had by him for defence, and his cup of water which he had for his refreshment, were both stolen from him while he slept. Thus do we lose our strength and our comfort, when we are careless and secure, and off our watch.

13. Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of a hill afar off, (a great space being between them;) 14. And David said to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who art thou that criest to the king? 15. And David said to Abner, Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like thee in Israel? wherefore hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord. 16. This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster. 17. And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king. 18. And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand? 19. Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go, serve other gods. 20. Now, therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the Lord: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

David being got safe from Saul's camp himself, and having brought with him proofs sufficient that he had been there, posts himself conveniently, so that they might hear him, and yet not reach him, (v. 13.) and then begins to reason with them upon what had passed.

1. He ye sons ironically with Abner, and keenly hatters him. David knew well that it was from the mighty power of God, that Abner and the rest of the guards were cast into so deep a sleep, and that God's immediate hand was in it. But he reproaches Abner, as unworthy to be captain of the life-guards, who could sleep, when the king his master lay so much exposed. By this it appears that the hand of God locked them up in this deep sleep, that, as soon as ever David was got out of danger, a very little thing awakened them, even David's voice at a great distance roused them, v. 14. Abner got up, (we may suppose it early in a summer's morning,) and asked who called and dis-
turbed the king's repose. "It is I," says David; and then he upbraids him with his sleeping, when he should have been upon his guard. Perhaps Abner, looking upon David as a despiseful enemy, and one that there was no danger from, had neglected to set a watch; however, he himself ought to have been more watchful. David, therefore, tells him, 1. That he had lost his honour; v. 15. "Art not thou a man?" so the word is; "a man in office, that art bound by the duty of thy place, to inspect the soldiers? Art not thou in reputation for a valiant man? So thou wouldest be esteemed; a man of such courage and conduct, that there is none like thee; but now thou art ashamed for ever. A slumberer and a sleeper! David, who had served to lose his head; v. 16. "Ye are all worthy to die," by martial law, for being off your guard, when you had the king himself asleep in the midst of you. Ecce signum—Behold this token. See where the king's spear is, in the hand of whom the king himself is pleased to count his enemy. They that took away this, might as easily and safely have taken away his life. Now see who are the king's best friends; you that neglected him and left him exposed, or I that protected him, when he was exposed. You pursue me as worthy to die, and irritate Saul against me; but who is worthy to die now?" Note, Sometimes those that unjustly condemn others, are justly left to fall into condemnation themselves.

II. He reasons seriously and affectionately with Saul. By this time he was so well awakened as to aim to dissuade him. But, Is this thy voice, my son David? In the same manner he had expressed his relentings, ch. 24. 16. He had given his wife to another, and yet calls him son; thirsted after his blood, and yet is glad to hear his voice. Those are bad indeed that have never any convictions of good, nor any good impressions. And now David has as fair an opportunity of reaching Saul's conscience as he had just now of taking away his life; this he lays hold on, though he had refused the other, and enters into a close argument with him, concerning the trouble he still continued to give him, endeavouring to persuade him to let fall the persecution, and be reconciled.

1. He complains of the very melancholy condition he was brought into by the enmity of Saul against him. Two things he laments; (1.) That he was driven out, and from all acquaintance with his father and mother. "My Lord pursues after his servant," v. 18. How gladly would I serve thee as formerly, if my service might be accepted; but, instead of being owned as a servant, I am pursued as a rebel, and my lord is my enemy, and he compels me to flee from him, whom I would follow with respect." (2.) That he was driven from his God and from his religion; and this was a much greater grievance than the former; (v. 19.) "They have driven me out from the inheritance of the Lord; have made Canaan, at least the inhabited parts of it, a dangerous abode, and have forced me into the deserts and mountains, and will, ere long, oblige me to quit the country." And that which troubled him, was, not so much that he was driven out from his own inheritance, as that he was driven out from the inheritance of the Lord, as he had been before comfortable to us to think of God's title to our estates, and his interest in them, than of our own; and that with them we may honour him, than that with them we may maintain ourselves. Nor was it so much his trouble, that he was constrained to live among strangers, as that he was constrained to live among the worshipers of strange gods, and therein thrust into temptation and to jeopadize with them in the devil's slip. His enemies did, in effect send him to go serve other gods; and perhaps he had heard that some of them had spoken to that purport of him. They that forbid our attendance on God's ordinances, do what in them lies to estrange us from God, and to make us heathens. If David had not been a man of extraordinary grace, and firmness to his religion, the ill usage he met with from his own prince and people, who were Israelites, and worshippers of the true God, would have been sufficient to move him against the religion they professed, and have driven him to communicate with idolaters. If these be Israelites," he might have said, "let me live and die with Philistines," and no thanks to them that it had not that effect. We are to reckon that the greatest injury that can be done us, which exposes us to sin. Of those who thus led David into temptation, he here says, Canaan, or the land which thou hast gotten for me, may fall under a curse, that thrust out those whom God receives, and endeavours to send those to the Devil, who are dear to God.

2. He insists upon his own innocence; What have I done, or what evil is in mine hand? v. 18. He had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had never done, nor ever designed, any mischief to the person, honour, or government, of his prince, nor to any of the interests of his country: he had lately had Saul's own testimony concerning him, ch. 24. 17, Thou art more righteous than I. It was very unreasonable and wicked for Saul to pursue him as a criminal, when he could not charge him with any crime.

3. He endeavours to convince Saul that his pursuit of him was not only wrong, but mean, and much below him; *The king of Israel, whose dignity is great, and who has so much other work to do, is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains," v. 20. A poor game for the king of Israel to pursue. He compares himself to a partridge, a very innocent harmless bird, which, when attempts are made upon its life, flies if it can, but makes no resistance. And would Saul bring the flower of his army into the field, only to hunt one poor partridge? What a disparagement was this to his honour! What a stain would it be on his memory! To trample upon so weak and patient, as well as so innocent, an enemy; (James 5. 6.) Ye have killed the just, and he doth not resist you.

4. He desires that the core of the controversy might be searched into, and some proper method taken to bring it to an end, v. 19. Saul himself could not say that justice put him on thus to persecute David, or that he was obliged to do it for the public safety. David was not willing to say (though it was very true) that Saul's own envy and malice put him on to do it; and therefore he concludes it must be attributed either to the righteous judgment of God, or to the unrighteous designs of evil men. Now, (1.) "If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, either in displeasure to me, (taking this way to punish me for my sins against him, though, as to thee, I am guiltless,) or in displeasure to thee, if it be the effect of that evil spirit from the Lord which troubles thee, let him accept an offering from us both; let us join in making our peace, with God, and reconciling ourselves to him, which may be done, by sacrifice; and then I hope the sin will be pardoned, whatever it is, and the trouble, which is so great a vexation both to thee and me, will come to an end." See the right method of peace-making: let us first make God our Friend by Christ the great Sacrifice, and then all other enmities shall be slain, Eph. 2. 16. Prov. 16. 7. But, (2.) "If thou art put upon it by wicked men, that intend thee evil, cursd be they that are the Lord;" that is, they are wicked people, and it is fit that they should be abjured as such, and excluded from the king's court and councils. He decently lays the blame upon the evil counsellors who advised the king to that which
was dishonourable and dishonest, and insists upon it, that they be removed from about him, and forbid

den his presence, as men cursed before the Lord, and then he hoped he should gain his petition, which is, (v. 20.) “Let not my blood fail to the earth, as thou threatenest, for it is before the face of the Lord, who will take cognizance of the wrong, and vindicate it.” Thus pathetically does David plead with Saul for his life, and, in order to that, for his favourable opinion of him.

21. Then said Saul, I have sinned: re
turn, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. 22. And David answered and said, Behold the king’s spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it. 23. The Lord render to every man his righteousness, and his faithfulness: for the Lord delivered thee into my hand to-day; but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the Lord’s anointed. 24. And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the Lord, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation. 25. Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. So Da

David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

Here is,

I. Saul’s penitent confession of his fault and folly in persecuting David, and his promise to do so no more. This second instance of David’s respect to him wrought more upon him than the former, and extorted from him better acknowledgments, v. 21.

1. He owns himself melted and quite overcome by David’s kindness to him; “My soul was precious in thine eyes this day, which, I thought, had been odious.” 2. He acknowledges he had done very ill to persecute him: that he had therein acted against God’s law, I have sinned; and against his own in

2. “I have played the fool, in pursuing him as an enemy who would have been one of my best friends, if I could but have thought so; herein (says he) I have erred exceedingly, and wronged both thee and myself.” Note, Those that sin, play the fool, and err exceedingly; those especially that hate and persecute God’s people, Job 19. 28. 3. He in

vites him to come again; Return, my son David. Those that understand themselves, will see it their interest to have those about them, that behave themselves worthy, as David did, and have God with them.

4. He promises him that he would not persecute him as he had done, but protect him; I will no more do thee harm. We have reason to think, according to the mind he was now in, that he meant as he said, and yet neither his confession nor his promise of amendsment came from a principle of true repentance.

II. David’s improvement of Saul’s convicitions and confessions, and the evidence he had to produce of his own sincerity. He desired that one of the footmen might fetch the spear, (v. 22.) and then, v. 23. 1. He appeals to God as Judge of the controversy; The Lord render to every man his righ
teouness. David, by faith, is sure that he will do it, for he infallibly knows the true characters of all persons and actions, and is inflexibly just to render to every man according to his work; and, by pray

er, he desires he would do it, wherein he does, in effect, pray against Saul, who had dealt unrighteous

ly and unfaithfully with him; Give them according to their deeds; (Ps. 28. 4.) but he principally intends it as a prayer for himself, that God would protect him in his righteousness and faithfulness, and reward him for it, since Saul so ill required him. 2. He reminds Saul again of the proof which he had now given of his respect to him, from a principle of loy

alty; I would not stretch forth mine hand against the Lord’s anointed; intimating to Saul, that the anointing oil was his protection, for which he was indebted to the Lord, and ought to express his gratitude. 3. He adds, however he had been a common person, he would not have been so tender of him; and, perhaps, with this further suggestion, Saul knew, or had reason to think, that David was the Lord’s anointed too, and therefore, by the same rule, Saul ought to be as tender of David’s life as he had been of his.

3. Not relying much upon Saul’s promises, he puts himself under God’s protection, and begs his favour; (v. 24.) “Let my life be much set by in the eyes of the Lord, how light soever thou makest of it.” Thus he takes God to be his Paymaster for his Kindness to Saul, which they may with a holy con

idence do, that do well and suffer for it.

III. Saul’s prediction of David’s advancement. He commends him; (v. 25.) Blessed be thou, my son David. So strong was the conviction Saul was now under of David’s honesty, and he was not ashamed of his own self and applaud David, even in the hearing of his own soldiers, who could not but blush to think that they were come out so frivolously against a man, whom their master, when he meets, caress

es thus. He foretells his victories, and his elevation at last; Thou shalt do great things. Note, Those who make conscience of doing that which is truly good, may come, by the divine assistance, to do that which is truly great. He adds, Thou shalt also still prevail, more and more,” he means, against himself, but was loath to speak that out. The princely qualities which appeared in David, his generosity in sparing Saul, his military authority in reprimanding Abner for sleeping, his care of the public good, and the signal token of God’s presence with him, convinced Saul that he would certainly be advanced to the throne at last, according to the prophecy concerning him.

Lastly, A palliative cure being thus made of the wound, they parted friends. Saul returned to Gib

eah re infecta—without accomplishing his design, and ashamed of the expedition he had made; but David could not take his word so far as to return with him. Those that have once been false, are not easily trusted another time. Therefore David went on his way. And, after this parting, it does not ap

pear that ever Saul and David saw one another again.

CHAP. XXVII.

David was a man after God’s own heart; and yet he had his faults, which are recorded, not for our imitation, but for our admonition; witness the story of this chapter, in which, though, I. We find, to his praise, that he prudently took care of his own safety and his family’s, (v. 2. 4.) and valiantly fought Israel’s battles against the Canaanites; (v. 8, 9.) yet, II. We find, to his dishonour, 1. That he began to despair of his deliverance, v. 1. 2. That he de

serted, and did not support, his own countrymen in the land of the Philistines, v. 1. 3. That he imposed upon Achish with an equivocation, if not a lie, concerning his expedition, v. 10. 12.

1. A

ND David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that
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I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand. 2. And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath. 3. And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife. 4. And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath; and he sought no more again for him. 5. And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee? 6. Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day. 7. And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months.

Here is,

I. The prevarication of David's fear, which was the effect of the weakness of his faith; v. 1. He said to his heart, (so it may be read,) in his communings with it concerning his present condition, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul. He represented to himself the restless rage and malice of Saul, who could not be wrought into a reconciliation; the treachery of his own countrymen, witness that of the Ziphites, once and again; he looked upon his own forces, and observed how few they were, and that no recruits had come in to him of a great while, nor could he perceive that he got any ground; and from hence, in a melancholy mood, he draws this dark conclusion, I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul. God, wilt thou exert a little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt? Was he not appointed to be king? Did not that simply give an assurance that he should be preserved to the kingdom? Though he had no reason to trust Saul's promises, had he not all the reason in the world to trust the promises of God? His experience of the particular care Providence took of him, ought to have encouraged him. He that has delivered, does and will. But unbelief is a sin that easily besets even good men. When without are fightings, within are fears, and it is a hard matter to get over them. Lord, increase our faith!

II. The resolution he came to hereupon. Now that Saul was, for this time, returned to his place, he determined to take this opportunity of retiring into the Philistines' country. Consulting his own heart only, and not the ephod or the prophet, he concludes, I will not be ruled better for me, than that I will speedily escape into the land of the Philistines. Long trials are in danger of tiring the faith and patience even of very good men. Now, 1. Saul was an enemy to himself and his kingdom, in driving him to this extremity. He weakened his own interest when he expelle from his service, and forced into the service of his enemies, so great a general as David was, and so had the command of. 2. David was no friend to himself in taking this course. God had appointed him to set up his standard in the land of Judah; (ch. 22. 5.) there God had wonderfully preserved him, and employed him sometimes for the good of his country; why then should he think of deserting his post? How could he expect the protection of the God of Israel, if he went out of the bounds of the land of Israel? Can he expect to be safe among the Philistines, out of whose hands he had lately escaped so narrowly by feigning himself mad? Will he receive obligations from those now, whom he knows, when he comes to be king, he must not return kindness to, but he under an obligation to make war upon? He will hereby gratify his enemies, who bid him go serve other gods; and he will have wherewith to reproach him; and will very much weaken the hands of his friends, who would not have wherewith to answer that reproach. See what need we have to pray, Lord, lead us not into temptation.

III. The kind reception he had at Gath; Achish bade him welcome, partly out of generosity, being proud of entertaining so brave a man; partly out of policy, hoping to engage him for ever to his service, and that his example would invite many more to desert, and come over to him. No doubt he gave David a solemn promise of protection, which he could rely upon, when he could not trust Saul's promises. We may blush to think that the word of a Philistine should go further than the word of an Israelite, who, if an Israelite indeed, would be without guile; and that the city of Gath should be a place of refuge to a good man when the cities of Israel refuse him a safe abode. David, 1. Brought his men with him, (v. 2.) that they might guard him, and might themselves be safe where he was; and to recommend himself the more to Achish, who hoped to have service out of him. 2. He brought his family with him, his wives and his household; so did all his men, v. 2, 3. Masters of families ought to take care of those that are committed to them, to protect and provide for those of their own house, and to dwell with them as men of knowledge. 4. Saul's desisting from the further persecution of him; (v. 4.) He sought no more again for him; this intimates that, notwithstanding the professions of repentance he had lately made, if he had had David in his reach, he would have aimed another blow. But, because he dares not come where he is, he resolves rather to make himself secure in the possession of their sins, but really their sins leave them; they would persist in them, if they could. Saul sought no more for him, contenting himself with his banishment, since he could not have his blood; and hoping, it may be, (as he had done, ch. 8. 25.) that he would, some time or other, fall by the hand of the Philistines: and though he would rather have the pleasure of destroying him himself, yet if they did, he will be satisfied, so that it be done effectually.

V. David's removal from Gath to Ziklag.

1. David's request for leave to remove, was prudent, and very modest, v. 5. (1.) It was really prudent. David knew what it was to be envied in the court of Saul, and had much more reason to fear in the court of Achish, and therefore desires preferment, and wishes to make settlement in the country, where he might be private, more within himself, and less in other people's way. In a town of his own, he might have the more free exercise of his religion, and keep his men better to it, and not have his righteous voice vexed as it was at Gath, with the idolatries of the Philistines. (2.) As it was presented to Achish, it was what he desired. He does not prescribe to him what place he should be. He only begs it might be in some town in the country, where he pleased; beggars must not be choosers: but he gives this for a reason, "Why should thy servant dwell in the royal city, to crowd
1. We may acquit him of cruelty and injustice in this action, because these people whom he cut off, were such as Heaven had long since doomed to destruction, and he that did it, was one whom Heaven had ordained to rule and be a head of a nation; so that the thing was very fit to be done, and he might do it. It was not for him that was anointed to fight the Lord’s battles, to sit still in sloth, however he thought fit, in modesty, to retire. He desired to be safe from Saul, only that he might expose himself for Israel; he avenged an old quarrel that God had with these nations, and at the same time fetched in provisions for himself and his army, for by their swords they must live. The Amalekites were to be all cut off; probably the Geshurites and Gezerites were branches of Amalek: Saul was rejected for sparing them; David makes up the deficiency of his obedience before he succeeds him. He smote them, and left none alive, v. 8, 9. The service paid itself, for they carried off abundance of spoil, which served for the subsistence of David’s forces.

2. Yet we cannot acquit him of dissimulation with Achish, in the account he gave him of this expedition.

1. David, it seems, was not willing that he should know the truth, and therefore spared none to carry tidings to Gath; (v. 11.) not because he was ashamed of what he had done as a bad thing, but because he was afraid, if the Philistines knew it, they would be apprehensive of danger to themselves or their allies, by harbouiring him among them, and would expect him their coasts. It would be hard to conclude, If so he did, so will be his manner; and therefore he industriously conceals it from them, which, it seems, he could do, by putting them all to the sword; for none of their neighbours would inform against him, nor, perhaps, would soon come to the knowledge of what was done; intelligence not being so readily communicated then as now.

2. He hid it from Achish, with an equivocation not at all becoming his character. Being asked which way he had made his sally, he answered, Against the south of Judah, v. 10. It was true, he had invaded those countries that lay south of Judah, but he made Achish believe he had invaded those that lay south in Judah, the Ziphites, for example, that had once and again betrayed him; so Achish understood him, and from thence inferred that he had made his fury to be directed against them, and so riveted himself in the interest of Achish. The fidelity of Achish to him, his good opinion of him, and the confidence he put in him, aggravate his sin in deceiving him thus; which with some other such instances, David seems penitently to reflect upon, when he prays, Remove from me the way of lying.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Preparations are herein making for that war which will put an end to the life and reign of Saul, and so make way for him to come into the throne. In the former chapter, the Philistines are the aggressors, and Achish their king makes David his confidant, v. 1, 2. 11. The Israelites prepare to receive them, and Saul their king makes the Devil his privy-counsellor, and thereby fills the measure of his iniquity. Observe, 1. The despairing condition which Saul was in, v. 3., 6. 2. The application he made to a witch, to bring him up Samuel, v. 7. 14. 3. His discouragement at the apparition, v. 15. 19. 4. The damnable stroke it struck upon him, v. 21. 25.

AND it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men. 2. And

1. And it is pleasing to thee, and oblige those about thee?" Note, Those that would stand fast, must not covet to stand high; and humble souls aim not to dwell in royal cities.

2. The grant which Achish made him, upon that request, was very generous and kind; (v. 6, 7.) Achish gave him Ziklag. Hereby, (1.) Israel recoyred their ancient right; for Ziklag was in the lot of the tribe of Judah, Josh. 15. 31. and afterward, out of that lot, was assigned, with some other cities, to Simeon, Josh. 19. 5. But either it was never subdued, or the Philistines had, in some struggle with Israel, made themselves masters of it. Perhaps they had got it unjustly, and Achish being a man of sense and honour, took this occasion to restore it. The righteous God judgeth righteously. (2.) David gained a commodious settement, not only at a distance from Gath, but bordering upon Israel, where he might keep up a correspondence with his own countrymen, and whither they might resort to him, at the revolution that was now approaching. Though we do not find that he augmented his forces at all, while Saul lived, (for ch. 30. 10. he had but his six hundred men,) yet, immediately after Saul’s death, that was the rendezvous of his friends. Nay, it should seem, while he kept himself close, because of Saul, multitudes resorted to him, at least, to assure him of their sincere intentions, 1 Chroh. 12. 1.-22. And this further advantage David gained, that Ziklag was annexed to the crown, at least the royalty of it proceeded to the kings of their own after six. Note, There is nothing lost by humility and modesty, and a willingness to retire. Real advantages follow those that flee from imaginary honours. Here David continued for a full year and some days, even four months, as it may very well he read, (v. 7.) or some days above four months. The Seventy read it, some months; so long he waited for the set time of his accession to the throne; for he that believeth, shall not make haste.

8. And David and his men went up and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezerites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt. 9. And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive; and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish. 10. And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to-day? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites. 11. And David saved neither man nor woman alive to bring tidings to Gath, saving, lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so will be his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines. 12. And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.

Here is an account of David’s actions, while he was in the land of the Philistines; a fierce attack he made upon some remains of the devoted nations, his success in it, and the representation he gave of it to Achish.
David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever. 3. Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. 4. And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilbon. 5. And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. 6. And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

Here is,
I. The design of the Philistines against Israel; they resolve to fight them, v. 1. If the Israelites had not forsaken God, there had been no Philistines remaining to molest them; if Saul had not forsaken him, they had by this time been put out of all danger by them. The Philistines took an opportunity to make this attempt, when they had David among them, whom they feared more than Saul and all his forces.

II. The expectation Achish had of assistance from David in this war, and the encouragement David gave him to expect it; "Thou shalt go with me to battle," says Achish, "if I protect thee, I may demand service from thee; and he will think himself happy, if he may have such a man as David on his side, who prospered whithersoever he went. David gave him an ambiguous answer, "We will see what will be done, it will be time enough to talk of that hereafter; but surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do!" (v. 2.) that is, "I will consider in what post I may be best able to serve thee, if thou wilt but give me leave to choose it." Thus he keeps himself free from a promise to serve him, and yet keeps up his expectation of it. For Achish took it in no other sense than as an engagement to assist him, and made him, therefore, that he would make him captain of the guards, protector, or prime minister of state.

III. The drawing of the armies, on both sides, into the field, v. 4. The Philistines pitched in Shunem, which was in the tribe of Issachar, a great way north from their country. The land of Israel, it seems, was ill guarded, when the Philistines could march their army into the very heart of the country. Saul, while he pursued David, left his people naked and exposed. On some of the adjacent mountains of Gilbon, Saul musters his forces and prepares to engage the Philistines, which he had little heart to do, now that the Spirit of the Lord departed from him.

IV. The terror Saul was in, and the loss he was at, upon this occasion. He saw the host of the Philistines, and by his own view of it, and the intelligence his spies brought him, he perceived they were more numerous, better armed, and in better heart, than his own were, which made him afraid, so that his heart greatly trembled, v. 5. H. d. he kept close to God, he needed not have been afraid at the sight of an army of Philistines; but now that he had provoked God to forsake him, his interest failed, his armies dwindled, and looked mean, and, which was worse, his spirits failed him, his heart sunk within him. A guilty conscience made him tremble at the shaking of a leaf; now he remembered the guilty blood of the Amalekites, which he had spared, and the innocent blood of the priests, which he had spilt; his sins are set in order before his eyes, they put him into confusion, embarrass all his counsels, and rob him of his courage; so that there remained only a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation. Notwithstanding, these terrors are terrors to the children of disobedience. In this distress, Saul inquired of the Lord, v. 6. Need drives those to God, who, in the day of their prosperity, slighted his graces and altars. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, Isa. 26. 16. Did ever any seek the Lord, and not find him? Yes, Saul did; the Lord answered him not, took no notice of his request; or rather, he put none of his inquiries; gave him no directions what to do, or any command, so that he might have hope that he would be with him. Should he be inquired of at all, by such a one as Saul? Ezek. 14. 3. No, he could not expect an answer of peace, for, 1. He inquired in such a manner, that it was as if he had not inquired at all. Therefore it is said, (1 Chron. 10. 14.) He inquired not of the Lord, for he did it faintly, and coldly, and with a secret desire, if God did not answer him, to commit the Devil. He did not inquire in faith, but with a double unstable mind. 2. He inquired of the Lord when it was too late, when the days of his probation were over, and he was finally rejected. Seek the Lord while he may be found, for there is a time when he will not be found. 3. He forfeited the benefit of all the methods of inquiry. Could he that hated and persecuted Samuel and David, who were both simple prophets, expect to be answered by prophecies? Could he that had slain the High Priest, to be answered by Urim? Or he that had sinned away the Spirit of grace, to be answered by dreams? No, Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

V. The mention of some things, that had happened a good while ago, to introduce the following story, v. 5. 1. The death of Samuel. Samuel was dead, which made the Philistines the more bold, and Saul the more afraid; for had Samuel been alive, Saul would, probably, have thought that his presence and countenance, his good advice and good prayers, would have availed him in his distress. 2. Saul's edict against witchcraft. He had put the laws in execution against those that had familiar spirits, who must not be suffered to live, Exod. 22. 18. Some think that he did this in the beginning of his reign, and others, that it was done afterwards; others think that it was lately done, for it was spoken of here, v. 9, as a late edict. Perhaps, when Saul was himself troubled with an evil spirit, he suspected that he was bewitched, and, for that reason, cut off all that had familiar spirits. Many seem zealous against sin, when they themselves are any way hurt by it, (they will inform against swears and swearers, and, if they swear against them, or against drunkards, if, in their drink, they see them, if, in their drunkenness, they have no concern for the glory of God, nor any dislike of sin as sin. However, it was commendable in Saul, thus to use his power for the terror and restraint of these evil doers. Note, Many seem enemies to sin in others, while they indulge it in themselves. Saul will drive the Devil out of his kingdom, and yet harbour him in his heart, by envy and malice.

7. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her and inquire of her. And his servants said unto him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor. 8. And Saul disguised
himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him upon whom I shall name unto thee. 9. And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? 10. And Saul sware to her by the Lord, saying, As the Lord liveth, there shall be no punishment happen unto thee for this thing. 11. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. 12. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice; and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. 13. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw a man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.

Here,

I. Saul seeks for a witch, v. 7. When God answered him not, if he had humbled himself by repentance, and persevered in seeking God, who knows but at length he might have been entreated for him? But since he can discern no comfort, either from heaven or earth, (Isa. 8. 21, 22,) he resolves to knock at the gates of hell, and to see if any there will befriend him, and give him advice; Seek me a woman that has a familiar spirit, v. 7. And his servants were too officious to serve him in this bad affair; they presently recommended one to him at En-dor, (a city not far off,) who had escaped the execution of Saul's edict: to her he went, for he was now ready to apply himself. Herein he is chargeable, 1. With contempt of the God of Israel; as if any creature could do him a kindness, when God had left him, and frowned upon him. 2. With contradiction to himself. He knew the heinousness of the sin of witchcraft, else he would not have cut off those that had familiar spirits; yet now he has recourse to that as an oracle, which he had before condemned as an abomination. It is common for men to inveigle severely against those sins which they are in no temptation to, but suffer themselves afterward to be overcome by them. Had one told Saul, when he was destroying the witches, that he himself would, ere long, consult with one, he would have said, as Hazzah did, What! is thy servant a dog? But who knows what mischiefs they will run into, that forsake God, and are forsaken of him. Thus the power of nature, that even diabolical invention, wagers, 2. She signifies her fear of the law, and her suspicion that this stranger came to draw her into a snare: v. 9. Thou knowest what Saul has done. Providence ordered it so, that Saul should be told to his face, of his edict against witches, at this very time when he was consulting one, for the greater aggravation of his sin. She insists upon the peril of the law, perhaps to raise her price; for, though there is made her free, no doubt she demanded, and had, a large one. Observe how sensible she is of danger from the edict of Saul, and what care she is in to guard against it; but not at all apprehensive of the obligations of God's law, and the terrors of his wrath. She considers what Saul had done, not what God had done, against such practices, and fears a snare laid for her life, more than a snare laid for her soul. It is common for sinners to be more afraid of punishment from men, than of God's righteous judgment. But, 3. Saul promises with an oath not to betray her, v. 10. It was his duty, as a king, to punish her, and he knew it, yet he swears not to do it; as if he could by his own oath bind himself from doing that, which, by the divine command, he was bound to do. But he promised more than he could perform, when he said, There shall no punishment befall thee; for he could not keep himself, much less secure her, from divine vengeance.

II. Hearing of one, he hastens to her, but goes by night, and in disguise, only with two servants, and probably on foot, v. 8. See how those that are led captive by Satan, are forced, 1. To disparage themselves. Never did Saul look so mean as when he went sneaking to a sorry witch to know his fortune. 2. To dissemble. Evil works are works of darkness, and they hate the light, neither care for coming to it. Saul went to the witch, not in his robes, but in the habit of a common soldier; not only lest the witch herself, if she had known him, should have declined to serve him, either fearing he came to trepan her, or resolving to be avenged on him for his edict against those of her profession, but lest his own people should know it, and abhor him for it. Saul is in the character of a natural man, one of those who do evil, blush, and are ashamed to do it.

III. He tells her his errand, and promises her impunity. 1. All he desires of her, is to bring him up one from the dead, whom he had a mind to discourse with. It was necromancy, or divination by the dead, that he hoped to serve his purpose by; this was expressly forbidden by the law, (Deut. 18.) But to bring the dead to the dead, Isa. 8. and 18. says, Bring me up him whom I shall name. This supposes that it was generally taken for granted, that souls exist after death, and that, when men die, there is not an end of them: it supposes too that great knowledge was attributed to separate souls. But to think that any good souls should come up at the beck of an evil spirit, or that God, who had denied a man the benefit of his own institutions should give it to another, is a very real advantage to the diabolical invention, was in it, 2. She signifies her fear of the law, and her suspicion that this stranger came to draw her into a snare: v. 9. Thou knowest what Saul has done. Providence ordered it so, that Saul should be told to his face, of his edict against witches, at this very time when he was consulting one, for the greater aggravation of his sin. She insists upon the peril of the law, perhaps to raise her price; for, though there is made her free, no doubt she demanded, and had, a large one. Observe how sensible she is of danger from the edict of Saul, and what care she is in to guard against it; but not at all apprehensive of the obligations of God's law, and the terrors of his wrath. She considers what Saul had done, not what God had done, against such practices, and fears a snare laid for her life, more than a snare laid for her soul. It is common for sinners to be more afraid of punishment from men, than of God's righteous judgment. But, 3. Saul promises with an oath not to betray her, v. 10. It was his duty, as a king, to punish her, and he knew it, yet he swears not to do it; as if he could by his own oath bind himself from doing that, which, by the divine command, he was bound to do. But he promised more than he could perform, when he said, There shall no punishment befall thee; for he could not keep himself, much less secure her, from divine vengeance.

IV. Samuel, who was lately dead, is the person whom Saul desired to have some talk with; and the witch, with her enchantments, gratifies his desire, and brings them together.

1. As soon as Saul had given the witch the assurance she desired, (that he would not discover her,) she applied herself to him, and he very cordially and cordially. Whom shall I bring up to thee? v. 11. Note, Hopes of impunity imbolden sinners in their evil ways, and harden their hearts.

2. Saul desires to speak with Samuel, Bring me up Samuel. Samuel had appointed him to the kingdom, and had formerly been his faithful friend and counsellor, and therefore with him he wished to advise. While Samuel was living at Ramah, not far from Saul's court, and presided in the school of the prophets, we never read of Saul's going to him to advise with him in any of the difficulties he was in; (it had been well for him if he had;) then he slighted him, and perhaps hated him, looking upon him to be in David's interest; but now that he is dead, "O for Samuel again! By all means, bring me up Samuel." Note, Many that despise and persecute God's saints and ministers when they
are living, would be glad to have them again, when they are gone. Send Lazarus to me, and send Lazarus to my father's house, Luke 16. 24.-27. The sepulchres of the righteous are garnished.

3. Here is a seeming defect or chasm in the story: Saul said, Bring me up Samuel, and the very next words are, When the woman saw Samuel, v. 12. Whereas one would have expected to be told how she performed the operation, what spells and charms she used. That, however, is not inquired into. It should be given of what she said or did: but the profound silence of the scripture concerning it, forbids our coveting to know the depths of Satan, (Rev. 2. 24.) or to have our curiosity gratified with an account of the mysteries of iniquity. It has been said of the books of some of the popish confessors, that, by their descriptions of sin, they have taught men to understand the similitude of sin, and the majesty of its aspect, that she called this appellation Elohim, a god, or gods; for so magistrates are styled, Ps. 82. 1.

6. Saul perceiving, by the woman's description, that it was Samuel, stooped with his face to the ground, either, as it is generally taken, in reverence to Samuel, though he saw him not, or perhaps to listen to that soft and muttered voice which he now expected to hear; for they that had familiar spirits, feigned and muttered, (Isa. 8. 19.) and, it should seem, Saul bowed humbly. (Probably by way of the witch's direction,) that he might hear what was whispered, and listen carefully to it; for the voice of one that has a familiar spirit, is said to come out of the ground, and to whisper out of the dust, Isa. 29. 4. He would stoop to that which would not stop to the word of God.

15. And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Samuel answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. 16. Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? 17. And the Lord hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: 18. Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day. 19. Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines; and to-morrow shall thou and thy sons be with me: the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

We have here the conference between Saul and Samuel. Saul came in disguise, (v. 6.) but Satan soon discovered him, v. 12. Satan comes in disguise, in the disguise of Samuel's mantle, and Saul cannot discover him. Such is the disadvantage we labour under, in wrestling with the rulers of the darkness of this world, that they know us, while we are ignorant of their wiles and devices.

I. The spectre, or apparition, personating Samuel, asks why he is sent for, (v. 15.) Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? To which Saul answers, that it was an evil spirit that personated Samuel; for (as Bishop Patrick observes) it is not in the power of witches to disturb the rest of good men, and to bring them back into the world when they please: nor would the true Samuel have acknowledged such a power in magical arts; but to Saul this was a proper device of Satan's to draw generation from him, to possess him with an opinion of the power of divination, and so to rivet him in the Devil's interests.

II. Saul makes his complaint to this counterfeit Samuel, mistaking him for the true; and a most deceiver it is: "I am sore distressed, and know not what to do, for the Philistines make war against me; yet I should do well enough with them,
if I had but the tokens of God's presence with me; but, alas! God is departed from me." He complained not of God's withdrawals till he fell into trouble, till the Philistines made war against him, and then he began to lament God's departure. He that in his prosperity inquired not after God, in his adversity thought it hard that God answered him not, nor took any notice of his inquiries, either to de- serve his anger or to personate himself, nor sent them by any of his messengers. He does not, like a penitent, own the righteousness of God in this; but, like a man enraged, flies out against God as unkind, and flies off from him; therefore I have called thee: as if Samuel, a servant of God, would favour those whom God frowned upon; or as if a dead prophet could do him more service than the living ones. One would think, from what God spoke by him, to meet with the Devil, and expected no other, (though under the covert of Samuel's name,) for he desires advice otherwise than from God, therefore from the Devil, that is, a rival with God. "God denies me, therefore I come to thee." Fleece si negque Suferos, Acheronta movens—If I fall with Heaven, I will succeed with Hell.

III. It is easy comfort which this evil spirit in Samuel's mantle gives to Saul, and is manifestly intended to drive him to despair and self-murder. Had it been the true Samuel, when Saul desired to be told what he should do, he would have bid him repent, and make his peace with God, and recall David from his banishment; and would then have told him, that he might hope in this way to find mercy with God: but, instead of that, he represents his case as helpless and hopeless, serving him as he did Judas, to whom he was first a tempter, and then a tormentor, persuading him first to sell his Master, and then to hang himself.

1. He upbraids him with his present distress; (v. 15.) he tells him, not only that God was departed from him, but that he was become his Enemy, and therefore he must expect no comfortable answer from him; "Wherefore dost thou ask me? How can I be thy friend, when God is thine enemy, or thy counsellor, when he has left thee?"

2. He upbraids him with the misconduct of David to the kingdom, v. 17. He could not have touched upon a string that sounded more unpleasant in the ear of Saul than this. Nothing is said to reconcile him to David, but all tends rather to exasperate him against David, and widen the breach. Yet, to make him believe that he was Samuel, he says, it was not God himself that spoke by him. The Devil knows how to speak with an air of religion, and can teach false apostles to transform themselves into the apostles of Christ, and imitate their language. Those who use spells and charms, and plead, in defence of them, that they find nothing in them but what is good, may remember what good words the Devil here spoke, and yet with what a malicious design. He upbraids him with his disobedience to the command of God, in not destroying the Amalekites, v. 18. Satan had helped him to palliate and excuse that sin, when Samuel was dealing with him to bring him to repentance; but now he aggravates it, to make him despair of God's mercy. "See what they get, that hearken to Satan's temptations! He himself will be their accuser, and insult over them. And see in what way, they resemble, and allure others to this, which is evil, and reproach them for it when they have done.

4. He foretells his approaching ruin, v. 19. (1.) That his army should be routed by the Philistines. This is twice mentioned; The Lord shall deliver Israel into the hand of the Philistines. This he might foresee, by considering the superior strength and number of the Philistines, the weakness of the armies of Israel, Saul's terror, and especially God's departure from them. Yet, to personate a prophet, he very gravely ascribes it once again to God; The Lord shall do it. (2.) That he and his sons should be slain in the battle. To-morrow, that is, in a little time, (and supposing that it was now after midnight,) I see not but it may be taken strictly for the very next day after that which was now begun, thou and thy sons shall be with me; that is, in the state of the dead, separate from the body. Had this been the true Samuel, he could not have foretold it, unless God had revealed it to him; and though it were an evil spirit, God might by him foretell it; as we read of an evil spirit that foresees Ahab's fall at Ramoth-Gilead, and was instrumental in it, (I Kings, xxviii. 6, 20, 30, &c.) as perhaps this evil spirit was, by the divine permission, in Saul's destruction. That evil spirit flattered Ahab, this frightened Saul, and both, that they might fall; so formidable are they that are under the power of Satan; for whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest, Prov. 29. 9.

20. Then Saul fell straightforward all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night. 21. And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me. 22. Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength when thou goest on thy way. 23. But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed. 24. And the woman had a fat calf in the house, and she hasted, and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded it, and did bake unleavened bread thereof: 25. And she brought it before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

We are here told how Saul received this terrible message from the ghost he consulted. He desired to be told what he should do, (v. 15.) but he only told what he had not done, and what should be done to him. Those that expect any good counsel or comfort otherwise than from God, and in the way of his institutions, will be as wretchedly disappointed as Saul here was. Observe,

1. How he sunk under the load, v. 20. He was indeed unfit to bear it, having eaten nothing all the day before, and fasting that night; he came fasting from the camp, and continued fasting; not for want of food, but for want of an appetite. The fear he was in of the power of the Philistines, (v. 5.) took away his appetite; or perhaps the struggle he had with his own conscience, after he had entertained the thought of consulting the witch, made him too nauseate even his necessary food, though ever so dainty. This made him an easy prey to this fresh ter-
tor, that now came upon him like an armed man. He fell along on the earth, as if the archers of the Philistines had already hit him, and there was no strength in him to bear up against these heavy tidings. Now he had enough of consulting witches, and found them miserable comforters. When God in his word speaks terror to sinners, he opens to them, at the same time, a door of hope, if they respect but they that apply themselves to the gates of hell for succour, must there expect darkness without any glimpse of light.

II. With what difficulty he was persuaded to take so much relief as was necessary to carry him back to his post in the camp. The witch, it should seem, had left Saul alone with the spectre, to have his talk with him by himself: but, perhaps, hearing him fall and groan, and perceiving him to be in an agony, she came and made him refreshment. No

mate with him to take some refreshment, that he might be able to get clear from her house, fearing that if he should be ill, especially if he should die there, she should be punished for it as a traitor, though she had escaped punishment as a witch.

This, it is probable, rather than any sentiment of kindness, made her solicitous to help him. But when he demurred, and he had brought himself to, when he needed so wretched a refreshment;

1. She shows herself very importunate with him to take some refreshment; she pleads, (v. 21.) that she had obeyed his voice to the endangering of her life; and why therefore should not he hearken to her voice for the relieving of his life, v. 22. She had a fat calf at hand, and (word signifies one that was made use of in treading out the corn, and therefore could be worse spared,) this she prepares for his entertainment. v. 24. Josephus is large in applauding the extraordinary courtesy and liberality of this woman, and recommending it for an example of compassion to the distressed, and readiness to communicate for their relief, though we have no prospect of being recompensed for it.

2. He showed himself very averse to it; He refused, and said, I will not eat, (v. 23.) choosing rather to die obscurely by famine than honourably by the sword. Had he laboured only under a defect of animal spirits, food might help him; but alas! his case was out of the reach of such succours. What are dainty meats to a wounded conscience? An vinegar upon nitre, so he that sings songs to a heavy heart; so disagreeable and unwelcome.

3. The woman at length, with the help of his servants, over-persuaded him, against his inclination and resolution, (v. 25.) and brought some refreshment by force, but by friendly advice, they compelled him; (v. 23.) and of no other such a rational and courteous compulsion, are we to understand that in the parable, Compel them to come in, Luke 14. 23. How forcibly are right words, when men are pressed by them to that which is for their own interest! Job. 6. 25. Saul was somewhat revived with this entertainment; so that he and his servants, when they had eaten, rose up, and went back. v. 26. Though it was light, (v. 25.) that they might hasten to their business, and that they might not be seen to come out of such a scandalous house. Josephus here much admires the bravery and magnanimity of Saul, that though he was assured he should lose both his life and honour, yet he would not desert his army, but resolutely returned to the camp, and stood ready for an engagement. I wonder more at the hardness of his heart, that did not again apply himself to God by repentance and prayer, in hopes yet to obtain, at least, a reprieve; but he desperately ran headlong upon his own ruin. Perhaps, indeed, what rage and envy possessed him to the uttermost, he was the better reconciled to his hard fate, being told that his sons, and Jonathan among the rest, whom he hated for his affection to David, should die with him. If he must fall, he cared not what desolations of his family and kingdom accompanied his fall, hoping it would be the worse for his successor. 

How Saul, who was forsaken of God, when he was in a strait, was more and more perplexed and embarrassed with his own counsels, we read in the foregoing chapter; in this chapter, we find how David, who kept close to God, when he was in a strait, was extricated and brought off by the providence of God, without any contrivance of his own. We have him, I M. God, when the Philistines, v. 1. 2. II. Exempted against by the lords of the Philistines, v. 3. 5. 11. Happily dismissed by Achish, from the service which did so ill become him, and which yet he knew not how to decline, v. 6. 11.

1. NOW the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek:

and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel. 2. And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rearward with Achish. 3. Then said the princes of the Philistines, What do these Hebrews here? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, Is not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me unto this day? 4. And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? Should it not be with the heads of these men? 5. Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

Here is,

I. The great strait that David was in, which we may suppose he himself was aware of, though we read not of any such action or press to go and seek a project of his own to get clear of it. The two armies of the Philistines and the Israelites were encamped and ready to engage, v. 1. Achish, who had been kind to David, had obliged him to come himself, and bring the forces he had, into his service. David came accordingly, and, upon a review of the army, was found with Achish, in the post assigned him in the rear, v. 2. Now, 1. If, when the armies engaged, he should retire and quit his post, he would fall under the indefeasible reproach, not only of cowardice and treachery, but of base ingratitude to Achish, who had been his protector and benefactor, and had reposed a confidence in him, and from whom he had received a very honourable commission. Such an unprincipled thing as this, he could by no means persuade himself to do. 2. If he
should, as was expected from him, fight for the Philistines against Israel, he would incur the imputation of being an enemy to the Israel of God, and a traitor to his country; would make his own people hate him, and unaimously oppose his coming to the counsel of the name of Israel; much more the honour and trust of a king of Israel, who had fought against them, under the banner of the uncircumcised. If Saul should be killed (as it proved he was) in this engagement, the fault would be laid at David's door, as if he had killed him; so that on each side there seemed to be both sin and scandal. This was the strait he was in; and a great strait it was to a good man, greater to see before his eyes to fall into the hand of his enemy, and to lose himself by his own unadvisedness, in quitting the land of Judah, and going among the uncircumcised. It is strange, if these that associate themselves with wicked people, and grow intimate with them, come off without guilt, or grief, or both. What he himself proposed to do, does not appear. Perhaps he designed to act only as a keeper to the king's head, the post assigned him, (ch. 26. 2.) and not to do any thing openly against Israel. But it would have been very hard to come so near the brink of sin, and not to fall in. Therefore, though God might justly have left him in this difficulty, to chastise him for his folly, yet, because his heart was upright with him, he would not suffer him to be tenabled above what he was able, but with the temptation made a way for him to escape. 1 Cor. 10. 13.

II. A door opened for his deliverance out of this strait. God inclined the hearts of the princes of the Philistines to oppose his being employed in the battle, and to insist upon his being dismissed. Thus their enmity befriended him, when no friend he had was capable of doing him such a kindness. 1. It was a proper question which they asked, upon the mustering of the forces; "What do these Hebrews here?" 2. What confidence can we put in them? Or what service can we expect from them? A Hebrew is out of his place, and, if he have the spirit of a Hebrew, is out of his element, when he is in the camp of the Philistines, and deserves to be made uneasy there. David used to hate the congregation of evil doers, (Ps. 26. 5.) however he came now to be among them. 2. It was an honourable testimony which Achish, on this occasion, gave to David. He loaded him upon him as a refugee, that fled from a wrongfull pursuit; his own enemiy, as his own servant, had put himself under his protection, whom, therefore, he was obliged, in justice, to take care of, and thought he might in prudence employ; for (says he) he has been with me these days, or these years, that is, a considerable time, many days at his court, and a year or two in his country; and he never found any fault in him, nor saw any cause to distrust his fidelity, or to think him other than that he was heartily come to over him. By this it appears that David had conducted himself with a great deal of caution, and had prudently concealed the affection he still retained for his own people. We have need to walk in wisdom toward them that are without, to keep our mouth when the wicked is before us, and to be upon the reserve. 3. Yet the princes are peremptory in it, that he must be sent home; and they give him reasons for their insistance. (1.) Because he had been an old enemy to the Philistines; in- stead what was sung in honour of his triumphs over them, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands, v. 5. "It will be a reproach to us to harbour and trust so one a destroyer of our people; nor can it be thought that he should now act heartily against Saul, who then acted so vigorously with him and for him." Who would be fond of popular praise and applause, when even that may, another time, be turned against a man to his reproach? (2.) Because he might be a most dangerous enemy to them, and do them more mischief than all Saul's army could, v. 4. "He may in the battle be an adversary to us, and surprise us with an attack in the rear, while their army charges us in the front; and we have reason to think he will do what, by betraying us, he may reconcile himself to his master. Who can trust a man, who, besides his affection to his country, will think it his interest to be false to us?" It is dangerous to put confidence in a reconciled enemy.

6. Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, as the Lord liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host is good in my sight; for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless, the lords favour thee not. 7. Wherefore, now return, and go in peace, that thou displeasest not the lords of the Philistines. 8. And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant, so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king? 9. And Achish answered and said to David, I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God: notwithstanding, the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle. 10. Wherefore now rise up early in the morning, with thy master's servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart. 11. So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines: and the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

If the reasons Achish had to trust David, were stronger than the reasons which the princes offered why they should distrust him, (as I do not see that, in policy, they were, for the princes were certainly in the right,) yet Achish was but one of five, though the chief, and the only one that had the title of king; accordingly, in a council of war, held on this occasion, he was over- voted, and obliged to dismiss David, though he was extremely fond of him. Kings cannot always do as they would, nor have such as they would about them.

1. The discharge Achish gives him, is very honourable, without final discharge, but only from the present service. (1.) He signifies the great pleasure and satisfaction he had taken in him, and in his conversation. Thou art good in my sight as an angel of God, v. 9. Wise and good men will gain respect, wherever they go, from all that know how to make a right estimate of persons and things, though of different professions in religion. What Achish says of David, God, by the prophet, says of the house of David, (Zech. 12. 8.) that it shall be as the angel of the Lord. But the former is a court compliment; the latter is a divine promise. (2.) He gives him a testimonial of his good behaviour, v. 6. It is very full, and in oblique terms; "Thou hast been upright, and thy whole conduct has been good in my sight, and I have not found evil in thee." Saul would not have given him such a testimonial,
though he had done far more service to him than to Achish. God's people should behave themselves always so unoffensively, as, if possible, to get the good word of all they have dealings with: and it is a debt we owe to those who have acquitted themselves well, to give them the praise of it. (3.) He had it, he says, from his dismission upon the princess, who would by no means suffer him to continue in the camp. "The king loves thee entirely, and would venture his life in thy hand; but the lords favour thee not, and we must not disoblig, or can we oppose them, therefore return, and go in peace." He had better part with his favourite, than occasion a disgust among his generals, and a mutiny in his army by his votes. It is a reason why they were uneasy; it was not so much for his own sake, as for the sake of his soldiers that attended him, whom he calls his master's servants, namely, Saul's; (v. 10.) they could trust him, but not them. (4.) He orders him to be gone early, as soon as it was light, (v. 10.) to prevent their further resentments, and the jealousies they would have been apt to conceive if he had lingered.

2. An epitome of this discourse is very compli- mental; but, I fear, not without some degree of dissimulation. "What!" says David, "must I leave my lord the king, whom I am bound by office to protect, just now when he is going to expose himself in the field? Why may not I go fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" v. 8. He seemed anxious to serve him, when he was at this juncture really anxious to leave him; but he was not willing that Achish should know that he was. No one knows how strong the temptation is to compli- ment and dissemble, which they are in, that attend great men, and how hard it is to avoid it.

3. God's providence ordered it wisely and graciously for him. For, besides that the snare was broken, and he was delivered out of the dilemma to which he was reduced, it proved a happy hastening of him to the relief of his own city, which sorely wanted him, though he did not know it. Thus the disgrace which the lords of the Philistines put upon him, proved more ways than one, an advantage to him. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way." What he does with us, we know not now, but we shall know hereafter and shall see it was all for good.

CHAP. XXX.

When David was dismissed from the army of the Philis- tines, he did not go over to the camp of Israel, but, being expelled by Saul, observed an exact neutrality, and si- lently retired to his own city Ziklag, leaving the armies ready to engage. Now here we are told, I. What a melancholy posture he found the city in, all laid waste by the Amalekites, and what distress it occasioned him and his men, v. 1. 6. II. What course he took to recover what he had lost. He inquired of God, and took out a com- mission from him, v. 7. 8. pursed the enemy, v. 9, 10. gained intelligence from a stranger, v. 11. 15. attacked and routed the plunderers, v. 16, 17. and recovered all they had carried off, v. 18. 20. III. What method he observed in the distribution of the spoil, v. 21. 31.

1. And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burnt it with fire; 2. And had taken the women captives that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but car- ried them away, and went on their way. 3. So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burnt with fire; and their wives, and their daughters, were taken captives. 4. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power toweep. 5. And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreel- itess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. 6. And David was greatly dis- tressed: for the people spake of stoning him; because the soul of all the people was griev- ed, every man for his sons and for his daugh- ters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

Here is:

I. The descent which the Amalekites made upon Ziklag, in David's absence, and the desolations they made there. They surprised the city when it was left unguarded, plundered it, burnt it, and carried all the women and children captives, v. 1, 2. They intended, by this, to avenge the like havoc that Da- vid had lately made of them and their country, ch. 27. 8. He that had made so many enemies, ought not to have left his own concerns so naked and de- fenceless. They that make bold with others, must expect that others will make as bold with them, and provide accordingly. Now observe in this, I. The cruelty of Saul's piety (as it proved) in sparing the Amalekites; if he had utterly destroyed them, as he ought to have done, these had not been in- tents to do the mischief. 2. How David was com- mended for being so forward to go with the Philistines against Israel. God showed him that he had better have staid at home, and looked after his own business. When we go abroad in the way of our duty, we may comfortably hope that God will take care of our families in our absence, but not otherwise. 3. How wonderfully God inclined the hearts of these Amalekites to carry the women and children away captives, and not to kill them. When David invaded them, he put all to the sword; (ch. 27. 9.) and no reason can be given why they did not retaliate upon this city, but that God restrained them; for he has all hearts in his hands, and says to the fury of the most cruel men, Hitherto thou shalt come, and no further. Whether they spared them, to lead them in triumph, or to sell them, or to use them for slaves, God's hand must be acknowledged, who de- signed to make use of the Amalekites for the cor- rection, not for the destruction, of the house of David.

II. The confusion and consternation that David and his men were in, when they found their houses in ashes, and their wives and children gone into captivity. Three days' march they had from the camp of the Philistines to Ziklag; and now that they came thither weary, but hoping to find rest in their houses, and joy in the families. The dying scene of relations and friends. Observe, 1. This trouble came upon them when they were absent. It was the ancient policy of Amalek to take Israel at an advantage. 2. It met them at their return, and for aught that appears, their own eyes gave them the first intelligence of it. Note, When we go abroad, we cannot foresee what evil tidings may meet us when we come home again. The going out may be very cheerful, and yet the coming in be very dolorous.
Boast not thyself therefore of to-morrow; nor of that night neither, for thou knowest not what a day, or a piece of a day, may bring forth, Prov. 27. 1. If, when we come off a journey, we find our tabernacles in peace, and not hid waste, as David here found his, let the Lord be praised for it.

III. The mutiny and murmuring of David's men against him, v. 6. David was greatly distressed, for in the midst of all his losses, his own people spake of stoning him. 1. Because they looked upon him as the occasion of their calamities, by the provocation he had given the Amalekites, and his indiscretion in leaving Ziklag without a garrison in it. Thus apt are we, when we are in trouble, to fly into a rage against those who are, in any way, the occasion of our trouble, while we overlook the Divine Providence, which may not at first be the most agreeable, but which at last would be the most beneficial to us. For God's hand in it, which would silence our passions, and make us patient. 2. Because now they began to despair of that preferment which they promised themselves in following David. They helped, ere this, to have been all princes; and now, to find themselves all beggars, was such a disappointment to them, as made them grow outrageous, and threaten the life of him, on whom, under God, they had the greatest dependence, because of the promises that always made those unmoved passions plunge men into!

This was a sore trial to the man after God's own heart, and could not but go very near him. Saul had driven him from his country, the Philistines had driven him from their camp, the Amalekites had plundered his city, his wives were taken prisoners, and now, to complete his woe, his own familiar friends, in whom he trusted, whom he had sheltered, and who did eat of his bread, instead of sympathizing with him, and offering him any relief, lifted up the heel against him, and threatened to stone him. Great faith must expect such severe exercises. But it is observable that David was reduced to this extremity just before his accession to the throne; at this present time, perhaps, the stroke was struck, which opened the door to his advancement. Things are sometimes at the worst with the church and people of God, just before they begin to mend.

IV. David's pious dependence upon the Divine Providence and grace, in this distress. But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God. 1. His men fretted at their loss; the soul of the people was bitter, so the word is; their own discontent and impatience added wormwood and gall to the affliction and misery, and made it doubly grievous. But David bore it better, though he had more reason than any of them to lament it; they gave liberty to their passions, but he set his graces on work, and, by encouraging himself in God, while they dispirited each other, he kept his spirit calm and sedate. Or, 2. David's language opposed itself to the threatening words his men gave out against him, they spake of stoning him; but he, not offering to avenge the affronts upon his person by them, encouraged himself in the Lord his God; believed and considered, with application to his present case, the power and providence of God, his justice and goodness, the method he commonly takes of bringing low, and then raising up; his care of his people that serve him, and trust in him, and the particular promises he had made to him of bringing him safe to the throne; with these considerations he supported himself, and in the midst of the worst there was, he was well. Note, Those that have taken the Lord for their God, may take encouragement from their relation to him in the worst of times. It is the duty and interest of all good people, whatever happens, to encourage themselves in God as their Lord and their God, assuring themselves that he can and will bring light out of darkness, peace out of trouble, and good out of evil, to all that love him, and are the called according to his purpose, Rom. 8. 28. It was David's practice, and he had the comfort of it; What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. When he was at his wit's end, he was not at his faith's end.

7. And David said unto Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. 3. And David inquired at the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all. 9. So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed. 10. But David pursued, he and four hundred men: (for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.) 11. And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water: 12. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him; for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. 13. And David said unto him, To whom belongeth thou? and whence art thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick. 14. We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which belongeth to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burnt Ziklag with fire. 15. And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company. 16. And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating, and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah. 17. And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day; and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men which rode upon camels, and fled. 18. And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away; and David rescued his two wives. 19. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all. 20. And David took
all the flocks and the herds, which they
brave before those other cattle, and said,
This is David's spoil.

Solomon observes, that the righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead; that the just faileth seven times a day, and riseth again; so it was with David. Many were his troops, but the Lord delivered him out of them all; and particularly out of this which here we have an account of.

I. He inquired of the Lord both concerning his duty, Shall I pursue after this troop? and concerning the event, Shall I overtake them? v. 8. It was a great advantage to David, that he had the High Priest with him, and the breast-plate of judgment, which, as a public person, he might consult in all his affairs, without being discovered. He left Abiathar and the ephod at Ziklag, for then he and it had been carried away by the Amalekites, unless we may suppose them hidden by a special providence, that they might be ready for David to consult at his return. If we conclude that David had his priest and ephod with him in the camp of the Philistines, it was certainly a great man, he had, heard not, something of the offers of the Lord by them, concerning his engagement to Achish. Perhaps he was ashamed to own his religion so far from among the uncircumcised; but now he begins to apprehend that this trouble is brought upon him to correct him for that oversight; and therefore the first thing he does, is, to call for the ephod. It is well if we get this good by our afflictions, to be reminded by them of neglecting duties, and particularly to be quickened by them to inquire of the Lord. See 1 Chron. 15. 13. David had no room to doubt but that his war against these Amalekites was just, and he had an inclination strong enough to set upon them, when it was for the recovery of that which was dearest to him in this world; and yet he would not go about it without asking counsel of God, thereby owning his dependence upon God, and submission to him. If we thus, in all our ways, would expect that God would direct our steps, as he did David's here, answering him above what he asked, with an assurance that he should recover all.

II. He went himself in person, and took with him all the force he had, in pursuit of the Amalekites, v. 9, 10. So how quickly, how easily, how effectually, the mutiny among the soldiers was crushed by his patience and faith. When they shake of stoning him, (v. 6.) he had spoken of his having done them, or had ordered that the ringleaders of the faction should immediately have had their heads struck off, though it had been just, yet it might have been of pernicious consequence to his interest, in it was critical juncture; and while he and his men were contending, the Amalekites would have clearly carried off their spoil; but when he, as a deaf, v. 11. fell, they crouched down, and encouraged himself in the Lord his God; a prospect of the people was stilled by his gentleness, and the power of God on their hearts; and, being thus mildly treated, they are now as ready to follow his foot, as they were but a little before to fly in his face. Meekness is the security of any government.

All his men were willing to go along with him in pursuit of the Amalekites, and he needed them all; but they dropped a third of them by the way; two hundred, out of six, were slain, with their long march, and so sunk under the load of their grief, that they could not pass the brook Besor, but staid behind there. This was, 1. A great trial of David's faith, whether he could go on, in a dependence upon the word of God, when so many of his men failed him. When we are disappointed and discouraged in our expectations from second causes, then go on with cheerfulness, confiding in the divine power, this is giving glory to God, by believing against hope, in hope. 2. A great instance of David's tenderness to his men, that he would by no means urge them beyond their strength, though the cause itself was so very urgent. The Son of David thus considers the frame of his followers, who are not all alike strong and vigorous in their spiritual pursuits and conflicts; but, where we are weak, there he is kind; may more, there he is strong, 2 Cor. 12. 9, 10.

III. Providence threw one in their way, that gave them intelligence of the enemy's motions, and guided their's; a poor Egyptian lad, scarcely alive, is made instrumental of a great deal of good to David. God chooses the foolish things of the world, with them to confound those of the wise; but a beast would use a baest. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. This Amalekite thought he should now have servants enough of the Israelite captives, and therefore cared not what became of his Egyptian slave; but could willingly let him die in a ditch for want of necessaries, while he was eating and drinking, v. 16. Justly did Providence make this poor servant, that was thus basely abused, the instrument of the destruction of his master, and his army of Amalekites, and his master among the rest; for God hears the cry of oppressed servants. 2. David's compassion to him, though he had reason to think he was one of those that had helped to destroy Ziklag, yet, finding him in distress, he generously relieved him, not only with bread and water, (v. 11.) but with figs and raisins, v. 12. Though the Israelites were very thirsty, and had plenty of water there, yet they would not forbear to deliver one that was drawn unto death, nor say, Behold, we know it not, Prov. 24. 11, 12. They are unworthy the name of Israelites, who shut up the bowels of their compassion from persons in distress. It was also prudently done to relieve this Egyptian; for, though despicable, he was capable of doing them service, so it proved; though they were not certain of it when they relieved him. It is a good reason why we should neither do an injury, nor deny a kindness, to any man, that we know not but, some time or other, it may be in his power to return either a kindness or an injury. 3. The intelligence David received from this poor Egyptian, when he was come to himself. He gave him an account concerning his party; (1.) What they had done, (v. 14.) We made an inversion. The countries which David had pretended to Achish, by making an incursion upon, (ch. 27. 10.) they really had invaded and laid waste. What was then false, now proved too true. (2.) Whither they were gone, v. 15. This he promised David to inform him of, upon condition he would spare his life and protect him from his master, who, if he could hear of him again, (he thought,) would add cruelty to cruelty. Such an opinion this poor Egyptian had of the destruction of an oath, that he desired no greater security for his life than that, Swear unto me by God; not by the gods of Egypt or Amalek, but by the one supreme God.

IV. David, being directed to the place where they lay, securely celebrating their triumphs, fell
upon them, and, as he used to pray, saw his desire when his enemies.

1. The spoilers were cut off. The Amalekites, finding the booty was rich, and being got with it (as they thought), they spared none, making themselves very merry with it, v. 16. All thoughts of war were laid aside, nor were they in any haste to house their prey, but spread themselves abroad on the earth in the most careless manner that could be, and there they were found eating and drinking, and dancing, probably in honour of their idol-gods, to whom they gave the praise of their success. In this posture, David surprised them, who were the cream of the Amalekites, and the blow he gave them, the more easy to him, and the more dismal to them. Then are sinner nearest to ruin, when they cry, Peace and safety, and put the evil day far from them. Nor does any thing give our spiritual enemies more advantage against us than sensuality, and the indulgence of the flesh. Eating and drinking, and dancing, have been the soft and pleasant way in which many have gone down to the congregation of the dead. Finding them thus off their guard, and from their arms, (many of them, it may be, drunk, and unable to make any resistance,) he put them all to the sword, and only four hundred escaped, v. 17. Thus is the triumphing of the wicked short, and wrath comes on them, as on Belshazzar, when they are in the midst of their jollity.

2. The spoil was recovered and brought off, and nothing was lost, but a great deal gotten. (1.) They retrieved all their own; (v. 18, 19.) David rescued his two wives; that is mentioned particularly, because that pleased David more than all the rest of his achievements. Providence had so ordered it, that the Amalekites carefully preserved all that they had taken, concluding that they kept it for themselves, though really they preserved it for the right owners; so that there was nothing lacking to them; so it proved, when they concluded all was gone; so much better is God oftentimes to us, than our own fears. Our Lord Jesus was indeed the son of David, and the son of Abraham, in this resembling them both, that he took the prey from the mighty, and led captivity captive: Abraham, Gen. 14. 16. and David here. But this was not all. (2.) They took all the spoil in the way of the Amalekites besides. 20, flocks and herds; either such as were taken from the Philistines, and others which David had disposed of by the law of war; or perhaps he made a sally into the enemy's country and fetched off these flocks and herds from thence, as interest for his own. This drove was put in the van of the triumph, with this proclamation, "This is David's spoil." This we may thank him for. Those who lately spoke of stoning him, now espoused him, and cried him up, because they got by him more than they had then lost. Thus are the world, and its sentiments, governed by interest.

21. And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them. 22. Then answered all the wicked men, and men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them aught of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart. 23. Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. 24. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarryth by the stuff: they shall part alike. 25. And it was so, from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.

26. And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the Lord. 27. To them which were in Beth-el, and to them which were in south Ramoth, and to them which were in Jattir, 28. And to them which were in Atroth-bezer, and to them which were in Siphmoth, and to them which were in Eshtemoa, 29. And to them which were in Rachal, and to them which were in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to them which were in the cities of the Kenites, 30. And to them which were in Hormah, and to them which were in Ceresh, and to them which were in Arad, 31. And to them which were in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt.

We have here an account of the distribution of the spoil which was taken from the Amalekites. When the Amalekites had carried away a rich booty from the land of Judah and the Philistines, they spent it in sensuality, in eating and drinking, and making merry with it; but David disposed of the spoil taken, after another manner, as one that knew that justice and charity must govern us, in the use we make of whatever we have in this world. What God gives us, he designs we should do good with, never leave our lust with. In the distribution of the spoil,

1. David was just and kind to those who abode by the staff. They came forth to meet the conquerors, and to congratulate them on their success, though they could not contribute to it; (v. 21.) for we should rejoice in a good work done, though Providence had laid us aside, and rendered us incapable of lending a hand to it. David received their addresses very kindly, and was so far from upbraiding them with their weakness, that he showed himself solicitous concerning them; he saluted them, he asked them of peace, so the word is; inquired how they did, because he had left them faint, and not well; or wished them peace, bid them be of good cheer, they should lose nothing by staying behind; for of this they seemed afraid; David perhaps saw it in their countenances.

1. There were those that opposed their coming in to share in the spoil; some of David's soldiers, probably the same that spoke of stoning him, spoke now of defrauding their brethren; they are called wicked men, and men of Belial, v. 22. Let not the best of men think it strange, if they have those attending them that are very bad, and they cannot prevail to make them better. We may suppose that David had instructed his soldiers, and praved
with them, and yet there were many among them that were wicked men and men of Belial; often terrif-
icated with the apprehensions of death, and yet
wicked men still, and men of Belial. These made
a motion, that the two hundred men who abode by
the stuff, should only have their wives and children
given them, but none of their goods. Well
might they be called wicked men; for this bespeaks them,
(1.) Very covetous us ourselves, and greedy of gain;
for hereby the more would fall to their share. A
which god would gladly have given half the
own to recover the other half; yet now that they
have all their own, they are not content unless they
can have their brethren’s too; so soon do men forget
their low estate. All seek their own, and too often
more than their own. (2.) Very barbarous to their
brethren; for, to give them their wives and chil-
dren, and not their estates, was to give them the
mouths without the men. They have of their families, if they had nothing to main-
tain them with? Was this to do as they would be
done by? These are men of Belial indeed, who de-
light in putting hardships upon their brethren, and
care not what is starved, so they may be fed to the
full.

2. David would by no means admit this, but or-
dered that they who tarried behind, should come in for
it, as if they had been engaged in the battle. They
were not engaged in the battle, v. 23, 24. This he did, (1.) In grati-
tude to God. The spoil we have, is that which
God has given us; we have it from him, and there-
fore must use it under his direction, as good stew-
dards. Let this check us when we are tempted to misapply that which God has intrusted us with of
this world’s good; “Nay, I must not do so with that
which God has given me, not serv’ e Satan and a base
lust, with these things which are gifts of his power,”
the gifts of his bounty. God has righ’ted us by deliv’ering the company that came against us into our hand, let us not then wrong our
brethren; God has been kind to us in preserving us,
and giving us victory, let not us be unkind to them.
God’s mercy to us should make us mercif’ul to one another.
(2.) Injustice to them. It is true, they
tarried behind; but, [1.] It was not by their own
fault, but by the stuff, to guard that which
somebody must take care of, else that might have
fallen into the hands of some other enemy. Every
post of service is not alike a post of honour, yet
those that are any way serviceable to the common
interest, though in a meaner station, ought to share
in the common advantages; as in the natural body,
every member has its use, and therefore has its
share. David over-
rule was, and won its war,
by reason, but with a great deal of mildness: (for the free
of reason is sufficient, without the force of passion;) he calls them his brethren, v. 23. Superiors often
lose their authority by haughtiness, but seldom by
courtesy and condensation; Secondly, Thus he
settled the matter for time to come, made it a
statute of his kingdom (a statute of a distribution which went
hence Davidis—in the first year of David’s reign),
an ordinance of war, (v. 25.) that as his part is that
goes down to the battle, and jeeps his life in the
high places of the field, so shall his be that guards
the carriages. Abraham returned the spoils of Sa-
don to the right owners, and quitted his title to
them, jure bellici—derived from the laws of war.
If we help others to recover their right, we must
not think that this alienates the property and makes it
our’s. God appointed that the spoil of Midian
should be divided between the soldiers and the whole
congregation, Num. 31. 27. The case here
was somewhat different, but governed by the same
general rule—that we are members one of another.
The disciples, at first, had all things common,
and so should still be ready to distribute, willing to
communicate, 1 Tim. 6. 18. When kings of armies
did flee aspace, she that tarried at home did divide
the spoil, Ps. 68. 12.

II. David was generous and kind to all his friends. When he had giv’en every one his own with interest,
there was a considerable overplus, which David, as
general, had the disposal of: probably the spoil of
the tents of the Amalekitcns consisted much in plate
and jewels; (Judg. he sent them out of the
shiel he thought they would but make his own soldiers
proud and effeminate, he thought fit to make pres-
ents of to his friends, even the elders of Judah, v.
26. Several places are here named to which he
sent of these presents, all of them in or near the
tribe of Judah. The first place named is Beth-erl,
which signif’es the house of God; that place shall
be first served for its name’s sake; or, perhaps,
it means not, he called the name of his house Beth-erl,
the ark was, which was therefore the house of God.
Thither David sent the first and best, to them
that attended there, for his sake who is the First and
Best. H’bron is named last, (v. 31.) probably
because thither he sent the residuum, which was the
largest share, having an eye upon that place as fit-
test for his head-quarters, 2 Sam. 2. 1.

In David’s sending these presents, observe, 1.
His generosity oblige us to enrich himself, but to serve
his country; and therefore God afterwards enla’ged him, and set him to rule the coun-
try he had served. It becomes gracious souls to be
generous; there is that scatters and yet increases.
2. His gratitude. He sent presents to all the places
where he and his men were wont to haunt; (v. 31.)
that is, to all he had received kindness from, that
had sheltered him, and sent him intelligence or
consider.ible, the. Honestly, we are apt to oblige
us to requite the favours that have been
done us, or, at least, make a real acknowledgment of
them as far as is in the power of our hand. 3.
His piety; that he calls it a blessing; for no present
we give to our friends will be a comfort to them,
but as it is made so by the blessing of God: it inti-
mates that his prayers for them accompanied his
presents; altho’ that he sent them out of the shiel the
enemies of the Lord, (so he calls them, not his
enemies,) that they might rejoice in the victory, for
the Lord’s sake, and might join with him in thank-
givings for it. 4. His policy, that he sent these
presents among his countrymen, to oblige them to
be ready to appear for him, upon his accession to
the throne, which he now saw at hand. A man’s
gift maketh room for him. He is fit to be a king,
who thus shows himself to be called, but the place which
Munificence recommends a man more than magni-
ficence. The Ziphites had none of his presents,
nor the men of Keila: and thus he showed, that,
though he was such a saint as not to revenge af-
fronts, yet he was not such a fool as not to take no-
tice of them.

CHAP. XXXI.

In the foregoing chapter, we had David conquering, yea,
more than a conqueror. In this chapter, we have Saul
conquered, and worse than a captive. Providence or-
dered it, that both these things should be doing just at the
same time. The very same day, perhaps, that David
was triumphing over the Amalekites, were the Phillis-
I. Samuel, XXXI.

I. NOW the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. 2. And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul, and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchi-shua, Saul's sons. 3. And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. 4. Then said Saul unto his armour-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armour-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid: therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. 5. And when his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him. 6. So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armour-bearer, and all his men, that same day together. 7. And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them. The day of recompense is now come, in which Saul must account for the blood of the Amalekites, which he had sinfully spared, and of the priests, which he had more sinfully spilt; that of David too, which he would have spilt, must come into the account. Now his day is come to fall, as David foresaw, when he should descend into battle, and perish, ch. 26. 10. Come, and see the righteous judgments of God. 1. He sees his soldiers fall about him, v. 1. Whether the Philistines were more numerous, better posted, and better led on, or what other advantages they had, we are not told. It seems they were more vigorous, for they made the onset, and fought against Israel, and the Israelites fled and fell. The best of the troops were put into disorder, and multitudes slain; probably, those whom Saul had employed in pursuing David. Thus they who had followed him, and served him in his sin, go before him in his fall, and share with him in his plagues. II. He sees his sons fall before him. The victorious Philistines pressed most forcibly upon the king of Israel, and those about him; his three sons were next him, it is probable, and they were all three slain before his face, to his great grief, for they were the hopes of his family; and to his great terror, for they were now the guard of his person; and he can conclude no other, than that his own turn comes next. His sons are named, (v. 2.) and it grieves us to find Jonathan among them: that wise, valiant, good man, who was as much David's friend as Saul was his enemy; he falls with the rest. Duty to his father would not permit him to stay at home, or to retire when the armies engaged; and Providence so orders it, that he falls in the common fate of his family, though he never involved himself in the guilt of it; so that the observation of the Philistines does not hold, (Job 4. 7.) Who ever perished, living innocent? For here was one. What shall we say to it? 1. God would hereby complete the vexation of Saul in his dying moments, and the judgment that was to be executed upon his house. If the family must fall, Jonathan, that is one of it, must fall with it. 2. He would hereby make David's way to the crown the more clear and open. For though Jonathan him, and his house, and his name, and his posterity, were proscribed, that was so anxious to have a king like the nations, would be zealous for the right line, especially if that threw the crown upon such a head as Jonathan's. This would have embarrassed David; and if Jonathan could have prevailed to bring in all his interest to David, then it would have been said that Jonathan had made him king, whereas God was to have all the glory. This is the Lord's doing. So that though the death of Jonathan would be a great affliction to David, yet, by making him mindful of his own frailty, as well as by faciliting his accession to the throne, it would be an advantage to him. 3. God would hereby show us, that the difference between good and bad is to be made in the other world, not in this. All things come alike to all. We cannot judge of the spiritual or eternal state of any, by the manner of their death; for in that there is one part to such as Saul and Jonathan, and another to such as David.
The scripture makes no mention of the souls of Saul and his sons, what became of them after they were dead; (seem things belong not to us) but of their bodies only.

I. How they were basely abused by the Philistines. The day after the battle, when they had recovered their fatigue, they came to strip the slain, and, among the rest, found the bodies of Saul and his three sons, v. 8. Saul’s arm-bearer perhaps intended to honour his master, by following the example of his self-murder, and to show thereby how well he loved him; but if he had consult his reason more than his passions, he would have spared that foolish compliment, not only in justice to his own life, but in kindness to his master, to whom, by the opportunity of survivorship, he might have done all the service that could be done him by any man after he was dead: for he might, in the night, have conveyed away his body, and those of his sons, and burned them, as the Jews did of Jonathan, and those of his sons, 1 Sam. xvi. 14. Saul and his sons were miserably stripped, shamefully dishonoured, and brought to a most ignominious death, after their bodies had been nailed up to the doors of the Philistines, and thus, together with the carcasses of all his armies, exposed and exposed to public view and contempt.

2. They cut off his head. Had they designed in this to revenge the cutting off of Goliath’s head, they should rather have cut off the head of David, who did that execution, when he was in their country; they intended it, in general, for a reproach to Israel, who promised themselves that a crowned, and an anointed head, would have saved them from the Philistines, and a particular reproach to Saul, who was taken by the head than other men, (which perhaps he would not boast of,) but was now shorter by the head.

3. They stripped him of his armour, (v. 9.) and sent that to be set up as a trophy of their victory in the house of Ashtaroth their goddess; (v. 10.) and we are told, 1 Chron. 10. 10. (though it is omitted here,) that they fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. Thus did they ascribe the honour of their victory, not to the might of the sword, but to the real justice of the true God, but to the imaginary power of their false gods; and by this respect paid to pretended deities, shame those who give not the praise of their achievements to the living God. Ashtaroth, the idol, that Israel had many a time given a whoring after, now triumphs over them.

4. They sent expresses throughout their country, and ordered public notice to be given, that the heads of their gods, of the victory they had obtained, (v. 9.) that public rejoicings might be made, and thanks given to their gods. This David regretted sorely; (2 Sam. 1. 20.) Tell it not in Gath.

5. They fastened his body, and the bodies of his sons, (as appears, v. 12.) to the wall of Beth-shan; a city that lay not far from Gilboa, and very near to the river Jordan. Hither they dragged, and they hung in chains, to be devoured by the birds of prey. Saul slew himself, to avoid being abused by the Philistines, and never was royal corpse so abused as his was; perhaps the more, if they understood that he slew himself, and for what reason. He that thinks to save his honour.

8. And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people. And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth; and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan. And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul, they were sorrowful for Saul and his sons, whom they had all the days of his life. And Saul was thirty and years old when he stood before the Lord, to judge Israel. He died for his country, but, with the rest of his family, dishonoured, stripped, and dishonoured.
by sin, will certainly lose it. See to what a height
of insoule the Philistines were arrived, just before
David was raised up, who perfectly subdued them.
Now that they had slain Saul and his sons, they
thought the land of Israel was their own for ever,
but they soon found themselves deceived. When
God has accomplished his whole work by them, he
will accomplish it upon them. See Isa. 10. 6, 7.

II. How they were bravely rescued by the men
of Jabesh-gilead. Little more than the river of
Jordan lay between Beth-shan and Jabesh-gilead,
and Jordan was in that place passable by its fords;
so bold adventure was therefore made by the valiant
men of that city, who, in the night, passed the
river, took down the dead bodies, and gave them
decent burial, v. 11-13. This they did, 1. Out of
a common concern for the honour of Israel, or the
land of Israel, which ought not to be defiled by the
exposing of any dead bodies, and especially of the
crown of Israel, which was thus profaned by the
uncircumcised. 2. Out of a particular sense of
gratitude to Saul, for his zeal and forwardness to
rescue them from the Ammonites, when he first
came to the throne, ch. 11. It is an argument of a
gracious spirit, and an encouragement to benefi-
cence, when the remembrance of kindness is thus
retained, and they are thus returned, in an extrem-
ity. The men of Jabesh-gilead would have done
Saul better service, if they had sent their valiant
men to him sooner, to strengthen him against the
Philistines. But his day was come to fall; and now
this is all the service they can do him, in honour to
his memory.

We find not that any general mourning was made
for the death of Saul, as was for the death of Sa-
"ml, (ch. 25. 1.) only those Gileadites of Jabesh
did him honour at his death; for, (1.) They made
a burning for the bodies, to perfume them. So
some understand the burning of them. They burnt
spices over them, v. 12. And that it was usual
to do honour to their deceased friends, at least,
their princes, appears by the account of Asa's fun-
eral, (2 Chron. 16. 14.) that they made a very great
burning for him. Or, (as some think,) they burnt
the flesh because it began to putrefy. (2.) They
buried the bodies, when, by burning over them,
they had sweetened them, (or, if they burnt them,
they buried the bones and ashes,) under a tree,
which served for a grave-stone and monument.
And, lastly, they fasted seven days; that is, each
day of the seven, they fasted till the evening; thus
they lamented the death of Saul, and the present
distracted state of Israel, and perhaps joined prays-
ers with their fasting, for the re-establishment of
their shattered state. Though when the wicked
perish, there is shouting, that is, it is to be hoped a
better state of things will ensue, which will be mat-
ter of joy, yet humanity obliges us to show a decent
respect to dead bodies, especially those of princes.
This book began with the birth of Samuel, but now
it ends with the burial of Saul, the comparing of
which two together will teach us to prefer the
honour that comes from God, before any of the
honours which this world pretends to have the dis-
posal of.
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

UPON THE SECOND BOOK OF

SAMUEL.

This book is the history of the reign of king David. We had, in the foregoing Book, an account of his designation to the government, and his struggles with Saul, which ended at length in the death of his persecutor. This Book begins with his accession to the throne, and is entirely taken up with the affairs of the government during the forty years he reigned, and therefore is entitled, by the Seventy, The Third Book of the Kings. It gives us an account of David’s triumphs and his troubles.

I. His triumphs over the house of Saul; (ch. 1-4.) over the Jebusites and Philistines; (ch. 5.) at the bringing up of the ark; (ch. 6 and 7.) over the neighbouring nations that opposed him, ch. 8-10. And so far the history is agreeable to what we might expect from David’s character, and the choice made of him. But his cloud has a dark side.

II. We have his troubles, the cause of them, his sin in the matter of Uriah, (ch. 11 and 12.) The troubles themselves from the sin of Ammon, (ch. 13.) the rebellion of Absalom, (ch. 14-19.) and of Sheba, (ch. 20.) and the plague in Israel for his numbering the people, (ch. 24.) beside the famine for the Gibeonites, (ch. 21.) His song we have, (ch. 22.) and his words and worthies, ch. 23. Many things in this history are very instructive; but for the hero, that is the subject of it, though, in many instances, he appears here very great, and very good, and very much the favourite of Heaven, yet it must be confessed that his honour shines brighter in his Psalms than in his Annals.

II. SAMUEL, I.

CHAP. I.

In the close of the foregoing Book, (which with this is connected as a continuation of the same history,) we had Saul’s exit; he went down slain to the pit, though he was the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. We are now to look toward the rising sun, and to inquire where David is, and what he is doing. In this chapter, we have, I. Tidings brought him to Ziklag of the death of Saul and Jonathan, by an Amalekite, who undertook to give him a particular narrative of it, v. 1-10. II. David’s sorrowful reception of these tidings, v. 11, 12. III. Justice done upon the messenger, who boasted that he had helped Saul to despatch himself, v. 13-16. IV. An elegy which David penned upon this occasion, 17-27. And in all this, David’s breast appears very happily free from the sparks, either of revenge or ambition, and he observes a very suitable demeanour.

1. Now it came to pass, after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abide two days in Ziklag; 2. It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul, with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance. 3. And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped. 4. And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also. 5. And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead? 6. And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. 7
II. SAMUEL, I.

And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me: and I answered, Here am I. 8. And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite. 9. He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me; for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me. 10. So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them bither unto my lord.

Here is,

I. David settling again in Ziklag his own city; after he had rescued his family and friends out of the hands of the Amalekites, (v. 1.) he abode in Ziklag. Thence a report of this tidings present to his friends. 1 Sam. 30. 26, and there was ready to receive those that came into his interests; not men in distress and debt, as his first followers were, but persons of quality in their country, mighty men, men of war, and captains of thousands; (as we find, 1 Chron. 12. 1, 8, 20.) such came day by day to him, God stirred up their hearts to do so, till he had a great host, like the host of God, as it is said there, 1 Sam. 30. 26. This first springs of revolutions is not accountable, and must be resolved into that Providence, which turns all hearts as the rivers of water. II. Intelligence brought him thither of the death of Saul. It was strange that he did not leave some spies about the camps, to bring him early notice of the issues of the engagement, a sign that he desired not Saul's woful day, nor was impatient to come to the throne, but willing to wait till those tidings were brought to him, which many a one would have sent more than half way to meet. He that believes, does not make haste, takes good news when it comes, and is not uneasy while it is in the coming.

1. The messenger presents himself to David as an express, in the posture of a mourner for the deceased prince, and a subject to the succeeding one. He did not go out of his clothes: David, (v. 2.) pleasing himself with the fancy that he had the honour to be the first that did him homage as his sovereign; but it proved he was the first that received from him sentence of death, as his judge. He told David he came from the camp of Israel, and intimatetd the confusion it was in, when he said he was escaped out of it, having much ado to get away with his life, v. 3.

2. He gives him a general account of the issue of the battle. David was very desirous to know how the matter went, as one that had more reasons than any to be concerned for the public; and he told him very distinctly that the army of Israel was routed, many slain, and, among the rest, Saul and Jonathan, v. 4. He names only Saul and Jonathan, because he knew David would be most solicitous to know of their fate; for Saul was the man whom he most feared, and Jonathan the man whom he most loved.

3. He gives him a more particular account of the death of Saul. It is probable that David had heard, by the report of others, what the issue of the war was, for multitudes resorted to him, it should seem, in consequence; but he was desirous to know the certainty of the report concerning Saul and Jonathan, either because he was not forward to believe it, or because he would not proceed upon it, to make his own claims, till he was fully assured of it. He therefore asks, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan are dead? In answer to which, the young man tells him a very ready story, putting it past doubt that Saul was dead, for he himself had been not only an eye-witness of his death, but an instrumen-t of it also, and therefore David might rely upon his testimony. He says nothing, in his narrative, of the death of Jonathan, knowing how ungrateful that would be to David, but accounts only for Saul thinking (as David understood it well enough, ch. 4. 10.) that he should be welcome for that, and rewar ded, as one that brought good tidings.

The account he gives of this matter is,

(1.) Very distinctly, the Amalekite bade him go to the place where Saul was, (v. 6.) as a passenger, not as a soldier, an therefore an indifferent person; that he found Saul endeavouring to run himself through with his own spear, none of his attendant being willing to do it for him; and, it seems, he could not do it dexterously for himself, his hand and heart failed him, the miserable man had not courage enough either to live or die; he therefore calls out to a man, a Philistine, who was known of the tryman he was, for provided he were not a Philistine he would gladly receive from his hand the coup de grace (as the French call it, concerning those that are broken on the wheel)—the merciful stroke, that might despatch him out of his pain. Understanding that he was an Amalekite, (neither one of his subjects, nor one of his enemies,) he begs this favour from him, (v. 9.) Stand upon me, and slay me. If his conscience, now, was willing to be trampled upon; sick of his life, and willing to be slain. Who then would be indiscrimi nately fond of life or honour? The case may be such, even with those that have no hope in their death, that yet they may desire to die, and death free from pain, Rev. 9. 6. Angusht is come upon men; so we read it; as a complaint of the pain and terror his spirit was sensible with. As his conscience, now, brought to mind the javelin he had cast at David, his pride, malice, and perfidiousness, and especially the murder of the priests, no marvel that anguish came upon him: moles (they say,) open their eyes when they are dying. Sense of unpardoned guilt will make death indeed the king of terrors. They that have baffled their convictions, will, perchance, in their dying moments, be overpowered by them.

(2.) It was David's manner to take the care of his clothing; that his coat of mail which he had for his defence, or his embroidered coat, which he had for ornament, hindered him, that he could not get the spear far enough into his body, or so estranged him, now that his body swelled with anguish, that he could not expire. Let no man's clothes be his pride, for it may so happen, that they may be his birthen and snare. "He chanced," says our young man, to bring himself up to an extremity of his clothes; that his coat of mail which he had for his defence, or his embroidered coat, which he had for ornament, hindered him, that he could not get the spear far enough into his body, or so straitened him, now that his body swelled with anguish, that he could not expire. Let no man's clothes be his pride, for it may so happen, that they may be a burden and snare. "He chanced," says our young man, (v. 10.) at which word, perhaps, he observed David look upon him with some show of displeasure, and therefore he excuses it, in the next words; "for I was sure he could not live; his life was whole in him indeed, but he would certainly have fallen into the hands of the Philistines, or given himself another thrust."

(3.) It is doubtful whether this story be true. If it was, the aspersion of David's is to be observed, that Saul, who spared the Amalekites, in contempt of the divine command, received his death's wound from an Amalekite. But most interpreters think that it was false, and that, though he might happen to be present, yet he was not assisting in the death of Saul, but told David so, in expectation that he would have rewarded him for it, as having done him a piece of good service. They who rejected the fall of an enemy, are apt to measure others by themselves, and to think that they will do too,
But a man after God's own heart, is not to be judged of by common men. I am not clear whether this young man's story was true or no; it may consist with the narrative in the chapter before, and it may add to it, as Peter's account of the death of Judas, Acts 1. 18. is to the narrative, Matth. 27. 5. What is there called a sword, may here be called a spear; or when he fell upon his sword, he leaned on his spear.

(3.) However, he produced that which was proof sufficient of the death of Saul, the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm. It should seem, these Saul was so foolishly found of, as to wear them in the field of battle, which made him a fair mark for the archers, by distinguishing him from those about him, but did not protect him, so it fears no danger from that which gratifies it. These fell into the hands of this Amalekite. Saul spared the best of their spoil, and now the best of his came to one of that devoted nation. He brought them to David, as the rightful owner of them now that Saul was dead, not doubting but by his officiousness herein, to recommend himself to the best preferments in his court or camp. The tradition of the Jews is, that this Amalekite was the son of Doeg, (for the Amalekites were descendants from Edom,) and that Doeg, who, they suppose, was Saul's armour-bearer before he slew himself, gave Saul's crown and bracelet (the ensigns of his royalty) to his son, and bade him carry them to David, to curry favour with him. But this is a groundless conceit; Doeg's son, it is likely, was so well known to Saul, that he needed not carry them to him, (v. 4.) Who art thou? David had been long waiting for the crown, and now it is brought him by an Amalekite. See how God can serve his own purpose of kindness to his people, even by designing (ill-designing) men, who aim at nothing but to set up themselves.

11. Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him: 12. And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword. 13. And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence art thou? And he answered, I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite. 14. And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the Lord's anointed? 15. And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died. 16. And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord's anointed.

Here is.

I. David's reception of these tidings. So far was he from falling into a transport of joy, as the Amalekite expected, that he falls into a passion of weeping, rent his clothes, (v. 11.) mourned and fasted, (v. 12.) not only for his people Israel, and Jonathan his friend, but for Saul his enemy. This he did, not only as a man of honour, in observance of that decorum which forbids us to insult over those that are fallen, and requires us to attend our relations to the grave with respect, whatever we lost by their life, or got by their death; but as a good man and a man of conscience, that had forgiven the injuries Saul had done him, and bore him no malice. He knew before his son wrote it, (Prov 24. 17, 18.) that if we receive when our enemy falls, the Lord sees it, and it displeaseth him; and, that he who is, or is called at revenge, shall not go unpunished, Prov. 17. 5. By this it appears, that those passages in David's psalms, which express his desire of, and triumph in, the ruin of his enemies, proceed not from a spirit of revenge, or any irregular passion, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God and the public good; for by what he did here, when he heard of Saul's death, we may perceive that his natural tenderness was quite tamed, and that he was kindly affected even to those that hated him. He was very sincere, no question, in his mourning for Saul, and it was not pretended, or a copy of his countenance only. His passion was so strong, on this occasion, that it moved those about him; all that were with him, at least, in complicity to him, rent their clothes, and they fasted till even, in token of their sorrow; and, probably, it was a religious duty, they did so, to themselves under the hand of God, and prayed for the repaying of the breaches made upon Israel by this defeat.

II. The reward he gave to him that brought him the tidings; instead of preferring him, he put him to death; judged him, cut of his own mouth, as a murderer of his prince, and ordered him forthwith to be executed for the same. What a surprise was this to the messenger, who thought he should have favour shown him for his pains! In vain did he plead that he had Saul's order for it, that he was a real kind-ness to him, that he must inevitably have died; all those pleas are overruled, "Thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord's anointed; (v. 16.) therefore thou must die."

Now, 1. Did herein did not do unjustly. For, (1.) The man was an Amalekite. This, lest he had mistaken it in his narrative, he made him own a second time, v. 13. That nation, and all that belonged to it, were doomed to destruction; so that, in slaying David, did what his predecessor should have done, and was rejected for not doing. (2.) He did himself confess the crime, so that the evidence was, by the consent of all laws, sufficient to convict him; for every man is presumed to make the best of himself. If he did as he said, he deserved to die for treason, (v. 14.) doing that which, if it be probable, he heard Saul himself ordered, for he could not refuse to do; if not, yet by boasting that he had done it, he plainly showed, that if there had been occasion, he would have done it, and would have made nothing of it; and by boasting of it to David, he showed what opinion he had of him, that he would rejoice in it, as one altogether like himself, which was an intolerable affront to him, who had himself ordered it, and again refused to stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed. To David, if indeed it were a lie, was highly criminal, and proved, as sooner or later that sin will prove, lying against his own head.

2. He did honourably well. Hereby he demonstrated the sincerity of his grief; discouraged all others from thinking, by doing the like, to gratify themselves with him; and did that which belonged, proceeded to the highest. He had won upon them, and recommend him to the people, as one that was zealous for public justice, without regard to his own private interest. We may learn from it, that to give assistance to any in murdering themselves, directly or indirectly, if done willingly, incurs the guilt of blood; and that the lives of princes ought to be, in a special manner, precious to us.
17. And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son: (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher:) 19. The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! 20. Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. 21. Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. 22. From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. 23. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. 24. Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights; who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel. 25. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. 26. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. 27. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

When David had rent his clothes, mourned and wept, and fasted, for the death of Saul, and done justice upon him who made himself guilty of it, one would think he had made full payment of the debt of honour he owed to his memory; yet this is not all: we have here a poem he wrote on the occasion; for he was a great master of his pen as well as sword. By this elegy he designed both to express his own sorrow for this great calamity, and to impress the like on the minds of others, who ought to lay it to heart. The putting of lamentations into poems, made them, 1. The more moving and affecting. The passion of the poet, or singer, is, by this way, wonderfully communicated to the readers and hearers. 2. The more lasting. Thus they were made, not only to spread far, but to continue long; from generation to generation. These might gain information by poems, that would not read history.

Here we have,

I. The orders David gave with this elegy; (v. 18.) He bade them teach the children of Judah (his own tribe, whatever others did) the use of the bow; either,

1. The bow used in war. Not but that the children of Judah knew how to use the bow; (it was so commonly used in war, long before this, that the sword and bow were put for all weapons of war, Gen. 48, 22.) but, perhaps, they had of late made more use of slings, as David, in killing Goliath, because cheaper; which David would have them now to see the inconvenience of, (for they were the archers of the Philistines that bore so hard upon Saul, 1 Sam. 31.) and so to return more generally to the use of the bow, to exercise themselves in this weapon, that they might be in a capacity to avenge the death of their prince upon the Philistines, and to outdo them at their own weapon. It was pity but those that had such good heads and hearts, as the children of Judah, should not be well armed. David hereby showed his authority over, and concern for, the armies of Israel, and set himself to rectify the errors of the former reign. But we find that the companies which were now come to David to Ziklag, were armed with bows; (1 Chron. 12, 2.) therefore, 2. Some understand it, either of some musical instrument called a bow, to which he would have the mournful ditties sung, or, of the elegy itself; he bade them teach the children of Judah, Kelelth, the bow, that is, this song, which was so entitled, for the sake of Jonathan's love, the aer), which were here celebrated. Moses commanded Israel to learn his song, (Deut. 31, 19.) so David his. Probably, he bade the Levites teach them. It is written in the book of Jasher, there it was kept upon record, and from thence transcribed into this history. That book was, probably, a collection of state poems; what is said to be written in that book, (Josh. 10, 13.) is also poetical, a fragment of an historical poem. Every song should be forgotten and lost, if they were not committed to writing, that best conservatory of knowledge.

II. The elegy itself. It is not a divine hymn, nor given by inspiration of God, to be used in divine service; nor is there any mention of God in it; but is a human composition, and therefore was inserted, not in the book of Psalms, which, being of divine original, is preserved; but in the book of Jasher, which, being only a collection of common poems, is long since lost.

This elegy bespeaks David to be,

1. A man of an excellent spirit, in four things.

(1.) He was very generous to Saul, his sworn enemy. Saul was his father-in-law, his sovereign, and the anointed of the Lord; and therefore, though he had done him a great deal of wrong, he does not wreak his revenge upon his memory when he is in his grave; but, like a good man, and a man of honour, he conceals his faults; and though there was no preventing of their appearance in his history, yet they should not appear in this elegy. Charity teaches us to make the best we can of every body; and those we can say no good of, to say nothing of, especially when they are gone. De mortuis nil nisi bonum—Speak evil of no one. We ought to deny ourselves the satisfaction of making personal reflections upon those who have offended us, and more drawing their character from thence, as if every man must of necessity be a bad man, that has done ill by us. Let the corrupt part of the memory be buried with the corrupt part of the man, earth to earth, ashes to ashes; let the blemish be hidden, and a vail drawn over the deformity. (2.) He celebrates that which was praise-worthy in him. He does not commend him for that for which he was not; says nothing of his piety, nor his good actions, nor his other commendations, which are gathered out of the spoils of truth, are not at all to the praise of those on whom they are bestowed, but very much the dispraise of those who unjustly misplace them. But he has this to say, in honour of Saul himself, First, That he was anointed with oil, (v. 21.) the sacred oil, which signified his elevation to, and qualification for, the government of Israel. Why? Secondly, That the remission of the anointing oil of his God was upon him, as is said of the High Priest, (Lev. 21, 12.) and, on that account, he was to be honoured, because God, the Fountain of honour, had honoured him. Secondly, That he was a man of war, a mighty man; (v. 19—21.) that he had often been victorious over the enemies of Israel, and vexed them whithersoever he turned; (1 Sam. 14, 17.) his sword
returned not empty, but satiated with blood and spoil, v. 22. His disgrace and fall, at last, must not make his former successes and services to be forgotten. Though his sun set under a cloud, time was, when it shone bright. Thirdly, That, take him with Jonathan, he was a man of a very agreeable temper, that recommended himself to the affections of his subjects; (v. 23.) Saul and Jonathan were very near together of blood, and Saul was so long as he concurred with him. Take them together, and in the pursuit of the enemy, never were men more bold, more brave, swifter than eagles, and stronger than lions. Observe, They that were most fierce and fiery in the camp, were no less sweet and lovely in the court; as amiable to the subject, as they were formidable to the foe: a rare composition of softness and sharpness the world, and this man was also happy. It may be understood of the harmony and affection, that, for the most part, subsisted between Saul and Jonathan; they were lovely and pleasant one to another. Jonathan a dutiful son, Saul an affectionate father, and therefore dear to each other in their lives, and in their death they were not divided, but kept close together in the stand they made against the Philistines, and fell together in the same cause. Fourthly, That he had dispatched his country with the spoils of conquered nations, and introduced a more splendid attire. When they had a king like the nations, they must have clothes like the nations; and herein he was, in a particular manner, obliging to his female subjects, v. 24. The daughters of Israel he clothed in scarlet, which was their delight.

(2) He was very grateful to Jonathan his sworn friend. Beside the tears he shed over him, and the encomiums he gives of him in common with Saul, he mentions him with some marks of distinction; (v. 25.) O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places! which, compared with v. 19. intimates that he meant him by the beauty of Israel, which, he there says, was slain upon the high places. He laments Jonathan as his particular friend; (v. 26.) My brother Jonathan; not so much of what he would have been to him if he had lived, very vicible, no doubt, in his advancement to the throne, and instrumental to prevent those long struggles, which, for want of his assistance, he had with the house of Saul; (had this been the only ground of his grief, it had been selfish;) but he lamented him for what he had been; "Very pleasant hast thou been unto me; but that pleasantness is now over, and I am distressed for thee." He had reason to be happy, for Jonathan's love to him was wonderful; sure never was the like, for a man to love one who he knew was to take the crown over his head; and to be so faithful to his rival: this far surpasses the highest degree of conjugal affection and constancy. See here, [1.] That nothing is more delightful in this world than a true friend, that is wise and good, that kind and liberal, that would help and returns our affection, and is faithful to us in all the interests of our friends. True friendship is a source of universal benefit. Nothing is more distressful than the loss of such a friend; it is parting with a piece of one's self. It is the vanity of this world, that what is most pleasant to us, are most liable to be distressed in. The more love, the more grieve. (3.) He was deeply concerned for the honour of God, for that is it which he has an eye to, when he feels the daughters of the uncircumcised, that are out of covenant with God, triumph over Israel, and the God of Israel, v. 20. Good men are touched in a very sensible part by the reproaches of them that reproach God.

(4.) He was deeply concerned for the public welfare. It was the beauty of Israel that was slain, (v. 19.) and the honour of the public that was disgraced; the mighty are fallen, that is three times lamented, (v. 19, 53, 27,) and so the strength of the people is weakened. Public losses are most laid to heart by men of public spirits. David hoped God would make him instrumental to repair their losses, and yet laments them.

2. David here shows himself to be a man of a fine imagination, as well as a wise and holy man. The expiation of a man was solemnly calculated to work upon the passions. (1.) The sacred type of that would fall lay upon a Famine, is elegant, (v. 20,) Tell it not in Gath. It grieved him to the heart, to think that it would be proclaimed in the cities of the Philistines, and that they would insol Q Israel upon it, and the more, in remembrance of the triumphs of Israel over them formerly, when they sung, Saul has slain his thousands; that would now be retorted. (2.) The curse he entitles on the moun-

Chap. ii.

David had paid due respect to the memory of Saul his prince, and Jonathan his friend, and what he did, was as much his praise as theirs; he is now considering what is to be done next. Saul is dead, now therefore David arises. 1. By direction from God, he went up to Hebron, and was anointed king over Israel, v. 1. 4. II. He returned thanks to the men of Jabesh-gilead for burying Saul, v. 5-7. III. Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, is set up in opposition to him, v. S, 11. IV. A warm encounter happened between David and Ish-bosheth's forces in which, 1. Twelve of each side engaged hand to hand, and were all slain, v. 15-16. 2. Saul's party was beaten, v. 17. 3. Asaiah, on David's side, was slain by Abner, v. 18. 22. 4. Joab, at Abner's request, sounds a retreat, v. 24, 25. 5. Abner is the best of his way, (v. 29,) and the loss on both sides is considerable, v. 30. 32. So that here we have an account of a civil war in Israel, which in process of time, ended in the complete settlement of David on the throne.

1. And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the Lord said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron. 2. So David went up
thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelite, and Abigail, Nabal’s wife, the Carmelite. 3. And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron. 4. And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, That the men of Jabesh-gilead were they that buried Saul. 5. And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the Lord, that ye have showed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. 6. And now the Lord show kindness and truth unto you: and I will also require you this kindness, because ye have done this thing. 7. Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

When Saul and Jonathan were dead, though David knew himself anointed to be king, and now saw his way very clear, yet he did not immediately send messengers through all the coasts of Israel, to summon all people to come in and swear allegiance to him, upon pain of death, but proceeded leisurely; for he that believeth, doth not make haste, but waits God’s time for the accomplishment of God’s promises. Many were come in to his assistance from several tribes, while he continued at Ziklag, (as we find, 1 Chron. 12. 1-22,) and by such a force he might have come in by conquest; but he that will rule with meekness, will not rise with violence. Observe here,

I. The direction he sought and had from God, in this critical juncture, v. 1. He doubted not of success, yet he uses proper means, both divine and human. Assurance of hope in God’s promise, will be so far from slackening, that it will quicken pious endeavours. If I be elected to the crown of life, it does not follow, Then will I do nothing: but, Then I will do all that he directs me, and follow his counsel, who chose me, this good will David make it his election, and so will all whom God has chosen. 1. David, according to the precept, acknowledged God in his way. He inquired of the Lord, by the breast-plate of judgment, which Abiathar brought him. We must apply ourselves to God, not only when we are in distress, but even then when the world smiles upon us, and second causes work in favour of us. His inquiry was, “Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?” Shall I anoint myself king? Though Ziklag be in ruins, he will not quit it without direction from God: “If I stir hence, shall I go to one of the cities of Judah?” Not limiting God to them; if God should so direct him, he would go to any of the cities of Israel. But it bespeaks his prudence, in the cities of Judah he would find most friends; and his modesty, he would look no further at present than his own tribe. In all matters of great purposes, it is comfortable to see God going before us; and we may, if by faith and prayer we set him before us. 2. God, according to the promise, directed his path, bade him go up, told him whither, unto Hebron, a priest’s city, one of the cities of refuge; so it was to David, and an intimation that God himself would be to him a little Sanctuary. The sepulchres of the patriarchs, ad

joining to Hebron, would remind him of the ancient promise, on which God had caused him to hope. God sent him, not to Beth-lehem his own city, because that was little among the thousands of Judah; (Mic. 5. 2.) but to Hebron, a more considerable place, and which, perhaps, was then as the country town of that tribe.

II. The symbolic act of his family and friends in his remove to Hebron. 1. He took his wives with him, (v. 2,) that, as they had been companions with him in tribulation, they might be so in the kingdom. It does not appear that as yet he had any children; his first-born was in Hebron, ch. 3. 2. 2. He took his friends and followers with him; (v. 3.) they had accompanied him in his wanderings, and therefore, when he gained a settlement, they stuck with him. Thus he was satisfied, “we shall reign with him,” 2 Tim. 2. 12. Nay, Christ does more for his good soldiers, than David could do for his; he found lodging for them, They dwelt in the cities of Hebron, the adjacent towns; but to those who continue with Christ in his temptations, he appoints a kingdom, and will feast them at his own table, Luke 22. 29, 30.

III. The honour done him by the men of Judah; they another time raising over the house of Judah, v. 4. The tribe of Judah had often stood by itself, more than any other of the tribes; in Saul’s time it was numbered by itself as a distinct body, (1 Sam. 15. 4.) and had been used to act separately; they did so now; yet they did it for themselves only; they did not pretend to anoint him king over all Israel, (as Judg. 9. 22,) but only over the house of Judah; the rest of the tribes might do as they pleased, but for them and their house, they would be ruled by him whom God had chosen. See how David rose gradually; he was first anointed king in reversion, then, in possession, of one tribe only, and, at last, of all the tribes, thus the kingdom of the Messiah, the son of David, is set up by degrees; he is Lord of all, by divine designation, but we see not yet all things put under him, Heb. 2. 8. David’s reigning at first over the house of Judah only, was a tacit intimation of Providence, that his kingdom would in a short time be reduced to that again, as it was when the ten tribes revolted from his grandson, and it would be an encouragement to the godly kings of Judah, that David himself, at first, reigned over Judah only.

IV. The respectful message he sent to the men of Jabez-gilead, to return them thanks for their kindness, he bade them send him a present of a little of the memory of his predecessor, and thereby to show, that he was far from aiming at the crown from any principle of ambition, or enmity to Saul, but purely because he was called of God to it. It was told him, that the men of Jabez-gilead buried Saul, perhaps, by some that thought he would have been displeased at them as over-officious. But he was far from that; 1. He commended them for it, v. 5. 2. According to the title of the Lord, who will deal kindly with his honour any while they lived, we ought to show respect to their remains, that is, their bodies, names, and families, when they are dead; “Saul was your lord,” says David, “and therefore you did well to show him this kindness, and do him this honour.” 2. He prays to God to bless them for it, and to recompense it to them, Blessed be ye, and blessed may ye be of the Lord, who will deal kindly with those in a particular manner, that deal kindly with the dead, as it is in Ruth 1. 8. Due respect and affection showed to the bodies, names, and families, of those that are dead, in conscience toward God, is a piece of charity, which shall in no wise lose its reward, The Lord shows kindness and truth to you! (v. 6.) that is, kindness according to the promise: what kindness God shows, is, in truth, what one
may trust to. 3. He promises to make them amends for it, I also will requite you. He does not turn them over to God for recompence, that he might excuse himself from rewarding them; good wishes are good things, and instances of gratitude, but they are too cheap to be rested in where there is an ability to do more. 4. He prudently takes this opportunity to gain them to his interest, ver. 7. They had paid their last respects to Saul, and he would have them to be the last; "The house of Judah have anointed me king, and it will be your wisdom to concur with them, and in that to be valiant." We must not so dote on the dead, how much soever we have valued them, as to neglect or despise the blessings we have in those that survive, whom God has raised up to us in their stead.

8. But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim: 9. And he made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel. 10. Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. 11. And the time that David was king in Hebron, over the house of Judah, was seven years and six months. 12. And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. 13. And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool. 14. And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise. 15. Then there arose, and went over by number, twelve of Benjamin, which pertained to Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. 16. And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword into his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is in Gibeon. 17. And there was a very sore battle that day: and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

Here is,
I. A rivalry between two kings; David, whom God made king, and Ish-bosheth, whom Abner made king. One would have thought, when Saul was slain, and all his sons that had sense and spirit enough to take the field with him, David should have come to the throne without any opposition, since all Israel knew not only how he had signalized himself, but how manifestly God had designated him to it; but such a spirit of contradiction is there, in the devices of men, to the counsels of God, that such a weak and silly thing as Ish-bosheth, who was not thought fit to go with his father to the battle, shall yet be thought fit to succeed him in the go

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verment, rather than David shall come peaceably to it. Herein David's kingdom was typical of the Messiah's, against which the heathens rage, and the rulers take counsel, Ps. 2. 1, 2. 1. Abner was the person who set up Ish-bosheth in competition with David; perhaps, in his zeal for the linear succession; since they must have a king like the nations, in this they must be like them, that the crown must descend from father to son. Or rather, in his affection to his own family and relations, (for he was Saul's uncle,) and because he had neither way to secure to himself the post of honour he was in, as captain of the host. See how much mischief the pride and ambition of one man may be the occasion of. Ish-bosheth would never have set up himself, if Abner had not set him up, and made a tool of him to serve his own purposes. 2. Mahanaim was the place where he first made his claim. On the other side Jordan, it was, but this point he had the least interest, and being at a distance from his forces, they might have time to strengthen themselves. But, having set up his standard there, the unthinking people of all the tribes of Israel, that is, the generality of them submitted to him, (ver. 9.) and Judah only was entire for David. This was a further trial of the faith of David in the promise of God, and of his patience, whether he could wait God's time, and perform that promise. 3. Some difficulty there is about the time of the continuance of this competition. David reigned over Judah only, about seven years; (ver. 11.) and yet (ver. 10.) Ish-bosheth reigned over Israel but two years: either before these two years, or after, or both, it was in general for the house of Saul, (ch. 3. 6.) and not any particular person of that house, that Abner declared. Or, these two years he reigned, before the war broke out, (ver. 12.) which continued long, even the remaining five years, ch. 3. 1.

II. A encounter between their two armies. It does not appear that either side brought their whole force into the field, for the slaughter was but small, ver. 30, 31. We may wonder, 1. That the men of Judah did not appear and act more vigorously for David, to reduce the whole nation into obedience to him; but, it is likely, David and Ish-bosheth were determined to act offensively, choosing rather to wait till the thing would do itself, or rather till God would do it for him, without the effusion of Israelitish blood, for to him, as a type of Christ, that was very precious, Ps. 72. 14. Even these that were his adversaries he looked upon as his subjects, and would treat them accordingly. 2. That the men of Israel did not appear in a manner wherein they would, and it is very unlikely under Ish-bosheth, for so many years, especially considering what characters many of the tribes displayed at this time, as we find, 1 Chron. 12. 23, &c. Wise men, mighty men, men of valour, expert in war, and not of double heart, and yet for seven years together, for aught that appears, most of them seemed indifferent in whose hand the public administration was. Divine Providence serves its own purposes by the stupidity of men at some times, and the activity of the same persons at other times; they are unlike themselves, and yet the motions of Providence uniform.

(1.) In this battle Abner was the aggressor. David sat still to see how the matter would fall; but the house of Saul, and Abner at the head of it, gave the challenge, and they went by the worst. Therefore go not forth hastily to strive, nor be for a word ready to begin quarrels, lest they know not what to do in the end thereof, Prov. 25. 8. A fool's lips and hands enter into contention.

(2.) The seat of the war was Gibeon; Abner chose it, because it was in the lot of Benjamin, where Saul had the most friends; yet, since he of
fiered battle, Joab, David's gener[.], would not de-

cline it, but there joined issue with him, and met

him by the pool of Gideon, v. 13. David's cause,
being built upon God's promise, feared not the dis-
advantages of the ground; the pool between them
gave both sides time to deliberate.

(3.) The engagement was first proposed by Ab-
ner, and accepted by Joab, to be fought between

twelve men of each side; (v. 1.) It should seem this

trial of skill began in sport. Abner made the motion,
(v. 14.) Let the young men arise, and play before

us, as gladiators; perhaps, Saul had used his men to
these barbarous pastimes, like a tyrant indeed,
and Abner had learnt it of him, to make a jest of
wounds and death, and divert himself with the
scenes of blood and horror. He meant, Let them
fight before us, when he said, Let the young men
play; but this is a mock at sin. But he is unworthy the
name of a man, that can be thus prodigal of human blood, that can thus throw
about fire-brands, arrows, and death, and say, Am
not I in sport? Prov. 26. 18, 19. Joab, having been
bred up under David, had so much wisdom as not
to make such a proposal, yet had not resolution
even to resist and gainsay it when another made it;
but he stood up for the honour of his master, and
thought it a blemish to his reputation to refuse a
challenge; and therefore said, Let them arise; not
that he was fond of the sport, or expected that
the duel would be decisive, but he would not be hec-
tored by his antagonist. How many precious lives
have thus been sacrificed to the caprice of proud
men! Twelve of each side were accordingly called
out as champions to enter the lists, a double jury of
life and death, not of others, but their own; and the
champions on Abner's side seem to have been most
forward, for they took the field first, (v. 15.) hav-
ing, perhaps, been bred up in a foolish ambition,
thus to serve the humour of their commander-in
chief. But, [2.] However it began, it ended in
blood; (v. 16.) they thrust every man his sword into
his fellow's side, spurred on by honour, not by en-
\nymity; so they fell down together, that is, all the
twenty-four were slain; such an equal match were
they for one another, and so resolute, that neither
side would either beg or give quarter; they did it
as they were by agreement, (says Josephus,) despatch
one another with mutual wounds. They that strike at
other men's lives, often throw away their own, and
die only conquers and rides in triumph. The
wonderful obstinacy of both sides was remembered in
the name given to the place, Hetkath-Jazzzurim,
the field of rocky men; men that were not only
strong in body, but of firm and unshaken constancy,
that stirred not at the sight of death. Yet the
stout-hearted were spoiled, and slept their sleep, Ps.
76. 5. Poor honour for men to purchase at so vast
an expense: they that lose their lives for Christ
shall find them.

(4.) The whole army, at length, engaged, and
Abner's force were routed, v. 17. The former
was a drawn battle, in which all were killed on
both sides, and therefore they must put it upon
another trial, in which (as it often happens) they
that give the challenge went away with loss. Da-
vid had God on his side; his side therefore was vic-
torious.

18. And there were three sons of Zeruiah
there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and
Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe.

19. And Asahel pursued after Abner; and
in going he turned not to the right hand nor
to the left from following Abner. 20. Then
Abner looked behind him, and said, Art

thou Asahel? And he answered, I am.
21. And Abner said to him, Turn thee
aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and
lay thee hold on one of the young men, and
take thee his armour. But Asahel would not
turn aside from following of him. 22.
And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee
aside from following me: wherefore should I
smite thee to the ground? how then should
I hold up my face to Joab thy brother! 23.
Howbeit, he refused to turn aside: where-
fore Abner, with the hinder end of the
spear, smote him under the fifth rib, that
the spear came out behind him; and he
died down there, and died in the same place:
and it came to pass, that as many as came
to the place where Asahel fell down and
died, stood still. 24. Joab also and Abish-
ai pursued after Abner: and the sun went
down when they were come to the hill of
Ammah, that lieth before Giah, by the way of
the wilderness of Gideon.

We have here the context between Abner and
Asahel: Abner, the brother of Joab, and cousin-
german to David, was one of the principal command-
ers of David's forces, and as such was in his own
defence, when he was in running; he uses as light of foot as a wild roe;
(v. 18.) this he got the name of, by swift pursuing,
not swift flying. Yet, we may suppose, he was not
comparable to Abner, as a skilful, experienced sol-
dier; we must therefore observe,

1. How rash he was in aiming to make Abner
his prisoner. He pursued after him, and no other,
v. 19. Proud of his relation to David and Joab, his
own swiftness, and the success of his party, no less
a trophy of victory would serve the young warrior,
than Abner himself, either slain or bound, which
he thought would put an end to the war, and effec-
tually open David's way to the throne. This made
him very eager in the pursuit, and careless of the
opportunities he had of seizing others in his way,
on his right hand, and on his left; his eye is on Ab-
ner only. The design was brave, had he been
fair negato—regarded to the accomplishment of it: but let
not the swift man glory in his swiftness, any more
than the strong man in his strength: meagrin excidit
ausi—he perish'd in an attempt too vast for him.

2. How fair Abner was, in giving him notice of
the danger he exposed himself to, and advising him
not to meddle to his own hurt, 2 Chron. 25. 19.
(1.) He hid him content himself with a lesser prey;
(v. 21.) Lay hold on one of the young men, plun-
der him, and make thy prisoner; meddle with
thy match, but pretend not to one who is so much
superior to thee." It is wisdom in all contests to
compare our own strength with that of our adver-
saries, and to take heed of being partial to our-
selves in making the comparison, lest we prove, in
the issue, enemies to ourselves, Luke 14. 31. (2.)
He begged of him not to put him upon the necessity
of slaying him in his own hand, as he was very loth to
do, but must do, rather than be slain by him,
v. 22. Abner, it seems, either loved Joab, or feared him,
for he was very loth to incur his displeasure, which
he would certainly do, if he slew Asahel. It is commendable for enemies to be thus
respectful one to another. Abner's care how he
should lift up his face to Joab, gives cause to sus-
pet that he really believed David would have the
kingdom at last, according to the divine designation,
and then, in opposing him, he acted against his conscience.

3. How fatal Asahel’s rashness was to him. He refused to turn aside, thinking that Abner spoke so kindly, because he feared him; but what came of it? Abner, as soon as he came up to him, gave him his death’s wound with a back stroke; (v. 23.) he smote him with the hinder end of his spear, from which he feared no danger. This was a pass which Asahel was not acquainted with, nor had learned to stand upon his guard against; but Abner, perhaps, had formerly used it, and done execution with it; and here it did effectual execution, Asahel died immediately of the wound. See here, (1.) How death often comes upon us by ways that we least suspect. Who would fear the hand of a flying enemy, or the butt-end of a spear? Yet from these Asahel receives his death’s wound. (2.) How we are often betrayed by the accomplishments we are proud of. Asahel’s swiftness, which he presumed so much upon, did him no kindness, but forwarded his fate, and with it he ran upon his death, instead of running from it. Asahel’s fall was not only Abner’s security from him, but put a full stop to the conqueror’s pursuit, and gave Abner time to rally again; for all that came to the place, stood still: only Abishai and Abishar, instead of being hurried, were exasperated by it, pursued Abner with so much the more fury, (v. 24.) and overtook him at last about sunset, when the approaching night would oblige them to retire.

25. And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of a hill. 26. Then Abner called to Joas, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren? 27. And Joab said, As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother. 28. So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more. 29. And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim. 30. And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David’s servants nineteen men and Asahel. 31. But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner’s men, so that three hundred and threescore men died. 32. And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which was in Beth-lehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

Here, 1. Abner being conqueror, meanly begs for a cessation of arms: he rallied the remains of his forces on the top of a hill, (v. 25.) as if he would have made head again, but becomes an humble supplicant to Joab for a little breathing-time, v. 26. He that was most forward to fight, was the first that had enough of it. He that made a jest of bloodshed, v. 14. Let the young men arise and play before us, is now shocked at it, when he finds himself on the losing side; and the sword he made so light of drawing, threatening to touch himself. Observe how his note is changed: then, it was but playing with the sword; now, Shall the sword devour for ever? It had devoured but one day, yet as to it, it went against him; and very willing he is now, that the sun should not go down upon his wrath. Now he can appeal to Joab himself concerning the miserable consequences of a civil war, Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? It will be reflected upon with regret, when the account comes to be made up; for whosoever gets in a civil war, the community is sure to lose. Perhaps it refers to the bitterness that was in the tribes of Israel at the end of their war with Benjamin, when they wept sore for the desolations which they themselves had made, Judg. 21. 2. Now he begs of Joab to sound a retreat, and pleads that they were brethren, who ought not thus to bite and devour one another: he that in the morning would have Joab bid the people fall upon their brethren, now would have bid them lay down their arms. See how he appeals to the people, as if it were a greater crime, to himself, (1.) How it is a sin to be a conqueror, and to rejoice upon his victory: (2.) How the issue of things alters men’s minds. The same thing which looked pleasant in the morning, at night looked dismal. These that are forward to enter into contention, will, perhaps, repent it before they have done with it, and therefore had better leave it off before it be meddling with, as Solomon advises. It is true of every sin, (O that men would consider it in time!) that it will be bitterness in the latter end. At the last, it bites, like a serpent, those on whom it fawned. 2. Joab, though a conqueror, generously grants it, and sounds a retreat, knowing very well his master’s mind, and how averse he was to the shedding of blood. He does indeed justly upbraid Abner with his forwardness to engage; he lays the blame upon him, that there had been so much blood shed as there was; (v. 27.) Unless thou hadst spoken, it is, "hadst given orders to fight, hast bid them the young men arise and play before us, none of us had struck a stroke, nor drawn a sword against our brethren. Thou complainest that the sword devours: but who first unsheathed it? Who began? Now thou wouldst have the people parted, but remember who set them on to fight. We had retired in the morning, if thou hadst not given the challenge." Those that are forward to make mischief, commonly the first to complain of it. Joab might have served to excuse Joab, if he had pushed on his victory, and made a full end of Abner’s forces; but, like one that pitied the mistake of his adversaries, and scorned to make an army of Israelites pay dear for the folly of their commander, he very humanely, by sound of trumpet, put a stop to the pursuit, (v. 28.) and suffered Abner to make an orderly retreat. It is good husbanding the blood of sparing blood. All the elders were here very obsequious to the general’s orders, so he, no doubt, observed the instructions of his prince, who sought the welfare of all Israel, and therefore not the hurt of any. 3. The armies being separated, both retired to the places whence they came, and both marched in the night; Abner to Mahanaim, on the other
side Jordan, (v. 29.) and Joab to Hebron, where David was, v. 32. The slain on both sides are computed. On David's side, only nineteen men were missing, and Asahel, (v. 30.) who was worth more than all; on Abner's side, three hundred and three score, v. 31. In civil wars formerly great slaughters had been made; (as Judg. 6.—20. 44.) in comparison with which, this was nothing. It is to be hoped that they were grown wiser and more moderate. Asahel's funeral is here mentioned; the rest they buried in the field of battle, but he was carried to Beth-lehem, and buried in the sepulchre of his father, v. 32. Thus are distinctions made between the dust of some and that of others; but in the resurrection no other difference will be made, but that between godly and ungodly, which will remain for ever.

CHAP. III.

The battle between Joab and Abner did not end the controversy between the two houses of Saul, and David, but it is in this chapter working towards a period. Here is, 1. The gradual advance of David's interest, v. 1. II. The building up of his family, v. 2—5. III. Abner's quarrel with Ish-bosheth, and his treaty with David, v. 6—12. IV. The preliminaries settled, v. 13—16. V. Abner's undertaking and attempt to bring over to David, v. 17—21. VI. The treacherous murder of Abner, by Joab, when he was carrying on this matter, 22. 27. VII. David's great concern and trouble for the death of Abner, v. 28. 29.

1. NOW there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker. 2. And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his first-born was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelite; 3. And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom, the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; 4. And the fourth, Adonijah, the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah, the son of Abital; 5. And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah, David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron. 6. And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul.

Here is,

1. The struggle that David had with the house of Saul, before his settlement in the throne was completed, v. 1. (1.) Both sides contested; Saul's house, though beheaded and diminished, would not fall tamely. It is not strange that there was war between them; but one would wonder it should be a long war, when David's house had right on its side, and therefore God on its side; but though truth and equity will triumph at last, God may, for wise and holy ends, prolong the conflict. The length of this war tried the faith and patience of David, and made his establishment at last the more welcome to him. (2.) David's side got ground. The house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker, lost places, lost men, sunk in its reputation, grew less considerable, was foiled in every engagement; but the house of David grew stronger and stronger; many deserted the declining cause of Saul's house, and prudently came into David's interest, being convinced that he would certainly win the day. The contest between grace and corruption in the hearts of believers, who are sanctified but in part, may fate be compared to this recorded here. There is a long war between them, the flesh lustful against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; but as the work of sanctification is carried on, corruption, like the house of Saul, grows weaker and weaker; while grace, like the house of David, grows stronger and stronger, and in the end it comes to a perfect man, and judgment be brought forth unto victory.

2. The increase of his own house. Here is an account of six several wives, in the seven years he reigned in Hebron. Perhaps this is mentioned here, as that which strengthened David's interest; every child, whose welfare was embarked in the common safety, was a fresh security given to the commonwealth for his care of it. He that has his quiver filled with arrows, shall speak with his enemy in the gate, Ps. 127. 5. As the death of Saul's sons weakened his interest, so the birth of David's strengthened his. (1.) It was David's fault thus to multiply wives, contrary to the law, (Deut. 17. 17.) and it was a bad example to his successors. (2.) It does not appear, that in these seven years he had above one son by each of these wives; some have had as numerous a progeny, and with much more disquietude of mind, care, and trouble, than David's. (3.) We read not that any of these sons came to be famous, three of them were infamous, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah; we have therefore reason to rejoice with trembling, in the building up of our families. (4.) His son by Abigail is called Chileab, v. 3. whereas, 1 Chron. 3. 1. he is called Daniel. Bishop Patrick tells the reason which the Hebrew doctors give for these names: that his first name was Daniel; God has judged me; namely, against Nabal; but David's enemies reproached him, and said, "It was Nabal's son, and not David's;" to confute which calumny, Providence so ordered it, that, as he grew up, he became, in his countenance and features, extremely like David, and resembled him more than any of his children, upon which he gave him the name of Chileab, which signifies, like his father; or, the father's picture. (5.) Absalom's mother is said to be the sister of Mechina and Bookiah, 2 Sam. 14. 27. perhaps David thereby hoped to strengthen his interest, but the issue of the marriage was one that proved his grief and shame. (6.) The last is called David's wife, which therefore, some think, was Michal, his first and most rightful wife, called here by another name; and though she had no child after she mocked David, she might have had before. Thus was David's house strengthened; but it was Abner that made himself strong for the house of Saul, which is mentioned, (v. 6.) to show that if he failed them, they would fall of course.

7. And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ish-bosheth said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine? 8. Then was Abner very wroth, for the words of Ish-bosheth, and said, Am I a dog's head, which against Judah do show kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me to-day with a fault concerning this woman! 9. So do God to Abner, and more also, except as the Lord hath sworn to David, even so do I do to him; 10. To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the
thron of David over Israel, and over Judea, from Dan even to Beer-sheba. 11. And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him. 12. And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee. 13. And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face. 14. And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son; saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines. 15. And Ish-bosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Phaltiel the son of Laish. 16. And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned. 17. And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you: 18. Now then do it: for the Lord hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies. 19. And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin. 20. So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him: and David made Abner, and the men that were with him, a feast. 21. And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

Here.

I. Abner breaks with Ish-bosheth, and deserts his interest, upon a little provocation which Ish-bosheth unwisely gave him. God can serve his own purposes by the sins and follies of men. 1. Ish-bosheth accused Abner of no less a crime than debauching one of his father's concubines, v. 7. Whether it was so or no, does not appear, nor what ground he had for the suspicion; but however it was, it had been Ish-bosheth's prudence to connive at it, considering how much it was his interest not to displease Abner. If the thing was false, and his jealousy groundless, it was very dishonourable and ungrateful to entertain unjust surmisest of one who had ventured his all for him, and was certainly the best friend he had in the world. 2. Abner resented the charge very deeply. Whether he was guilty of the fault concerning this woman, or no, he does not say, (v. 8.) but we suspect he was guilty, for he does not expressly deny it; and though he was, he lets Ish-bosheth know, (1.) that he scorned to be reproached with it by him, and would not take it at his hands. "What!" says Abner, "am I a dog's head, a vile and contemptible animal, that thou exposest me thus? v. 8. Is this my recompense for the kindness I have shown to thee and thy father's house, and for the service I have done you? He magnifies the service with this, That it was against Judah, the tribes on which the crown was settled, and which would certainly have it at last; so that, in supporting the house of Saul, he acted both against his conscience, and against his interest, for which he deserved a better requital than this: and yet, perhaps, he would not have been so zealous for the house of Saul, if he had not thereby gratified his own ambition, and hoped to find his own account in it. Note, Proud men will not bear to be reproved, especially by those whom they think they have obliged. (2.) That he would certainly be avenged on him, v. 9, 10. With the utmost degree of arrogance and insolence, he lets him know, that, as he had raised him up, so he could pull him down again, and would do it. He knew that God had sworn to David to give him the kingdom, and yet he presumed to make it as a thing of his own, and to set up his own ambition; but now he complies with it from a principle of revenge, under colour of some regard to the will of God, which was but a pretence. They that are slaves to their lusts, have many masters, which drive, some one way, and some another, and according as they make head, men are violently hurried into self-contradictions. Abner's ambition made him zealous for Ish-bosheth, and now his revenge made him zealous for David; if he had sincerely regarded God's promise to David, and acted with an eye to that, he had been steady and uniform in his counsels, and acted in consistence with himself. But while Abner serves his own lusts, God, by him, serves his own purposes, makes even his wrath and revenge to praise him, and ordinates strength to David by it. Lastly, See how Ish-bosheth was thunderstruck by Abner's insolence. He could not but own the falsehood of his charge, v. 11. I answer him according to his words; and if he had had the spirit of a man, especially of a great prince, he might have answered him, that his merits were the aggravation of his crimes: that he would not be served by so bold a man, and doubted not but to do well enough without him. But he was conscious to himself of his own weakness, and therefore said not a word, lest he should make bad worse. His heart failed him, and he now became, as David had foretold, concerning his enemies, like a bowing wall, and a tottering fence, Ps. 62. 3.

II. Abner treats with David. We must suppose that he began to grow weary of Ish-bosheth's cause, and sought an opportunity to desert it; or else, however he might threaten Ish-bosheth with it, for the quashing of the charge against himself, he would not have made good his angry words so soon as he did, v. 12. He sent, as a priest of David, to tell him that he was at his service. "Where is the land? Is it not thine? For thou hast the best title to the government, and the best interest in the people's affections." Note, God can find out ways to make those serviceable to the kingdom of Christ, who yet have no sincere affection for it, and who have vigorously set themselves against it. Enemies are sometimes made a footstool, not only to be trodden upon, but to ascend by. The earth helped the woman.

III. David enters into a treaty with Abner, but upon condition that he procure him the restitution of Michal his wife, v. 13. Hereby, 1. David showed the sincerity of his conjugal affection to his first and most rightful wife; neither her marrying an-
II. 

and her. He brought her in one hand, and a crown in the other. Latter husband was loath to part with her, and followed her weeping; (v. 16.) but there was no remedy, he must thank himself; for when he took her, he knew that another had a right to her. Usurpers must expect to resign. Let no man therefore set his heart on that which he is not entitled to. He that is not a husband and wife, as they expect the blessing of God, let them be reconciled, and come together again; let all former quarrels be forgotten, and let them live together in love, according to God's holy ordinance.

IV. Abner uses his interest with the elders of Israel, to bring them over to David; knowing, that which ever way they went, the common people would follow of course. Now that it serves its own turn, he can plead in David's behalf, that he was, 1. Israel's choice, (v. 17.) "Ye sought for him in times past to be king over you; when he had sanguized himself in so many engagements with the Philistines, and done you so much good service; no man can pretend to greater person. I merit than David, nor to less than Ish-bosheth: you have tried them both, Detur dignitum—Give the crown to him that best deserves it. Let David be your king." 2. God's choice; (v. 18.) The Lord hath spoken of David.

Compare v. 9. "When God appointed Samuel to anoint him, he did, in effect, promise, that by his hand he would save Israel; for, for that end he was made king. God having promised, by David's hand, to save Israel, it is both your duty, in compliance with God's will, and your interest, in order to your victories over your enemies, to submit to his highest will, and let the world see you oppose him." Who would have expected such reasonings as these out of Abner's mouth? But thus God will make the enemies of his people to know, and own, that he has loved them, Rev. 3. 9. He particularly applied himself to the men of Benjamin, those of his own tribe, on whom he had the greatest influence, and whom he had drawn in to appear for the house of Saul; he was the man that had drawn them, and therefore he was concerned to undeceive them. Thus the multitude are as they are managed.

V. David concludes the treaty with Abner; and he did wisely and well therein; for, whatever induced Abner to it, it was a good work to put an end to the war, and to settle the Lord's anointed on the throne; and it was as lawful for David to make use of his agency, as for a poor man to ask alms from a Pharisee, who gives it in pride and hypocrisy. Abner reported to David the sense of the people, and the success of his communications with them, v. 19. He came now, not, as at first, privately, but with a retinue of twenty men, and David entertained them with a feast, (v. 20.) in token of reconciliation and joy, and as a pledge of the agreement between them: it was a feast upon a covenant, like that, Gen. 26. 30, If Shem enemy hunger, feed him; but if he submit, feast him. Abner, pleased with his entertainment, the prevention of his fall with Saul's house, (which would have been inevitable, if he had not taken this course,) and much more with the prospect he had of preferment under David, undertakes, in a little time, to perfect the revolution, and to have all Israel into obedience to David, v. 21. He tells David he shall reign over all that heart desired. He knew David's elevation took rise from God's appointment, yet he insinuates that it sprang from his own ambition and desire of rule; thus (as bad men do) he measured that good man by himself. However, David and he parted very good friends, and the affair between them went on without a struggle. This it moves all, who fear God and keep his commandments, to avoid strife, even with the wicked; to live at peace with all men, and to show the world that they are children of the light.

22. And, behold, the servants of David and Joab came from pursuing a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: (but Abner was not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.) 23. When Joab and all the host that was with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace. 24. Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? And Abner came unto thee; why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone? 25. Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out, and thy coming in, and to know all that thou dost. 26. And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew it not. 27. And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother. 28. And afterward, when David heard it, he said, I and my kingdom are guiltless before the Lord for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner. 29. Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not fall from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread. 30. So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle. 31. And David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, Render your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David himself followed the bier. 32. And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and
all the people wept. 33. And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abneras a fool dieth? 34. Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fallest thou. And all the people wept again over him. 35. And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or aught else, till the sun be down. 36. And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people. 37. For all the people, and all Israel understood that day, that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner. 38. And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel? 39. And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me: the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

We have here an account of the murder of Abner by Joab, and David's deep resentment of it.

I. Joab very insolently fell foul upon David for treating with Abner. He happened to be abroad upon service, when Abner was with David, pursuing a troop, either of Philistines, or of Saul's party; but, upon his return, was informed that Abner was just gone, (v. 32, 33,) and that at great many kindnesses past between David and him. He had all the reason in the world to be satisfied of David's prudence, and to acquiesce in the measures he took, knowing him to be a wise and good man himself, and under a divine conduct in all his affairs; and yet, as if he had the same sway in David's cause that Abner had in Ish-bosheth's, he chides David, and reproaches him to his face, as impolitic; (v. 24, 25,) What hast thou done? As David was accountable to him for what he did: " Whv hast thou sent him away, when thou mightest have made him a prisoner? He came as a spy, and will certainly betray thee." I know not whether to wonder more, that Joab had impudence enough to give such an affront to his prince, or that David had patience enough to take it. He does, in effect, call David a fool, when he tells him he knew Abner came to deceive him, and yet he trusted him. We find no answer that David gave him, but because he feared him, as Ish-bosheth did Abner, (v. 11,) but because he despised him, or because Joab had not so much good manners as to stay for an answer.

II. He very treacherously sent for Abner back, and, under colour of a private conference with him, barbarously killed him with his own hand. That he would fail of David's name, under pretence of giving him some further instructions, is intimated in that, but David knew it not, v. 26. Abner, designing no harm, feared none, but very innocently returned to Hebron, and when he found Joab waiting for him at the gate, turned aside with him to speak with him privately, forgetting what he himself had said, when he slew AsaHEL, How shall I hold off my face to Joab thy brother? (ch. 2. 22,) and there Joab murdered him; (v. 27.) and it is intimated, (v. 30,) that Abishai was privy to the design, and was aiding and abetting, and would have come in to his brother's assistance, if there had been occasion: he is therefore charged as an accessory; Joab and Abishai sware Abner; though perhaps he only knew it, who is privy to the thoughts and intents of men's hearts.

Now in this, 1. It is certain that the Lord was righteous. Abner had maliciously, and against the convictions of his conscience, opposed David; he had now basely deserted Ish-bosheth, and betrayed him, under pretence of regard to God and Israel, but really from a principle of pride and revenge, and impatience of control; God will not therefore use so bad a man, though David might well so good a work, as the uniting of Israel. Judgments are prepared for such scorriers as Abner was. But, 2. It is as certain that Joab was unrighteous, and, in what he did, did wickedly. David was a man after God's heart, but could not have those about him, no not in places of the greatest trust, after his own heart. Many a good prince, and a good master, has been forced to employ bad men. (1.) Even the pretence for doing this was very unjust. Abner had indeed slain his brother Asahel, and Joab and Abishai pretended herein to be the avengers of his blood; (v. 27, 30,) but Abner slew Asahel in an open war, wherein Abner indeed had given the challenge, but Joab himself had accepted it, and had slain many of Abner's friends; he did it likewise in his own defence, and not till he had given him fair warning, (for which he was to have a trial,) without vacillation; but Joab here shed the blood of war in piece, 1 Kings 2. 5. (2.) That which we have reason to think was at the bottom of Joab's enmity to Abner, made it much worse. Joab was now general of David's forces; but if Abner should come into his interest, he would possibly be preferred before him, being a senior officer, and more experienced in the art of war. This Joab was jealous of, and could not but bear the guilt of blood, than the thoughts of a rival. (3.) He did it treacherously, and under pretence of speaking peaceably to him, Deut. 27. 24. Had he challenged him, he had done like a soldier; but to assassinate him was done villanously, and like a coward. His words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords, Ps. 53. 21. Thus he basely slew AsaHEL, ch. 20. 9, 10. (4.) The doing of it was a great affront and injury to David, who was now in treaty with Abner, and Joab was now actually in his master's service, so that, through his side he struck at David himself. (5.) It was a great aggravation of the murder, that he did it in the gate, openly and avow'dly, as one that was not ashamed, nor could blush. The gate was the place of judgment and the place of concourse; so that he did it in defiance of justice, both the just sentence of the magistrates, and the just sentiments of the crowd; as one that neither feared God, nor regarded man, but thought himself above all control; and Hebron was a Levites' city, and a city of refuge.

III. David laid it deeply to the heart, and many ways expressed his detestation of this execrable villany.

1. He washed his hands from the guilt of Abner's blood. Let any should suspect that Joab had the secret intimation from David to do as he did, (and the rather, because he went so long unpunished,) he here solemnly appeals to God concerning his innocency; I and my kingdom are guiltless (and my kingdom is so, because I am so) before the Lord for ever, v. 28. It is a comfort to be able to say, when any bad thing is done, that we had no hand in it; We have not shed this blood, Deut. 21. 7. However we may be suspected or suspected, our hearts shall not reproach us.

2. He entailed the curse for it upon Joab and his family; (v. 29,) "Let it rest on the head of Joab; let the blood cry against him, and let divine ven-
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gence follow him. Let the iniquity be visited upon his children, and children's children, in some hereditary disease or calamity. This is the longer let it last when it does come. Let his posterity be stigmatized, blemished with an issue, or a leprosy, which will shut them out from society; let them be beggars, or cripples, or come to some untimely end, that it may be said, "Here is one of the race." This intimates that the guilt of blood brings a curse upon families; if men do not avenge it, God will, and will lay up the iniquity for the children. But, even taking a resolving punishment of the murderer himself would better have become David, than this passionate imprecation of God's judgments upon his posterity.

3. He called upon all about him, even Joab himself, to lament the death of Abner; (v. 31.) *Render your clothes and mourn before Abner;* that is, before the hearers of Abner, as Abraham is said to mourn before his dead; (Gen. 23. 2, 3.) and he gives a reason why they should attend his funeral with sincere and solemn mourning, (v. 38.) because there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel. His alliance to Saul, his place as general, his interest, and the great services he had formerly done, were enough to denominate him a prince and a great man. When he could not call him a saint and a good man, he said nothing of that, but what was true he gave him the praise of, though he had been his enemy, that he was a great man, a man in men, in Israel, and fallen this day, just when he was doing the best deed he ever did in his life; this day, when he was likely to be so serviceable to the public peace and welfare, and could so ill be spared.

(1.) Let them all lament it. The humbling change death puts all men under, is to be lamented, especially as affecting princes and great men. Alas, alas! (a dying Gro. 18. 10.) how man, how little, are they made by death, who made themselves the terror of the mighty in the land of the living! But we are especially obliged to lament the fall of useful men in the midst of their usefulness, and when there is most need of them. A public loss must be every man's grief, for every man shares in it. Thus David took care that honour should be done to the memory of a man of merit, to animate others.

(2.) Let Joab, in a particular manner, lament it, which he has less at heart, but more reason to do, than any of them. If he could be brought to do it sincerely, it would be an expression of repentance for his sin in slaying him. If he did it in show only, as it is likely he did, yet it was a sort of penance imposed upon him, and a present commutation of the punishment. If he do not as yet expiate the murder with his blood, he doth it towards it, with tears. This, perhaps, Joab submitted to with no great reluctance, now he had gained his point. Now that he is on the bier, no matter in what pomp as lies. *Sed duvis modo non sit vivus—Let him be cano- nized, so that he be but killed.*

4. David himself followed the corpse as chief mourner, and made a funeral oration at the grave. He uttered the words; (v. 31.) *Do something for the grave;* (v. 33.) Though Abner had been his enemy, and might possibly have proved no fast friend, yet, because he had been a man of bravery in the field, and might have done service in the public counsels at this critical juncture, all former quarrels are forgotten, and David is the true mourner for his fall. What he said over the grave, fetched fresh floods of tears from the eyes of all that were present, who thought they had already paid the debt in full, v. 33, 34. *Died Abner as a fool died?* (1.) He speaks as one vexed that Abner was fool, out of his life; that so great a man as he, so famed for con- nuct and courage, should be imposed upon by a co- loour of friendship, slain by surprise, and so, die as a fool do. The wisest and strongest of men must, in fence against treachery. To see Abner, who thought himself the main hinge on which the great affairs of Israel turned, so considerable as, himself, to be able to turn the scale of a trembling government, his head full of great projects, and great prospects, to see him made a fool of by a base rivial, and falling, on a sudden, a sacrifice to his ambition and jealousy, robs the pride of all glory, and would put one out of conceit with projects, as such; *Put not your trust in princes, Ps. 146. 3, 4.* And let us therefore make that sure, which we cannot be fooled of. A man may have his life, and all that is dear to him, taken from him, and not be able to prevent it with all his wits, m, care, and integrity; but there is that which no thief can break through to steal. See here how much more we are beholden to God's providence, than to our own devices, for the continuance of our lives and comforts. Were it not for the hold God has of the consciences of bad men, how soon would the weak and innocent be come an easy prey to the strong and merciless, and the wisest die as fools! Or, (2.) He speaks as one maintaining that Abner did not fool himself out of his life. *Died Abner as a fool died?* No; he did not, not as a criminal, a traitor or felon, that forfeits his life into the hands of his enemies; but were not Abner old, or his feet fettered, as those of a malefactor's are. Abner falls not before just men, by a judicial sentence, but as a man, an innocent man, fellath before wicked men, thieves and robers, so fellest thou.* Died Abner as Nabal died? So the Seventy read it. Nabal died as he lived, like himself, like a sot; but Abner's fate was such as might have been the fate of the wisest and best man in the world; (v. 3. 6.) *David brought a bier, and put Abner in it, as Asahel did, who willfully ran upon the spear, after fair warning, but he was struck by surprise. Note, It is a sad thing to die like a fool, as they do, that any way shorten their own days, and much more they that make no provision for another world. 5. He fasted all that day, and would by no means be persuaded to eat any thing till night, v. 35. It was then the custom of great mourners to refrain from all food and drink on the day of a bodily mortuary service; 1 Sam. 31. 13. How incongruous is it then to turn the house of mourning into a house of feasting! The respect which David paid to Abner, was very pleasing to the people, and satisfied them that he was not, in the least, accessory to the murder; (v. 36, 37.) he was solicitous to avoid the suspicion, lest Joab's villainy should have made him odious, as that of Simeon and Levi did Jacob, Gen. 34. 20, for on this occasion it is said, *Whatever the king did pleased all the people.* Which bespeaks, (1.) His good af- fection to them; he studied to please them in every thing, and carefully avoided what might be dis obliing. (2.) Their good opinion of him; they thought every thing he did, well done; such a mutu- tal willingness to please, and easiness to be pleased, will make every relation comfortable.

6. He bewailed it that he could not, with safety, do justice on the murderers, v. 39. He was weak, his kingdom newly planted, and a little shake would overthrow it; Joab's family had a great interest, were bold and daring, and to make them his ene- mies now might be of bad consequence. These sons of Zeruiah were too hard for him, too big for the law to lay hold of; and therefore, though by man, by the magistrate, the stedfast of a murderer in his hands, go to the bier, and this death Abner bears; the old capital in vain, and contents himself, as a private person, to leave them to the judgment of God. *The Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.* Now this is a diminution, (1.) To David's
greatness; he is anointed king, and yet is kept in awe by his own subjects, and some of them are too hard for him. Who would be fond of power, when a man may have the name of it, and must be accountable for it, and yet be hampered in the use of it? (2.) To David's goodness; he ought to have done his duty, and trusted God with the issue. Flat just us, naut calam—Let justice be done, though the heavens should fall aumder. If the law had laid its course against Joab, perhaps the murder of Ish-bosheth, Amnon, and others, had been prevented. It was carnal policy and cruel pity that spared Joab. Righteousness supports the throne, and will never shake it. Yet it was only a reprieve that David gave to Joab; on his death-bed, he left it to Solomon (who could the better wield the sword of justice, because he had no occasion to draw the sword of war) to avenge the blood of Abner. Evil pursues sinners, and will overtake them at last. David preferred Abner's son Jaasiel, 1 Chron. 27. 21.

CHAP. IV.

When Abner was slain, David was at a loss for a friend to procure the safety of his own tribes the murder of Ish-bosheth's interest; which way to adopt for the accomplishment of it, he could not tell: but here Providence brings it about by the removal of Ish-bosheth. 1. Two of his own servants slew him, and brought his head to David, v. 1-8. 2. David, instead of rewarding them, put them to death for what they had done, v. 9.-12.

1. And when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feebie, and all the Israelites were troubled. 2. And Saul's son had two men that were captains of bands; the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin: (for Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin. 3. And the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day.) 4. And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet, and was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

5. And the sons of Rimmon, the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth, who lay on a bed at noon: 6. And they came thither into the midst of the house, as though they would have fetched wheat; and they smote him under the fifth rib: and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped.

7. For when they came into the house, he lay on his bed in his bed-chamber; and they smote him, and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night. 8. And they brought the head of Ish-bosheth unto David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold the head of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the Lord hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.

Here is,

1. The weakness of Saul's house; still it grew weaker and weaker. 1. As for Ish-bosheth, who was in possession of the throne, his hands were feeble; (v. 1) all the strength they ever had, was from Abner's support, and now that he was dead, he had no spirit left in him. Though Abner had, in his passion, deserted his interest, yet he hoped, in his means, to have made good terms with David; but now even that hope fails him, and he sees himself forsaken by his friends, and at the mercy of his enemies. All the Israelites that adhered to him, were troubled, and at a loss what to do, whether to proceed in their treaty with David or no. 2. As for Mephibosheth, who, in the right of his father Jonathan, had a prior title, his feet were lame, and he was unfit for any warlike employment. He had never heard old when his father and grandfather were killed; his nurse, hearing of the Philistines' victory, was apprehensive that, in pursuit of it, they would immediately send a party to Saul's house, to cut off all that pertained to it, and would especially aim at her young master, who was now next heir to the crown. Under the apprehension of this, she fled with the child in her arms, to secure it either in some secret place where he could not be found, or in some strange place where he could not be come at; and, making more haste than good speed, she fell with the child, and by the fall some bone was broken or put out, and not well set, so that he was lame of it as long as he lived, and unfit either for court or camp. See what sad accidents children are liable to in their infancy, the effect of which may be felt by them, to their great uneasiness, all the days; even the children of princes and great men, the children of good men, for such a one Jonathan was, children that are well tended, and have nurses of their own to take care of them, yet are not always safe. What reason have we to be thankful to God for the preservation of our limits and senses to us, through the many perils of the weak and helpless state of infancy, and to own his goodness in giving his angels a charge concerning us, to be over us in all our ways, of which there is no danger of failing. Ps. 91. 12.

II. The murder of Saul's son: we are here told,

1. Who were the murderers, Baanah and Rechab, v 2, 3. They were own brothers, as Simeon and Levi, and partners in iniquity. They were, or had been, Ish-bosheth's own servants employed under him; so much the more base and treacherous was it in them to do him mischief. They were Benjamites, of his own tribe. They were of the city of Beeroth; for some reason which we cannot now account for, care is here taken to let us know (in a parenthesis) that the city belonged to the lot of Benjamin; (so we find Josh. 18. 25.) but that the inhabitants, upon some occasion or other, perhaps upon the death of Saul, retired to Gittaim, another city which lay not far off in the same tribe, but was better fortified by nature, being situate (if we may depend upon Mr. Fuller's map) between the two rocks Boez and Senec; there the Beerothites were when this was written, and, probably, took root there, and never returned to Beeroth again, which made Beeroth, that had been one of the cities of the Gibeonites, (Josh. 9. 17.) to be forgotten, and Gittaim to be famous long after, as we find, Neh. 13. 5.

2. How the murder was committed, v. 5-7. See here (1.) The slothfulness of Ish-bosheth. He lay upon his bed at noon; it does not appear that the country was at any time of the year so hot, as to oblige the inhabitants to retire at noon, as we are
told they do in Spain in the heat of summer; but Ish-bosheth was a sluggish man, loved his ease, and hated business; and when he should have been, at this critical juncture, at the head of his forces in the field, or at the head of his counsels in a treaty with David, he was lying upon his bed, and sleeping, for his hands were feeble, (v. 1.) and so were his head and heart. When those difficulties dispirit us, which should rather invigorate us, and sharpen our endeavours, we betray both our crowns and lives. Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty and ruin. The idle soul is an easy prey to the destroyer. (2.) The treachery of Baanah and Rechab. They came into the house, under pretence of fetching wheat for the victualling of their regiments; and such was the plainness of these times, that the king's corn-chamber, and his bed-chamber, lay near together, which gave them an opportunity, when they were fetching wheat, to murder him as he lay on the bed. We know not when and where death will meet us: when we lie down to sleep, we are not sure but that we may sleep the sleep of death before we awake; nor do we know from what unsuspected hand a fatal stroke may come. Ish-bosheth's own men, who should have protected his life, took it away.

3. The murderers triumphed in what they had done. As if they had performed some very glorious action, and the doing of it for David's advantage was enough not only to justify it, but to sanctify it, they make a present of Ish-bosheth's head to David; (v. 8.) Behold the head of thine enemy, etc.; which they thought nothing could be more acceptable to him: yea, and they make themselves instruments of God's justice, ministers to bear his sword, though they had no commission. The Lord hath avenged thee this day of Saul, and of his seed, etc.; but that they had any regard either to God, or David's honour, they aimed at nothing but to make their own fonumes, (as we say,) and to get preferment in David's court; but, to ingratiate themselves with him, they pretend a concern for his life, a conviction of his title, and a zealous desire to see him in full possession of the throne. Jehu pretended zeal for the Lord of hosts, when an ambition to set up himself and his own family was the spring of his actions.

9. And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, As the Lord liveth, who hath recompensed my soul out of all adversity, 10. When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, (thinking to have brought good tidings,) I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings: 11. How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth? 12. And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the ploe in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth, and buried it in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

We have here justice done upon the murderers of Ish-bosheth:
1. Sentence past upon them. There needed no evidence, their own tongues witnessed against them, and we are so far from denying the fact, that they gloried in it; David therefore shows there was the baseness of the crime, and that blood called for blood from his hand, who was now the chief magis trate, and was, by office, the avenger of blood. And, perhaps, he was the more vigorous in the prosecution, because, for reasons of state, he had spared Joab. "Shall I not require the blood of the slain at the hand of the slayers, and since they cannot make restitution, take their's instead of the crime? Observe, 1. How he aggravates the crime, v. 11. Ish-bosheth was a righteous person: he had done them no wrong, nor designed them any. As to himself, David was satisfied that what opposition he gave him, was not from malice, but mistake, from an idea he had of his own title to the crown, and the influence of others upon him, who urged him to put in for it. Note, Charity teaches us to bear with the worst, not only of our friends, but of our enemies, and to think those may be righteous persons, who yet, in some instances, do us wrong. I must not presently judge a man a bad man, because I think him so to me. David owns Ish-bosheth an honest man, though he had created him a deal of trouble unjustly. The manner of it much aggravated the crime. To slay him in his own house, which should have been his castle, and upon his bed, when he was expected,) was treachery and treachery; this is treacherous and barbarous, and all that is base, and that which every man's heart will rise with indignation at the thought of, that is not perfectly lost to all honour and humanity. Assassinating is centesimally the most odious and villainous way of murdering. Curse is he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. 2. He quotes a precedent; (v. 10.) he had put him to death, who had brought the head of his opposite son of the house of Saul, to David; he had thought it would be good tidings to David. Nothing is here said of that Amalekite's helping Saul to kill himself, only of his bringing the tidings of it: by which it should seem that the story he told, was, upon inquiry, found to be false, and that he lied against his own head. "Now," (says David,) "did I treat him as a criminal, and not a favourite, (as he expected,)" "who brought me Saul's crown, and slew his heart in Hat外表, betraying my friend's head?" 3. He ratifies the sentence with an oath; (v. 9.) As the Lord liveth, who hath recompensed my soul out of all adversity. He expresses himself thus resolutely, to prevent the making of any intercession for the criminals by those about him: and thus piously, to intimate that his dependance was upon God for the putting of him in possession of the promised throne; and that he would bring any man to help him to it, by any indirect or unlawful practices. God had redeemed him from all adversity hitherto, helped him over many a difficulty, and through many a danger, and therefore he would depend upon him to crown and complete his own work. He speaks of his redemption from all adversity, as a thing done, though he had many a storm yet before him, because he knew that he had many a deliverance to meet him, upon his signs a warrant for the execution of these men, v. 12. This may seem severe, when they intended him a kindness in what they did; but, (1.) He would thus show his detestation of the villany. When he heard that the Lord smote Nabal, he gave thanks, 1 Sam. 25. 38, 39. for he is the God to whom vengeance belongeth; but if wicked men only should reverse it, the dread is greater, for taking God's work out of his hands. 2. He would thus show his resentment of the great affront they put upon him, in expecting that he should patronise and reward it; they could scarcely have done him a greater injury, than thus to think him altogether
such a one as themselves; one that cared not what blood he waded through to the crown.

II. The coronation done. The murderers were put to death according to law, and their hands and feet were hung up; not their whole bodies, the law forbade that, but only their hands and feet, in terrorem—to frighten others, and to be monuments of Da-vid’s justice, to make that to be taken notice of, which would recommend him to the esteem of the people, as a man fit to rule, and that aimed not at his own preferment, nor had any enmity to the house of Saul, but did all for the public welfare. But what a confusion was this to the two murderers! What a horrid disappoint-ment! And such they will meet with, who think to serve the interests of the Son of David, by any im-moral practices, by war and persecution, fraud and rapine; who, under colour of religion, murder princes, break solemn contracts, lay countries waste, hate their brethren, and cast them out, and say, Let the Lord be glorified; kill them, and think they do God good service. However men may canonize such methods of serving the church and the catholic cause, Christ will let them know, an-other day, that Christianity was not intended to de-stroy humanity; and they, who thus think to merit heaven, shall not escape the damnation of hell.

CHAP. V.

How far Abner’s deserting the house of Saul, his murder, and the murder of Ish-bosheeth, might contribute to the perfecting of the revolution, and the establishing of Da-vid king over all Israel, does not appear; but, it should seem, that happy change followed presently thereupon, which in this chapter we have an account of. Here is, I. David anointed king by all the tribe, v. 1. 2. II. Making himself master of the strong hold of Zion, v. 6. 10. III. Building himself a house, and strengthen-ing himself in his kingdom, v. 11. 12. IV. His children that were born after this, v. 13. 16. His victories over the Philistines, v. 17. 25.

THEN came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. 2. Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest into Israel; and the Lord said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel. 3. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord: and they anointed David king over Israel. 4. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. 5. In Hebron he reigned seven years and six months; and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.

Here is,

1. The insensible address of all the tribes of Israel to David, beseeching him to take upon him the government, (for they were now as sheep having no shepherd,) and owning him for their king. Though David might by no means approve the murder of Ish-bosheeth, yet he might imagine the advantages he gained thereby, and accept the applications made to him thereupon. Judah had submitted to David as their king, above seven years ago, and their ease and happiness, under his administration, encouraged the rest of the tribes to make their court to him. 

What number came from each tribe, with what zeal and sincerity they came, and how they were entertained three days at Hebron, when they were all of one heart to make David king, we have a full account, 1 Chron. 12. 23. 40. Here we have only the heads of their address, containing the grounds they went upon in making David king. 1. Their relation to him was some inducement. We are thy bone, and thy flesh, v. 1. Not only thou art our bone, and our flesh, not a stranger, unquali-fied by the law to be king, (Deut. 17. 15.) but we are thy people, thy brethren, and that we are of old en-mist us as thy bone and thy flesh, and hast a tender concern for us, as a man has for his own body, which Saul and his house had not. We are thy bone and thy flesh, and therefore wilt be as glad as we shall be, to put an end to this long civil war; and thou wilt take pity on us, protect us, and do thine utmost for our welfare. Those who take the character for that, might as justly be called enemies. 2. "We are thy bone and thy flesh; thou hast made thyself in all things like unto thy brethren, (Heb. 2. 17.) therefore be thou our Ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand," Isa. 3. 6. 2. His former good services to the public were a further inducement; (v. 2.) "When Saul was king, he was but the cipher, thou wast the figure, thou wast he that leddest out Israel to battle, and broughtest them triumph; and therefore who should sit on the vacant throne?" He that is faithful in a little deserves to be intrusted with more. Former good offices done for us should be gratefully remembered by us, when there is occasion. 3. The divine appointment was the greatest inducement of all. The Lord said, Thou shalt feed my people Israel; that is, thou shalt rule them; for princes are to feed their people as shepherds, in every thing consult ng the subject for their feeding them, and being ready at all times to do them good. And thou shalt be not only a king to govern in peace, but a captain to preside in war, and be exposed to all the toils and perils of the camp." Since God has said so, now at length, when need drives them to it, they are persuaded to say so too.

II. The public and solemn inauguration of Da-vid, v. 3. The convention of the Levites was called, all the elders of Israel came to him; the contract was settled, the pacta conventa—covenants sworn to, and subscribed on both sides; he obliged himself to protect them as their judge in peace, and captain in war; and they obliged themselves to obey him; he made a league with them, to which God was a Witness; it was before the Lord. Hereupon he was, the third time, anointed king. His advances were gradual, that his faith might be tried, and that he might gain experience. And thus his king-dom typified that of the Messiah, which was to come to his height by degrees; for we see not yet all things put under him, (Heb. 2. 8.) but we shall see it, 1 Cor. 15. 25.

III. A general account of his reign and age. He was thirty years old when he began to reign, upon the death of Saul, v. 4. At that age, the Levites were at first appointed to begin their ministration. Numb. 4. 3. About that age, the Son of David entered upon his public ministry, Luke 3. 23. Then men come to their full maturity of strength and judgment. He reigned, in all, forty years and six months; of which, seven years and a half in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem, v. 5. Hebron had been famous; (Josh. 14. 13.) it was a kirieth’s city, but Jerusalem was to be more so, and to be the holy city. Great kings affected to raise cities of their own; (Gen. 10. 11—36. 32.—33.) David did so, and Jerusalem was it; the city of Da-vid. It is a name famous to the end of the Bible, (Rev. 21.) where we read of a new Jerusalem.
6. And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land; which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither.  

7. Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David.  

8. And David said on that day, Whosoevergeth up to the garter, and smite the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain: wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.  

9. So David dwelt in the fort, and called it The city of David: and David built round about, from Millo and inward.  

10. And David went on, and grew great; and the Lord God of hosts was with him.  

If Salem, the place which Melchizedek was king of, was Jerusalem, (as seems probable from Ps. 76. 2.) it was famous in Abraham's time; Joshua, in his time, found it the chief city of the south part of Canaan, Josh. 10. 1-3. It fell to Benjamin's lot, (Josh. 18. 28.) but joined close to Judah's, Josh. 13. 8. The children of Judah had taken it, (Judg. 1. 28.) but the children of Benjamin suffered the Jebusites to dwell among them, (Judg. 1. 21.) and they grew so upon them, that it became a city of Jebusites, Judg. 19. 11. Now the very first exploit David did, after he was anointed king over all Israel, was, to gain Jerusalem out of the hand of the Jebusites, which, because it belonged to Benjamin, he could not well attempt, till that tribe, which long adhered to Saul's house, (1 Chron. 12. 29.) was admitted to him. Here we have,  

1. The Jebusites' defiance of David, and his forces. They said, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither, v. 6. They sent David this provoking message, because, as it is said afterward, on another occasion, they could not believe that ever an enemy should enter into the gates of Jerusalem, Lam. 4. 12. They confided, either, 1. In the protection of their gods, which David, in contempt, had called the blind and the lame, for they have eyes and see not, and walk not: "But," say they, "these are the guardians of our city, and except thou take those away, (which thou canst never do,) thou wilt not come in thither." Some think they were constellation images of brass, set up in the recess of the fort, and intrusted with the custody of the place. They called their idols their Muzzim, or strongholds, (Deut. 26. 15.) as such relied on them; the name of the Lord is our strong tower, and our arm is strong, his eyes piercing, Or, 2. In the strength of their fortifications, which they thought were made so impregnable by nature or art, or both, that the blind and the lame were sufficient to defend them against the most powerful assailant. The strong hold of Zion they especially depended on, as the which could not be forced. Probably, they could not believe the people would have priz'd soldiers, to make their appearance upon the wall, in scorn of David and his men, judging them an equal match for them. Though there remain but wounded men among them, yet they should serve to beat back the besiegers. Compare Jer. 57. 10. 

Note, The enemies of God's people are often very confident of their own strength, and most secure when their day to fall draws nigh. 

II. David's success against the Jebusites. Their pride and insolence, instead of daunting him, animating him, and when he made a general assault, he gave this order to his men; "He that smiteth the Jebusites, let him also throw down in the ditch, or gutter, the lame and the blind, which are set upon the wall to affront us and our God. It is probable they had spoken blasphemous things, and were therefore hated of David's soul. Thus v. 6. may be read; we fetch our reading of it from 1 Chron. 11. 6. which speaks only of smiting the Jebusites, but nothing of the blind and the lame. The Jebusites had said, that if these images of their's did not protect them, the blind and the lame should not come into the house, that is, they would never again trust their palladium, (so Mr. Gregory understands it,) nor pay the respect they had paid to their images; and David, having gained the fort, saith so, that these images, which could not protect their worshippers, should never have any place there more. 

III. His fixing his royal seat in Zion; he himself dwelt in the fort, (the strength whereof, which had given him opposition, and was a terror to him, now contributed to his safety,) and he built houses round about for his attendants and guards, (v. 9.) from Millo (the town-hall, or state-house) and inward. He proceeded and prospered in all he set his hand to; grew great in honour, strength, and wealth; more and more honourable in the eyes of his subjects, and formidable in the eyes of his enemies; for the Lord God of hosts was with him. God has all creatures at his command, makes what use he pleases of them, and serves his own purposes by them; and he was with him, to direct, preserve, and prosper him; those that have the Lord of hosts for them, need not fear what hosts of men or devils can do against them. Those who grow great, must ascribe it to the presence of God with them, and give him the glory of it. The church is called Zion, and the city of the living God; the Jebusites, Christ's enemies, must first be conquered and dispossessed, the blind and the lame taken away, and then Christ divides the spoil, sets up his throne there, and makes it his residence by the Spirit. 

11. And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar-trees, and carpenters, and masons; and they built David a house. 12. And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake. 13. And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David. 14. And these be the names of those that were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shammua, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon. 15. Ithar also, and Elishua, and Nepheg, and Japhia, 16. And Elishama, and Eliazo, and Eliphalet. 

Here is, 1. David's house built, a royal palace, fit for the reception of the court he kept, and the homage that was made to him, v. 11. The Jews were husbandmen and shepherds, and did not much addict themselves either to merchandise or manufactures; and therefore Hiram, King of Tyre, a wealthy prince, when he sent to congratulate David on his accession to the throne, offered him workmen to build him a house: David thankfully accepted the
II. SAMUEL, V.

offer, and Hiram's workmen built David a house to his mind. Many have excelled in arts and sciences, who were strangers to the covenants of promise; yet David's house was never the worse, nor the less fit to be dedicated to God, for its being built by the sons of the strangers: it is prophesied of the gospel-church, 'The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee,' Isa. 60. 10.

II. David's government rooted and built up, v. 12. 1. His kingdom was established; there was nothing to shake it, none to disturb his possession, or question his title. He that made him king, established him, because he was to be a type of Christ, with whom God's hand should be established, and his covenant stand fast, Ps. 89. 21–26. Saul was made king, but not established; so David, in all his office. David was established king, so is the Son of David, and all who, through him, are made to our God kings and priests. 2. It was exalted in the eyes both of its friends and enemies: never had the nation of Israel looked so great or made such a figure, as it began now to do. Thus it is promised of Christ, that he shall be higher than the kings of the earth, Ps. 89. 27. God has highly exalted him, and his name. 3. David was exalted by the wonderful concurrence of providences to his establishment and advancement; By this I know that thou favourest me, Ps. 41. 11. Many have the favour and love of God, and do not perceive it, and so want the comfort of it: but to be exalted to that, and established in it, and to perceive it, is happiness enough. 4. He owned that it was for his people Israel's sake, that God had done such great things for him; that he might be a blessing to them, and they might be happy under his administration. God had not made Israel his subjects for his sake, that he might be great, and rich, and absolute; but he made him their king for their sake, that he might lead, and guide, and protect them. Kings are ministers of God to their people for good, Rom. 13. 4.

III. David's family multiplied and increased. All the sons that were born to him after he came to Jerusalem, are here mentioned together; eleven in all; beside the six that were born to him before in Hebron, ch. 3. 2–5. There the mothers are mentioned, not here; only, in general, that he took him more concubines and wives, v. 13. Shall we praise him for this? We praise him not; we justify him not; nor can scarce excuse him. The bad example of the patriarchs might make him think there was no harm in it, and he might hope it would strengthen his interest, by multiplying his alliances, and increasing the royal family. Happy is the man that has his quiver full of these arrows. But one vine by the side of the house, with the blessing of God, may send boughs to the sea, branches to the rivers. Adam, by one wife, peopled the world, and Noah repeated it. David had many wives, and yet that did not keep him from coveting his neighbour's wife, and diverting her; and he that have once broken the fence, will wander endlessly. Of David's concubines, see ch. 15. 16.–16. 22. — 19. 3. Of his sons, see 1 Chron. 3. 5.

17. But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold. 18. The Philistines also came, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. 19. And David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to the Philis-
III. In the former of these engagements, David routed the army of the Philistines by dint of sword, (v. 20.) and had kept them on the run, and not even the idols of silver and gold to the moles and the bats, Isa. 2: 20, 21. David and his men continued in the plain of the Brood of Asher, and further they spread themselves, the fairer mark they are to God's arrows.

II. In both, David, though forward enough to go forth against them, (for, as soon as he heard it, he went down to the hold, to secure some important advantage, vs. 17.) yet he entered not upon action, till he had inguared of the Lord by the breast-plate of judgment, v. 19. and again, when he remembered his duty: "Shall I go up? Shall I have a commission from heaven to engage them?" One would think he needed not doubt this; what was he made king for, but to fight the battles of the Lord, and Israel? But a good man loves to see God going before him in every step he takes. "Shall I go up now?" It is to be done, but is it to be done at this time? In all thy ways acknowledge him. And besides, though the Philistines were public enemies, yet some of them had been his particular friends; Achish had been kind to him in his distress, and had protected him: "Now," says David, "ought not I, in remembrance of that, rather to make peace with them, than to make war with them?" "No," says God, "they are Israel's enemies, and are doomed to destruction, and therefore never scruple it, but go up." Concerning his suit to God He had been asked the former question, "Shall I go up?" his prudence asked this, "Wilt thou deliver them into my hand?" Hereby he owns his dependence on God for victory, that he could not conquer them unless God delivered them into his hand; and refers himself to the good pleasure of God, Wilt thou do it? Yea, says God, I will doubtless do it. If God sends us, he will bear us out, and stand by us: They know that once God has given us victory, we need not be afraid of our spiritual enemies, that are more than Satan under our feet shortly, should animate us in our spiritual conflicts. We do not fight at uncertainty. David had now a great army at command, and in good heart, yet he relied more on God's promise than his own force.

His principles in the engagement he is now in: He gives his God the glory; he saith, "The Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me; I could not have done it, if he had not done it before me; he opened the breach, like the breach of waters in a dam, which, when once opened, grows wider and wider." The principal part of the work was God's doing; may, he did all; what David did, was not worth speaking of; and therefore, Not unto me, but unto the Lord, give glory. He hoped likely, as this breach, like the breach of waters, was the opening of the sluice, to let in a final desolation upon them: and, to perpetuate the remembrance of it, he called the place Baal-herazim, the master of the breaches; because, God having broken in upon their forces, he soon had the mastery of them. Let posterity take notice of it to God's honour. 2. He put their gods to shame. They brought the image of Asherah into the field, as their protector, in imitation of the Israelites bringing the ark into their camp; but being put to flight, they could not stay to carry off their images, for they were a burden to the weary beasts, (Isa. 46. 1.) and therefore they left them to fall with the rest of their baggage into the hands of the conquerors. Their images failed them, and gave them no assistance, and therefore they left their images to shift for themselves. God can make men weary of those things that they have been most fond of, and compel them to desert what they doted upon, and cast them into the moles and the bats. But the images they burnt, (Deut. 7. 5.) Ye shall burn their graven images with fire, in token of your detestation of idolatry, and lest they should be a snare." Bishop Patrick well observes here, that when the ark fell into the Philistines' hands, it consumed them, but when these images fell into the hands of Israel, they could not save themselves from being consumed.

IV. In the latter of these engagements, God gave David some sensible tokens of his presence with him, bade him not fall upon them directly, as he had done before, but fetch a compass behind them. 23. 1. God appoints him to draw back, as Israel stood still, to see the salvation of the Lord. 2. He promised him to charge the enemy himself, by an invisible host of angels, v. 24. Thou shalt hear the sound of a going, like the march of an army in the air, upon the tops of the mulberry-trees. Angels tread light, and he that can walk upon the clouds, can, when he pleases, walk on the tops of trees, or, (as Bishop Patrick understands it,) at the head of the mulberry-tree; that is, of the wood, or hedge-row, of those trees. "And by that sign thou shalt know that the Lord goes out before thee; though thou see him not, yet thou shalt hear him, and faith shall come and be confirmed by hearing, as the going is to smite the host of the Philistines." When David had himself smitten them, (v. 20.) he ascribed it to God: The Lord has broken forth upon mine enemies; to reward him for which thankful acknowledgment, the next time God did it himself alone, without putting him to any toil or peril; for those that own God in what he has done for them, he will do more. But observe, though God promised to go before them and smite the Philistines, yet David, when he heard the sound of the going, must bestir himself, and be ready to pursue the victory. Note, God's grace must quicken our endeavours. If God work in us both to will and to do, it does not follow that we must sit still, as those that have nothing to do, but we must therefore work out our salvation with all possible care and diligence, Phil. 2. 12, 13. The sound of the going was, (1.) A signal to David when men were in danger; it is a signal of God's approaching help. And, (2.) Perhaps, it was an alarm to the enemy, and put them into confusion. Hearing the march of an army against their front, they retreated with precipitation, and fell into David's army, which lay behind them in their rear. Of those whom God fights against, it is said, (Lec. 26. 36.) The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them. The sense of this is hereby set down, v. 25. David observed his orders, waited till God moved, and stirred then, but not till then. Thus he was trained up in a dependence on God and his providence. God performed his promise, went before him, and routed all the enemies' force, and David failed not to improve his advantages; he smote the Philistines, even to the borders of their own country. When the kingdom of the Messiah was to be set up, the apostles that were to beat down the Devil's kingdom, must not attempt anything till they received the promise of the Spirit: who come with a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, (Acts 2. 2.) which was typified by this sound of going on the tops of the mulberry-trees; and when they heard that, they must bestir themselves, and did so; they went forth conquering and to conquer.

CHAP. VI.

The obscurity of the ark, during the reign of Saul, had been as great a grievance to Israel as the insults of the Philis-
times. David having humbled the Philistines and mortified them, in gratitude for that favour, and in pursuance of his designs for the public welfare, is led to bring the ark to his own city, that it might be near him, and be an ornament and strength to his new foundation. Here is, 1. An attempt to do it, which failed and miscarried. The design was well laid, v. 1, 2. But, 1. They were guilty of an error in carrying it in a cart, v. 3–5. 2. They were punished for that error by the sudden death of Uzzah, (v. 6, 7,) which was a great terror to David, (v. 8, 9,) and put a stop to his proceedings, 10, 11. II. The object of David was to put it into the ark in its own place, v. 12, 15. And, 1. The good understanding between David and his people, v. 16–19. 2. The uneasiness between David and his wife, upon that occasion, v. 19–22. And when it was seen that the ark was not in both the token of God's presence, and a type of Christ, we shall see that this story is very instructive.

1. AGAIN, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. 2. And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of The Lord of hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubims. 3. And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. 4. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. 5. And David and all the house of Israel, played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir-tree, even on harps, and psaltery, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

We have not heard a word of the ark, since it was lodged in Kerjath-jearim, immediately after its return out of its captivity among the Philistines, (1 Sam. 7. 1, 2,) except that, once, Saul called for it, 1 Sam. 14. 18. That which, in former days, the ark was set forth in the mode in which it was afterwards, is now brought in, as a neglected thing, for many years. And if now the ark was for so many years in a house, it let not seem strange that we find the church so long in the wilderness, Rev. 12. 14. Perpetual visibility is no mark of the true church. God is graciously present with the souls of his people, when they want the external tokens of his presence. But now that David is settled in the throne, the honour of the ark begins to revive, and Israel is brought to its flouris(h again, wherein also, no doubt, the good people among them had been careful, but they lacked opportunity, Phil. 4. 10.

I. Here is honorable mention made of the ark. Because it had not been spoken of a great while, now that it is spoken of, observe how it is described; (v. 2.) it is the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of The Lord of hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubims; or, at which name, even the name of the Lord of hosts, was called upon; or, upon which the name of the Lord of hosts was called: or, b-cause of which the name is proclaimed, the name of the Lord of hosts; that is, God was greatly magnified in the miracles done before the ark. Or, the ark of God, who is called the name; (Lev. 24. 11, 16.) the name of the Lord of hosts, sitting on the cherubims upon it. Let us learn hence, 1. To thev and speak highly of God. He is the name above every name; the Lord of hosts, that has all the creatures in heaven and earth at his command, and receives homage from them all, and yet is pleased to dwell between the cherubims, over the propitiatory or mercy seat, graciously manifesting himself to his people, records of God, and Mediator, and ready to do them good. 2. To think and speak honourably of holy ordinances, which are to us, as the ark was to Israel, the tokens of God's presence, (Matth. 28. 20,) and the means of our communion with him, Ps. 27. 4. It is the honour of the ark, that it is the ark of God, he is jealous for it, is magnified in it, his name is called upon it. The divine institution is not a bare and dead, but a beautiful and grand and great, and glorious, and pleasing, and lovely, and worshipful, and reverent, and holy; in the corporate, that is, peculiar, and sociable, the Christian is an Ark, in, and by him God manifests his favour, and communicates his grace to us, and accepts our adorations and addresses.

II. Here is an honourable attendance given to the ark upon the removal of it. Now, at length, it is inquired after; David made the motion, (1. Chron. 13. 1. 3.) and the heads of the congregation agreed to it, v. 4. All the chosen men of Israel are called together, to gratify the solemn purpose of God, as respects to the ark, and to testify their joy on its removal. The nobility and gentry, elders and officers, came, to the number of thirty thousand, (v. 1,) and the generality of the common people besides; (1 Chron. 13. 5.) for, some think, it was done at one of the three great festivals. This would make a noble cavalcade, and would help to inspire the young people of the nation, who, perhaps, had scarcely heard of the ark, with a great respect for it, for this was certainly a treasure of inestimable value, which the king himself, and all the great men, waited upon, and were a guard to.

III. Here are great expressions of joy, upon the removal of the ark, v. 5. David himself, and all that were with him that were musically inclined, made use of such instruments as they had, to excite to express, their rejoicing on this occasion. It might well put them into a transport of joy, to see the ark rise out of obscurity, and move towards a public station. It is better to have the ark in a house, than not at all, better in a house than a captive in Dagon's temple. But it is very desirable to have it in a tent pitched on purpose for it, where the resort to it may be more free and open. As secret worship is better the more secret it is, so public worship is better the more public it is. It was a reason to rejoice, when restraints were taken off, and the ark of God finds welcome in the city of David, and has not only the protection and support, but the countenance and encouragement, of the civil powers; for joy of this, they played before the Lord. Note, Public joy must always be as before the Lord, with an eye to him, and terminating in him; and must not degenerate into that which is carnal and sensual. David, upon this occasion, David penned the 68th Psalm, because it begins with that ancient prayer of Moses, at the removing of the ark, Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered; and notice is taken there (v. 25,) of the singers and players on instruments that attended, and (v. 27,) of the princes of several of the tribes; and perhaps those words in the last verse, that thou art terrible out of thy holy places, were added, upon occasion.
6. And when they came to Nachon's threshing-floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. 7. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. 8. And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day. 9. And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me? 10. So David would not remove the ark of the Lord unto him into the city of David; but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 11. And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.

We have here Uzzah struck dead for touching the ark, when it was upon its journey toward the city of David, a sad providence, which скорили his shoulder, they needed not put it in a cart like a common thing. It was no excuse for them, that the Philistines had done so, and were not punished for it; they knew no better, nor had they any priests or Levites with them to undertake the carrying of it; better carry it in a cart, than that any of Dagon's priests should carry it. Philistines may cart the ark with impunity; but if Israelites do, it is at their peril. And it mended the matter very little, that it was, new, carle in, old or new, it was not what God had appointed. I wonder how so wise and good a man as David was, that conversed so much with the law of God, came to be guilty of such an oversight. We will charitably hope that it was because he was so extremely intent upon the substance of the service, that he forgot to take care of this circumstance.

II. His punishment for this offence seems very great; (v. 7.) The anger of the Lord was kindled against him, (for in sacred things he is a jealous God,) and he smote him there for his rashness, as the word is, and struck him dead upon the spot. There he sinned, and there he died, by the ark of God; even the mercy-seat would not save him. Why was God thus severe with him? 1. The touching of the ark was forbidden to the Levites, expressly under pain of death, lest they die; and God, by this instance of severity, would show how he might justly have dealt with our first parents, when they had eaten that which was forbidden under the same penalty, lest ye die. 2. God saw the presumption and irreverence of Uzzah's heart. Perhaps he affected to do what no one else dared before. For the great assembly, he was bold he could make with the ark, having been so long acquainted with it. Familiarity, even with that which is most awful, is apt to breed contempt. 3. David afterward owned that Uzzah died for an error they were all guilty of, which was carrying the ark in a cart; because it was not carried on the Levites' shoulders, The Lord made that breach upon us, 1 Chron. 15. 13. But Uzzah was singled out to be the punishment of an example. It would have been most forward in advising that way of conveyance; however, he had fallen into another error, which was occasioned by that. Perhaps, the ark was not covered, as it should have been, with the covering of badgers' skins, (Numb. 4. 6.) and that was a further provocation. 4. God would hereby strike an awe upon the thousands of Israel, would convince them that the ark was never the less venerable by being brought before their eyes, and would use his authority and majesty to prevent transgressions; and thus he would teach them to rejoice with trembling, and always to treat holy things with reverence and holy fear. 5. God would hereby teach us that a good intention would not justify a bad action; it will not suffice to say of that which is ill done, that it was well meant. He will let us know that he can and will secure his ark, and needs not any man's aid to help him, and is so great a king as to lay hold on the ark of the covenant, that had no right to so do, what is it for those to lay claim to the privileges of the covenant, that come not up to the terms of it? To the wicked, God says, What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth? Ps. 50. 16. Friend, how canest thou in hither? If the ark was so sacred, and not to be touched irreverently, what is the blood of the covenant? Heb. 10. 19.

III. David's feelings on the infliction of this stroke, were keen, and perhaps not altogether as they should have been. He should have humbled himself under God's hand, confessed the error, acknowledged God's righteousness, and deprecated the further tokens of his displeasure, and then have gone on with the good work he had in hand. But we find,

1. He was displeased; it is not said because Uzzah had affronted God, but because God had made a breach upon Uzzah, v. 8. David's anger was kindled. It is the same word that is used for God's displeasure, v. 7. Because God was angry, David was angry and out of humour. As if God might not assert the honour of his ark, and frown upon one that touched it rudely, without asking David's leave. Shall mortal man pretend to be more just than God, an attribute of his own essence, or charge him with inequity? David did not now act like himself, like a man after God's own heart. It is the way that God does, to humble and unpleasing soever it is to us. The death of Uzzah
was indeed an eclipse to the glory of a solemnity, which David valued himself upon more than any thing else, and might give birth to some speculations among those that were dissatisfied to him, as if God were departing from him too; but, however, he ought to have subscribed to the righteousness and wisdom of God in it, and not to have been displeased at it. When we lie under God's anger, we must keep under our own.

2. He was afraid, v. 9. It should seem he was afraid with amazement; for he said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me? As if God sought advantages against all that were about him, and was so extremely tender of his ark, that there was no dealing with it; and therefore better for him to keep it at a distance. Qui procul a Jove, procul a fulmine. To retire from Jove, is to retire from the thunder-bolt. He should rather have said, Let the ark come to me, and I will take warning by this to treat it with more reverence." Provoke me not," (says God, Jer. 25. 6.) and I will do you no hurt. Or, this may be looked upon as a good use which David made of this tremendous judgment; he did not say, "Surely, Uzzah was a sinner above all men, because he suffered such things," but is concerned for himself, as one conscious, not only of his own unworthiness of God's favour, but also of the censure of his conscience for the sin of touching God's holy things; "God might justly strike me dead, as he did Uzzah; my flesh trembles for fear of thee," Ps. 119. 120. This God intends in his judgments, that others may hear and fear. David therefore will not bring the ark into his own city, (v. 10.) till he is better prepared for its reception.

3. He took care to perpetuate the remembrance of this stroke by a new name he gave to the place, Perez-uzzah, the breach of Uzzah, v. 8. He had been lately triumphing in the breach made upon his enemies, and called the place Baal-perazim, a place of breaches. But here is a breach upon his friends. When we see one breach, we should consider, that we know not where the next will be. The memorial of this stroke would be a warning to posterity, to take heed of all rashness and irreverence in dealing about holy things; for all will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him.

4. He lodged the ark in a good house, the house of Obed-edom a Levite, which happened to be near the place where this disaster happened, and there, (1.) It was kindly entertained and bid welcome, and continued there three months, v. 10, 11. Obed-edom knew what slaughter the ark had made among the Philistines that imprisoned it, and the Bethshemites that looked into it. He saw Uzzah struck dead for touching it, and perceived that David himself was afraid of meddling with it; yet he cheerfully invites it to his own house, and opens his doors to it without fear, knowing it was a savour of death unto death, to those only that treated it ill. "O the courage," says Bishop Hall, "of an honest and faithful heart; nothing can make God otherwise than happy, to the preservation of his own very justice is lovely." (2.) It paid well for his accommodation of the ark. The Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household. The same hand that punished Uzzah's proud presumption, rewarded Obed-edom's humble boldness, and made the ark unto him a savour of life unto life. Let none think the worse of the gospel for the judgments inflicted on those that reject it, but set in opposition to them the blessings it brings to those that duly receive it. None ever had, or ever shall have reason to say that it is in vain to serve God. Let masters of families be encouraged to keep up religion in their families, and to serve God and the interests of his kingdom, with their houses and estates, for that is the way to bring a blessing upon all they have. The ark is a guest which none shall lose by, that bid it welcome. Josephus says, that whereas, before Obed-edom was poor on a sudden, in these three months, his estate increased, to the envy of his neighbours. Piety is the best friend to prosperity. In wisdom's left hand are riches and honour. His household shared in the blessing: it's good living in a family that entertains the ark, for all about it will fare the better for it.

12. And it was told king David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness. 13. And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. 14. And David danced before the Lord with all his might: and David was girded with a linen ephod. 15. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. 16. And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart. 17. And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord. 18. And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts. 19. And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house.

We have here the second attempt to bring the ark home to the city of David; and this succeeded, though the former miscarried. It should seem, the blessing with which the house of Obed-edom was blessed for the ark's sake, was a great inducement to David to bring it forward; for when that was told him, (v. 12.) he hastened to fetch it to him. For, 1. It was an evidence that God was reconciled to them, and his anger was turned away. As David could read God's frowns upon them all in Uzzah's death, so he could read God's favour to them all in Obed-edom's prosperity; and if God be at peace with them, they can cheerfully go on with their design. 2. It was an evidence that the ark was not such a burthensome stone, as it was taken to be, but, on the contrary, happy was the man that had it near him. Christ is indeed a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence, to them that are stumbled; but to them whom believe, he is a precious Stone, a Corner-stone.
to our's; we may have it, and the blessing of it, without fetching it from our neighbour's.

Let us see how David managed the matter now.

I. He rectified the former error; he did not put the ark in a cart now, but ordered those, whose business it was, to carry it on their shoulders. This is implied here, (v. 15.) and expressed 1 Chron. 15.

Then we make a good use of the judgments of God towards ourselves and others, when we are awakened by them to reform and amend whatever has been amiss.

II. At their first setting out, he offered sacrifices to God, (v. 13.) by way of atonement for their former errors, and in a thankful acknowledgment of the blessings bestowed on the house of Obed-edom. Then we are likely to speed in our enterprises, when we begin with God, and give diligence to make our peace with him. When we attend upon God in holy ordinances, our eye must be to the great Sacrifice, to which we owe it that we are taken into covenant and communion with God, Ps. 50. 5.

III. He himself attended the solemnity with the highest expressions of joy that could be, (v. 14.) he danced before the Lord with all his might; he leaped for joy, as one transported; on this occasion, and in his more and more increasing joy, he leaped over the disappointment he met with the last time. It is a pleasure to a good man to see his errors rectified, and himself in the way of his duty. His dancing, I suppose, was not artificial, by any certain rule or measure, nor do we find that any danced with him; but it was a natural expression of his great joy and exultation of mind. He did it with all his might; so we should perform all our religious services, as those that are interwoven with us, and desire to do them in the best manner: all our might is little enough to be employed in holy duties; the work deserves it all. On this occasion, David laid aside his imperial purple, and put on a plain ephod, which was light and convenient for dancing, and was used in religious exercises by those who were no priests, for Samuel wore one, 1 Sam. 2. 18. That great prince thought it no disparagement to him to appear in the habit of a minister the other way.

IV. All the people triumphed in this advancement of the ark; (v. 15.) They brought it up into the city with shouting, and with sound of trumpet, so expressing their own joy in loud acclamations, and giving notice to all about them to rejoice with them. The public and free administration of ordinances, not only under the protection, but under the smiles, of the civil powers, is just matter of recompense to every people.

V. The ark was safely brought to, and honorably deposited in, the place prepared for it, v. 17. They set it in the midst of the tabernacle, or tent, which David had pitched for it; not the tabernacle which Moses reared, that was at Gibeon, (2 Chron. 1. 13.) and, we may suppose, being made of cloth, in so many hundred years, it was gone to decay, and not covered; but this was a tent set up on purpose to receive the ark. He would not bring it into a private house, no not his own, lest it should seem to be too much engrossed, and people's resort to it, to pray before it, should be less free; yet he would not build a house for it, lest that should supersede the building of a more stately temple in due time; and therefore, for the present, he placed it within curtains, under a tent pitched in the manner of Moses's tabernacle. As soon as ever it was lodged, he offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, in thankfulness to God, that the business was now done without any more errors or breaches; and in supplication to God for the continuance of his favour. Note, All our joys must be sanctified both with praises and prayers; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Now, it should seem, he penned Ps. 132. 7. 8.

VI. The people were then dismissed with great satisfaction. He sent them away, 1. With a gracious prayer; he blessed them in the name of the Lord of hosts, (v. 18.) having not only a particular interest in them as a prophet, but a peculiar right over them as a prince, for thou art blessed of the better, Heb. 7. 7. He prayed to God to bless them, and particularly to reward them for the honour and respect they had now shown to his ark; assuring them they should be no losers by their journey, but the blessing of God upon their affairs at home would more than bear their charges. He testified his desire for their welfare by this prayer for them, and, lest they should know they had a king that loved them. 2. With a generous treat; for so it was, rather than a distribution of alms; the great men, it is probable, he entertained at his own house, but to the multitude of Israel, men and women, (and children, says Josephus,) he dealt, to each, a cake of bread; (a spice-cake, so some;) a good piece of flesh; (a handsome, decent piece, so some; a part of the peace-offerings, so Josephus;) that they might feast with him. He did this from the love of God, or his love, which he had for them; that they might be grateful to them, and, in return, do all in their power to assist in his kingdom, and to further the cause of religion. It is an evident evidence of a true and sincere desire to serve God, that he is desirous of rendering satisfaction to his enemies; and, in return, that we should do all we can to make them happy, and to encourage them to serve God.

20. Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself! 21. And David said unto Michal, It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. 22. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maid-servants, which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour. 23. Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death.

David, having dismissed the congregation with a blessing, returned to bless his household, (v. 20.) that he might pray with them and for them, and to offer up his family-thanksgiving for this national mercy. Ministers must not think that their public performances will excuse them from their family-worship; but when they have, with their instructions and prayers, blessed the solemn assemblies, they must return in the same manner to bless their households, for with them they are in a particular
manner charged. David, though he had prophets, and priests, and Levites, about him, to be his chaplains, yet did not devote the work upon them, but himself blessed his household. It is angel's work to worship God, and therefore surely that can be no disparagement to the greatest men.

1. When he had penned up his house with so much pleasure and satisfaction, as he did now that he had got the ark into his neighbourhood, and yet even this joyful day concluded with some uneasiness, occasioned by the pride and peevishness of his wife. Even the palaces of princes are not exempt from domestic troubles. David had pleased all the multitude of Israel, but Michael was not pleased with his dancing before the ark: for this, when he came home, she scolded him, and when he came home, she scolded him. She was not displeased at his generosity to the people, nor did she grudge the entertainment he gave them; but she thought he demeaned himself too much in dancing before the ark. It was not her covetousness, but her pride, that made her fret.

II. When she saw David in the street dancing before the ark, she despised him in her heart, v. 16. She thought this mighty zeal of his for the ark of God, and the transport of joy he was in, upon its coming home to him, was but a foolish thing, and uncanning so great a soldier, and statesman, and monarch, as he was: it had been enough for him to encourage the devotion of others, but she looked upon it as a thing below him to appear so devout himself. "What a fool!" (thinks she) "does he think that we can be made of himself now? How tender is he of this ark, that might as well have lain still where it had lain for so many years! Much devotion has almost made him mad." Note, The exercises of religion appear very mean in the eyes of those that have little or no religion themselves.

II. When he came home in the very best disposition, she began to upbraid him, and was so full of disdain and indignation, that she could not hold her peace till she had him in private, but went out to meet him with her reproaches.

Observe, 1. How she taunted him; (v. 20.) "How glorious was the King of Israel to-day! What a figure didst thou make to-day in the midst of the mob; how unconcerned thy post and character!" Her contempt of him and his devotion began in the heart, but out of the abundance of that the mouth spake. That which displeased her, was, his affection to the ark; she could wish he had not greater kindness for than she had: but she basely represents his conduct, in dancing before the ark, as lev and immodest; and, while really she was displeased at it, as a diminution to his honour, she pretended to dislike it, as a reproach to his virtue, that he uncovered himself in the eyes of his maidservants; as no man would have done, but one of the least persons, and that cares not how much he shames himself. We have some reason to think that this was true in fact: David, no doubt, observed decorum, and governed his zeal with discretion; but it is common for those that reprieze religion, thus to put false colours upon it, and lay it under the most odious characters. To have abused any man thus, for his pious zeal, had been very profane; but to abuse her own husband thus, whom she ought to have been the proudest of, that cares not how much he shames himself, above the reach of malice itself to disparage, one who had showed such affection for her, that he would not accept a crown, unless he might have her restored to him, (ch. 3. 13.) was a most base and wicked thing, and showed her to have more of Saul's daughter in her, than of David's wife, or Jonathan's sister.

2. How he replied to her reproach. He does not upbraid her with her treacherous departure from him, to embrace the bosom of a stranger. He had forgiven that, and therefore had forgotten it, though, it may be, his own conscience, on this occasion, upbraided him with his folly in receiving her again, (for that is said to pollute the hand, Jer 3. 1.) but he justifies himself in what he did.

(1.) He designed thereby to humble himself; (v. 21.) It was before the Lord, and with an eye to him. Whatever invidious construction she was pleased to put upon it, he had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he sincerely aimed at the glory of God, for whom he thought he could never do enough. Here he reminds her indeed of the setting aside of her father's house, to make way for him to be chief of the king's house, and to be himself the most proper judge of propriety; "God chose me before thy father, and appointed me to be ruler over Israel, and now I am the fountain of honour; and if the expressions of a warm devotion to God were looked upon as mean and unfashionable in thy father's court, yet I will play before the Lord, and thereby bring them into reputation again. And if this be not vile, (v. 22.) I will yet be more vile.

(2.) He designed thereby to humble himself; "I will be base in my own sight, and will think nothing mean to speak of for the honour of God. In the throne of judgment, and in the field of battle, none shall do more to support the prudence and authority of a prince than David shall; but in acts of devotion he lays aside the thoughts of majesty, humbles himself to the dust before the Lord, joins in with the meanest services done in honour of the ark, and yet thinks it no diminution to him. The greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of Jesus Christ." (v. 23.)

(3.) He doubted not but even this would turn to his reputation among those whose reprobate he feared; Of the maidservants shall I be had in honour. The common people would be so far from thinking the worse of him for these pious condescensions, that they would esteem and honour him so much the more. Those that are truly pious, are sometimes manifested in the consciences even of those that speak ill of them, and be afraid of censoring the devotion of others, though it may not agree with our sentiments, because for aught that we know, the heart may be upright in it, and who are we that we should despise those whom God has accepted? (2.) If we can approve ourselves to God in what we do in religion, and do it as before the Lord, we need not value the censures and reproaches of men. If we appear right in God's eyes, no matter how men reproach us. The more we are valified for well doing, the more resolute we should be in it, and hold our religion the faster, and bind it the closer to us, for the endeavours of Satan's agents to shake us, and to shame us out of it. I will be yet more vile.

CHAP. VII.

Still the ark is David's care as well as his joy. In this chapter, we have, I. His consultation with Nathan
about building a house for it; he signifies his purpose to do it. (v. 1, 5.) and Nathan approves his purpose, v. 3.

II. His communion with God about it. 1. A gracious message God sent him about it, accepting his purpose, countermanding the performance, and promising him an enemy of blessings unto his family, v. 4. 2. A humble prayer which David offered up to God, in return to that gracious message: thankfully accepting God's promises to him, and earnestly praying for the performance of them, v. 18. 29. And in both these, there is an eye to the Messiah, and his kingdom.

1. And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies, 2. That the king said unto Nathan the prophet. See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains. 3. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart: for the Lord is with thee.

Here is,

I. David at rest. He sat in his house, (v. 1.) quiet and undisturbed, having no occasion to take the field; The Lord had given him rest round about, from all his enemies. This is a most comfortable settlement in his throne, and he sets himself to enjoy that rest; though he was a man of war, he was for peace, (Ps. 120. 7.) and did not delight in war. He had not been long at rest, nor was it long before he was again engaged in war; but, at present, he enjoyed a calm, and he was in his element when he was sitting in his house, meditating on the law of God.

II. David's thoughts of building a temple for the honours God had put upon him. Note, When God, in his providence, has remarkably done much for us, it should put us upon contriving what we may do for him and his glory. What shall I render unto the Lord? 2. Thus he would improve the present calm, and make a good use of the rest God had given him. Note, But he was not called out to serve God and Israel in the high places of the field, he would employ his thoughts, and time, and estate, in serving him another way, and not indulge himself in ease, much less in luxury. When God, in his providence, gives us rest, and finds us little to do of worldly business, we must do so much the more for God and our souls. How different were the thoughts of David, when he sat in his palace, from Nebuchadnezzar's, when he walked in his. Dan. 4. 29. 30. That proud man thought of nothing but the might of his own power, and the honour of his own majesty; this humble soul is full of contrivance how to glorify God, and give honour to him; and how God resisted the proud, and gave grace and glory to the humble, the event showed. David considered (v. 2.) the stateliness of his own habitation, (I dwell in a house of cedar,) and compared with that the meanness of the habitation of the ark, (that dwells within curtains,) and thought this incongruous, that he should dwell in a palace, and the ark in a tent. David had been uneasy till he found out a place for the ark, (Ps. 132. 4, 5.) and now he is uneasy till he finds out a better place. Gracious, grateful souls, (1.) never think they can do enough for God, but will do as much, have as much projecting to do more, and devising liberal things. (2.) They cannot enjoy their own accommodations, while they see the church of God in distress and under a cloud. David can take little pleasure in a house of cedar for himself, unless the ark have one. Those who stretched themselves upon beds of ivory, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, though they had David's music, had not David's spirit; (Amos 6. 4, 6.) nor they who dwelt in their ceiled houses, while God's house lay waste, Hag. 1. 4.

III. His communicating of his thought to Nathan the prophet. He told him, as a friend and confidant of his, to advise him whether he should not build a temple for himself. David had gone out to himself? Was it not his own work? Was not he himself a prophet? Yes, but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. David told him that by him he might know the mind of God. It was certainly a good work, but it was uncertain whether it was the will of God that David should have the doing of it.

IV. Nathan's approbation of it. Go, do all that is in thine heart, for the Lord is with thee. 3. We do not find that David told him that he proposed to build a temple, only that it was a trouble to him that there was not one built; from which Nathan easily gathered what was in his heart, and bade him go on and prosper. Note, We ought to do all we can, to encourage and promote the good purposes and designs of others, and put in a good word, as we have opportunity, to forward a good work. Nathan does not think it not in God's name, but as from himself; not as a prophet, but as wise and good man; it was agreeable to the revealed will of God, which requires that all in their places should lay out themselves for the advancement of religion and the service of God, though, it seems, the secret will was otherwise that David should not do this. It was Christ's prerogative always to speak the mind of God, which he perfectly knew; other prophets spoke it only when the spirit of prophecy was upon them; but if in any thing they mistook, (as Samuel, 1 Sam. 16. 6. and Nathan here,) God soon rectified the mistake.

4. And it came to pass that night, that the word of the Lord came unto Nathan, saying, 5. Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build me a house for me to dwell in? 6. Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. 7. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, speak I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me a house of cedar? 8. Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheep-cote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: 9. And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. (10. Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as before-time, 11. And as since the time that I com-
manded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies.) Also the Lord telleth thee, that he will make thee a house. 12. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 13. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 14. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: 15. But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. 16. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. 17. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

We have here a full revelation of God's favour to David, and the kind intentions of that favour; the notices and assurances of which, God sent him by Nathan the prophet, whom he intrusted to deliver this long message to him. The design of it is to take him from his purposes of building the temple, and was therefore sent, 1. By the same hand that had given him encouragement to do it: lest, if it had been sent by any other, Nathan should have been despised and insulted, and David should have been perplexed, being encouraged by one prophet, and discouraged by another. 2. The same night, that Nathan might not continue long in an error, nor David have his head any further filled with thoughts of that which he must never bring to pass. God might have said this to David himself immediately, but he chose to send it by Nathan, to support the honour of his prophets, and to preserve in David a regard to them: though he be the head, they must be the eyes by which he must see the visions of the Almighty, and the tongue by which he must hear the word of God. He that delivered this message to Nathan, assisted his memory to retain it, that he might deliver it fully, (he being resolved to deliver it faithfully,) as he received it of the Lord.

Now in this message we have,

1. David's purpose to build God a house superseded. God took notice of that purpose, for he knows what is in men, and he was well pleased with it, as appears, I Kings 8. 18, Thou didst well that this thing be done in thine heart; yet he forbade him to go on with his purpose, v. 5, "Shalt thou build me a house? No, thou shalt not," as it is explained in the parallel place, 1 Chron. 17. 4. "There is other work appointed for thee to do, which must be done first." David is a man of war, and he must enlarge the borders of Israel, by carrying on their conquests. David is a sweet psalmist, and he must prepare psalms for the use of the temple when it is built, and the course of the Levites; but his son's genius will better suit for building the house, and he will have a better treasure to bear the charge of it, and therefore let it be reserved for him to do. As every man hath received the gift, to let him minister.

The building of a temple was to be a work of time, and preparation made for it; but it was a thing that had never been spoken of till now. God tells him, 1. That hitherto he never had had a house built for him; (v. 6,) a tabernacle had served him, and it might serve a while longer. God values not outward pomp in his service; his presence was as surely with his people when the ark was in a tent, as when it was in a temple; David was uneasy that the ark was in curtains, (a mean and movable habitation,) but God was contented of it as any unceasing to him. He did not dwell, but walk, and yet fainted not, nor was weary. Christ, like the ark, when here on earth, walked in a tent and tabernacle, for he went about doing good, and dwelt not in any house of his own, till he ascended on high, to the mansions above, in his Father's house, and there he sat down. The church, like the ark, in this world, is ambulatory, dwells in various places, because it possesses no fixed abode; and military; its continuing city is to come. David, in his Psalms, often calls the tabernacle a temple, (as Ps. 5. 7.—27. 4.—29. 9.—65. 4.—138. 2.) because it answered the intention of a temple, though it was made but of curtains: wise and good men value not the show, while they have the substance. David perhaps had more true devotion, and sweeter communion with God, in a house of worship, than in any successions of the house of edom. 2. That he had never given any orders or directions, or the least intimation, to any of the sceptres of Israel, that is, to any of the judges, 1 Chron. 17. 6. (for rulers are called sceptres, Ezek. 19. 14. the great Ruler is called so, Num. 24. 17.) concerning the building of the temple, v. 7. That worship only is acceptable, which is instituted: why should David therefore design what God never ordained? Let David have wait for a warrant, and then let him do it. Better a tent of God's appointing, than a temple of his own inventing.

II. David is reminded of the great things God had done for him, to let him know that he was a favourite of Heaven, though he had not the favour to be employed in this service: as also that God was not indebted to him for his good intentions; but, whatever he did for God's honour, God was beforehand with him. v. 8. 9. 1. He had raised him from a very mean and low condition: he took him from the sheep-cote. It is good for those who are come to great preferment, to be often reminded of their small beginnings, that they may always be humble and thankful. 2. He had given him success and victory over his enemies; (v. 9,) "I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, to protect thee when pursued, to prepare thee with a fruitful land; I had cast off all thine enemies, that stood in the way of thine advancement and settlement." 3. He had crowned him not only with power and dominion in Israel, but with honour and reputation among the nations about, I have made thee a great name. He was become famous for his courage, conduct, and great achievements, and was more talked of than any of the great men of his day. A great name is what they who excite others, have great reason to be thankful for, and to improve to good purposes; but what they that have not, have no reason to be ambitious of: a good name is more desirable. A man may pass through the world very obscurely, and yet very comfortably.

III. A happy establishment is promised to God's Israel, v. 10. 11. This comes in in a parenthesis, before the promises made to David himself, to let him understand the great God's promise was, for Israel's sake, that they might be happy under his administration, and to give him the satisfaction of foreseeing peace upon Israel, when it was promised him that he should see his children's children, Ps. 128. 6. A good king cannot think himself happy unless his kingdom be so. The promises that follow, relate to his family and posterity,
powers, therefore, which speak of the settlement of Israel, intend the happiness of his own reign. Two things he suggests. 1. A quiet place; I will appoint a place for my people Israel. It was appointed long ago, yet they were disappointed, but now that appointment should be made good. Canaan should be clearly their own, without any ejection or molestation. 2. A quiet enjoyment of that place; the children of wickedness, meaning especially the Philistines, who had been so long a plague to them, shall not afflict them any more: but, as in the time that I caused judges to be over my people Israel, I cause thee to rest from all time enemies; so v. 11. may be read; that is, "I will continue and complete that rest; the land shall rest from war, as it did under the judges."

IV. Blessings are entailed upon the family and posterity of David. David had purposed to build God a house, and, in requital, God promises to build him a house, v. 11. Whatever they do for God, or sincerely design to do, though Providence prevents our doing it, we shall in no wise lose our reward. He had promised to make him a name, v. 9. here he promises to make him a house, which should bear up that name. It would be a great satisfaction to David, while he lived, to have the inviolable assurance of a divine promise, that his family should flourish when he is gone. Next to the happiness of the soul, and the church of God, we should desire the happiness of our seed, that those who come of us, may be raising God on earth, when we are praising him in heaven.

1. Some of these promises relate to Solomon, his immediate successor, and to the royal line of Judah. (1.) That God would advance him to the throne. Those words, when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, intimate that God would make him king; and then I will set up thy seed. This favour was so much the greater, because it was more than God had done for Moses, or Joshua, or any of the judges, whom he called to feed his people. David's government was the first that was entail'd; for the promise made to Christ, of the kingdom, was to reach to his spiritual seed: if children, then heirs. (2.) That he would settle him in the same kingdom. The throne of his kingdom, v. 13. His title shall be clear and uncontested, his interest confirmed, and his administration steady. 3. That he would employ him in that good work of building the temple, which David had only the satisfaction of designing. He shall build a house for my name, v. 13. The work shall be done, though David shall not have the doing of it. (4.) That he would take him into the covenant adoption; v. 14. I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son. We need no more to make us and ours happy, than to have God to be a Father to us and them: and all those to whom God is a Father, he by his grace makes his sons, by giving them the disposition of children. If he be a careful, tender, bountiful Father to us, we must be obedient, tractable, dutiful children to him. The promise here speaks as unto sons. [1.] That his Father would correct him, when there was occasion; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? Afflictions are an article of the covenant, and are not only consistent with, but flow from, God's Fatherly love. "If he commit iniquity," (as it proved he did, 1 Kings 11. 1.) "I will chasten him to bring him to repentance; but it shall be with the rod of men, such a rod as men may wield; I will not plead against him with the great rod of my Father, Job 23. 6. Or rather, such a rod as men may bear. "I will consider his frame, and correct him with all possible tenderness and compassion, when there is need, and no more than there is need of; it shall be with the stripes, the touchers," (so the word is), "of the children of men; not a stroke, or wound, but a gentle touch." [2.] That yet he would not disinherit him; (v. 15.) My mercy (and that is the inheritance of sons) shall not depart from him. The revolt of the ten tribes from the house of David was their correction for iniquity, but the constant adherence of the other two to that family, which was a competent support of the royal dignity, perpetuated the mercy of God to the seed of David, according to the promise that the family was cut short, yet it was not cut off, as the house of Saul was. Never any other family swayed the sceptre of Judah, than that of David. This is that covenant of royalty celebrated Ps. 89. 3, 8, as typical of the covenant of redemption and grace.

2. Others of them relate to Christ, who is often called David, and the Son of David; that son of David to whom these promises pointeth, and in whom they had their full accomplishment. He was of the seed of David, Acts 13. 23. To him God gave the throne of his father David, Luke 1. 32. All power, both in heaven and earth, and authority to execute judgment. He was to build the temple, a house for God's name, Zech. 6. 12, 13. That promise, I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son, is expressly applied to Christ by the apostle, Heb. 1. 5. But the establishing of his house, and his throne, and his kingdom forever, (v. 13.) and again, and a third time, (v. 16.) for ever, can be applied to no other than Christ and his kingdom; David's house and kingdom are long since come to an end, it is only the Messiah's kingdom that is everlasting, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. The supposition of committing iniquity cannot indeed be applied to the Messiah himself, but it is applicable (and very common) to his spiritual seed; true believers have their infirmities, for which they may expect to be corrected, but they shall not be cast off. Every transgression in the covenant will not throw us out of covenant.

Now, (1.) This message Nathan faithfully delivered to David, v. 17. Though, in forbidding him to build the temple, he contradicted his own words, yet he was not backward in doing it. He was better informed concerning the mind of God. (2.) These promises God faithfully performed to David, and his seed, in due time. Though David came short of making good his purpose to build God's house, yet he did not come short of making good his promise to build him a house. Such is the tenure of the covenant we are under; though there are many failures in our performances, there are more in God's.

18. Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord; and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hither? 19. And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? 20. And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant. 21. For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. 22. Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee, according to all that we have heard with our
years. 23. And what one nation in the earth is like to thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods!

24. For thou hast confirmed by thyself, to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, Lord, art become their God. 25. And now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said. 26. And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. 27. For thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it; and it shall come to pass, that the house of thy servant shall be established before thee: 28. Now therefore let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it; and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.

We have here the solemn address David made to God, in answer to the gracious message God had sent him. We are not told what he said to Nathan; no doubt he received him very kindly and respectfully, as his messenger, but his answer to God he took himself, and did not send by Nathan. When ministers deliver God's message to us, it is not to them, but to God, that our hearts must reply; he understands the language of the heart, and to him we may come boldly. David had no sooner received the message, than while the impressions of it were fresh, he retired to return an answer. Observe,

I. The place he retired to; he went in before the Lord, that is, into the tabernacle where the ark was, which was the token of God's presence; before that he presented himself. God's will now is, that men pray every where; but wherever we pray, we must set ourselves as before the Lord, and set him before us.

II. The posture he put himself into; he set before the Lord. 1. It denotes the posture of his body. Kneeling or standing is certainly the most proper gesture which is well in protestant, but the Jews, from this instance, say, "It was allowed to the kings of the house of David to sit in the temple, and to no other." But this by no means justify the ordinary use of that gesture in prayer, whatever may be allowed in a case of necessity. 2. David went in, and took his place before the Lord, so it may be read; but when he prayed, he stood up as the manner was. Or, he went in and continued before the Lord; said some time silently meditating, before he began his prayer, and then remained longer than usual in the tabernacle. 3. It may denote the frame of his spirit at this time. He went in and composed himself before the Lord; thus we should do in all our approaches to God: O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed.

III. The prayer itself, which is full of the breath of pleasing and devout affection toward God; the

1. He speaks very humbly of himself, and his own merits. So he begins "is one astonished, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house?" v. 18. God had reminded him of the meanness of his original, (v. 8.) and he subscribed to it; he had low thoughts, (1.) Of his personal merits, Who am I? He was, upon all accounts, a very considerable and valuable man. His endowments, both of body and mind, were extraordinary, and his services, past and present, were eminent. He was a man of honour, sincerity, and usefulness, the darling of his country, and the dread of its enemies; yet he says, when he comes to speak of himself before God, "Who am I? A man not worth taking notice of." (2.) Of the merits of his family. What is my house? His house was of the royal tribe, and descended from the prince of that tribe; he was allied to the best families of the country, and yet, like Gideon, thinks his family poor in Judah, and himself the least in his father's house, Judg. 6. 15. David thus humbled himself, when Saul's daughter was mentioned to him for a wife, (1 Sam. 18. 18.) but now with much more reason. Note, It very well becomes the greatest and best of men, even in the midst of the highest advantages, to have low and mean thoughts of themselves. For many of most considerable merit are sinners, and those that are highest advanced, have nothing but what they have received; "Who am I, thou hast brought me hitherto; brought me to the kingdom, and to a settlement in it, and rest from all mine enemies?" It intimates that he could not have reached this himself by his own management, if God had not brought him to it. All our attainments must be looked upon as God's vowishing.

2. He speaks very highly and honourably of God's favours to him. (1.) In what he had done for him. "Thou hast brought me hitherto, to this great dignity and dominion. Hitherto thou hast helped me." Though we should be left at uncertainty concerning further mercy, we have great reason to be thankful for that which has been done for us hitherto. Acts 26. 18. (2.) In what he had yet further promised him. God had done so much for him already, and yet, as if those were but little for God to bestow upon his children, he has spoken concerning them for a great while to come, even as far as eternity itself reaches. Of this we must own, as David here, [1.] That it is far beyond what we could expect. Is this the manner of men? That is, First, Can man expect to be so dealt with by his Maker? Is this the law of Adam? Note, Considering what the character and condition of men are, it is very surprising and amazing that God should deal with them as he does. Man is a mean creature, and therefore under a law of distance; unable to come to God, and therefore under a law of disesteem and disregard; guilty and obnoxious, and therefore under a law of death and damnation. But how unlike are God's dealings with man to this law of Adam? He is brought near to God, purchased at a high rate; taken into covenant and communion with God; could this ever have been thought of? Of man, Do men usually deal thus one with another? No, the way of our God is far above the manner of men. Though he be high, he has respect to the lowly; and is this the manner of men? Though he is offended by us, he beseeches us to be reconciled,
who would be, promise, I know whose name I say with; 21. let us know the eternal Word, that is, that for the sake of Christ the eternal Word, it is all owing to his merit. Or, “That thou mayest magnify thy word of promise above all thy name, in making it the stay and store-house of thy people.” (2.) A cording to thy own heart, thy gracious counsels and designs, ex mero motu—of thy own good pleasure; Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes. All that God does for his people in his providences, and secures to them his promises, is for his pleasure, and for his praise; the pleasure of his will, and the praise of his word.

4. He adores the greatness and glory of God; (v. 22.) Thou art great, O Lord God, for there is none like thee. God’s gracious condescension to him, and the honour he had put upon him, did not at all abate his awful veneration for the Divine Majesty; for the nearer any are brought to God, the more they see of his glory; and the dearer we are in his eyes, the greater he should be in ours. And this acknowledgment concerning God, that there is no Being like him, nor any God beside him; and that what we have seen with our eyes of his power and goodness, is according to all we have heard with our ears, and the one half not told us.

5. He expresses a great esteem for the Israel of God; (v. 23, 24.) As there were none among the gods to be compared with Jehovah, so none among the nations to be compared with Israel; considering, (1.) The works he had done for them. He went to redeem them, applied himself to it as a great work, went about it with solemnity, Zebi’phan hecer, di iverunt—The gods went. As if there were the same consultation and concurrence of all the persons in the blessed Trinity, about the work of redemption, that there was about the work of creation, when God said, Let us make man. When they that were sent of God, went to redeem; so the Chaldee, meaning, I suppose, Moses and Aaron. The redemption of Israel, as described here, was typical of the redemption by Christ, in that, [1.] They were redeemed from the nations and their gods; so are we from all impurity, and all consciences that prevent world; Christ came to save his people from their sins. [2.] They were redeemed to be a people unto God, purified and appropriated to himself, that he might make himself a great name, and do for them great things; the honour of God, and the eternal happiness of the saints, are the two things aimed at in their redemption. (2.) The covenant he had made with them, v. 24. It was, [1.] Mutual; “They to be a people to thee, and thou to be aGod to them; all their interests consecrated to thee, and all thine attributes engaged for them.” [2.] Immutable; “Thou hast confirmed it.” He makes the covenant, makes it sure, and will make it good.

6. He concludes with humble petitions to God. (v. 1.) Let him hear his petitions upon the message which God had sent him; (v. 27.) Thou hast revealed this to thy servant; that is, “Thou hast hasted thine own good will given me the promise, that thou wilt build me a house, else I could never have found in my heart to pray such a prayer as this; I durst not have asked such great things, if I had not been directed and encouraged by thy promise to ask them: they are indeed too great for me to beg, but not too great for me to ask.” Let us go in, Thy servant was found in his heart to pray this prayer,” so it is in the original, and the Septuagint. Many, when they go to pray, have their hearts to seek, but David’s heart was found, that is, it was found: gathered in from its wanderings, and entirely engaged to the duty, and employed in it. That prayer which is found in the tongue only, will not please God; it must be found in the heart; that must be lifted up before the throne of God, and make it known there.

(1.) He prays for the performance of his promise; (v. 25.) “Let the word be made good to me, on which thou hast caused me to hope, (Ps. 119. 49.) and do as thou hast said; I desire no more, and I expect no less; so full is the promise, and so firm.” Thus we must turn God’s promises into prayers, and then they shall be turned into performances; for, with God, saying and doing are not two things, as they often are with men; God will do as he hath said.

(2.) He prays for the glorifying of God’s name; (v. 26.) Let thy name be magnified for ever; this ought to be the summary and centre of all our prayers, the Alpha and the Omega of them; begin with Hallowed be thy name, and end with The Lord shall be magnified, and let thy name be magnified.” And he reckons that nothing magnifies God’s name more than this, to say, with suitable affections, The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel. This bespeaks the God of Israel gloriously great, that he is the Lord of hosts; and this bespeaks the Lord of hosts gloriously good, that he is God over Israel; in both, let his name be magnified for ever; let all the churches of this world, and all the glory of the name of God be ascribed to him the glory of these two. David desired the performance of God’s promise for the honour, not of his own name but of God’s: Thus the Son of David prayed, Father, glorify thy name; (John 12. 28. 17.) Glorify thy Son, that the Son may also glorify thee.

(3.) He prays for his house, for that the promise has special reference: First, That it might be happy; (v. 29.) Let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant; and again, with thy blessing, let the house of the servant be truly and eternally blessed. These whom thou blessest are blessed indeed. The care of good men is very much concerning their families; and the best entail on their families is that of the blessing of God. The repetition of this request is not a vain repetition, but expressive of the
value he had of the divine blessing, and his earnest desire of it, as all in all to the happiness of his family.

Secondly, That the happiness of it might remain.

Let it be established before thee, v. 26. Let it continue for ever before thee, v. 29. He prays, 1. That the entail of the crown might not be cut off, but remain in his family; that none of his might ever forfeit it, but that they might walk before God, and that would be their establishment. 2. That the kingdom might have its perfection and perpetuity in the kingdom of the Messiah. When Christ for ever sat down on the right hand of God, (Heb. 10. 12.) and received all possible assurance that his seed and throne shall be as the days of heaven, this prayer of David the son of Jesse for his seed was abundantly answered, that it might continue before God for ever. See Ps. 72. 17. The perpetuity of the Messiah's kingdom is the desire and faith of all good people.

CHAP. VIII.

David having sought first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, settling the ark as soon as he was himself well settled, we are here told how all things were added to him. Here is an account, I. Of his conquests. He triumphed over the Philistines, v. 1. v. 2. Over the Moabites, v. 2. 3. Over the king of Zobah, v. 3, 4. Over the Syrians, v. 5. v. 8, 9. 5. Over the Edomites, v. 14. II. Of the presents that were brought him, and the wealth he got from the nations he subdued, which he dedicated to God, v. 9. v. 12. III. Of his court; the administration of his government, (v. 13.) and his chief officers, v. 16. v. 18. This gives us a general idea of the prosperity of David's reign.

1. AND after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines.

2. And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive: and so the Moabites became David's servants, and gave gifts. 3. David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates. 4. And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David bough all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for a hundred chariots. 5. And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men. 6. Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and gave gifts. And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went. 7. And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. 8. And from Betah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass.

God had given David rest from all his enemies that opposed him and made head against him; and he, having made a good use of that rest, has now a commission given him to make war upon them, and to act offensively for the avenging of Israel's quarrels and the recovery of their rights, for as yet they were not in full possession of that country, yet by the promise of God they were entitled to.

1. He quite subdued the Philistines, v. 1. They had attacked him when they thought him weak, (ch. 5. 17.) and went by the worse then; but when he found himself strong, he attacked them, and made himself master of their country. They had long been vexed with oppressors: and David had got no ground against them, but David completed Israel's deliverance, which Samson had begun long before, Judg. 13. 5. Metheg-ammah was Gath, (the chief and royal city of the Philistines,) and the towns belonging to it, among which there was a constant garrison kept by the Philistines on the hill Ammah, (ch. 2. 24.) which was Metheg, a bridle (so it signifies), or curb over the people of Israel, that David took upon him. and used it as a curb upon them. Thus when the strong man is disarmed, the armour wherein he trusted, is taken from him, and used against him, Luke 11. 22. And after the long and frequent struggles which the saints have had with the powers of darkness, like Israel with the Philistines, the Son of David shall tread them all under their feet, and make the saints more than conquerors.

2. He smote the Moabites, and made them tributaries to Israel, v. 2. He divided the country into three parts; two of which he destroyed, casting down the strong holds, and putting all to the sword; the third part he spared, to till the ground, and be servants to Israel. Dr. Lightfoot says, he led them on the ground, and measured them with a cord, which should be slain, and who should live, and they is called measuring the breadth of the valley of Succoth, Ps. 60. 6. The Jews say, he used this severity with the Moabites, because that they had slain his parents, and brethren, whom he put under the protection of the King of Moab during his exile. 1 Sam. 22. 3, 4. He did it in justice, because they had been, and in policy, because, if left in their strength, they still would have been, dangerous enemies to the Israel of God. But observe, though it was necessary that two, like David, should be as sharp as a serpent, that was to keep alive, though it was but one, is ordered to be a full line. Be sure to give that length enough; let the line of mercy be stretched to the utmost, in favorem vitae—so as to favour life: acts of indemnity must be construed so as to enlarge the favour. Now Baham's prophecy was fulfilled, A sacrifice shall arise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, to the uttermost of which the fatal arrow extended, Gen. 24. 17. The Moabites continued tributaries to Israel till after the death of Ahab, (2 Kings 3. 4, 5.) then they rebelled and were never reduced.

3. He smote the Syrians, or Aramites; of them there were two distinct kingdoms, as we find them spoken of in the title of the 66th Psalm, Aram Naharaim, Syria of the rivers, whose head city was Damascus. 1. And Damascus, (v. 13.) and Zobah, (v. 12.) and Zobah, which joined to it, but extended to Euphrates. These were the two northern crowns. 1. David began with the Syrians of Zobah, v. 3, 4. As he went to settle his border at the river Euphrates, (for so far the land convoyed by the divine grant to Abraham and his seed did extend, Gen. 15. 18.) the king of Zobah opposed him, being himself possessed of these countries which belonged to Israel, but David routed his forces, and took his chariots and horsemen. The horsemen are here said to be seven hundred, but 1 Chron. 18. 4, seven thousand. If they divided their horse by ten in a company, as it is probable they did, the captains and companies were 700, but the horsemen were 7000. David heaved the
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16. David reserved only one hundred chariots out of one thousand for his own use; for he placed his strength, not in chariots or horses, but in the living God. (Ps. 20. 7. v.) and wrote it from his own observation, that a horse is a vain thing for safety. Ps. 33. v. 5. so that it was easy for David to make himself master of the country, and garrison it for himself, v. 6. The enemies of God's church, that think to secure themselves, will, prove, in the end, to ruin themselves, by their confederacies with each other. Associate yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Is. 8. 9.

In all these wars, (1.) David was protected. The Lord preserved him whithersoever he went. It seems, he went in person, and, in the cause of God and Israel, jeopardized his own life in the high places of the field; but God covered his head in the day of battle, which he often speaks of, in his Psalm, to the glory of God. (2.) He was enriched. He took the walls of gold which the servants of Hadadezer had in their custody, (v. 7.) and much brass from several cities of Syria, (v. 8.) which he was entitled to not only jure bellii—by the uncontrollable right of the longest sword, ("Get it, and take it,") but by commission from heaven, and the ancient entail of these countries on the seed of Abraham.

3. When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer, 10. Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him, (for Hadadezer had wars with Toi: ) and Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass; 11. Which also king David did dedicate unto the Lord, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued; 12. Of Syria, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, king of Zobah. 13. And David got him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of Salt, being eighteen thousand men. 14. And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons: and all of Edom became David's servants. And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went.

Here is,

1. The court made to David by the king of Hamath, who, it seems, was at this time at war with the king of Zobah. He, hearing of David's success against his enemy, sent his own son—an ambassador to him, (v. 9, 10.) to congratulate him on his victory, to return him thanks for the favour he had done him, in breaking the power of his king, and securing his friendship; thus he not only secured but strengthened himself. And David lost nothing by taking this little prince under his protection, any more than the old Romans did by the like policy; for the wealth he had from the countries he conquered by way of spoil, he had from this by way of present or gratuity: Vessels of silver and gold. Better get by composition than by compulsion.

2. The offering David made to God of the spoils of the nations, and all the rich things that were brought him. He dedicated all to the Lord, v. 11, 12. This crowned all his victories, and made them far to outshine Alexander's, or Caesar's; that they might be an image of that which he aimed at the glory of God. All the precious things he was master of, were dedicated things; that is, they were designed for the building of the temple; and a good omen it was of kindness to the Gentiles in the fulness of time, and of the making of God's house a house of prayer for all people, that the temple was built of the spoils and presents of Gentile nations. In allusion to which, we find the kings of the earth bringing their glory and honour unto the Lord, Rev. 11. 11. The kings of gold David burnt, (ch. 5. 21.) but their vessels of gold he dedicated; thus, in the conquest of a soul, by the grace of the Son of David, what stands in opposition to God must be destroyed, every lust mortified and crucified, but what may glorify him must be dedicated, and the property of it altered; even the merchandise and the hire must be holiness to the Lord, (Isa. 53. 10.) for God designed even the Lord of the whole earth, (Mic. 4. 13.) and then it is truly our own, and that most comfortably.

3. The reputation he got, in a particular manner, by his victory over the Syrians, and their allies the Edomites, who acted in conjunction with them; as appears by comparing the title of the 60th Psalm, which was penned on this occasion, with v. 13, he got him a name, for all that conduct and courage which are the praise of a great and distinguished general. Something extraordinary, it is likely, there was in that action, which turned very much to his honour, yet he is careful to transfer the honour to God, as appears by the psalm he penned on this occasion, v. 12. It is through God, that we do valiantly.

4. His success against the Edomites; they all became David's servants, v. 14. Now, and not till now, Isaac's blessing was accomplished, by which Jacob was made Esau's lord; (Gen. 27. 57. . 40.) and the Edomites continued long tributaries to the kings of Judah, as the Moabites were to the kings of Israel, till, in Joram's time, they revolted, (2 Chron. 21. 8.) as Isaac had there foretold that Esau should, in process of time, break the yoke off his neck. Thus David, by his conquests, and his sins, showed that he had found the time to build the temple. And (2.) Precured wealth for his son, that he might have wherewith to build it. God employs his servants variously; some in one employment, others in another; some in the spiritual battles, others in the spiritual buildings; and one prepares work for the other, that God may have the glory of all. All David's victories were typical of the success of the gospel against the three powers opposed to it; the Son of David rode forth, conquering and to conquer, and he shall reign, till he has brought down all opposing rule, principality, and power: and he has, (Isa. David had, (v. 2.) a line to kill, and a line to save; for the same gospel is to some a savour of life unto life, to others a savour of death unto death.

15. And David reigned over all Israel: and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people. 16. And Zeruiah was over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; 17. And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests; and
Seraiah was the scribe; 18. And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief rulers.

David was not so engaged in his wars abroad, as to neglect the administration of the government at home. 1. His care extended itself to all parts of his dominion. He reigned over all Israel; (v. 15.) not only he had a right to reign over all the tribes, but he did so; they were all safe under his protection, and free to enjoy the fruits of his good government. 2. He did justice with an unbiased unshaken hand; he executed judgment unto all his people; neither did wrong, nor denied or delayed right to any. It bespeaks, (1.) His industry, and close application to business; also his easiness of access, and readiness to admit all addresses and appeals made to him. All his people, even the meanest, and those of the meanest tribes, were welcome to his council-board. (2.) His impartiality and the equity of his proceedings, in administering justice; he never perverted justice for favour or affection, nor had respect of persons, in judgment. Herein was a type of Christ, who was faithful and true, and who doth in righteousness both judge and make war, Rev. 19. 11. See Ps. 72. 1. 2. 3. He kept good order, and good officers, in his court. Under his eye, Our Lord Jesus was established, (for Saul's reign was short and unsettled,) he had the modelling of the administration: in Saul's time, we read of no other great officer than Abner, who was captain of the host; but David instituted more officers. Here are, (1.) Two military officers; Joab that was general of the forces in the field, and Benaiah that was over the Cherethites and Pelethites, who were either the city-train-bands, archers and slingers, so the Chaldees, or rather the life-guard, or standing force, that attended the king's person; the pretorian band, the militia. They were ready to do service at home, to assist in the administration of justice, and to preserve the public peace: we find them employed in proclaiming Solomon, 1 Kings 1. 38. (2.) Two ecclesiastical officers; Zadok and Ahimelech were priests, that is, they were most employed in the public business, in the midst of war, the high priest. (3.) Two civil officers; one that was recorder, or remembrancer, to put the king in mind of business in his season; he was prime minister of state, yet not intrusted with the custody of the king's conscience, as they say of our lord chancellor, but only of the king's memory; let the king be put in mind of business, and he would do it himself. Another was scribe, or secretary of state, that drew up public orders and despatches, and recorded judgments given. Lastly, David's sons, as they grew up to be fit for business, were made chief rulers; they had places of honour and trust assigned them, either in the household, or in the camp, or in the courts of justice, according as their genius led them. They were chief about the king; (so it is explained, 1 Chron. 18. 17.) employed near him, that they might be under his eyes. Our Lord Jesus has appointed officers in his kingdom, for his honour and the good of the community; when he ascended on high, he gave these gifts, (Eph. 4. 8. 11.) to every man how work, Mark 13. 34. David made his sons chief rulers; but all believers, Christ's spiritual seed, are better preferred, for they are made to our God kings and priests, Rev. 1. 6.

CHAP. IX.

The only thing recorded in this chapter, is, the kindness David showed to Jonathan's seed for his sake. 1. The kind inquiry he made after the remains of the house of Saul, and his discovery of Mephibosheth, v. 1. 4. II. The kind reception he gave to Mephibosheth, when he was brought to him, v. 5. 8. III. The kind provision he made for him and his, v. 9. 13. 1. AND David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake? 2. And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba; and when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. 3. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet. 4. And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar. 5. Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar. 6. Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth! And he answered, Behold thy servant. 7. And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. 8. And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?

Here is,

I. David's inquiry after the remains of the ruined house of Saul, v. 1. This was a great while after his accession to the throne, for it should seem that Mephibosheth, who was but five years old when Saul died, had now a son born. 12. David had too long forgotten his obligations to Jonathan, but now, at length, they are brought to his mind. It is good sometimes to behold ourselves, whether there be any promises or engagements that we have neglected to make good; better do it late than never. The compendium which Paul gives us of the life of David, is this, (Acts 13. 36.) that he served his generation according to the will of God, that is, he was a man that made it his business to do good; witness this instance, where we may observe, 1. That he sought an opportunity to do good. He might perhaps have satisfied his conscience with the performance of his promise to Jonathan, if he had been only ready, upon request or application made to him by any of his seed, to help and succour them. But he does more, he inquires of those about him first, (v. 1.) and when he met with a person that was likely to inform him, asked him particularly, "Is there any yet left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness?" v. 3. Is there any, not only to whom I may do justice, (Numb. 5. 8.) but to whom I may show kindness?" Note, Good men should seek opportunities of doing good. The liberal. ver. 5. liberal things, Is. 32. 8. For the most proper objects of our kindness and charity are
such as we, nor be frequently met with without inquiry. The most necessitous are the least
clamous.
2. Those he inquired after, were the remains of the house of Saul, to whom he would show kindness
for Jonathan's sake; Is there any left of the house of Saul? Saul had a very numerous family, (1 Chron. 8.
33.) enough to replenish a country, and yet so exempted, that none of it appeared; but it was come to
this inquiry, Is there any left? See how the provision of God can empty full families; see how the
sin of man will do it! Saul's was a bloody house, no marvel it was thus reduced, ch. 21. 1. But though
God visited the iniquity of the father upon the chil-
dren, David would not, Is there any left that I
can show kindness to, not for Saul's own sake, but
for Jonathan's?
1. Saul was David's sworn enemy, and yet he
would show kindness to his house with all his heart,
and was forward to do it. He does not say, Is
there any left of the house of Saul, that I may find
some way to take them off, and prevent them giv-
ing disturbance to me or my successor. It was
against Abimelech's mind, that any one was left of
the house of Gideon, (Judg. 9. 5.) and against
Athaliah's mind, that any one was left of the seed
royal; (2 Chron. 22. 10, 11.) these were usurped
governments. David's need not such vile sup-
pports; he was desirous to show kindness to the house
of Saul, not only because he trusted in God and feared
his providence could do him no harm, but because he
knew he was of a chivalrous disposition, and forgave
what they had done to him. Note, We must evi-
dence the sincerity of our forgiving those that have
been any way unjust or injurious to us, by being
ready, as we have opportunity, to show kindness
both to them and their. We must not only not avenge ourselves upon them, but we must love them,
and do them good; (Matt. 5. 44.) and not be back-
ward how day office of love and good will, that they
have done us many an injury. (1 Pet. 3. 9.) but contrariwise, blessing. This is the way to o
come evil, and to find mercy for ourselves and ours,
when we or they need it.
2. Jonathan was David's sworn friend, and therefore he would show kindness to his house.
This teaches us, [1.] To be mindful of our cove-
ant. The kindness we have promised, we must con
ventionally lend and send, though it should not be claimed. God is faithful to us, let us not be un-
faithful to one another. [2.] To be mindful of our
friendships, our old friendships. Note, Kindness
to our friends, even to them and theirs, is one of
the laws of our holy religion. He that has friends,
must show himself friendly, Prov. 18. 24. If Pro-
vidence has raised us, and our friends and their
families are brought low, yet we must not forget
former acquaintances, but rather look upon that as
giving us so much the firmer opportunity of being
kind to them; then our friends have most need of
us, and we are in the best capacity to help them.
Though there be not a solemn league of friendship
tying us to this constancy of love, yet there is a se-
cred law of friendship no less obliging, that to him
that is in misery, pity should be showed by his friend, and the friend should be careful that
Friendship obliges us to take cognizance of the
families and surviving relations of those we have
loved, who, when they left us, left behind them
their bodies, their names, and their posterity, to be
kind to.
3. The kindness he promised to show them, he
calls the kindness of God; not only great kindness,
but (1.) Kindness, in pursuance of the covenant
that was between him and Jonathan, to which God
was a witness. See 1 Sam. 20. 42. (2.) Kindness,
after God's example; for we must be merciful as he
is. 1. He spares those whom he has advantage
against, and so must we. Jonathan's request to
David was, (1 Sam. 20. 14.) Show me the kindness
of the Lord, that I die not, and the same to my
seed. The kindness of God in the presence of one
instance of kindness than one can ordinarily expect
from men. (3.) It is kindness done after a godly
sort, and with an eye to God, and his honour and
favour.
II. Information given him concerning Mephibos-
gheth, the son of Jonathan. Ziba was an old retire
ner to Saul's family, and knew the state of it; he is sent
for and examined, and acquaints the king that
Jonathan's son is alive, and come to be so, we read before, (ch. 4. 4.) and that
he lived obscure, probably, among his mother's
relations in Lo-debar, in Gilead, on the other side
Jordan, where he was forgotten as a dead man out
of mind, but bore it the more easily, because he could
remember little of the honour he fell from.
III. The bringing of him to court. The king sent
(Ziba, it is likely) to bring him up to Jerusalem with
all convenient speed, v. 5. Thus he eased Machir
of his trouble, and, perhaps, recompensed him for
what he had laid out on Mephibosheth's account.
This Machir appears to have been a very generous
free-hearted man, and to have entertained Mephi-
boseeth, not out of any disaffection to David, or his
government, but in compassion to the reduced son
of a prince, for afterward we find him kind to Dav-
idd himself in the unusual and approaches of their
in-
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m-

named (ch. 17. 27.) among those that furnished the
king with what he wanted at Mahanaim; though
when David sent for Mephibosheth from him, he
little thought that the time would come, when he
himself would gladly be beholden to him; and per-
haps Machir was then the more ready to help Da-
vid, in recompense for his kindness to Mephi-
boseeth; therefore we should be forward to give,
because we know not but we ourselves greater at
time be in want; (Eccl. 11. 2.) And he that watereth,
shall be watered also himself. Prov. 11. 25.
Now, 1. Mephibosheth presents himself to David
with all the respect that was owing to his character.
Lame as he was, he fell on his face, and did rever-
ence, v. 6. David had thus made his honours to
Mephibosheth's father, Jonathan, when he was next
to the throne; (1 Sam. 20. 41.) he bowed himself
him three times, and honorifically, and in a
manner, addresses him, when affairs are so com-
pletely reversed. Those who, when they are in
inferior relations, show respect, when they come to
be advanced, shall have respect shown them.
2. David received him with all the kindness that
could be. (1.) He spoke to him as one surprised,
but pleased to see him. "Mephibosheth! Why, is
there such a man living?" He remembered his
name, for it is probable that he was born about the
time of the intimacy between him and Jonathan.
(2.) He bade him not be afraid. Fear not, v. 7.
It is probable that the sight of David put him into
some confusion: to free him from which, he assures
him that he sent for him, not out of any jealousy
he had of him, or with any bad design upon him, but
to show him kindness. Great men should not take
a pleasure in displeasing those whom they have
advantaged, and the graces of their inferiors, (for the great God does not,) but should en-
courage them. (3.) He gives him, by grant from
the crown, all the land of Saul his father, that is,
his paternal estate, which was forfeited by Ishbo-
sheth's rebellion, and added to his own revenue.
This was a real favour, and more than giving him a
kin's word. True friendship will be generous. (4.)
Though he had thus given him sufficient to main-
tain him, yet, for Jonathan's sake, (whom perhaps he saw some resemblance of in
Mephibosheth's face,) he will take him to be a
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constant guest at his own table, where he will not only be comfortably fed, but have company and attendance suitable to his birth and quality. Though Mephibosheth was lame and unsightly, and does not appear to have any great fitness for business, yet, for his good father's sake, David will take him to be one of his family.

3. Mephibosheth accepts this kindness with great humility and self-abasement. He was none of those that take every favour as a debt, and think every thing a thing of course. The text, however, on the contrary, speaks as one amazed at the grants David made him; (v. 8.) What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am? How does he viliify himself! Though the son of a prince, and the grandson of a king, yet, his family being under guilt and wrath, and himself poor and lame, he calls himself a dead dog before David. Note, It is good to have the heart humble under humbling providences: if, when Divine Providence brings our condition down, divine grace brings our spirits down with it, we shall be easy. And those who thus humble themselves, shall be exalted. How does he magnify David's kindness! It had been easy to lessen it, if he had been so disposed. Had David restored him his father's estate, it was but giving him his own. Did he take him to his table? That was policy, that he might have an eye upon him. But Mephibosheth thinks all kind, that David said and did, and himself least than the least of his favours. See 1 Sam. 18. 18.

9. Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul, and to all his house. 10. Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth, thy master's son, shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons, and twenty servants. 11. Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons. 12. And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Miac. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth. 13. So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.

The matter is here settled concerning Mephibosheth.

1. This grant of his father's estate is confirmed to him, and Ziba called to be a witness to it; (v. 9.) and, it should seem, Saul had a very good estate, and an estate of a mighty man of substance. (1 Sam. 9. 1.) and he had fields and vineyards to bestow, 1 Sam. 22. 7. Be it ever so much, Mephibosheth is now master of it all.

2. The management of the estate is committed to Ziba, who knew what it was, and how to make the most of it, whom having been his father's servant, he might confide in, and who, having a numerous family of sons and servants, had hands sufficient to be employed about it, v. 10. Thus Mephibosheth is made very easy, having a good estate without care, and is in a fair way of being very rich; having much coming in, and little occasion to spend, him or being kept at David's table. Yet he must have food to eat besides. He had, provisions for his son and servants, and Ziba's sons and servants would come in for their share of his revenue; for much reason, perhaps, their number is here mentioned, fifteen sons and twenty servants, who would require nearly all there was; for as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them, and what good has the owner thereof, save the beholding of him with his eyes? Ecc. 5. 11. All that dwelt in the house of Ziba, were servants of Mephibosheth; (v. 12.) that is, they all lived upon him, and made a prey of his estate, under pretence of waiting on him, and doing him service. The Jews have a saying, "He that multiplies servants, multiplies thieves." Ziba is now pleased, for he loves wealth, and will have abundance: As the king has commanded, so shall thy servant do; (v. 11.) let me alone with the estate: and as for Mephibosheth," (they seem to be Ziba's words,) "if the king please, he need not trouble the court, he shall eat at my table, and be as well treated as one of the king's sons." But David will have him to his own table, and Mephibosheth is as well pleased with his post, as Ziba with his; how unfaithful Ziba was to him, we shall find afterward, ch. 16. 3.

Now because David was a type of Christ, his Lord and Son, his Root and Offspring, let his kindness to Mephibosheth serve to form and confirm the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward fallen man, which yet he was under no obligation to, as David was to Jonathan. Man was convicted of rebellion against God, and, like Saul's house, under a sentence of rejection from him, was not only brought low and impoverished, but lame and impotent, made so by the fall: the son of God inquires after this degenerate race, that he may not be without them. Provision is made, and called the kingdom's, and is given to humble, and commit themselves to him, he restores the forfeited inheritance, he entitles them to a better paradise than that which Adam lost, and takes them into communion with himself, sets them with his children at his table, and feasts them with the dainties of heaven. Lord, what is man, that thou shouldest thus magnify him!

CHAP. X.

This chapter gives us an account of a war David had with the Ammonites, and the Syrins their allies, with the occasion and success of it. 1. David sends a friendly embassy to Hanun king of the Ammonites, v. 1, 2. II. He, upon a base surmise that it was ill-intentioned, abused David's ambassadors, v. 3, 4. III. David resenting it, (v. 5.) the Ammonites prepared for war against him, v. 6. IV. David carries the war into their country, sends Joab and Abishai against them, who address themselves to the battle with a great deal of conduct and bravery, v. 7. 12. V. The Ammonites, and the Syrins their allies, were totally routed, v. 13. VI. The fate of the Syrins, which rallied again, were a second time defeated, v. 15. 19. Thus did David advance his own reputation for gratitude, in returning kindnesses; and justice, in repaying injuries.

1. And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. 2. Then said David, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him, by the hand of his servants, for his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon. 3. And the princes of the children of Ammon
said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou
that David doth honour thy father, that he
hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not
David rather sent his servants unto thee
to search the city, and to spy it out, and to over-
throw it? 4 Wherefore Hanun took David's
servants, and shaved off the one half of
their beards, and cut off their garments
in the middle, even to their buttocks, and
sent them away. 5 When they told it unto
David, he sent to meet them, because the
men were greatly ashamed: and the king
said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be
grown, and then return.

Here is,
I. The great respect David paid to his neighbour,
the king of the Ammonites, v. 1, 2. 1. The induce-
ment to it was, some kindnesses he had formerly
received from Nahash, the deceased king. He
showed kindness to me, says David; (v. 2.) and there-
fore (having lately had satisfaction in showing kind-
ness to Mephibosheth, for his father's sake) he re-
solves to show kindness to his son, and to keep up a
friendly correspondence with him. Thus the plea-
sure of doing one kind and generous action, should
excite us to another. Nahash had been an enemy
to Israel, a cruel enemy, (1 Sam. 11. 2.) and yet
had showed kindness to David, perhaps only in con-
tradiction to Saul, who was unkind to him: how-
ever, if David received kindness, he is not nice in
examining the grounds and principles of it, but re-
solves gratefully to return it. If a Pharaoh give
alms in pride, though God will not reward it, yet
he that receives the alms, ought to return thanks
for it: God knows the heart, but we do not. 2.
The particular instance of respect, was, sending an
embassy to condole with him on his father's death,
as is common among princes in alliance with each
other. David sent to comfort him. Note, It is a
comfort to children, when their parents are dead,
to find that their parents' friends are theirs, and
that they intend to keep up acquaintance with them.
It is a comfort to mourners, to find that there are
those who mourn with them, are sensible of their
loss, and share with them in it. It is a comfort to
those who are honouring the memory of their de-
ceased relations, to find there are others who like-
wise honour it, and had a value for those they valued.

II. The great affront which Hanun the king of the
Ammonites put upon David in his ambassadors.
1. He heartened to the spiteful suggestions of his
princes, who insinuated that David's ambassadors,
under the plea of sending comforters, were coming
to spy. v. 3. False men are ready to think others as
false as themselves; and they that bear ill-will to
their neighbours, are resolved not to believe that
their neighbours bear any good-will to them. They
would not thus have imagined that David dissen-
died, but that they were conscious to themselves
that they could have dissembled, to serve a turn.
Ill-founded suspicions arise. But the suspicion, not
on this, is, that there is nothing so well meant, but it may be ill-interpreted, and is wont to be by men who love nobody but them-
Cie. Men of the greatest honour and virtue must
not think it strange if they be thus misrepresented.
Charity thinketh no evil. 2. Entertaining this vie
suggestion, he basely abused David's ambassadors,
like a man of a sordid villainous spirit, that was lit-
to rike a kennel than to wear a crown. If he
had any reason to suspect that David's messengers
came on a bad design, he had done prudently

enough to be upon the reserve with them, and
to dismiss them as soon as he could; but it is plain he
had some other occasion to put the utmost disgrace
he could upon them, out of an antiquity to their
king and country. They were themselves men of
honour, and much more so, as they represented the
prince that sent them; they and their reputation
were under the special protection of the law of na-
tions; they put a confidence in the Ammonites, and
came among them unarmed; yet Hanun used them
like rogues and vagabonds, and would, shaved off
the one half of their beards and cut off their gar-
ments in the midst, to expose them to the contempt
and ridicule of his servants, that they might make
sport with them, and that they might seem vile.

III. David's tender concern for his servants that
were thus abused. He sent to meet them, and
to let them know how much he interested himself in
their quarrel, and how soon he would avenge it, and
departed them to stay at Jericho, a private place,
where they would not have occasion to come into
company, till that half of their beards, which was
shaved off, was grown to such a length that the other
half might be decently cut to it, v. 5. The
Jews wore their beards long, reckoning it an honour
to appear aged and grave; and therefore it was not
fit that persons of their rank and figure should ap-
pear at court unlike their neighbours. Change of
raiment, it is likely, they had worn them, to put on,
instead of those into which they were cut off; but the loss
of their beards would not be so soon repaired; yet, in
time, those would grow again, and all would be well.
Let us learn not to lay too much to heart unjust re-
proaches; after a while, they will wear off of them-
selves, and turn only to the shame of their authors,
while the injured reputation in a little time grows
again, as these beards did. God will bring forth
thy righteousness as the morning, therefore will pat-
ience for him, Ps. 37. 6, 7.

Some have thought that David, in the indignity he
received from the king of Ammon, was but well
either served for courting and complimenting that
pagan prince, whom he knew to be an invertebrate
enemy to Israel, and might now remember how,
when he would have put out the right eye of the
men of Jabesh-gilead, he designed that, as he did this,
but a reproach upon him, 1 Sam. 11. 2.
What better usage could he expect from such a
spiritful people? Why should he covet the friendship of a people, which Israel must have
so little to do with, as that an Ammonite might not
enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to the
tenth generation, Deut. 23. 3.

6. And when the children of Ammon saw
that they stank before David, the children of
Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of
Beth-rehob, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty
thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a
thousand men, and of Ish-tob twelve thou-
sand men. 7. And when David heard of
it, he sent Joab, and all the host of the
mighty men. 8. And the children of Am-
on came out, and put the battle in array
at the entering in of the gate: and the Sy-
rians of Zoba, and of Rehob, and Ish-tob,
and Maacah, were by themselves in the
field. 9. When Joab saw that the front of
the battle was against him before and be-
hind, he chose of all the choice men of Israel,
and put them in array against the Syrians:
10. And the rest of the people he delivered
into the hand of Abishai his brother, that he might put them in array against the children of Amnon. 11. And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me; but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee. 12. Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good. 13. And Joab drew nigh, and the people that were with him, unto the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him. 14. And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city. So Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem.

Here is,
1. The preparation which the Ammonites make for war, v. 6. They saw they had made themselves very odious to David, and obnoxious to his just displeasure; this they might easily foresee, when they abused his ambassadors, which was no other than a preliminary to war, and a bold defiance of him. Yet, it seems, they had not considered how unable they were, with their thousands, to meet his; for, now they found themselves an unequal match, and were forced to hire forces of other nations into their service. Thus sinners daringly provoke God, and expose themselves to his wrath; and never consider that he is stronger than they, 1 Cor. 10. 22. The Ammonites gave the affright first, and they were then the creatures that raised forces to justify it. They thereupon armed themselves, and begged David's pardon, probably an honorary satisfaction might have atoned for the offence. But when they were thus desperately resolved to stand by what they had done, they courted their own ruin.

II. The speedy descent which David's forces made upon them, v. 7. When David heard of their military preparations, he sent Joab with a great army to attack them, v. 7. They that are in war, with the Son of David, not only give the provocation, but begin the war; for he waits to be gracious, but they strengthen themselves against him, and therefore, if they turn not, he will whet his sword, Ps. 7. 12. God has forces to send against those that set his wrath at defiance, (Isa. 5. 19.) which will convince them, when it is too late, that none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. It was David's prudence to carry the war into their own country, and fight them at the entering in of the gate of their capital city, Rabbah, as some think, or Medeba, a city in their borders, before which they pitched to guard their coast, 1 Chron. 19. 7. "Such are the terrors and desolations of war, that every good prince will, in love to his people, keep it, as much as may be, at a distance from them."

III. Preparations made on both sides for an engagement. 1. The enemy disposed themselves into two bodies, one of Ammonites, which, being their own, were posted at the gate of the city; the other of Syrians, whom they had taken into their pay, and who were therefore posted at a distance in the field, to charge the forces of Israel in the flank or rear, while the Ammonites charged them in the front, v. 8. 2. Joab, like a wise general, was soon aware of the design, and accordingly divided his forces: the choicest men he took under his own command, to fight the Syrians, whom, probably, he knew to be the better soldiers, and, being hired men, better versed in the art of war, v. 9. The rest of the forces he put under the command of Abishai his brother, to engage the rest of the Ammonites, v. 10. It should seem, Joab found the enemy so well prepared to receive them, that his conduct and courage were never so tried as now.

IV. Joab's speech before the battle, v. 11, 12. It is not long, but pertinent and brave. 1. He prudently concurs the matter with Abishai his brother, that the dividing of the forces might not be the weakening of them; but that, which put a sorely wounded hand hard upon, the other should come in to its assistance. He supposes the worst, that one of them should be obliged to give back; and, in that case, upon a signal given, the other should send a detachment to relieve it. Note, Mutual helpfulness is brotherly duty. If occasion be, thou shalt help me, and I will help thee. Christ's soldiers should thus strengthen one another's hands in their spiritual warfare. The strong must succour and help the weak. They that through grace are conquerors over temptation, must counsel, and comfort, and pray for, those that are tempted: When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren, Luke 22. 32. The members of the natural body help one another, 1 Cor. 12. 21. 2. He bravely encourages himself, and his brother, and the rest of the officers and soldiers, to do their utmost. Great dangers put an edge upon true courage. When Joab saw the front of the battle was against him, both before and behind, instead of giving orders to make an honourable retreat, he animates his men to charge so much the more vigorously: Be of good courage, and let us play the men, not for pay and pretence, for honour and fame, but for our people, and the cities of our God; for the public safety and welfare, in which the glory of God is so much interested. God and our country, was the word. "Let us be valiant from a principle of love to Israel, that are our people, descended from the same stock, for whom we are employed, and in whose peace we shall have peace; and from a principle of love to God, for they are his cities that we are fighting in the defence of." The relation which any person or thing stands in to God, should endear it to us, and engage us to do our utmost in its service. 3. He piously leaves the issue with God: "When thine hour doth come, according to the duty of our place, let the Lord do that which seemeth him good." Let nothing be wanting in us, whatever the success be; let God's work be done by us, and then God's will be done concerning us. When we make conscience of doing our duty, we may, with the greatest satisfaction, leave the event with God; not thinking that our valour bids it to prosper us, but that still he may do as he pleaseth, yet hoping for his salvation in his own way and time.

V. The victory Joab obtained over the confederate forces of Syria and Ammon, v. 13, 14. He provided for the worst, and put the case that the Syrians or Ammonites might prove too strong for him; (v. 11.) but he proved too strong for them both. We do not hinder our success by preparing for disappointment. The Syrians were first routed by Joab, and then the Ammonites by Abishai; the latter seem not to have fought at all, but, upon the retreat of the Syrians, to have fled into the city. It is a temptation to soldiers to fly, when they have a city at their backs to fly to. It is one thing when men may either fight or fly, and another thing when they must either fight or die.

15. And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel, they gathered themselves together. 16. And Hadad-zei-
sent, and brought out the Syrians that were beyond the river: and they came to Helam; and Shobach, the captain of the host of Hadarezer, went before them. 17. And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and came over Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him. 18. And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, which died there. 19. And when all the kings that were servants to Hadarezer saw that they were shitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

Here is,

1. A new attempt of the Syrians to recover their lost honour, and to check the progress of David's victory. The forces that were lately dispersed, rallied again; and gather themselves together, v. 15. Even the baffled cause will make head as long as there is any life in it; the enemies of the Son of David do so, Matth. 22. 34. Rev. 19. 19. These, being conscious of their insufficiency, called in the aid of their allies and dependencies, on the other side the river, (v. 16.) and, being thus recruited, they hoped to make their part good against Israel, but only knew not the thoughts of the Lord, for he gathereth them as sheaves into the floor; see Mi. 4. 11-13. The defeat of this attempt by the vigilance and valour of David, who, upon notice of their design, resolved not to stay till they attacked him, but went in person at the head of his army over Jordan, (v. 17.) and in a pitched battle routed the Syrians; (v. 18.) slew 7000 men, who belonged to 700 chariots, and 40,000 horsemen, and 30,000 foot soldiers, as appears by comparing 1 Chron. 19. 18. Their general was killed in the battle, and David came home in triumph, as he doubted.

2. The consequence of this victory over the Syrians. (1.) David gained several tributaries, v. 19. The kings, or petty princes, that had been subject to Hadarezer, when they saw how powerful David was, very wisely made peace with Israel, when they found they could not make war with, and served them who were able to give them protection. Thus the promise made to Abraham, (Gen. 15. 18.) and repeated to Joshua, (ch. 1. 4.) that the borders of Israel should extend to the river Euphrates, was performed at length. (2.) He Ammonites lost their old allies. The Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon, not because they had an unrighteous cause, (justifying a crime which was a breach of the law of nature,) but because they found it was an unsuccessful cause. It is dangerous helping those that have God against them; for when they fail, their helpers will fail with them.

Jesus Christ, the son of David, sent his ambassadors, his apostles and ministers, after all his servants the prophets, to the Jewish Church and nation; but they treated them shamefully, as Hanun did David's ambassadors; mocked them, abused them, slew them; and this was it that filled the measure of their iniquity, and brought upon them ruin without remedy; (Matt. 21. 35, 41.—22. 7; compare 2 Chron. 36. 16.) for Christ takes the affronts and injuries done to his ministers, as done to himself, and will avenge them accordingly.

CHAP. XI.

What David said of the mournful report of Saul's death, may more fitly be applied to the sad story of this chapter, the adultery and murder David was guilty of—Tell it not my soul. Publish it not in the streets of Jesuelon. We wish we could draw a veil over, and the sight never be known, might never be said, that David did such things as are here recorded of him; but it cannot, it must not, be concealed: the scripture is faithful in relating the sins even of those whom it most applauds, which is an instance of the sincerity of the penman, and an evidence that it was not written to serve any party; and even such stories as these were written for our learning that he that thinketh he standeth, let him take heed he lest he fall; and that others' harms may be our warnings. Many, no doubt, have been imbodlled to sin, and hardened in it, by this story, and to them it is a shame of death unto life. They are very great sins, and greatly aggravated, which we find David guilty of. 1. He committed adultery with Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah, v. 1-5. II. He endeavoured to father the spurious brood upon Uriah, v. 6-13. III. When that project failed, he plotted the death of Uriah by the sword of the children of Ammon, and effected it, v. 14.—25. IV. He married Bathsheba, v. 26, 27. Is this David? Is this the man after God's own heart? How is his behaviour changed, worse than it was before Abimelech! How is this gold become dim? Let him that readeth understand what the best of men are, when God leaves them to themselves.

1. And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem. 2. And it came to pass in an evening-tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house; and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. 3. And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? 4. And David sent messengers, and took her: and she came in unto him, and he lay with her, (for she was purified from her uncleanness,) and she returned unto her house. 5. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.

Here is,

1. David's glory in pursuing the war against the Ammonites, v. 1. We cannot take that pleasure in viewing this great action, which hitherto we have taken in observing David's achievements, because the beauty of it was stained and sullied by sin; otherwise we might take notice of David's wisdom and bravery in following his blow. Having routed the army of the Ammonites in the field, as soon as ever the season of the year permitted, he sent more forces to waste the country, and further to avenge the murder of his ambassadors. Rabbah, their metropolis, made a stand, and held out a great while; that city Joab laid close siege to, and it was at the time of that siege, that David fell into this sin.

II. David's shame, in being himself conquered.
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and led captive, by his own lust. The sin he was guilty of, was adultery, against the letter of the seventh commandment, and (in the judgment of the patriarchal age) a heinous crime, and an iniquity to be punished by the judges; (Job 31. 11.) a sin which takes away the heart, and gets a man a wound and dishonour, more than any other, and that more, because it is not enjoined against.

1. Observe the occasions of this sin, which led to it.

(1.) Neglect of his business. When he should have been abroad with his army in the field, fighting the battles of the Lord, he devoted the care upon others, and he himself tarried still at Jerusalem, v. 1. To the war with the Syrians David went in person, ch. 10. 17. Had he been now at his post at the head of his forces, he had been out of the way of this. When we are out of the way of our duty, we are in temptation.

(2.) Love of ease, and the indulgence of a slothful temper. He came off his bed at evening-tide; (v. 2.) there he had dozed away the afternoon in idleness, which he should have spent in some exercise, for his own improvement, or the good of others. He used to pray, not only morning and evening, but at noon, in the day of his trouble: it is to be feared he had, this noon, omitted it.

We are more likely to yield to sin when we give ourselves up to indolence. The bed of sloth oft proves the bed of lust.

(3.) A wandering eye. He saw a woman washing herself, probably from some ceremonial pollution, according to the law. This sin came in at the eye, as Eve’s did. Perhaps, he sought to see her; at least, he did not practice according to his own prayer. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and his son’s caution in a like case, Look not thou on the wine when it is red. Either he had not, like Job, made a covenant with his eyes, or, at this time, he had forgotten it.

2. The steps of the sin. When he saw her, lust immediately conceived, and, (1.) He inquired who she was, (v. 3.) perhaps, intending only, if she were unmarried, to take her to wife, as he had taken several; but if she were a wife, having no design upon her. (2.) The corrupt desire growing more violent; though he was told she was a wife, and whose wife she was, yet he sent messengers for her, and then, it may be, intended only to please himself with her company and conversation. But, (3.) When she came, he lay with her, she too easily consenting, because he was a great man, and famed for his goodness too; surely (thinks he) that of the no sin, which such a man as David is the mover of. See how the way of sin is down-hill; when men begin to do evil, they cannot soon stop themselves. The beginning of lust, as of strife is like the letting forth of water; it is therefore wisdom to leave it off before it be meddled with. The foolish fly fires her wings, and fools away her life, at last, by playing about the candle.

3. The sins of Uriah. (1.) He was now in years, fifty at least, some think more, when those lusts, which are more properly youthful, one would think, should not have been violent in him. (2.) He had many wives and concubines of his own; this is insisted on, ch. 12. 8. (3.) Uriah, whom he wronged, was one of his own worthies; a person of honour and virtue, one that was now abroad in his service, jeopardizing his life in the high places of the fight; and thus to the honour and safety of him and his kingdom, where he himself should have been. (4.) Bath-sheba, whom he debauched, was a lady of good reputation, and, till she was drawn by him and his influence into this wickedness, no doubt, had preserved her purity: little did she think that ever she could have done so bad a thing, as to forsake the guide of her youth, and forget the covenant of her God; nor perhaps could any one in the world, but David, have prevailed against her. The adulterer not only wrongs and ruins his own soul, but as much as he can, another’s soul too. (5.) David was a king, whom God had intrusted with the sword of justice, and the execution of the law upon other criminals, particularly upon adulterers, who were, by the law, to be put to death; for him therefore to be guilty of these crimes himself, was to make himself a pattern, when he should have been a terror, to evil doers. With what face could he rebuke or punish that in others, which he was conscious to himself of being guilty of? See Rom. 2. 22.

Much more might be said to aggravate the sin; and I can think but of one excuse for it, which is, that it was done but once; it was far from being his practice; it was by the surprise of a temptation that he was drawn into it. He was none of these, of whom the prophet complains, that they were as sed horses, neighing every one after his neighbour’s wife; (Jer. 5. 8.) but, this once, God left him to himself, as he did Hezekiah, that he might know what was in his heart, 2 Chron. 32. 31. Had he been told of it before, he would have said, as Haman, What is this thing that I hear? but in this instance we are taught, what need we have to pray every day, Father, in heaven, lead us not into temptation, and to watch, that we enter not into it.

6. And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7. And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered. 8. And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king’s house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king. 9. But Uriah slept at the door of the king’s house, with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house. 10. And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house? 11. And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields: shall I then go into mine house, to eat, and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing. 12. And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to-day also, and to-morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day and the morrow. 13. And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

Uriah, we may suppose, had now been absent from his wife for some weeks, making the campaign in the country of the Ammonites, and not intending to return till the end of it: the situation of his wife would bring to light the hidden works of darkness; and when Uriah, at his return, should
find how he had been abused, and by whom, it might well be expected, 1. That he would prosecute his wife, according to law, and have her stemmed to death; for jealousy is the rage of a man, especially a man of honour; and he that is thus injured, will not share in the day of vengeance, Prov. 6. 34. This appeared to be the case, when she sent to let David know she was with child, intimating that he was concerned to protect her, which, it is likely, if he had not promised her so to do, (so wretchedly abusing his royal power,) she would not have consented to him. Hope of impunity is a great encouragement to iniquity. 2. It might also be expected that since he could not prosecute David by law for an offence of this nature, he would take revenge another way, and raise a rebellion against him. There have been instances of kings, who, by provocations of this nature, given to some of their powerful subjects, have lost their crowns.

To prevent this double mischief, David endeavoured to father the child which should be born, upon Uriah himself, and therefore sends for him, to stay a night or two in his own house. Observe,

I. How the plot was laid. Uriah must come home from the army, under pretence of bringing David an account how the war prospered, and how they went on with the siege of Rabbah, v. 7. Thus doth he pretend a more than ordinary concern for his army, when that was, at present, the least thing in his thoughts; if he had not another turn to serve, an express, of much less figure than Uriah, might have sufficed to bring him a report of the state of the war. David, having such a much conference with Uriah as he thought requisite to cover the design, sent him to his house, and, that he might be the more pleasant there, sent a dish of meat for the entertainment of himself and his wife, v. 8. When that project failed the first night, and Uriah, being weary of his journey, and more desirous of sleep than meat, lay all night in the guard-chamber, the next night, he made him drunk, (v. 13.) or made him merry; tempted him to drink more than was fit, that he might forget his vow, (v. 11.) and might be disposed to go home to his own bed; to which, perhaps, if David could have made him dead drunk, he would have ordered him to be carried. It is a very wicked thing, upon any design whatsoever, to make a person drunk; Woe to him that doth so, Hab. 2. 15, 16. God will put into the mouth of the cup; it shall trouble him with sweetmeats, and the hands of others the cup of drunkenness. Robbing a man of his reason, is worse than robbing him of his money; and drawing him into sin, worse than drawing him into any trouble whatsoever. Every good man, especially every magistrate, should endeavour to prevent this sin, by admonishing, restraining, and denying the glass to those whom they see falling into excess; but to further it, is to do the Devil's work as factors for him, to effect it.

II. How this plot was defeated by Uriah's firm resolution not to lie in his own bed; both nights, he slept with the life-guard, and went not down to his house, though, it is probable, his wife pressed him to do it as much as David, v. 9, 12. Now, 1. Some think he suspected what was done, being informed of his wife's attendance at court, and therefore he would not go near her. But if he had had any suspicion of that kind, surely he might have opened the letter that David sent by him to Joab, 2. Whether he suspected any thing or no, Providence put this resolution into his heart, and kept him to it, for the discovering of David's sin, and that the baffling of his design to conceal it might awaken David's conscience to confess it, and repent of it. 3. The reason he gave to David of this strange instance of self-denial and mortification, was very brave, v. 11. That while the army was encamped in the field, he would not lie at ease in his own house. The ark is in a tent, whether at home, in the tent David had pitched for it, or abroad, with Joab in the camp, is not certain. Joab, and all the mighty men of Israel, the hired and the wages ready, and much exposed to the weather, and to the enemy; and shall I go take my ease and pleasure at my own house?" No, he protests he will not do it. Now, (1.) This was in itself a generous resolution, and shows Uriah to be a man of a public spirit, bold and hearty, and mortified to the delights of sense. In times of public difficulty and danger, it does not become us to repose ourselves in security, or roll ourselves in pleasure; or, with the king and Haman, to sit down to drink, when the city Shushan was perplexed, Esth. 3. 15. We should voluntarily endure hardness, when the church of God is constrained to endure it. (2.) It might have been of use to awaken David's conscience, and make his heart to smite him for what he had done. [1.] That he had basely abused so brave a man as Uriah was, a man so heartily concerned for him and his kingdom, and that acted for him and it with so much vigour. [2.] That he was himself so much unlike him. The consideration of the public hardships and hazards kept Uriah from lawful pleasures, yet could not keep David, through more nearly interested, from unlawful ones. Uriah's severity to himself should have shamed David for his indulgence of himself. The law was, When the host goeth forth against the enemy, then, in a special manner, keep thyself from every wicked thing, Deut. 23. 9. Uriah outdid that law, but David violated it.

14. And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. 15. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die. 16. And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were. 17. And the men of the city went out and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also. 18. Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war; 19. And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king, 20. And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? 21. Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also. 22. So the messenger went, and came and showed David all that Joab had sent him for. 23. And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the
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field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate. 24. And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants, and some of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also. 25. Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee; for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it; and encourage thou him. 26. And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. 27. And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

When David's project of fathering the child upon Uriah himself failed, so that, in process of time, Uriah would certainly know the wrong that had been done him; to prevent the fruits of his revenge, that would be great. When David had taken him off, and then neither he nor Bath-sheba would be in any danger; what prosecution could there be, when there was no prosecutor? And suggesting further, that when he was out of the way, Bath-sheba might, if he pleased, be his own for ever. Adulteries have often occasioned murders, and one wickedness must be covered and secured with another. The beginnings of sin are therefore to be dreaded; for who knows what the world? (as in the case of Bath-sheba). This is the way of punishment. Quantum mutatus ab illo!—But ah, how changed! Is this he that executed judgment and justice to all his people? How can he now do so unjust a thing? See how fleshly lusts war against the soul, and what devastations they make in that war: how they blind the eyes, harden the heart, tear the conscience, and deprive men of all sense of honour and justice. Who so commiteth adultery with a woman, lacketh understanding, and quite loses it; he doth it, destroyeth his own soul, Prov. 6. 32.

But as the eye of the adulterer, so the hand of the murderer, seeks concealment, Job 24. 14, 15. Works of darkness hate the light. When David bravely slew Goliath, it was done publicly, and he gloried in it; but when he basely slew Uriah, it must be done clandestinely, for he is ashamed of it, and well he may. Who would do a thing that he dared not own? The Devil having, as a poisonous serpent, put it into David's heart to murder Uriah, as a subtle serpent, he puts it into his head how to do it. Not as Absalom slew Amnon, by commanding his servants to assassinate him, or as Ahab slew Naboth, by suborning witnesses to accuse him, but by exposing him to the enemy; a way of doing it, which, perhaps, would not seem so odious to conscience and the world, because soldiers expose themselves, of course; if Uriah had not been in that dangerous post, another must; he has (as we say) a chance for his life; if he fight stoutly, he may, perhaps, come off; and if he die, it is in the field of honour, where a soldier would choose to die; and yet all this will not save it from being a wilful murder, of maketh David base.

I. Orders are sent to Joab to set Uriah in the front of the hottest battle, and then to desert him, and abandon him to the enemy, v. 14, 15. This was David's project to take off Uriah, and it succeeded, as he designed. Many were the aggravations of this murder. 1. It was deliberate. He took time to consider of it; and though he had time to consider of it, for he wrote a letter about it, and he had time to consider of it afterward, before it could be put in execution, yet he did not do it. 2. He sent the letter by Uriah himself; than which nothing could be more base and barbarous, to make him accessory to his own death. And what a paradox was it, that he could bear such a malice against him, in whom yet he could repose such a confidence, as that he would carry letters, which he must not know the purport of. 3. Advantage must be taken of Uriah's own courage and zeal for his king and country, which deserves the greatest praise and recompense, to betray him the more easily to his fate. If he had not been forward to expose himself, perhaps he was a man of such importance, that Joab could not have exposed him; and that his noble fire should be designedly turned upon himself, was a most unnatural and unaccountable [sic] thing. He that is involved in the guilt, Joab, the general, to whom the blood of his soldiers, especially the worthies, ought to be precious, must do it; he, and all that retire from Uriah, when they ought in conscience to support and second him, become guilty of his death. 4. Uriah cannot thus die alone, the party he commands is in danger of being cut off with him; and if it proved so, some of the people, even the servants of David, were to the other king. Many, many, many, say (as David's sin, in being so prodigal of his lives,) fell with him, v. 17. Nay, this wilful misconduct by which Uriah must be betrayed, might be of fatal consequence to the whole army, and, having obliged them to raise the siege, 6. It will be the triumph and joy of the Ammonites, the sworn enemies of God and Israel; it will gratify them exceedingly. David prayed for himself, that he might not fall into the hands of the king, and the Ammonites (24. 13, 14.) yet he sells his servant Uriah to the Ammonites, and not for any iniquity in his hand.

II. Joab executes these orders. In the next assault that was made upon the city, Uriah has the most dangerous post assigned him; was encouraged to hope, that if he be repulsed by the besieged, he shall be relieved by Joab, in dependence on which, he marches on with resolution, but, succeeds not coming on, the service proved too hot, and he was slain in it, v. 16, 17. It was strange that Joab would do such a thing merely upon a letter, without knowing the reason. But, I. Perhaps he supposed Uriah had been guilty of some great crime, to inquire into which, David had sent for him, and that, because he would not punish him openly, he took this course with him to put him to death. 2. Joab had been guilty of blood, and we may suppose it pleased him very well, to see David himself falling into the same guilt, and he was willing enough to serve him in it, that he might continue to be favourable to him. It is common for those who have done ill themselves, to desire to be countermanded therein by others doing ill likewise, especially by the sins of those that are eminent in the profession of religion. Or, perhaps, David knew that Joab had been guilty of murder, and he would gladly place the guilt upon him; otherwise Joab, when he saw cause, knew how to dispute the king's orders, as ch. 24. 3.—19. 5.

III. He sends an account of it to David. An express is despatched away immediately, with a report
of this last disgrace and loss which they had sustained, v. 18. And, to disguise the affair, 1. He supposes that David would appear to be angry at his bad conduct, would ask why they came so near the wall, v. 20. Did they not know that Abimelech lost his life by doing so? v. 21. We had the story, Judg. 9. 53. which book, it is likely, was published as a part of the sacred history in Samuel's time: and (be it noted to their praise, and for imitation) even the soldiers were conversant with their Bibles, and could readily quote the scripture-story, and make use of it for admonition to themselves, not to run upon the same attempts which there they found to be fatal. 2. He silly orders the messenger to soothe it with telling him that Uriah the Hittite was dead also, which gave too broad an intimation to the messenger, and by him to others, that David would be so consumed with grief at his loss as to become mad, and who knows? will not? And when men do such base things, they must expect to be bantered and upbraided with them, even by their inferiors. The messenger delivered his message agreeably to orders, v. 22-24. He makes the besieged to sally out first upon the besiegers, They came out unto us, into the field: represents the besiegers as doing their parts with great bravery, We were upon them, even to the entering of the gate, we forced them to run; note the very thing with precipitation; and so concludes with a slight mention of the slay: here made among them by some shot from the wall, Some of the king's servants are dead; and particularly Uriah the Hittite, an officer of note, stood first in the list of the slain.

IV. David receives the account with a secret satisfaction, v. 25. Let not Joab be displeased, for David is not; he blames not his conduct, nor thinks they did ill in approaching so near the wall; all is well now that Uriah is got out of the way. This point being gained, he can make light of the loss, and turn it off easily with an excuse, The sword devours one as well as another: it was a chance of war, nothing more common. He orders Joab to make the battle more strong next time, while he, by his sin, was weakening it, and provoking God to blast the undertaking.

Lastly, He mùaed the widow, in a little time. She submitted to the ceremony of mourning for her husband, as little time as custom would admit, (v. 26.) and then David took her to his house as his wife, and she bare him a son. Uriah's revenge was prevented by his death, but the birth of the child, so soon after the marriage, published the crime; sin will have shame; yet that was not the worst of it, The thing that David had done brought sin unto the Lord; the whole matter of Uriah, (as it is called, 1 Kings 15. 5.) the adultery, falsehood, murder, and this marriage, at last, it was all displeasing to the Lord. He had pleased himself, but displeased God. Note, God sees and hates sin in his own people. Nay, the nearer any are to God in profession, the more displeasing to him their sins are; for in them there is more ingratitude, treachery, and repugnance to God and his truth. Let us therefore encourage ourselves in sin by the example of David; for they that sin as he did, will fall under the displeasure of God as he did. Let us therefore stand in awe, and sin not; not sin after the similitude of his transgression.

CHAP. XII.

The foregoing chapter gave us the account of David's sin, this of his repentance; though he fell, he was not utterly east down, but by the grace of God, recovered himself, and found mercy with God. Here is, I. His conviction, by a message Nathan brought him from God, which was a parable that obliged him to condemn himself, v. 1. 6. And the interpretation of the parable, in which Nathan charged him with the sin, (v. 7—9.) and pronounced sentence upon him, v. 10. 12. II. His repentance and remission, with a reserve of judgment, v. 13, 14. III. The sickness and death of the child, and his behaviour, while it was thus, and when it was dead, v. 15. 21. Both which, David gave evidences of his repentance. IV. The birth of Solomon, and God's gracious message concerning him, in which God gave an evidence of his reconciliation to David, v. 24, 25. V. The taking of Rabbah, (v. 26—31.) which is mentioned as a further instance, that God did not deal with David according to his sins.

1. AND the Lord sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

2. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: 3. But the poor man had no thing save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up; and it grew up together with him, and with his children: it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

4. And there came a traveller unto the rich man; and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. 5. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: 6. And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. 7. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul: 8. And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would, moreover, have given unto thee such and such things. 9. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. 10. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. 11. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. 12. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. 13. And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord
also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. 14. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme the child also that is born unto thee shall surelie die.

It seems to have been a great while after David had been guilty of adultery with Bath-sheba, before he was brought to repentance for it. For, when Nathan was sent to him, the child was born, v. 14. So that it was about nine months that David lay under the guilt of it; that it was, and, for aught that appears, unrepentet of. What shall we think of David's state all this while? Can we imagine his heart never smote him for it? Or that he never repented it in secret before God? I would willingly hope that he did, and that Nathan was sent to him, immediately upon the birth of the child, when the thing by that means came to be publicly known and talked of, to draw from him an open confession of the sin, to the glory of God, and the admonition of others, and that he might receive, by Nathan, absolution with certain limitations. But during these nine months, we may well suppose his content and the exercises of his graces suspended, and his communion with God interrupted; during all that time, for certain, he penned no Psalms, his harp was out of tune, and his soul like a tree in winter, that has life in the root only; therefore, after the child's birth, he might be thus moved, to be comforted by the words of Ps. 12, 15. Let us observe,

I. The messenger God sent to him. We were told, by the last words of the foregoing chapter, that the thing David had done, displeased the Lord, upon which, one would think, it should have followed that the Lord sent enemies to invade him, terrors to take hold of him, and the messenger of death to arrest him. Nathan, his faithful friend and confidant, to instruct and counsel him, v. 1. David did not send for Nathan, (though he had never had so much occasion as he had now for his counsellor,) but God sent Nathan to David. Note, Though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, he will not suffer them to lie still in it. He went on forwardly in the way of his deed, and left to run away. 

Nathan was chosen of God to open the heavenly vision, and went en God's errand to David. He did not say, "David has sinned, I will not come near him;" no, Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother, 2 Thess. 3. 15. He did not say, "David is a king, I dare not reproove him;" no, if God send him, he sets his face like a flint, Isa. 50. 7. 

II. The message Nathan delivered to him, in order to his conviction. 1. He fetched a compass with a parable, which seemed to David as a complaint made to him by Nathan against one of his subjects that had wronged his poor neighbour, in order to his righting the injured, and punishing the injurious. Nathan, it is likely, used to come to him upon such errands, which made this the less suspected; it becomes the nearer notice, when it is observed, no, he sends a prophet to him, he prophesies, Restores unto me the joy of thy salvation, and opens thou my lips, Ps. 51. 12, 15. Let us observe,

1. Whether the parable is applicable to the action he had done or not. Was it an actual case of what the parable represented? No. The parable is not applicable to what David had done, it is the case of a rich man and a poor man. He had brought in the wealth of the poor man, and now the rich man shall have to do what he said he would. It is not applicable to what David did, for he had brought in himself. But it may be a type of what David had done, as a carriage of friendship and bountifulness to a poor man's child, which may learn charity, and the poor contentment. This poor man had but one lamb, a ewe-lamb, a little ewe-lamb, having not wherewithal to buy or keep more. But it was a caged-lamb, (as we will call it) it grew up with his children, (v. 3.) he was fond of it, and it was familiar with him at all times. The rich man having occasion for a lamb to entertain a friend with, took the poor man's lamb from him by violence, and made use of that; (v. 4.) either out of covetousness, because he grudged to make use of his own, or rather out of luxury, because he fancied the lamb that was thus tenderly kept, and ate and drank like a child; must needs be more delicate food than any of his own, and have a better relish.

(2.) In this, he showed him the evil of the sin he had been guilty of, in defiling Bath-sheba. He had many wives and concubines, whom he kept at a distance, as rich men keep their flocks in their fields; had he had but one, and had she been dear to him, as the ewe-lamb was to its owner, had she been dear to him, as the loving kind and the pleasant rose; her breasts would have satisfied him at all times, and he would have looked no further, Prov. 7. 3. But he eschews remedy against fermentation, but marrying many is not; for, though David had committed with Bath-sheba, he was not a wayfarer in the vineyard, which he might have satisfied with some of his own, yet nothing would serve but Uriah's darling. They observe that this evil disposition is called a traveller, in the beginning it is only so, but, in time, it becomes a guest, and in conclusion, is master of the house. For he that is called a traveller, in the beginning of the verse, is called a man, (nish, one, or seneshen, 1, the) in the close of it. Yet some observe, that in David's case, David, the rich man, the poor man's lamb, which he might have satisfied with some of his own, yet nothing would serve but Uriah's darling. If he had but one, and Uriah had been dear to him, as the little lamb was to its owner, he would have been dearer to him, as the loving kind and the pleasant rose; her breasts would have satisfied him at all times, and he would have looked no further, Prov. 7. 3. But he eschews remedy against fermentation, but marrying many is not; for, though David had committed with Bath-sheba, he was not a wayfarer in the vineyard, which he might have satisfied with some of his own, yet nothing would serve but Uriah's darling.
prudence in giving reproofs; it is well-managed if, as here, the offender can be brought, ere he is aware, to convict and condemn himself but here, in his application, he shows his faithfulness, and deals as plainly and roundly with king David himself, as if he had been a common person. In plain terms, "Thou art the man, who hast done this wrong, and a much greater, to thine neighbour; and therefore, by thine own sentence, thou deservest to die, and shalt be judged out of thine own mouth. Did he desere to die, who took his neighbour's lamb, and said, who is this neighbour's lamb?" Though he took the lamb, he did not cause the owner thereof to lose his life, as thou hast done, and therefore much more art thou worthy to die."

Now he speaks immediately from God, and, in his name, begins with, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, a name sacred and venerable to David, and which commanded his attitude. Nathan now speaks, not as a petitioner for a poor man, but as an ambassador from the great God, with whom is no respect of persons.

(1.) God, by Nathan, reminds David of the great things he has done and designed for him, anointing him to be king, and preserving him to the kingdom; (v. 7.) giving him power over the house and household of his predecessor, and of others that had been his masters, Nabal formerly, he had given him three cities of Judah; the wealth of the kingdom was at his service; every body was willing to oblige him; and ready to bestow any thing upon him, to make him easy: I would have given thee such and such things, v. 8. See how liberal God is in his gifts; we are not straitened in him. Where he has given much, yet he gives more. And God's bounty to us is a great aggravation of our discontent, and desire of more; it shows the ingratitude to cover what God has prohibited, while we have liberty to pray for what God has promised, and that is enough.

(2.) He charges him with a high contempt of the divine authority, in the sins he had been guilty of. Wherefore hast thou (presuming upon thy royal dignity and power) despaired the commandment of the Lord? v. 9. This is the sin of his heart: this is making light of the divine law, and the Law-maker; as if the obligation of it were weak, the precepts of it trifling, and the threats not at all formidable. Though no man ever wrote more honourably of the law of God than David did, yet, in this instance, he is justly charged with a contempt of it. His adultery with Bath-sheba, which began the mischief, is not mentioned, perhaps, because he was already convicted of it, instead of the murder of Uriah the Ammonite, which is twice mentioned. Thou hast killed Uriah with the sword; though not by sword, yet the sword of the children of Ammon, by ordering him to be set in the forefront of the battle. They that contrive wickedness and command it, are as truly guilty of it as those that execute it. It is repented, with an aggravation, Thou hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon, to pronounce him the enemy of God and Israel. [2.] The marrying of Bath-sheba is likewise twice mentioned, because he thought there was no harm in that; (v. 9.) Thou hast taken his wife to be thy wife; and again, v. 10. To marry her whom he had before defiled, and whose husband he had slain, was an affront upon the ordinances of marriage, making not only to pollute, but in a manner to defile, such villages. In all this, he despised the sword of the Lord, so it is in the Hebrew, not only his commandment in general, which forbids such things, but the particular word of promise, which God had, by Nathan, sent to him some time before, that he would build him a house; which sacred promise, if he had had a due value and veneration for, he would not thus have polluted his house with lust and blood.

(3.) He threatens an entail of judgments upon his family for this sin; (v. 10.) "The sword shall never depart from thy house, nor in thy time, nor afterwards but, for the most part, thou and thy posterity shall be engaged in war." Or, it points at the slaughters that should be among his children, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah, all falling by the sword. God had promised the sword to Uriah, who did not depart from him and his house, (ch. 7. 15.) yet here threatens that the sword should not depart. Can the mercy and the sword consist with each other? Yes, those may lie under great and long afflictions, who yet shall not be excluded from the grace of the covenant. The reason given is, Because thou hast despised my word, That, those who despise himself to the God, despise God himself, and shall be lightly esteemed.

It is particularly threatened, [1.] That his children should be his grief; I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house. Sin brings trouble into a family, and one sin is often made the punishment of another. [2.] That his wives should be his shame; that by an unparalleled piece of villany they should be publicly debarred before all Israel, (ch. 11. 24.) and not said to be his; his own son, lest the accomplishment should have been hindered by the prediction being too plain; but it was done by Absalom, at the counsel of Ahithophel; (ch. 16. 21, 22.) He that defiled his neighbour's wife, should have his own defiled, for thus sin used to be punished, as appears by Job's imprecation, (Job 31. 10.) Then let my wife griev unto another, and that threatening, Hos. 4. 14. The sin was secret, and industriously concealed, but the punishment should be open and industriously proclaimed, to the shame of David, whose sin in the matter of Uriah, though committed many years before, would then be called to mind, and commonly talked of upon that occasion. As face answers to face in a glass, so does the punishment often answer to the sin; here is blood, for blood, and uncleanness for uncleanness. Though he has slain an innocent man, even in his own people, and that, whenever he finds it, he will not let it go unpunished.

3. David's penitent confession of his sin, hereupon. He says not a word to excuse himself or extenuate his sin, but freely owns it, I have sinned against the Lord, v. 13. It is probable that he said more to this purport; but this is enough to show that he was truly humbled by what Nathan said, and subjected himself to the conviction. He owns his guilt, I have sinned; and aggravates it. It was against the Lord: on this string he harps in the Psalm he penned on this occasion; (Ps. 51. 4.) Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.

4. His pardon declared, upon this penitent confession, but with a reserve of judgment. When David said, I have sinned, and Nathan perceived that he was in true penitence, he immediately assures him that his sin was forgiven, "The Lord also has put away thy sin out of the sight of his avenging eye; thou shalt not die," that is, "not die eternally, nor be for ever put away from God, as thou wouldst have been, if he had not put away the sin." The obligation to punishment is hereby cancelled and vacated. He shall not come into condemnation; that is the nature of God, he does by his innocence not be the everlasting ruin, The sword shall not depart from thy house, but, (v. 1.) "It shall not cut thee off, thou shalt come to thy grave in peace." David deserved to die as an adulterer and murderer, but God would not cut him off, as he might justly have done. [2.] "Though thou shalt all thy days be chastened of the Lord, yet thou shalt
not to be condemned with the world." See how ready God is to forgive sin. To this instance, perhaps, David refers, Ps. 32. 5, I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest. Let not great sinners despair of finding mercy with God, if they truly repent; for who is a God like unto him, pardoning iniquity? (2.) Yet he pronounces a sentence of death upon the child, v. 14. Behold the soveraigny of God! The guilty parent lives, and the guiltless infant dies; but all souls are his, and he may, in what way he pleases, glorify himself in his creatures. [1.] David had, by his sin, wronged God in his honour; he had given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. The wicked people of that generation, the infidels, idolaters, and profane, would triumph in David's fall, and speak ill of God and of his law, when they saw one guilty of such foul enormities, that professed such an honour both for him and it. [2.] These are your professors! This is he that says, and sings psalms, and is so very devout! What good can there be in such exercises, if they will not restrain men from adultery and murder? They would say, "Was not Saul rejected for a less matter? Why then must David live and reign still?" Not considering that God sees not as men see, but searches the heart. To this day, there are those who reproach God, and are hardened in sin, through the example of David. Now, though it is true that none have any just reason to speak ill of God, or of his word and ways, for David's sake, and it is their sin that doth, yet he shall be reckoned with, that laid the stumbling-block in their way, and gave, though not cause, yet colour for the reproach.

Note, There is this great evil in the scandalous sins of those that profess religion, and relation to God, that they furnish the enemies of God and religion with matter for reproach and blasphemy, Rom. 2. 24. [2.] God will therefore vindicate his honour, by showing his displeasure against David for this sin, and letting the world see that though he loves David, he hates his sin; and he chooses to do it by the death of the child. The landlord may distrain on any part of the premises where he pleases. Perhaps, the diseases and deaths of infants were not so common in those days as they are now, which might make this, as an uncommon trial, the more manifest token of God's displeasure; according to the word he had often said, that he would visit the sins of the fathers upon the children.

15. And Nathan departed unto his house. And the Lord struck the child; that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

16. David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in and lay all night upon the earth. 17. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. 18. And it came to pass on the seventh day that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice; how will he then vex himself if we tell him that the child is dead? 19. But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead; therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. 20. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. 21. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. 22. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? 23. But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. 24. And David comforted Bath-sheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon; and the Lord loved him. 25. And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord.

Nathan having delivered his message, stayed not at court but went home, probably, to pray for David, to whom he had been preaching. God, in making use of him as an instrument to bring David to repentance, and as the herald both of mercy and judgment, put an honour upon the ministry, and magnified his word above all his name. David named one of his sons by Bath-sheba, Nathan, in honour of this prophet, (1 Chron. 3. 5.) and it was that son, of whom Christ, the great Prophet, lineally descended, Luke 3. 31. When Nathan retired, David, it is probable, retired likewise, and penned the 51st Psalm, in which (though he had been assured that his sin was pardoned) he prays earnestly for pardon, and greatly laments his sin; for then will true penitents be ashamed of what they have done, when God is pacified toward them, Ezek. 16. 63.

Here is,

I. The child's illness. The Lord struck it, and it was very sick, perhaps with convulsions, or some other dreadful distemper, v. 15. The diseases and death of infants, that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, especially as they are sometimes sadly circumstanced, are sensible proofs of the original sin in which they are conceived.

II. David's humiliation under this token of God's displeasure, and the intercession he made with God for the life of the child; (v. 16, 17.) He fasted, and lay all night upon the earth, and would not suffer any of his attendants either to feed him, or help him up. This was an evidence of the truth of his repentance. For, 1. Hereby it appeared that he was willing to bear the shame of his sin, to have it ever before him, and to be continually upbraided with it; for this child would be a continual memorandum of it, both to himself and others, if he lived; and therefore, he was so far from desiring its death, as most, in such circumstances, do, that he prayed earnestly for its life. True penitents patiently bear the reproaches of their youth and of their youthful lusts, Jer. 31. 19. 12. A very tender compassion of the spirit appeared in this, and great humanity, above what is commonly found in men, especially men of war, toward little children, even their own; and
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this was another sign of a broken contrite spirit: they that are penitent, will be pitiful. 5. He discovered, in this, a great concern for another world, which is an evidence of repentance. Nathan had told him that certainly the child should die; yet, while it is in the reach of prayer, he earnestly intercedes with God for it. Chiefly, as we may suppose, that its seal might be safe and happy in another world, and that his sin might not come against the child, and that it might not fare the worse for that in the future state.* 4. He discovered, in this, a holy dread of God and of his displeasure. He deprecated the death of the child, chiefly as it was a token of God’s anger against him and his house, and was inflicted in performance of a threatened curse; hence, there was a factually, that if it were the will of God, the child might live, because that would be to him a token of God’s being reconciled to him. Lord, chasten me not in thy hot displeasure, Ps. 6. 1.

III. The death of the child; it died on the seventh day, (v. 18.) when it was seven days old, and therefore not circumcised, which David might, perhaps, interpret as a further indication of God’s displeasure that its seal was brought under the seal of the covenant; yet he does not therefore doubt of its being happy, for the benefits of the covenant do not depend upon the seals. David’s servants, judging of him by themselves, were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, concluding that then he would disquiet himself most of all; so that he knew not till he asked, v. 19.

1. David’s wonderful calmness, when he understood the child was dead. Observe,
1. What he did. (1.) He laid aside the expressions of his sorrow, washed and anointed himself, and called for clean linen, that he might decently appear before God in his house. (2.) He went up to the tabernacle, and worshipped like Job when he heard of the death of his children. He went to acknowledge the hand of God in the affliction, and to humble himself under it, and to submit to his holy will in it; to thank God that he himself was spared, and his sin pardoned; and to pray that God would not proceed in his controversy with him, nor stir up all his wrath. Is any afflicted? Let him pray. Weeping must never hinder worshipping. (3.) Then he went to his own house, and refreshed himself, as one who found benefit by his religion in the day of his affliction; for, having wept, he did not go away, but made his house more holy.
2. The reason he gave for what he did. His servants thought it strange that he should afflict himself so for the sickness of the child, and yet take the death of it so easily; and asked him the reason of it, v. 21. In answer to which, he gives this plain account of his conduct. (1.) That while the child was alive, he thought it his duty to importune the divine favour for it. (2.) That so soon as he saw the child should die, but, for aught that he knew, the threatening might be conditional, as that concerning Hezekiah: upon his great humiliation and earnest prayer, he that had so often heard the voice of his worshipping, might be pleased to reverse the sentence, and spare the child; Who can tell whether God will yet be gracious to me? God gives us leave to intercede with him in prayer for particular blessings, from a confidence in his power and general mercy, though we have no particular promise to build upon: we cannot be sure, yet let us pray, for who can tell but God will be gracious to us, in this or that particular? When our relations and friends have fallen sick, the prayer of faith has prevailed much; while there is life, there is hope, and while there is hope, there is room for prayer. (2.) That, the child being dead, he thought it as much his duty to be satisfied in the divine disposal concerning it; (v. 23.) Now, wherefore should I fast? Two things checked his grief: [1.] I cannot bring him back again; and again, He shall not return to me. Those that are dead, are out of the reach of prayer: we may suppose that he could neither weep nor pray them back to this life. Wherefore then should we fast? To what purpose is this waste? Yet David fasted and wept for Jonathan when he was dead, in honour to him. [2.] I shall go to him; First, To him, to the grave. Note, The consideration of our own death should moderate our sorrow at the death of our relations. It is the common lot; instead of mourning for their death, we should call them, our own, and whatever loss we have of them now, we shall die shortly, and go to them. Secondly, To him, to heaven, to a state of blessedness, which even the Old Testament saints had some expectation of. Godly parents have great reason to hope concerning their children that die in infancy, that it is well with their souls in the other world; for the promise is to us and to our seed, which shall be performed to those that do not put a bar in their own way. Our infants are not amiss—Favours received should produce the hope of more. God calls them his children, that are born unto him; and if they be his, he will save them. This may comfort us when our children are removed from us by death; they are better provided for, both in work and wealth, than they could be in this world. We shall be with them shortly, to live no more in sorrow.

V. The birth of Solomon. Though David’s marrying Bath-sheba had displeased the Lord, yet he was not therefore commanded to divorce her; so far from this, that God gave him that son by her; on whom the covenant of royalty should be entailed. Bath-sheba, no doubt, was greatly afflicted with the sense of her sin and the tokens of God’s displeasure. But God having restored to David the joys of his salvation, he comforted her with the same comforts with which he himself was comforted of God, v. 24. He comforted Bath-sheba. And both he and she had reason to be comforted in the tokens of God’s reconciliation to them.

1. Inasmuch as, by his providence, he gave them a son, not as the former, who was given in anger and taken away in wrath, but a child graciously given, and written among the living in Jerusalem. They called him Solomon. The birth of a child was a token of God’s being at peace with them, because of the prosperity which was entailed upon him, and because he was to be a type of Christ, the Prince of Peace. God had removed one son from them, but now gave them another, instead of him, like Seth, instead of Abel, Gen. 4. 25. Thus God often balances the griefs of his people with comforts, in the same time, v. 22. Yet he was not altogether content with what he had, however much that was; for he found a more ample happiness in another. David had very patiently submitted to the will of God in the death of the other child, and now God made up the loss of that, abundantly to his advantage in the birth of this. The way to have our creature-comforts either continued or restored, or the loss of them made up among other ways, is, cheerfully to resign them to God.

2. Inasmuch as, by his grace, he particularly owned and favoured that son; The Lord loved him, (v. 24.) and (v. 25.) ordered him, by the prophet Nathan, to be called Jedidiah, beloved of the Lord; though a seed of evil-doers, (for such David and Bath-sheba were,) yet so well ordered was the covenant, and the crown entailed by it, that it took away all attainers, and corruption of blood, signifying, that those who were by nature children of wrath and disobedience, should, by the covenant

* Of the propriety of this suggestion, the reader will form a judgment for himself.—Ez.
of grace, not only be reconciled, but made favourites. And in this name, he typified Jesus Christ, that blest and saved, the Son of God's love, concerning whom God declared again and again, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

26. And Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city. 27. And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters. 28. Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name. 29. And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it. 30. And he took their king's crown from off his head, (the weight whereof was a talent of gold with the precious stones,) and it was set on David's head: and he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance. 31. And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem.

We have here an account of the conquest of Rabbah, and other cities of the Ammonites. Though this comes in here, after the birth of David's child, yet it is most probable that it was effected a good while before, and soon after the death of Uriah, perhaps during the days of Bath-sheba's mourning for him.

Observe, 1. That God was very gracious in giving David this great success against his enemies, notwithstanding the sin he had been guilty of, (just at that time when he was engaged in this war,) and the wicked use he had made of the sword of the children of Ammon in the murder of Uriah. Justly might he have made that sword, from thenceforward, a plague to David and his kingdom; yet he brake it, and makes David's sword, which, therefore, upon the cutting off of that, would be obliged speedily to surrender, he sent to David to come in person to complete this great action, that he might have the praise of it, v. 26. Herein, he showed himself a faithful servant, that sought his master's honour, and his own only in subordination to his, and left an example to the servants of the Lord Jesus, in every thing they do, to consult his honour: Not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory. 3. That David was both too haughty, and too severe, upon this occasion, and neither so humble nor so tender as he should have been. (1.) He seems to have been too fond of the crown of the king of Ammon, v. 30. because it was of extraordinary value, by reason of the precious stones with which it was set. David will have it set upon his head, though it would have been better to have cast it at God's feet, and, at this time, to have put his own mouth in the dust, under guilt. The heart that is truly humbled for sin, it is a broken and a humble heart, with a holy contempt. (2.) He seems to have been too harsh with his prisoners of war. (v. 31.) taking the city by storm, after it had obstinately held out against a long and expensive siege; if he had put all to the sword in the heat of battle, whom he found in arms, it had been severe enough; but to kill them afterward, in cold blood, and by cruel tortures, with saws and harrows, tearing them to pieces, did not become him, who, when he entered upon the government, promised to sing of mercy as well as judgment, Ps. 101. 1. Had he made examples of those only, who had abused his ambassadors, advised or assisted in it, that being a violation of the law of nations, it might be looked upon as a piece of necessary justice for terror to other nations; but to be thus severe with all the cities of the children of Ammon, (that is, the garrisons or soldiers of the cities,) was extremely rigorous, and a sign that David's heart was not yet made soft by repentance, else the bowels of his compassion would not have been thus shut up; a sign that he had not yet found mercy, else he would have been more ready to show mercy.

CHAP. XIII.

The righteous God had lately told David, by Nathan the prophet, that, to chastise him for his sin, in the matter of Uriah, he would raise up evil against him, out of his own house and out of his own bowels, v. 1. And further, that if he would now find the evil beginning to rise; from henceforward, he was followed with one trouble after another, which made the latter part of his reign less glorious and pleasant than the former part. Thus God chastened him with the rod of men, yet assured him that his loving-kindness he would not utterly take away. Adultery and murder were David's sins, and those sins, among his children, (Amnon defiling his sister Tamar, and Absalom murdering his brother Amnon,) were the beginnings of his punishment, and the more grievous, because he had reason to fear that his bad example might help to bring them to these wickednesses. In this chapter, we have, I. Amnon revishing Tamar; assisted in his plot to do it by Jonadab his kinsman, and villainously executing it, v. 1. 20. II. Absalom murdering Amnon for it, v. 21. 39. Both, great griefs to David, and the more, because he was unwilling to let the necessary punishment, by sending Tamar to Ammon, and Absalom to Abishai.
come to see him, Amnon said unto the king, I pray thee, let Tamar my sister come and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat at her hand. 7. Then David sent home to Tamar, saying. Go now to thy brother Amnon's house, and dress him meat. 8. So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was laid down. And she took flour, and kneaded it, and made cakes in his sight, and did bake the cakes. 9. And she took a pan, and poured them out before him; but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, Have out all men from me: and they went out every man from him. 10. And Amnon said unto Tamar, Bring the meat into the chamber, that I may eat of thine hand. And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. 11. And when she had brought them unto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come, lie with me, my sister. 12. And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly. 13. And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee. 14. Howbeit, he would not hearken unto her voice; but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her. 15. Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her: and Amnon said unto her, Arise, begone. 16. And she said unto him, there is no cause: this evil in sending me away is greater than the other that thou didst unto me. But he would not hearken unto her. 17. Then he called his servant that ministered unto him, and said, Put now this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her. 18. And she had a garment of divers colours upon her: for with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins apparelled. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her. 19. And Tamar her brother said unto her, Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? but hold now thy peace, my sister: he is thy brother; regard not this thing. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house.

We have here a particular account of the abominable wickedness of Amnon, in ravishing his sister; a subject not fit to be enlarged upon, nor indeed to be mentioned without blushing, that ever any man should be so vile, especially that a son of David should be so. Amnon's character, we have reason to think, was bad in other things; if he had not forsaken God, he had never been given up to these vile affections. God's parents have often been afflicted with wicked children; grace does not run in the blood, but corruption does. We do not find that David's children imitated him in his devotion; but his false steps they trod in, and in those did much worse, and repented not. Parents know not how fatal the consequences may be, if, in any instance, they give their children bad examples. Observe the steps of Amnon's sin.

1. The Desolation of an uncleanness, put it into his heart to lust after his sister Tamar. Beauty is a snare to many, it was so to her, she was fair, and therefore Amnon coveted her. 2. They that are peculiarly handsome, have no reason, on that account, to be proud, but great reason to stand upon their watch. Amnon's lust was, 1. Unnatural in itself; to lust after his sister, which even natural conscience excludes, and even the very spirit of nature. Such a spirit of contradiction there is in man's corrupt nature, that still it desires forbidden fruit, and the more strongly it is forbidden, the more greedily it is desired. Can he entertain the thought of betraying that virtue and honour, of which, as a brother, he ought to have been the protector? But what wickedness so vile, as not to find admittance into an unsanctified ungodly heart, left to itself? 3. It was very uneasy in him. He was so vexed that he could not gain an opportunity to solicit her chastity, (for innocent converse with her was not denied him,) that he fell sick. 4. Fleshy lusts are their own punishment, and not only war against the soul, but against the body too, and are the rottenness of the bones. See what a hard master sinners serve, and how heavy his yoke is.

1. The Desolation of an uncleanness, put it into his head how to compass this wicked design. Amnon had a friend, (so he called him, but he was really an enemy to him,) a kinsman that had in him more of David's blood (for he was his nephew) than of David's spirit, for he was a subtle man, cunning to carry on any bad design, especially an intrigue of this nature.

1. He takes notice that Amnon looked ill, and being a subtle man, concludes that he was love-sick, (v. 4.) and asks him, 'Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day? Why dost thou pine, being the king's eldest son, and heir to the crown? Being the king's son,' (1.) "Thou hast the pleasure of the court to divert thee: take those pleasures them, and with them drive away the sorrow, whatever it is." Content and comfort are not always to be found in royal palaces. With much more reason may we ask dejected and disconsolate saints, why they that are the children of the king of kings, and heirs of the crown of life, are thus lean from day to day. (2.) "Thou hast the power of a prince to command what thou wastent and wishest for; use that power therefore, and gratify thyself. Pine not away for that which, lawful or unlawful, thou, being the king's son, may have. Quisquis quisquisque esse potest, tuus est."

Thus Jezebel to Ahab in a like case, (1 Kings 21. 7.) "Dost thou govern Israel? The abuse of power is the most dangerous temptation of the great.

2. Amnon having the impudence to own his wicked lust, miscalling it love, (I love Tamar,) Jonadab put him in a way to compass his desiring, v. 5. Had he been what he pretended, (Amnon's friend.) he would have startled at the mention of such horrid wickedness, would have had before him the evil of it, what an offence it was to God, and
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what a wrong to his own soul, to entertain such a vile thought; of what fatal consequence it would be to him to cherish and prosecute it; he would have used his curiosity to divert Ammon from it, by recommending some other person to him, when he might lawfully marry. But he seems not at all surprised at it; objects not either the unlawfulness of the difficulty, the repugnance, or so much as his father's displeasure; but puts him in the way to get Tamar to his bedside, and then he might do as he pleased. Note, The case of those is very miserable, whose friends, instead of admonishing and reproving them, flatter them and forward them in their sinful ways, and are their counsellors and contrivers to do wickedly. Amnon is already sick, but goes about; he must take upon him to be still, (and his thin looks will give colour enough to his pretences) as not to be able to get up, and to have no pretence to any thing but just that which pleases his fancy. Dainty meat is abhorred; (Job 33. 20.) the best dish from the king's table cannot please him; but if he can eat any thing, it must be from his sister Tamar's fair hand. This is what he is advised to.

3. Amnon follows these directions, and thus gets Tamar into his chamber, and makes her his desire, v. 6. Thus he lieth in wait secretly, as a lion in his den, to catch the fowl, and to draw them into his net, Ps. 10. 8. 10. David was always fond of his children, and concerned if any thing ailed them; he so soon hears that Amnon is sick, than he comes himself to visit him. Let parents learn hence to be tender of their children, and compassionate toward them. The sick child commonly the mother comforteth, (Isa. 66. 13.) but let not the father be unconcerned. We may suppose that when David came to see his sick son, he gave him good counsel to make a right use of his affliction, and prayed with him, which did not alter his wicked purpose. At parting, the indulgent father asks, "Is there any thing thou hast a mind to, that I can procure for thee?" "Yes, Sir," says the disembowelling son, "my stomach is weak, and I know not of any thing I can eat, unless it be a cake of my sister Tamar's making, and I cannot be satisfied that it is so, unless I see her make it, and it will do me the more good, if I eat it at her hand." David saw no reason to suspect any mischief intended, God hid his heart from understanding in this matter; he therefore immediately orders Tamar to go and attend her sick brother, v. 7. He does it very innocently, but afterward, no doubt, reflected upon it with great reason, and could not but think it a most vicious action, and a breach of the father's commands, either of them dreading any abuse; why should she from a brother, a sick brother? Not disdaining, in obedience to her father, and love to her brother, (though but her half-brother,) to be his nurse, v. 8, 9. Though she was a king's daughter, a great beauty, (v. 1.) and well-dressed, (v. 18.) yet she did not think it below her to knead cakes and bake them, nor had she done it never, if she had not been commanded to do it. This was not below the greatest ladies, nor ought they to think it a disparagement to them. The virtuous woman, whose husband sits among the elders, yet works willingly with her hands, Prov. 31. 13. Modern ages have not been destitute of such instances, nor is it so unfinishable as some would make it. Preparing for the sick should be more the care and delight of the wife, than preparing for the nice; charity more than curiosity.

4. Having got her to him, he contrives to have her alone; for the adulterer (much more, so vile an adulterer as this) is in care that no eye see him, Job 24. 15. The meat is ready, but he cannot eat while he is looked at by those about him; they must all be turned out, v. 9. The sick must be humour'd, and think they have a privilege to command. Tamar is willing to humour him; her chaste and virtuous soul is not the least thought of that which his polluted breast is full of; and therefore she makes no scruple of being alone with him in the inner chamber, v. 10. And now the mask is thrown off, the meat is thrown by, and the wicked wretch calls her sister, and yet impudently courts her to consent to such wickedness, when he knew her behaviour to be always exemplary, modest, and virtuous. But it is common for those that live in uncleanness, to think others such as themselves, at least fonder to their sparks.

III. The Devil, as a strong temptation, deafts his car to all the reasoning with which she resisted his assaults, and doth nothing that will persuade her to consent to such wickedness, when he knew her behaviour to be always exemplary, modest, and virtuous. We may well imagine what a surprise and terror it was to the young lady, to be thus attacked, how she blushed, and how she trembled; yet, in this great confusica, nothing could be said more pertinently, or with greater strength of argument, than what she said to him.

1. She calls him brother, reminding him of the nearness of the relationship, which made it unlawful for him to marry her, much more to debauch her. It was expressly forbidden, (Lev. 18. 9.) under a severe penalty, Lev. 20. 17. Great care must be taken, lest the love that should be among relations, degenerate into lust.

2. She entreats him not to force her, which intimates that she would never consent to it in any degree; and what satisfaction could he take in offering resistance?

3. She lays before him the great wickedness of it. It is folly; all sin is so, especially uncleanness: it is wickedness of the worst kind. Such abominations ought not to be committed in Israel, among the professing people of God, that have better statutes than the heathen have. We are Israelites; if we do such things, we are more inexcusable than others, and our condemnation will be more intolerable, for we reproach the Lord, and that worthy name by which we are called.

4. She represents to him the shame of it, which perhaps might influence him more than the sin of it. "For my part, wilt thou cause me my shame to go? If it should be concealed, yet I shall blush to think of it as long as I live; and if ever it be known, how shall I be able to look any of my friends in the face? For thy part, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel;" is this his advice to her, and this is all that is. "There shall he be looked upon as an atrocious debaucher, the worst of men; thou wilt lose thine interest in the esteem of all that are wise and good, and so wilt be set aside as unfit to rule, though the first-born; for Israel will never submit to the government of such a fool." Prospect of shame, especially everlasting shame, should deter us from sin.

5. To deter him from his wicked purpose at this time, and (if possible) to get clear of him, she intimates to him, that, probably, the king, rather than he should die for love of her, would dispense with the divine law, and let him marry her; not as if she thought he had such a dispensing power, or would pretend to; it was she was confident that, upon notice given to the king by himself, of this wicked desire, which he would scarcely have believed from any one else, he would take an effectual course to protect her from him.

But all her arts and all her arguments availed not. His proud spirit cannot bear a denial; but her comfort, and honour, and all that was dear to her, must be sacrificed to his brutish and outrageous lust, v. 14. It is to be feared that Amnon, though young, had long lived a lewd life, which his father either knew not, or punished not; for a man could not, of a
sudden, arrived such a pitch of wickedness as this. But is this his love to Tamar? Is this the recompense he gives her for her readiness to attend him in his sickness? Will he deal with her sister as with a harlot? Base villain! God deliver all that are modest and virtuous from such wicked and unrea-
sional actions.

IV. The Devil, as a tormentor and betrayer, immedi-
ately turns his love of her into hatred; (v. 15.) He hated her with great hatred, greatly, so it is in
the margin, and grew as outrageous in his malice, as he had been in his lust; he basely turned her out of
doors by force; nay, as if he now disdained to touch her with his own hands, he ordered his serv-
ants, let her out, and bolt the door after her, v. 17. Now, 1. The innocent injured lady had reason to
resent this as a great affront, and in some respects, (as she says, v. 16.) worse than the former; for no-
thing could have been done more barbarous, or more
disgraceful to her. Had he taken care to conceal
what was done, her honour had been lost to herself
only. Had he gone down on his knees, and begged
her pardon, it might have been some little repar-
tion for his crimes; but he now forced her to come
out, after the horrid confusion she was put into, she
might have kept her countenance when she went out,
and so have kept her counsel. But to dismiss her
thus hurried, thus rudely, as if she had done some
wicked thing, obliged her, in her own defence,
to proclaim the wrong that had been done her. 2. We
may learn from it, both the malignity of sin, un-
briddled passions are as bad as unbridled appetites,
and the mischievous consequences of sin, at last, it
bites like a serpent; for here we find, (1.) That
sins, sweet in the commission, afterward become
diabolical and p. injurious, and the sinner's own conscience makes them so to himself. Amnon hated Tamar,
because she would not consent to his wickedness,
and so take part of the blame upon herself, but, to
the last, resisted it, and reasoned against it, and so
threw it upon him. Had he hated the sin, and loathed
himself for it, we might have hoped he was peni-
tent: Godly sorrow worketh indignation; (2 Cor.
7. 11.) but to hate the person he had abused, showed
that his conscience was terrified, but his heart
not at all humbled. See what deceitful pleasures
those of the flesh are, how soon they pass away, and
turn into loathing; see Ezek. 23. 17. (2.) That
sins, secret in the commission, afterward become
open and public, and the sinners themselves often
make them so. Their own tongues fall upon them.
The Jewish doctors say, that, upon the occasion of
this wickedness of Amnon, a law was made, that a
young man and a young woman should never be
alone together; for, said they, if the king's daughter
be so used, what will become of the children of pri-
mest men?

We must now leave the criminal to the terrors
of his own guilty conscience, and inquire what becomes of
himself.

[1.] She bitterly lamented the criminal to the terrors
of his own guilty conscience, and inquire what becomes of
himself.

[2.] She retired to her brother Absalom's house,
because he was her own brother, and there she
remained in solitude and sorrow, in token of her modesty,
and detestation of uncleanness. Absalom spoke kindly
unto her, bid her pass by the injury; for the present,
designing himself to revenge it, v. 20. It should
seem, by Absalom's question, (Has Amnon been
with thee?) that Amnon was notorious for such
lewd practices, so that it was dangerous for a mo-
dest woman to be with him; this Absalom might
know, and yet Tamar be wholly ignorant of it.

21. But when king David heard of all these
things, he was very wroth. 22. And Absa-
loom spoke unto his brother Amnon neither
good nor bad: for Absalom hated Amnon,
because he had forced his sister Tamar.
23. And it came to pass, after two full years,
that Absalom had sheep-shearers in Baal-
hazor, which is beside Ephraim: and Absa-
loom invited all the king's sons. 24. And
Absalom came to the king, and said, Be-
hold now, thy servant hath sheep-shearers;
let the king, I beseech thee, and his ser-
vants, go with thy servant. 25. And the
king said to Absalom, Nay, my son, let us
not all now go, lest we be chargeable unto
thee. And he pressed him: howbeit he
would not go, but blessed him. 26. Then
said Absalom, If not, I pray thee, let my
brother Amnon go with us. And the king
said unto him, Why should he go with thee?
27. But Absalom pressed him, that he let
Amnon and all the king's sons go with him.
28. Now Absalom had commanded his ser-
vants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's
heart is merry with wine; and when I say
unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear
not: have not I commanded you? be cou-
rageous, and be valiant. 29. And the ser-
vants of Absalom did unto Absalom as
Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's
sons arose, and every man gat him up upon
his mule and fled.

What Solomon says of the beginning of strife, is
as true of the beginning of all sin; it is as the letting
forth of water; when once the flood-gates are pluck-
ed up, an inundation follows; one mischief begets an-
other, and it is hard to say, what shall be in the end
the changest.

I. We are here told, how David resented the
tidings of Amnon's sin; he was very wroth, v. 21.
So he had reason to be, that his own son should do
such a wicked thing, and draw him to be accessory
to it. It would be a reproach to him, for not giving
him a better education; it would be a blot upon his
family, the ruin of his daughter, a bad example to
his kingdom, and a wrong to his son's soul. But
was it enough for him to be angry? He ought
to have punished his son for it, and to have put him
to open shame; both as a father, and as a king, he
could have power to do it. But the Septuagint here adds these
words: But he saddened not the spirit of his son
Ammon, because he loved him, because he was his
first-born. He fell into Eli's error, whose sons
made themselves vile, and he frowned not on them.
If Amnon was dear to him, his punishing of him
would have been so much the greater punishment
to himself for his own uncleanness. But he cannot
bear the shame those must submit to, who correct
that in others, which they are conscious of in them-
selves, and therefore his anger must serve instead
of his justice; this hardens sinners, Eccl. 8. 11.

II. How Absalom resented it. He resolves al-
ready to do the part of a judge in Israel; and since
his father will not punish Amnon, he will, from a
principle, not of justice, or zeal for virtue, but of revenge, because he reckons himself affluent in the abuse done to his sister. Their mother was daughter to a heathen prince, (ch. 3. 3.) which perhaps they were upbraided with sometimes by their brethren, as children of a stranger; as such a one Absalom thought his sister was now treated; and if Amnon thought her fit to be made his harbottle, he would think him fit to be made his slave; this enraged him, and nothing less than the blood of Amnon will quench his rage. Here we have, 1. The design conceived. Absalom hated Amnon, (v. 22.) and he that hateth his brother, is a murderer already, and, like Cain, is of that wicked one, 1 John 3. 12-15. Absalom's hatred of his brother's crime had been commandable, and he might justly have prosecuted him for it by a due course of law, for example to others, and the making of some compensation to his injured sister; but to hate his person, and design his death by assassination, was to put a great affront upon God, by offering to rep in the breach of his seventh commandment by the violation of his sixth, as if they were not all alike sacred; But he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill, James 2. 11. 2. The design concealed. He said nothing to Amnon of this matter, either good or bad, appeared or began to him, and Amnon, by taking him in his usual civility, only waiting for a fair opportunity to do him a mischief. That malice is the worst, (1.) Which is hidden close, and has no vent given to it. If Absalom had reasoned the matter with Amnon, he might have convinced him of his sin, and brought him to repentance; but saying nothing, Amnon's heart was hardened, and his own more and more imbittered against him; therefore nothing can be more foolish, Absalom's action, to hide his malice in our hearts, Lev. 19. 17. Let passion have vent, and it will spend itself. (2.) Which is gilded over with a show of friendship; so Absalom's was, his words smoother than butter, but war in his heart. See Prov. 26. 26. (3.) Which is harboured long; two full years Absalom nursed this root of bitterness, v. 23. It may be, at first, he did not intend to kill his brother, (for if he had, he might have had the best opportunity to do it, as he had at last;) but only waited for an occasion to disgrace him, or do him some other mischief; but, in time, his hatred ripened to this, that he would be no less than the death of him. If the sun going down once upon the wrath, gives such a place to the Devil as is intimated, Eph. 4. 26. 27. what would the sun-sets of two full years do? 3. The design laid. (1.) Absalom has a feast at his house in the country, as Nabath had, on occasion of his sheep-shearing, v. 23. Attentive as Absalom was to his person, (ch. 14. 26.) and as high as he looked, he knew the state of his flocks, and looked well to his herds. Those that have no other care about their estates in the country, than how to spend them in the town, take a ready way to see the end of them. When Absalom had sheep-shearers, he would himself be with them. (2.) To this feast he invited not only his brethren, but all the princes of the blood, v. 24. Not only that he might have this opportunity to pay his respects to them, but that he might make himself the more respected among his neighbours. Those are as akin to great folks, are apt to value themselves too much on their kindness. (3.) The king would not go himself, because he would not put him to the expense of his entertainment, v. 25. It required more than his wits to design his death by assassination, in which he lived like himself; the king had given it him, but would have him to be a good husband of it: in both these, he is an example to parents, when their children are grown up, to give them a competency to live upon, according to their rank, and then to take care that they do not live above it, especially that they be no way necessary to their doing so. It is prudent for young housekeepers to begin as they can hold out, and not to spend the wool upon the shearing of it. (4.) Absalom got leave for Amnon, and all the rest of the king's sons, to come and grace his table in the country, v. 26, 27. Absalom had so effectually concealed his enmity to Amnon, that David saw no reason to suspect any design upon him in that particular invitation, "Let my brother Amnon go:" but this would make the stroke more cutting to David, that he was himself drawn in to consent to that which gave the opportunity for it, as before, v. 7. It seems, David's sons, though grown up, continued to pay that deference to their father, as not to go such a small journey as this, without his leave. Thus caught children, even when they are become men and women, to honour their parents, advise with them, and do nothing material without their consent, much less against their mind. 4. The design executed, v. 28, 29. (1.) Absalom's entertainment was very plentiful; for he resolves that they shall all be merry with wine; at least, concludes that Amnon will be so, for he knew that he was apt to drink to excess. But, (2.) The orders he gave to his servants concerning Amnon, that while he slept, and was in a condition to be deceived, that they should be very barbarous. Had he challenged him, and, in reliance upon the goodness of his cause, and the justice of God, fought him himself, though that had been bad enough, yet it had been more honorable and excusable; (our ancient law, in some cases, allowed trial by battle;) but to murder him, as he did, was to copy Cain's example, only that the reason made a difference; Abel was slain for his righteousness, Amnon for his wickedness; he thought, the aggrovations of this sin: [1.] He would have Amnon slain, when his heart was merry with wine, and he was, consequently, least apprehensive of danger, least able to resist it, and also least fit to go out of the world; as if his malice aimed to destroy both soul and body, not giving him time to say, Lord have mercy upon me. What a dreadful surprise has death been to many, whose hearts have been full of wickedness, and whose hands have been idle all the day, not so as to be able to make a stroke of it. [2.] His servants must be employed to do it, and so involved in the guilt. He was to give the word of command, Suite Amnon; and then they, in obedience to him, and, upon presumption that his authority would bear them out, must kill him. What an impious defiance does he bid to the divine law, when, though the command of God is express, Thou shalt not kill, he bids them kill Amnon, with the usual warrant, "Have not I commanded you?" and when is enough; Be courageous, and fear neither God nor man." Those servants are ill-taught, (and have wicked masters,) who obey, in contradiction to God. These are too obsequious, that will damn their souls to please their masters, whose big words cannot secure them from God's wrath. Masters must always command their servants, as those that know they have also a Master in heaven. [3.] He did it in the presence of all the king's sons, of whom it is said, (ch. 8. 18.) that they were chief rulers; so that it was an affront to public justice, which they had the administration of, and to the king's father whom they represented, and a contempt of that sword which should have been a terror to his evil deeds; while his evil deeds, on the contrary, were a terror to him that bare it. [4.] There is reason to suspect that Absalom did not expect in this, not to reveal his father's secrets, but to make way for himself to the throne; which he was ambitious of, and which he would stand fair for, if Amnon the eldest son was taken off. When the word of command was given, Absa...
II. Sam. XIV.

By the sly suggestions of Jnabad, David's nephew, who could tell him, Amnon only is dead, and not all the king's sons; (v. 32, 33.) and could tell him too that it was done by the appointment of Absalom, and desired him to obtain from him the head of Tamar. What a wicked man was he, if he knew all this, or had any cause to suspect it, that he did not make David acquainted with it sooner, that means might have been used to make up the quarrel, (such was Jonadab's duty had he acted as an honest man,) or, at least, that David might not have thrown Amnon into the mouth of danger, by letting him go to Absalom's house. If we do not our utmost to prove mischief, we make ourselves accessory to it. If we say, Behold, we know it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart, consider whether we did or no? See Prov. 24. 11, 12. It is well, if Jonadab was not as guilty of Amnon's death, as he was of his sin; such friends do the prove who are hearkened to as counsellors to do wickedly: he that would not be so kind as to prevent Amnon's sin, neither would he be so kind as to prevent his ruin, when it should seem, he might have done both. 2. By the safe return of all the king's sons, except Amnon. They, and their attendants, were speedily discovered by the watch, (v. 34, 35.) and soon arrived, to show themselves alive, but to bring the certain sad news that Absalom had murdered their brother Amnon. The grief David had been in for that which was not, made him the better able to bear the truth which was, by giving him occasion, when he was understanded, to thank God, that all his sons were not dead; yet, that Amnon was dead, and slain by his own brother, in such a treacherous barbarous manner, was enough to put the king and court, the king and kingdom, into real mourning. Sorrow is never more reasonable, than when there is sin in the case.

III. Absalom's flight from justice. Absalom immediately fled, v. 34. He was now as much afraid of the king's sons, as they were of him; they fled from his malice, he from their justice; no part of the land of Israel could shelter him, the cities of refuge gave no protection to a willful murderer; though David had let Amnon's incest go unpunished, Absalom could not promise himself a pardon for this murder; so express was the law in this case, and so well known David's justice, and his dread of blood, that Absalom's own relations made the best of his way to his mother's relations, and was entertained by his grandfather, Talmah, king of Geshur, (v. 37.) and there he was protected three years; (v. 38.) David not demanding him, and Talmah not thinking himself obliged to send him back, unless he were demanded.

IV. David's uneasiness for his absence. He mourned for Amnon a good while, (v. 37.) but he being past the time when they might have been comforted concerning Amnon: it also were off too much his detestation of Absalom's sin; instead of loathing him, as a murderer, he longs to go forth to him, v. 39. At first, he could not find in his heart to do justice on him, now he can almost find in his heart to take him into his favour again. This was David's infirmity; something God saw in his heart that made a difference; else we should have thought that he, as much as Eli, honoured his sons more than God.

CHAP. XIV.

How Absalom threw himself out of his royal father's protection. We read in the foregoing chapter, which left him an exile, outlawed, and proscribed; in this chapter, we have the arts that were used to bring him and his father together again, and how, at last, it was done: which is here recorded, to show the folly of David in sparing him, and indulging him in his wicked-

...
Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom. 2. And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead; 3. And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab put the words in her mouth. 4. And when the woman of Tekoah spake to the king, she fell on his face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help, O king. 5. And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, I am indeed a widow woman, and my husband is dead. 6. And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and there was none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him. 7. And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband neither name nor remainder upon the earth. 8. And the king said unto the woman, Go to thine house, and I will give charge concerning thee. 9. And the woman of Tekoah said unto the king, My lord, O king, the iniquity be on me, and on my father's house; and the king and his throne be guiltless. 10. And the king said, Whosoever saith ought unto thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more. 11. Then said she, I pray thee, let the king remember the Lord thy God, that thou wouldest not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son. And he said, As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth. 12. Then the woman said, Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak one word unto my lord the king. And he said, Say on. 13. And the woman said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished. 14. For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again: neither doth God respect any person; yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him. 15. Now therefore that I am come to speak of this thing unto my lord the king, it is because the people have made me afraid: and thy handmaid said, I will now speak unto the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his handmaid. 16. For the king will hear, to deliver his handmaid out of the hand of the man that would destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God. 17. Then thine handmaid said, The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king, to discern good and bad; therefore the Lord thy God will be with thee. 18. Then the king answered and said unto the woman, Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee. And the woman said, Let my lord the king now speak. 19. And the king said, Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this? And the woman answered and said, As thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand or to the left from aught that my lord the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab, he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid: 20. To fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth. Here is, I. Joab's design to get Absalom recalled out of banishment, his crime pardoned, and his attainder reversed, v. 1. Joab made himself very busy in this affair. 1. As a curtey, that was studious, by all ways possible, to ingratiate himself with his prince, and improve his interest in his favour; he perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom, and that, the heat of his displeasure being over, he still retained his old affection for him, and only wanted a friend to court him to be reconciled, and to contrive for him how he might do it, without imparing the honour of his justice. Joab, finding how David stood affected, undertook this good work. 2. As a friend, to Absalom, when perhaps, he had a particular kindness for, at least looked upon as the rising sun, to whom it was his interest to recommend himself. He plainly foresaw that his father would, at length, be reconciled to him, and therefore thought he should make both his friends, if he were instrumental to bring it about. 3. As a statesman, and one concerned for the public welfare. He knew how much Absalom was the darling of the people, and if David should die while he was in banishment, it might occasion a civil war between those that were for him and those that were against him; for it is probable that though all Israel loved his person, yet they were much divided upon his case. 4. As one who was himself a delin
queat, by the murder of Abner; he was conscious to himself of the guilt of blood, and that he was himself obnoxious to public justice, and therefore, whatever favour he could procure to be shown to Absalom, would corroborate his reprieve.

1. His admission to do it, by laying somewhat of a proceed case, before the king, which was done so dexterously by the person he employed, that the king took it for a real case, and gave judgment upon it, as he had done upon Nathan's parable; and the judgment being in favour of the criminal, the manager might, by that, discover his sentiments so far, as to venture upon the application of it, and to shew that it was the case of his own family, which it was believable, she was instructed not to proceed to, if the king's judgment upon her case had been severe.

1. The person he employed, is not named, but is said to be a woman of Tekoa, one whom he knew to be fit for such an undertaking: and it was requisite that the scene should be laid at a distance, that David might not think that he had not heard of it before. It is said, She was a wise woman—there being a quick wit, and a reader tongue, than most of her neighbours, v. 2. The truth of the story would be the less suspected, when it came, as was supposed, from the person's own mouth.

2. The character she put on, was, that of a disconsolate widow, v. 2. Jeab knew such a one would have an easy access to the king, who was always ready to comfort the meritorious. The majority of mankind himself mentioned it among the titles of God's honour, that he is a Judge of the widows, Ps. 68. 5. God's ear, no doubt, is more open to the cries of the afflicted, and his heart too, than that of the most merciful princes on earth could be.

3. It was a case of compassion which she had to represent to the king, and a case in which she could have no relief but from the chancery in the royal breast; the law (and, consequently, the judgment of all the inferior courts) being against her. She tells the king that she had buried her husband; (v. 5.) that she had two sons that were the support and comfort of her widowed state; that these two (as young men are apt to do) fell out and fought, and one of them unhappily killed the other; (v. 6.) that, for her part, she was desirous to protect the murderer, but was constrained by the mind, which they had no impediment to own was the thing they aimed at, the inheritance might be their's: and thus they would cut off (1.) Her comfort; "They shall quench my coal, deprive me of the only support of my old age, and put a period to all my joy in this world, which is reduced to this one coal."
(2.) Her husband's memory; "His family will be quite extinct, and they will leave him neither son nor daughter."

4. The King promised her his favour, and a protection for her son. Observe how she grew upon the king's compassionate concessions. (1.) Upon the representation of her case, he promised to consider of it, and to give orders about it, v. 8. This was encouraging, that he did not dismiss her petition with "Curat lex—Let the law take its course, blood calls for blood, and let it have what it calls for" but he will take time to inquire whether the allegations of her petition be true. (2.) The woman is not content with this, but begs that he would immediately give judgment in her favour; and, if the matter of fact were not as she represented it, and consequently a wrong judgment given upon it, let her bear the blame, and free the king and his throne from guilt. v. 9, 10. The king stopped short not to acquit the king, if he should pass sentence without taking due cognizance of the case.

5. Being thus pressed, he makes a further promise, that she should not be injured or insulted by her adversaries, but he would protect her from all molestation, v. 10. Magistrates ought to be the patrons of oppressed widows. (4.) Yet this does not content her, unless she could have a son's parable, and protection for him too. Parents are not exempt; alessandria would be safe, for both worlds, v. 11. "Let not the avenger of blood destroy my son, for I am undone if I lose him; as good take my life as his. Therefore let the king remember the Lord thy God;" that is; [1.] "Let him confirm this merciful sentence with an oath, making mention of the Lord our God, by way of appeal to him, that the sentence may be indisputable, and irreverend; and then I shall be easy." See Heb. 6. 17, 18. [2.] "Let him consider what good reason there is for this merciful sentence, and then he himself will be confirmed in it. Remember how gracious and merciful the Lord thy God is, how he hears long with sinners, and does not deal with them according to their deserts, but is ready to forgive. Remember how the Lord thy God spared Cain, who slew his brother, and protected murderers of blood, Gen. 4. 15. Remember how the Lord thy God forgave the blood of Uriah, and let the king, that has found mercy, show mercy." Note, Nothing is more proper, or more powerful, to engage us to every duty, especially to all acts of mercy and kindness, than to remember the Lord our God. (5.) This importunate widow, by pressing the matter thus close, obtains, at last, a full pardon for her son, ratified with an oath as she desired; As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth; that is, "I will undertake he shall come to no damage upon this account." The Son of David has assured all that put themselves under his protection, that, though they should be put to death for his sake, not a hair of their head shall perish; (Luke 21. 16, 18.) though they should lose for him, they should not now by his death. He undertakes the protection of a murderer, whom the cities of refuge would not protect, I cannot say. But as the matter of fact appeared to him, there was not only great reason for compassion to the mother, but room enough for a favourable judgment concerning the son: he had slain his brother, but he hated him not in time past; it was upon a sudden provocation, and, for ought that appeared, it might be his brother's own. He pleased not this himself, but the judge must be of counsel for the prisoner; and therefore, Let mercy, at this time, rejoice against judgment.

5. The case being thus adjudged in favour of her son, it is now time to apply it to the king's son, Ab-salom. The mask here begins to be thrown off, and another scene opened; the king is surprised, but not at this event, for his thoughts are upon his other son. He plenteous not this himself, but the judge must be of counsel for the seller, and therefore, Let mercy, at this time, rejoice against judgment.

1. She supposes Absalom's case to be, in effect, the same with that which she had put as her son's; and therefore, if the king would protect her son, though he had slain his brother, much more ought
be to protect his own, and to fetch home his banished, v. 13. Mutua nomine de te fabula narratur— Change but the names, to you the tale belongs. She names not Absalom, nor needed she to name him; David longed for his return, and had him so much in his thoughts, that he was soon aware whom she meant by his banished. And in those two words, were two arguments which the king's tender spirit felt the force of:—He is banished, and has, for three years, undergone the disgrace and terror, and all the inconveniences, of banishment: sufficient to such a one to be punishment: but he is thy banished, thy own son, a piece of thyself, thy dear son, whom thou lovest.

It is true, Absalom's case differed very much from that which she had put. Absalom did not slay his brother upon a hasty passion, but maliciously, and upon an old grudge; not in the field, where there were no witnesses, but at table, before all his guests. Absalom was not an only son, as her's was; David had many more, and one lately born, more likely to be his successor than Absalom, for he was called Jedidiah, because God loved him. But David was himself too well affected to the cause, to be critical in his remarks upon the disparity of the cases, and was more desirous than she could be, to bring that favourable judgment to his own son, which he had given concerning her's.

(2.) She reasons upon it with the king, to persuade him to recall Absalom. All of banishment should give him his pardon, and take him into his favour again.

[1.] She pleaseth the interest which the people of Israel had in him. "What is done against him, is done against the people of God, who have their eye upon him as heir of the crown, at least, have their eye upon the house of David in general, with which the covenant is made, and which therefore they cannot see the diminution and decay of, by the fall of such a man to such a degradation. Therefore the king speaks as one that is faulty, for he will provide that my husband's name and memory be not cut off, and yet takes no care, though his own be in danger, which is of more value and importance than ten thousand of our's."

[2.] She pleads man's mortality; (v. 14.) "We must needs die, it is appointed for us, we cannot avoid the thing itself; nor defer it till another time. We all come into the world, as Absalom is, God's guest; and when we are dead, we are past recall, as water spilt upon the ground; nay, even when we are alive, we are so, we have lost our immortality, past retrieve. Amon must have died, some time, if Absalom had not killed him; and if Absalom be now put to death for killing him, that will not bring him to life again."

This was poor reasoning, and would serve against the punishment of any murderer; but, it should seem, Amon was a man little regarded by the people, and his death little lamented, and it was generally thought hard that so dear a life as Absalom's should go for one so little valued as Amon's.

[3.] She pleaseth God's mercy and his clemency toward poor guilty sinners. "God does not take away the soul, or life, but devises means that his banished, his children that have offended him, and are obnoxious to his displeasure, should be not for ever expelled from him," v. 14. Here are two great instances of the mercy of God to sinners, properly urged as reasons for showing mercy. First, the patience he exercises toward them. His law is broken, yet he does not immediately take away the life of those that break it; does not strike sinners dead, as justly he might, in the act of sin, but bears with them, and waits to be gracious. God's vengeance had suffered Absalom to live; why then should not David's justice suffer him? Secondly, the provision he had made for their restoration to his favour, that though by sin they had banished themselves from him, yet they might not be expelled, or cast off, for ever. Atonement might be made for sinners by sacrifice. Lepers, and others ceremonially unclean, were banished, but provision was made for their cleansing, that, though for a time excluded, they might not be finally expelled. The state of sinners is a state of banishment from God. Poor banished sinners are likely to be for ever expelled from God, if some course be not taken to prevent it: it is against the mind of God that they should be so, for he is not willing that any should perish: infinite wisdom has devised proper means to prevent it; so that it is sinners' own fault, if they be banished. This is true, that sinners will towards us all, should incline us to be merciful and compassionate one towards another, Matt. 18. 32, 33.

6. She concludes her address, with high compliments to the king, and strong expressions of her assurance that he would do what was just and kind, both in the one case and the other; (v. 15.-17.) for, as if the case had been real, still she pleads for herself and her son, yet meaning Absalom.

(1.) She would not have troubled the king thus, but that the people made her afraid. Understanding it of her own case, all her neighbours made her apprehensive of the ruin she and her son were upon the brink of, from the avengers of blood, the terror of which made her thus bold in her applications to the king himself. Understanding it of Absalom's case, she gives him the assurance that he did not know before, that the nation was disgusted at his severity towards Absalom, to that degree, that she was really afraid it would occasion a general mutiny, or insurrection, for the preventing of which great mischief, she ventured to speak to the king himself. The fright she was in must excuse her rudeness.

(2.) She的理由了 herself to him with a great confidence in his wisdom and clemency. "I said, I will speak to the king myself; and ask nobody to speak for me; for the king will hear reason, even from so mean a creature as I am, will hear the cries of the oppressed, and will not suffer the poorest of his subjects to be destroyed out of the inheritance of God," that is, "driven out of the land of Israel, to seek for shelter among the uncircumcised, as Absalom was, cannot be so much the worse, that being shut out of the inheritance of God, he wants God's law and ordinances, which might help to bring him to repentance, and is in danger of being infected with the idolatry of the heathen among whom he sojourns, and of bringing home the infection." To engage the king to grant her request, she expresses a confident hope, that his answer would be comfortable, and such as angels bring, (as Bishop Patrick explains it,) they were passengers of divine mercy. What this woman says, by way of compliment, the prophet says by way of promise, (Zech. 12. 8.) that when the week shall be as David, the house of David shall be as the angel of the Lord. "And, in order to this, the Lord thy God shall be with thee, to assist thee in this and every judgment thou givest." Great expectations are set engaging the king, especially to persons of honour, to do their utmost to weep and disquiet these, that depend on them.

Lastly, The hand of Joab is suspected by the king, and acknowledged by the woman, to be in all this, v. 18.-20.

(1.) The king soon suspected it. For he could not think that such a woman as this, would have appealed to him, in a matter of such moment, of her own head. And he knew none so likely to set her on as Joab, who was a politic man, and a friend of Absalom.

(2.) The woman very honestly owned it. "Th:
servant Joab he had me. If it be well done, let him have the thanks; if ill, let him bear the blame." Though she found it very agreeable to the king, yet she would not take the praise of it to herself, but speaks the truth as it was, and gives us an example to do likewise, and never to tell a lie for the concealing of a well-managed scheme; *Dare to be true, nothing can need a lie.*

21. And the king said unto Joab, Behold now I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again. 22. And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant. 23. So Joab arose, and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. 24. And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face. 25. But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. 26. And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it; because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it,) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels, after the king's weight. 27. And unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter, whose name was Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.

Observe here,
I. Orders given for the bringing back of Absalom; the errand on which the woman came to David, was so agreeable, and her management of it so very ingenious and surprising, that he was brought into a peculiarly kind humour: Go, (says he to Joab,) *bring the young man Absalom again,* v. 21. He was himself inclined to favour him, yet, for the honour of his justice, he would not do it but upon assurance made for him, which may illustrate the methods of divine grace. It is true, God has thoughts of compassion toward poor sinners, not willing that any should perish, yet he is reconciled to them through a Mediator, who intercedes with him on their behalf, and to whom he has given these orders, Go, *bring them again.* God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and he came to this land of our bondage, to bring us to God.

Joab, having received these orders, 1. Returns thanks to the king for doing him the honour to employ him in an affair so universally grateful, v. 22. Joab took it as a kindness to himself, and (some think) as an indication that he would never call him to an account for the murder he had been guilty of. But if he meant so, he was mistaken, as we shall find, 1 Kings 2. 3, 6. 2. Delays not to execute David's orders, he brought Absalom to Jerusalem, v. 23. I see not how David can be justified in suspending the execution of the ancient law, (Gen. 9. 6.) *Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed,* in which a righteous magistrate ought not to acknowledge even his brethren, or know his own children. God's laws were never designed to be like cobwebs which catch the little flies, but suffer the great ones to break through. God justly made Absalom a scourge to him, whom his foolish pity thus spared. But though he allowed him to return to his own house, he forbad him the court, and would not see him himself, v. 24. He put him under this interdict, (1.) For his own honour, that he might not seem to countenance so great a criminal, nor to forgive him too easily. (2.) For Absalom's greater correction. Perhaps he had heard something of his conduct, when Joab went to fetch him, which gave him too much reason to think that he was not truly penitent; he therefore put him under this mark of his displeasure, that he might be awakened to a sight of his sin, and to sorrow for it, and might make his peace with God; upon the first notice of which, no doubt, David would be forward to receive him again into his favour.

II. Occasion taken from hence to give an account of Absalom. Nothing is said of his wisdom and piety; though he was the son of such a devout father, we read nothing of his devotion; parents cannot give grace to their children, though they give them ever so good an education. All that is here said of him, is, 1. That he was a very handsome man; there was not his equal in all Israel for beauty, v. 25. A poor commendation for a man that has nothing else in him valuable. Handicrafts are they that handsome do. Many a polluted deformed soul dwells in a fair and comely body; witness Absalom's, that was polluted with blood, and deformed with unnatural affection to his father and prince. In his body there was no blemish, but in his mind nothing but wounds and bruises. Perhaps this was one reason why his father was so fond of him, and protected him from justice; for he had reason to have reason to fear affliction in their children, who are not here pleased with their beauty than with their virtue. 2. That he had a very fine head of hair. Whether it was the length, or colour, or extraordinary softness of it, something there was, which made it very valuable, and very much an ornament to him, v. 26. This notice is taken of his hair, not as the hair of a Nazarite, (he was far from that strictness,) but as the hair of a beautiful man. He let it grow, till it was burdened to him, and was heavy on him, nor would he cut it, as long as ever he could bear it. As pride feels no cold, so it feels no heat: and that which feeds and gratifies it, is not complained of, though very uneasy. When he did poll it at certain times, for ornament he had it weighed, that it might be seen how much it excelled other men's; and it weighed two hundred shekels, which some reckon to be twenty pounds and two ounces of our weight, and with the oil and powder, especially if it were powdered (as Josephus says the fashion then was) with gold-dust, Bishop Patrick thinks it is not at all incredible that it should weigh so much. This fine hair proved his halter. ch. 18. 9. 3. That his family began to be built up. It is probable that it was a good while before he had a child; and then it was, that, desiring of having one, he set up that pillar which is mentioned, ch. 18. 18. to bear up his name; but afterward he had three sons, and one daughter, v. 27. Or, perhaps, these sons, while he was hatching his rebellion, were all cut off by the righteous hand of God, and thereupon, he set up that monument.

28. So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face. 29. Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the
thought he could not justify his refusal to go and speak with him; and therefore Absalom thought he could justify his taking this way to fetch him. And now Joab (perhaps frightened at the surprising boldness and fury of Absalom, and apprehensive that he had made an interest in the people strong enough to bring him out in doing the most daring things, else he would not have done it) not only puts up with this injury, but goes on his errand to the king. See what some men can do by threats, and carrying things with a high hand.

2. By his insolent message (for I can call it no better) to the king, he recovered his place at court, to see the king's face, that is, to become a privy counsellor. Esth. 1. 14. (1.) His message was haughty and presumptuous, as that of a son or a subject, v. 32. He undervalued the favour that had been shewn him, in recalling him from banishment, and restoring him to his own house and that in Jerusalem; Wherefore am I come from Geshur? He denies his own crime, though most notorious, and will not own that there was any iniquity in him, insinuating that theretofore he had been wronged in the rebuke he had been under. He defies the king's justice. "Let him kill me, if he can find in his heart," knowing he loved him too well to do it. (2.) Yet with this message he carried his point, v. 32. David's strong affection for him, construed all this to be the language of a great respect to his father, and an earnest desire of his favour, when, alas, it was nothing like it. See how easily wise and good men may be imposed upon by their own cleverness in that design ill, especially when they are blindly fond of them. Absalom, by the posture of his body, testified his submission to his father, He bowed himself on his face to the ground; and David, with a kiss, sealed his pardon. D'd the bowels of a father prevail to reconcile him to an impenitent son, and shall penitent sinners question the compassion of him who is the Father of mercy? If Ephraim bemoan himself, God seen bemoans him, with all the kind expressions of a Elisha's tenderness; He is a dear son, and a pleasant child, Jer. 31. 20.

CHAP. XV.

Absalom's name signifies the peace of his father, yet he proves his greatest, trouble; so often are we disappointed in our expectations from the creature. The sword, entailed upon his father's house, had hitherto been among his children, but now it begets its despair against his neck; and instead of it, with this aggravation, that he may thank himself for it, for had he done justice upon the murderer, he had prevented the traitor. The story of Absalom's rebellion begins with this chapter, but we must go over three or four more before we see the end of it. In this chapter, we have, I. The arts Absalom used to incite himself into the people's affection, v. 1. 6. II. His own avowal of his pretensions to the crown at Hebron, whether he went under colour of a vow, and the strong party that appeared for him there, v. 7. 12. III. The notice brought of this to David, and his flight from Jerusalem; hereupon, v. 13. 14. IV. Right we come to the plot between him and Itai, v. 19. 22. 2. The concerns of the country for him, v. 23. 3. His conference with Zadok, v. 34. 29. 4. His tears and prayers upon this occasion, v. 30. 31. 5. Matters concerted by him with Hushai, v. 32. 37. Now the word of God was fulfilled, that he would raise up evil against him out of his own house, ch. 16. 10.

1. AND it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. 2. And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate; and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom
Absalom is no sooner restored to his place at court, than he aims to be in the throne. He that was unhumbled under his troubles, became insufferably proud when he was exalted. He was as full of himself as of being the king's son, and the prospect of being his successor; but he must be king now. His mother was a king's daughter; on that, perhaps, he valued himself, and despised his father, who was but the son of Jesse. She was the daughter of a heathen king, which made him the less concerned for the peace of Israel. David, in this unhappy issue of that marriage, smartered for his unwise and unwarrantable connexion.

When Absalom was restored to the king's favour, if he had had any sense of gratitude, he would have studied how to oblige his father, and make him easy; but, on the contrary, he meditates how to undermine him, by stealing the hearts of the people from him. Two things recommend a man to popular esteem; greatness, and goodness.

I. Absalom looks great, v. 1. He had learned of the king of Geshur, what was not allowed to the kings of Israel, t triply horses; which make him look desirable, while his father, on his mule, looks despicable. The people desired a king like the nations; and such a one Absalom will be, appearing in pomp and magnificence, above what had been seen in Jerusalem. Samuel had foretold that this would be the manner of the king; He shall have chariots and horsesmen, and some shall run before his chariot. (1 Sam. 8. 11.) and this is Absalom's manner. Fifty footmen (in rich livery we may suppose) running before him, to give notice of his approach, would highly gratify his pride and the people's foolish fancy. David thinks that it is designed only to grace his court, and convives at it. Those parents know not what they do, who indulge a proud humour in their children; for I have seen more young people ruined by pride than by any one like Absalom.

II. Absalom will seem very good too, but with a very bad design. Had he proved himself a good son, and a good subject, and set himself to serve his father's interest, he had done his present duty, and showed himself worthy of future honours, after his father's death. Those that know how to obey well, know how to rule. But to show how good a judge, and how good a king he would be, he did not set about doing himself and others. Those are good indeed, that are good in their own place, not that pretend how good they will be in other people's places. But this is all the goodness we find in Absalom.

1. He wishes that he were a judge in Israel, v. 4. He had all the pomp and all the pleasure he could wish; yet this will not content him, unless he have power too; O that I were a judge in Israel! He that should himself have been judged to death for murder, has the impudence to aim at being a judge of others. We read not of Absalom's wisdom, virtue, or learning in the laws, nor had he given any proofs of his love to justice, but the contrary: yet he wishes he were a judge. Note, These are commonly most ambitious of preferment, that are least fit for it; for no one is too qualified for public service, but is too self-sufficient, while it is no better than the spirit of an Absalom, that says, O that I were a judge in Israel!

2. He takes a very bad course for the accomplishing of his wish. Had he humbly petitioned his father to employ him in the administration of justice, and studied to qualify himself for it, (according to the promise of verse 15.) he had been sure of the next judge's place; but, he is too mean a post for his proud spirit. It is below him to be subordinate, though to the king his father; he must be supreme, or nothing. He wants to be such a judge, that every man who has any cause, shall come to him; in all cases, and over all persons, he must preside; little thinking what a fatiguing this would be, to have every man come to him. Absalom judges himself could not bear it. Those know not what power is, that grasp at so much, so very much.

To gain the power he aims at, he endeavours to instil into the people's minds,

(1.) A bad opinion of the present administration, as if the affairs of the kingdom were altogether neglected, and no care taken about them. He got round him all he could, that had business at the council-board, inquired what their business was; and, Upon a slight and general inquiry into their cause, he pronounced it good; Thy matters are right. A fit man indeed to be a judge, who would give judgment upon hearing one side only! For he has a bad cause indeed, that cannot put a good colour upon it, when he himself has the telling of the story. But, He told them that it was to no purpose to appeal to the throne, There is no man defeated of the king to hear thee. The king is himself old, and past business; or so taken up with his devotions, that he never minds business; (his sons were so addicted to their pleasures, that, though they had the name of chief rulers, they took no care of the affairs committed to them;) he further seems to insinuate, what a great loss there was of him, while he was banished and confined, and how much the public suffered by it. But his father said truly, (Ps. 75. 3.) he says falsly, The land and all the inhabitants of it are dissolved, all will go to wreck and ruin, unless I hear up the pillars of it. Every appellant shall be made to believe that he will never have justice done him, unless Absalom be viceroy, or lord-justice. It is the way of turbulent factious aspiring men, to reproach the government they are under, presuming as if they, not others, were chosen for the public usefulness, 2 Pet. 2. 10. Even David himself, the best of kings, and his administration, could not escape the worst of censures. They that aim to usurp, cry out of grievances, and pretend to design nothing but the redress of them, as Absalom here.

2. A good opinion of his own fitness to rule. That the people might say, "O that Absalom were a judge!" (and they are apt enough to desire such changes,) he recommends himself to them, (1.) As very diligent; he rose up early, and appeared in public before the rest of the king's sons were stirring, and he stood beside the way of the gate, where the courts of judgment sat, as one mightily concerned to see justice done, and public business despatched. (2.) As very inquisitive and prying, and desirous to be acquainted with every one's case.
He would know of what city every one was, that came for judgment, that he might inform himself concerning every part of the kingdom, and the state of it, v. 2. (3.) As very familiar and humble, if any Israelite offered to do obsequies to him, he took him, and embraced him as a friend. No man's conduct could be more condescending, while his heart was as proud as Lucifer's. Ambitious projects are often carried on by a show of humility, Col. 2. 23. He knew what a grace it puts upon greatness, to be affable and courteous, and how much it wins upon common people: had he been sincere in it, it had been his praise, but to fawn upon the people, that he might betray them, was abominable hypocrisy. *He croueth, and humbly boweth himself; to draw them into his net,* Ps. 10. 9, 10.

7. And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow which I have vowed unto the Lord in Hebron. 8. For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the Lord shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then will I serve the Lord. 9. And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron. 10. But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron. 11. And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing. 12. And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

We have here the breaking out of Absalom's rebellion, which he had long been contriving. It is said to be after forty years, v. 7. But whence that is to be dated, we are not told, not from David's beginning his reign, for then it would fall in the last year of his life, which is not probable, but either from his first anointing by Samuel seven years before, or rather, (I think,) from the people's desiring a king, and the first change of the government into a monarchy; which might be about ten years before David began to reign; it is fitly dated from thence, to show that the same restless spirit was still working, and still they were given to change: as fond now of a new man, as then of a new model. So it fell about the thirtieth year of David's reign, Absalom's plot being now ripe for execution.

I. The place he chose for the rendezvous of his party was Hebron, the place where he was born, and where his father began his reign, and continued it several years, which would give some advantage to his pretensions. Every one knew Hebron to be a royal city; and it lay in the heart of Judah's lot, in which tribe, probably, he thought his interest strong.

II. The pretence he had both to go thither, and to invite his friends to him there, was, to offer a sacrifice to God, in performance of a vow he had made during his banishment, v. 7, 8. We have cause enough to suspect that he had not made any such vow, it does not appear that he was so religiously inclined; but he that struck not at murder and treason, would not make conscience of a lie to serve his purpose. If he said he had made such a vow, nobody could disprove him. Under this pretext,

1. He got leave of his father to go to Hebron. He would be well pleased to hear that his son, in his exile, was so desirous to return to Jerusalem, not only his father's city, but the city of the living God; that he looked up to God, to bring him back; that he had vowed, if he were brought back, to serve the Lord, whose service he had hitherto neglected; and that now, being brought back, he remembered his vow, and was determined to perform it, and to do it in Hebron, rather than in Zion or Gibeah, the good king is so well pleased with the thing itself, that he will not object against his choice of the place. See how willing tender parents are to believe the best concerning their children, and, upon the least indication of good, to hope, even concerning those that have been untoward, that they will repent and reform. But how easy it is for children to make advances in sin, and to take advantage of their father's容纳, and to impose upon them with the show of religion, while still they are what they were! David was overjoyed to hear that Absalom was inclined to serve the Lord, and therefore readily gave leave to go to Hebron, and to go thither with solemnity.

2. He got a good number of sober substantial citizens to go along with him, v. 11. There went two hundred men with him, probably, of the called men of Jerusalem, whom he invited to join with him in his feast upon his sacrifice; and they went in their simplicity, not in the least suspecting that Absalom had any bad design in his journey. He knew that it was to no purpose to tempt them into his plot, they were inviolably firm to David; but he drew them in to accompany him, that the common people might think that they were in his interest, and that David was deserted by some of his best friends. Note, It is no new thing for very good men, and very good things, to be made use of by designing men, to put a colour upon bad practices. When religion is made a stalking-horse, and sacrifice a sheathing-horn, to sedition and usurpation, it is not to be wondered at, if some that were well-affected to religion, as these followers of Absalom here, are misled and carried to the fall, if their principles, or their repeated engagements, or the news was both very true and very good, and that they were all concerned to take up arms for their new king. Upon the sudden spreading of this proclamation, Absalom reigns in Hebron, some would conclude that David was dead, others that he had resigned; and thus they that were in the secret, would draw in many to appear for Absalom, and come in to his assistance; and believe it is, that they understood this matter, would have abhorred the thought of it, but, being drawn in, would adhere to him. See what artifices ambitious men use for the compassing of their ends; and in matters of state, as well as in matters of religion, let us not be forward to believe every spirit, but try the spirits.

IV. The person he especially courted and relied upon in this affair, was, Ahithophel, a politic thinking man, and one that had a clear head, and a great compass of thought, that had been David's coun...
II. SAMUEL, XV.

II.

This and for servants, as offerings. That shall Jerusalem, are contention, which was on the projects of his ambition, that he could not stay to make an end of his devotion; which showed what his eye was upon, in all, and that it was but for a pretence that he made long offerings.

V. The party that joined with him, proved, at last, very considerable. The people increased continually with Absalom, which made the conspiracy strong and formidable. Every one whom he had complimented and caressed, (pronouncing his matters right and good, especially, if, afterward, the cause went against him,) not only came himself, but made all the interest he could for him, so that he wanted not for numbers. The majority is no certain rule to judge of equity by. All the world wondered after the beast. Whether Absalom formed this design merely in the height of his ambition and fondness to rule, or whether there was not in it also malice against his father, and revenge for his banishment and confinement, though it was so much less than he deserved, does not appear. But, generally, that which aims at the crown, aims at the head that wears it.

12. And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. 14. And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword. 15. And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint. 16. And the king went forth, and all his household after him: and the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house. 17. And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off. 18. And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Peletites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king. 19. Then said the king to Ittai the Gittle, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king; for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. 20. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? Seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee. 21. And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be. 22. And David said to Ittai, Go, and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him. 23. And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over toward the way of the wilderness.

Here is,

I. The notice brought to David of Absalom's rebellion, v. 13. The matter was bad enough, and yet it seems to have been made worse to him (as such things commonly are) than really it was; for he was told, that the hearts of the men of Israel (that is, the generality of them, at least, the leading men) were after Absalom. But David was the more apt to believe it, because now he could call to mind the arts Absalom had used to inveigle them, and perhaps reflected upon it with regret, that he had not done more to counterwork him, and secure his own interest, which he had been too confident in. Note, It is easy to the wise man, rather quit the view of the hearts of their subjects; for if they have them, they have their purses, and arms, and all, at their service.

II. The alarm this gave to David, and the resolutions he came to, thereupon. We may well imagine him in a manner thunder-struck, when he heard that the son he loved so dearly, and had been so indulgent to, was so unlovingly ingrained against him. Well might he say, Caesar, kai so taino — What, thou my son? Let not parents raise their hopes too high from their children, lest they be disappointed. David did not call a council, but, consulting only with God and his own heart, determined immediately to quit Jerusalem, v. 14. He took up this strange resolve, so disagreeable to his character as a man of courage, either, 1. As a penitent, submitting to the rod, and laying down under God's scourging hand. Conscience now reminded him of his sin in the matter of Uriah, and the sentence he was under for it, which was, that evil should rise against him out of his own house. Now, thinks he, the word of God begins to be fulfilled, and it is not for me to contend with it, or fight against it: God is righteous, and I submit." Before unrighteous Absalom, he could justify himself: as, and stand it out; but before the righteous God, he must condemn himself, and yield to his judgments. Thus he accepts the punishment of his iniquity. Or, 2. As a politician. Jerusalem was a great city, but not tenable; it should seem, by David's prayer, (Ps. 51. 18.) that the walls of it were not built up, much less was it regularly fortified; it was too large to be garrisoned by so small a force as David had now with him; he had reason to fear that the impiety of the inhabitants were to well-affect Absalom, to be true to him; should he fortify himself there, he might lose the country, in which, especially among those that lay furthest from Absalom's tampering, he hoped to have the most friends. And he had such a kindness for Jerusalem, that he was loath to make that the seat of war, and expose it to the calamities of a siege; he will rather quit it tamely to the rebels. Note, Good men, when they suffer themselves, care not how few are involved with them in suffering.
III. His hasty flight from Jerusalem. His servants agreed to the measures he took, faithfully adhered to him, (v. 15.) and assured him of their inviolable allegiance. Whereupon, 1. He went out of Jerusalem himself on foot, while his son Absalom had chariots and horses. It is now that God makes the bravest and best figure. See here, not only the servant, but the traitor, on horseback, while the prince, the rightful prince, walks as a servant upon the earth, Eccl. 10. 7. Thus he chose to do, to abase himself so much the more under God’s hand, and in condescension to his friends and followers, with whom he would walk, in token that he would live and die with them. 2. He took his life-guard with him, or band of pensioners; the Cherethites and Pelethites, who were under the command of Benaiah; and the Gittites, who were under the command of Ittai, v. 18. These Gittites seem to have been, by birth, Philistines of Gath, who came, a regiment of them, 600 in all, to enter themselves in David’s service, having known him in Gath, and being greatly in love with him for his virtues and piety, and having embraced the Jews’ religion. David made them of his garde du corps—his body-guard, and they adhered to him in his distress. The son of David found not so great faith in Israel as in a Roman centurion, and a woman of Canaan. 4. As many as would, of the people of Jerusalem, he took with him, and made a halt at some distance from the city, to draw them up, v. 17. He compelled none; they whose hearts were with Absalom, to Absalom let them go, and so shall their doom be, they will soon have enough of him. Christ enlists none but volunteers.

IV. His discourse with Ittai the Gittite, who commanded the Philistine prosetytes. 1. David dissuaded him from going along, with him, v. 19. 20. Though he and his men might be greatly serviceable to him, yet, (1.) He would try whether he were not goy to be the Prince and incline to Absalom; he therefore bids him return to his post in Jerusalem, and serve the new king. If he were no more than a soldier of fortune, (as we say,) he would be for that side which would pay and prefer him best; and to that side let him go. (2.) If he were faithful to David, yet he would not have him exposed to the fatigues and perils he now counted upon. David’s tenable that which now seems to be a stronger and an exile, a prosetyle and a new convert, wrought, by all means possible, to be encouraged and made easy, should at his first coming, meet with such hard usage. “Should I make thee go up and down with us? No, return with thy brethren.” Generous souls are more concerned at the shares others have in their troubles, than at their own. Ittai shall therefore be dismissed with a blessing, Mercy and truth be with thee, and then thou art safe, and mayest be easy wherever thou art.” David’s dependence was upon the mercy and truth of God, for comfort and happiness, both for himself and his friends; see Ps. 61. 7.

2. Ittai bravely resolves not to leave him, v. 21. Where David is, whether in life or death, safe or in peril, there will this faithful friend of his be; and he confirms his resolution with an oath, that he might not be tempted to break it: such a value has he for David, not for the sake of his wealth and greatness, (for then he would have deserted him, now that he saw him thus reduced,) but for the sake of his wisdom and goodness, which were still the same, that, whatever comes of it, he will never leave him. Note, That is a friend indeed, who loves at all times, and will adhere to us in adversity. Thus should we cleave to the Son of David, with full purpose of heart, that neither life nor death shall separate us from his love.

V. The common people’s sympathy with David in his affliction. When he and his attendant passed over the brook Kidron, (the very same brook that Christ passed over, when he entered upon his sufferings, John 18. 1.) toward the way of the wilderness, which lay between Jerusalem and Jericho, all the country wept with a loud voice, v. 23. Cause enough there was for weeping. 1. To see a prince thus reduced; one that had lived so great a force from his palace, and in fear of his life, with a small retinue, seeking shelter in a desert; the city of David, which he himself won, built, and fortified, made an unsafe abode for David himself: it would move the compassion even of strangers, to see a man fallen thus low from such a height, and this by the wickedness of his own son; a piteous case it was. Parents that are abused and ruined by their own children, merit the tender sympathy of their friends, as much as any of the sons or daughters of affliction. Especially, 2. To see their own prince thus wronged, who had been so great a blessing to their land, and had not done any thing to forfeit the affections of his people; to see him in this distress, and themselves unable to help him, might well draw floods of tears from their eyes.

24. And, lo, Zadok also, and all the Levites were with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city.

25. And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitations. 26. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him. 27. The king said also unto Zadok the priest, Art not thou a seer? return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimeaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. 28. See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me. 29. Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem; and they tarried there. 30. And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered; and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.

Here is,

I. The fidelity of the priests and Levites, and
their firm adherence to David and his interest.
They knew David's great affection to them and
his absence. He calls Zadok a seer, (v. 27.) that
is, a wise man, a man that can see into business,
and discern time and judgment; "Thou hast thine
eyes in thy head, (Eccl. 2. 14.) and therefore art
capable of doing me service, especially, by sending
me intelligence of the enemies' motions and resolu-
tions."

First friend that is a seer, in such an exis-
tence as that. It is much needed for a quick-sighted.
For the settling of a private cor-
respondence with the priests in his absence, he ap-
points, 1. Whom they should send to him, their two
sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan, whose coat, it might
be hoped, would be their protection, and of whose
prudence and faithfulness, probably, he had had
experience. 2. Whether they should send. He
would encourage them in "their flails in the wild-
erness," till he heard from them, (v. 28.) and then they
according to the information and advice they should
send him. Hereupon, they returned to the city, to
wait the event; it was pity that any disturbance
should be given to a state so happy as this was,
when the prince and the priests had such an entire
affection for, and confidence in each other.

IV. The melancholy posture that David and his
men put themselves into, when, at the beginning of
their march, they went up the mount of Olives.

30. 1. David himself, as a deep mourner, covered
his head and face for shame and blushing, went
barefoot, as a prisoner or a slave, and for mortifica-
tion, and went weeping. Did it become a man of
his reputation for courage and greatness of spirit,
thus to cry like a child, only for fear of an enemy
at a distance, against whom he might easily have
made head, and perhaps with one bold stroke have
routed him? Yes, it did not ill become him, consi-
dering how much there was in this trouble, (1.) Of
the unkindness of his son. He could not but weep,
to think that one who came out of his bowels, and
had so often lain in his arms, would thus lift up the
heel against him. God himself is said to be grieved
with the rebellions of his own children, (Ps. 95. 10.)
and even broken with their whorish heart, Ezek. 6.
9. (2.) There was much of the displeasure of his
God in it; this infused the wormwood and gall into
the affliction and misery, Lam. 3. 19. His sin was
ever before him, (Ps. 51. 3.) but never so plain, nor
ever appearing so black, as now. He never wept
thus when Saul hunted him, but a wounded con-
science makes troubles lie heavy, Ps. 38. 4. 2.
When David wept, all his company wept likewise,
being much affected with his grief, and willing to
share in it. It is our duty to weep with those that
weep, especially our superiors, and those that are
better than we; for, if this be done in the green tree,
what shall be done in the dry? We must weep
with those that weep for sin. When Hezekiah
humbled himself for his sin, all Jerusalem joined
with him, 2 Chron. 32. 26. To prevent suffering
with sinners, let us sorrow with them.

31. And one told David, saying, Ahithoph-
el is among the conspirators with Abasa-
lon. And David said, 0 Lord, I pray thee,
to turn the counsel of Ahithophel to foolishness.
32. And it came to pass, that
when David was come to the top of the
mount, where he worshipped God, behold,
Hushai the Archite came to meet him, with his
cost rent, and earth upon his head: 33.
Unto whom David said, If thou passest on
with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto
me: 34. But if thou return to the city, and
say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant; O
king; as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. 35. And hast thou not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, that what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. 36. Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear. 37. So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

Nothing, it seems, appeared to David more threatening in Absalom's plot, than that Ahithophel was in it; for one good head, in such a design, is worth a thousand good hands. Absalom was himself no politician, but he had got one entirely in his interest that was, and would be the more dangerous, because he had been, all along, acquainted with David's counsels and affairs: if therefore he can be baffled, Absalom is as good as routed, and the head of the conspiracy cut off. This David endeavours to do.

1. By prayer. When he heard that Ahithophel was in the plot, he lifted up his heart to God, in this short prayer, Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness, v. 31. He had not opportunity for a long prayer, but he was none of those that thought he should be heard for his much speaking. It was a fervent prayer, "Lord, I pray thee, do this." God is well pleased with the importunity of those that come to him with their petitions. David was particular in this prayer; he names the person whose counsels he prays against. God gives us leave, in prayer, to be humbly and reverently free with him, and to mention the particular care, and fear, and grief, that lies heavy upon us. He prays not for the world's peace and prosperity but against his counsel, that God would turn it into foolishness; that though he was a wise man, he might, at this time, give foolish counsel; or, if he gave wise counsel, that it might be rejected as foolish: or, if it were followed, that, by some providence or other, it might be defeated, and not attain the end. David prayed this, in a firm belief that God has all hearts in his hand, and tongues too; that, when he pleases, he can take away the understandings of the aged, and make the judges fools, (Job 12. 17. Isa. 3. 2, 3.) and in hope that God would own and plead his just, and injured cause. Note, We may pray in faith, and should pray with fervency, that God will turn that counsel into foolishness, which is taken against his people.

2. By policy. We must second our prayer with our endeavours, else we tempt God. It is good service to counterfeit the policy of the church's enemies. When David came to the top of the mount, he worshipped God, v. 32. Note, Weeping must not hinder worshipping, but quicken it rather. Now he penned the third Psalm, as appears by the title; and some think that his singing it, was the worship he now paid to God. Just now Providence brought Hushai to him; while he was yet speaking, God heard, and sent him the person that should be instrumental to beseech Ahithophel. He came to comodle with David on his present trouble, with his rent, and earth upon his head; but David, having a great deal of confidence in his conduct and faithfulness, resolved to employ him in the nature of a spy upon Absalom: he would not take him with him, (v. 33.) for he had now more need of soldiers than counsellors, but sent him back to Jerusalem, to wait for Absalom's arrival, as a deserter from David, and to offer him his service, v. 34. Thus he might insinuate himself into his counsels, and defeat Ahithophel, either by dissuading Absalom from following his advice, or by discovering it to David, that he might know where to stand upon his guard. How this great dissimulation, which David put on, and Hushai and others, were justified in, I do not see. The best that can be made of it, is, that Absalom, if he rebel against his father, must stand upon his guard against all mankind, and if he will be deceived, let him be deceived. David recommends him to Zadok and Abiathar, as persons proper to be consulted with, (v. 35.) and to their two sons, as trusty men to be sent on errands to David, v. 36. Hushai, thus instructed, came to Jerusalem, (v. 37.) whither also Absalom soon after came with his forces. How soon do royal palaces and royal cities change their masters! But we look for a kingdom which cannot be thus shaken, and in the possession of which we cannot be disturbed.

CHAP. XVI.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we left David flying from Jerusalem, and Absalom entering into it; in this chapter, I. We are to follow David in his melancholy flight: Absalom and Joab find him. v. 1. 2. Cursed by Shimie, v. 5. 14. II. We are to meet Absalom in his triumphant entry; and there we find him. 1. Cheated by Hushai, v. 13. 18. 2. Counseled by Ahithophel to go in unto his father's concubines, v. 20. 23.

A ND when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and a hundred bunches of raisins, and a hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine. 2. And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink. 3. And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To-day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father. 4. Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.

We read before how kind David was to Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, how he prudently and generously entertained him at his own table, ch. 9. 10. This matter was well settled; but, it seems, Ziba is not content to be manager, he longs to be master, of Mephibosheth's estate. Now he thinks it his time to make himself master; if he can procure a grant of it from the crown, he hopes, whether David or Absalom get the better, it is all one to him, he shall secure his prey, which he promises himself by fishing in troubled waters. In or der hereunto,
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1. He makes David a handsome present of provisions, which was the more welcome, because it came so opportunely (v. 1) and with this he designed to unite him to himself; for a man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men, Prov. 18. 16. Nay, whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth, Prov. 17. 8. David inferred from this, that Ziba was a very discreet and generous man, and well affected to him, when, in all, he designed nothing but to make his own market, and to get Mephibosheth's estate settled upon him. Shall the potsherds, in this world, be so affected toward, as to be not only valuable but precious to them; and shall not the belief of an abundant recompense in the resurrection of the just, make us charitable to the poor? Luke 14. 14. Ziba was very considerate in the present that he brought to David; it was what would do him some good in his present distress, v. 2. Observe, The wine is intended for those that were faint, not for the king's own drinking, or the courtiers; it seems, they did not commonly use it, but it was for cordials for them, that were ready to perish, Prov. 31. 6. Blessed art thou, O land, when thy princes use wine for strength, as David did, and not for drunkenness, as Absalom did, ch. 13. 28. See Eccl. 10. 17. Whatever Ziba intended in this present, God's providence sent it in to David for his support very graciously. God makes use of bad men for good purposes to his people, and their plots are turned into a blessing. David is, and always was, a man, a meanstall, and a mean spirit.

2. Having by his present insinuated himself into David's affection, and gained credit with him, the next thing he has to do for the compassing of his end, is, to incense him against Mephibosheth, which he does by a false accusation, representing him as ungratefully designing to raise himself by the present broils, and to recover the crown to his own head, now that David and his son were contending for it. David had been too near, and dear, a father to him, which gives Ziba occasion to tell this false story of him, v. 3. What immense damages do masters often sustain by the ly ing tongues of their servants! David knew Mephibosheth not to be an ambitious man, but easy in his place, and well affected to him and his government; nor could he be so weak as to expect with his lame legs to climb the ladder of preferment; yet he gives credit to this false and malicious report, and proceeds to execute Mephibosheth of treason, seizes his lands as affected, and grants them to Ziba; Behold, these are all that pertained to Mephibosheth; (v. 4.) a rash judgment, and which afterward he was ashamed of, when the truth came to light, ch. 19. 29. Princes cannot help it, but they will be sometimes (as our laws speaks) deceived in their grants; but they ought to use all means possible to discover the truth, and to guard against malicious designing men, who would impose upon them, as Ziba did upon David, who, having by his wiles gained his point, triumphed over the king's credulity, congratulated himself on his own success, and parted, with a great compliment upon the king, that he valued his favour more than Mephibosheth's estate, "Let me find grace in thy sight, O king, and I have enough." God sends these men to be jealous of flatteringers, and remember that nature has given them two ears, that they may hear both sides.

5. And when king David came to Baal- rim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. 6. And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. 7. And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: 8. The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in this mischief, because thou art a bloody man. 9. Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. 10. And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? 11. And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him curse: for the Lord hath bidden him. 12. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day. 13. And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust. 14. And the king, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there.

We here find how David bore Shimei's curses much better than he had borne Ziba's flatteries; by those he was brought to pass a wrong judgment on another, by these to pass a right judgment on himself; the world's smiles are more dangerous than its frowns. Observe here,

1. How insolent and furious Shimei was, and how his malice took occasion from David's present distress, to be so much the more outrageous. David, in his flight, was come to Bahurim, a city of Benjamin, in or near which, this Shimei lived, who, being of the house of Saul, (with the fall of which all his hopes of preferment fell,) had an implacable enmity to David, unjustly looking upon him as the ruin of Saul and his family, only because by the divine appointment, he succeeded it. While David was in prosperity and power, Shimei hated him as much as he did now, but durst not then say any thing against him; (God knows what is in the hearts of those that are dissatisfied to him and his government, earthly princes do not;) but now he came forth, and cursed David with all the bad words and wishes he could invent. v. 4. He took it proud of himself to give vent to his malice, 1. Because now he thought he might do it safely; yet, if David had thought proper to resent the provocation, it had cost Shimei his life. 2. Because now it would be most grievous to David, would add affliction to his grief, and pour vinegar into his wounds. He complains of them as most barbarous, who talk to the grief of those whom God has wounded, Ps. 69. 26. So Shimei did, loading him with curses, whom no generous eye could look upon without compassion. 3. Because now he thought that Providence justified his
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reproaches, and that David's present afflictions proved him to be as bad a man as he was willing to represent him. Job's friends condemned him upon this false principle. They that are under the rebukes of a gracious God, must not think it strange if these bring upon them the reproaches of evil men. If once it be said, God hath forsaken him, presently it follows, Persecute and take him, Ps. 71. 11. But it is the character of a base spirit thus to triumph upon those that are down, and insult over them.

See, (1.) What this wretched man did: He cast stones at David, (v. 6.) as if his king had been a dog, or the worst of criminals, whom all Israel must stone with stones till he die. Perhaps he kept at such a distance, that the stones he threw, could not reach David, nor any of his attendants, yet he showed what he would have done, if it had been in his power. The blood of the house of Saul, was attended with his mighty men on his right hand and on his left, so that he was not in so forlorn a condition as he thought; (persevered, but not forsaken;) and that he continued to do it, and did it the more passionately, for David's bearing it patiently.

(2.) What he said. With the stones he shot his arrows, even bitter words, (v. 7, 8.) in contempt of that law, Thou shalt not curse the gods, Exod. 22. 28. David was a man of heaven so foolish, as to act and in great reputation for every thing that is just and good; what could this foul mouth say against him? Why truly, what was done long since to the house of Saul, is the only thing which he can recall, and with which he upbraids him, because that was the thing that he himself was a loser by. See how apt we are to judge of men and their character, by what they are to us; and to conclude that those are cursed that have so lately been, and that we ever so unjustly think have been, instruments of evil to us. So partial are we to ourselves, that no rule can be more fallacious than this. No man could be more innocent of the blood of the house of Saul than David was. Once and again he spared Saul's life, while Saul sought his. When Saul and his sons were slain by the Philistines, David and his men were many miles off; and, when they heard it, lamented it from the utmost end of the earth. But Ahner and Ish-bosheth he had sufficiently cleared himself; and yet all the blood of the house of Saul must be laid at his door: innocency is no fence against malice and falsehood; nor are we to think it strange, if we be charged with that which we have been most careful to keep ourselves from. It is well for us, that men are not to be our judges, but He, whose judgment is according to truth.

The house of Saul, so most unjustly charged upon him, [1.] As that which gave him his character, and denominated him a bloody man, and a man of Belial, v. 7. And if a man of blood, no doubt, a man of Belial, that is, a child of the Devil, (who is called Belial, 2 Cor. 6. 15.) and who was a murderer from the beginning. Bloody men are the worst of men. [2.] As that which brought the present trouble upon him: Now that the art discovered, and driven out to the wilderness, the Lord has returned upon thee the blood of the house of Saul. See how forward malicious men are to press God's judgments into the service of their own passion and revenge. If any, who they think, has wronged them, come into trouble, that must be made the cause of the trouble. But we must take heed, lest we wrong God by making his providence thus to patronize our foolish and unjust resentments. As the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God, so the righteousness of God serves not the wrath of man. [3.] As that which would now be his utter ruin; for he endeavors to make him despair of ever recovering his kingdom, and when they say, There is no help for him in God, Ps. 3. 2. Saul was dethroned, the kingdom into the hands of Absalom, (not Mephibosheth, the house of Saul never dreamed of making him king, as Ziba suggested,) and thou art taken in thy mischief; that is, "the mischief that will be thy destruction, and all, because thou art a bloody man." Thus Shimei cursed.

II. See how patient and submissive David was, under this abuse. The sons of Zeruiah, Abishai particularly, were forward to maintain David's honour with their swords; they resented the affront keenly, as well they might; Why should this dead dog be suffered to curse the king? v. 9. If David will but give them leave, they will put these lying cursing lips to silence, and take off his head; for his throwing stones at the king was an overt-act, which abundantly proved that he compassed and imagined mischief, and that he would commit murder, and have it, What have I to do with you? So let him curse. Thus Christ rebuked the disciples, who, in zeal for his honour, would have fire from heaven on the town that affronted him, Luke 9. 55. Let us see with what considerations David quieted himself.

1. The chief thing that silenced him, was, that he had deserved it: this is not mentioned indeed; for a man may truly repent, and yet needs not, upon all occasions, proclaim his penitent reflections. Shimei unjustly upbraided him with the blood of Saul; from that his conscience acquitted him, but, at the same time, charged him with the blood of Uriah: The reproach is too true, (thinks David,) though false as he means it. Note, A humble tender spirit will turn reproaches into reproofs, and so get good by them, instead of being provoked by them.

2. He observes the hand of God in it; The Lord said unto him, Curse David; (v. 10.) and again, So let him curse, for the Lord hath hidden him, v. 11. As it was Shimei's sin, it was not from God, but from the Devil, and his own wicked heart, nor did God's hand in it excuse or extenuate it, much less justify it, any more than it did their sin, who put Christ to death, Acts 2. 24.—4. 28. But as it was David's affliction, it was from the Lord, one of the evils which he raised up against him. David looked above the instrument of his trouble to the supreme director, as Job, when the plunderers had stripped him, acknowledges, The Lord hath taken away. Nothing more proper to quiet a gracious soul under affliction, than an eye to the hand of God in it: I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it. The scourge of the tongue is God's hand. The Lord's hand acts on the wicked.
his affliction, would balance the trouble itself, and
recompense his patience under it; "The Lord will
require me good for his cursing. If God bid Shimmei
grieve me, it is that he himself may the more sensibly
comfort me; surely he has mercy in store for me,
which he is preparing me for by this trial." We
may depend upon God as our Paymaster, not only
for our services, but for our sufferings. Let them
curse, but bless thou. David, at length, is housed
at Bahurim, (v. 14.) where he meets with refresh-
ment, and is hidden from this strife of tongues.

15. And Absalom, and all the people, the
men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and
Ahithophel with him. 16. And it came to
pass, when Hushai the Archite, David's
friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hus-
hai said unto Absalom, God save the king.
God save the king. 17. And Absalom said
to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend?
why wentest thou not with thy friend? 18.
And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but
whom the Lord, and this people, and all
the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and
with him will I abide. 19. And again,
whom should I serve? should I not serve
in the presence of his son? As I have served
in thy father's presence, so will I be in
thy presence. 20. Then said Absalom to
Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what
we shall do. 21. And Ahithophel said un-
to Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concu-
bines, which he hath left to keep the house;
and all Israel shall hear that thou art ab-
horred of thy father: then shall the hands
of all that are with thee be strong. 22. So
they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of
the house; and Absalom went in unto his
father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.
23. And the counsel of Ahithophel, which
he counselled in those days, was as if a man
had inquired at the oracle of God: so was
all the counsel of Ahithophel, both with David
and with Absalom.

Absalom had notice sent him speedily by some
of his friends at Jerusalem, that David was withdrawn,
and with what a small retinue he was gone; so that
the coasts were clear, Absalom might take posses-
sion of Jerusalem when he pleased. The gates were
open, and there were none to oppose him. Ac-
accordingly, he came without delay, (v. 13.) extreme-
ly elevated, no doubt, with this success at first, and
that that, in which, when he formed his design,
probably, he apprehended the greatest difficulty,
was so easily and effectually done. Now that he is
master of Jerusalem, he concludes all his own, the
country will follow of course. God suffers wicked
men to prosper while in their wicked plots, even
beyond their expectation, that their dishonour
may be the more grievous and disgraceful.

The most celebrated politicians of that age, were,
Ahithophel and Hushai; the former Absalom brings
with him to Jerusalem, (v. 15.) the other meets him
there; (v. 16.) so that he cannot but think himself
sure of success, when he has both these to be his
counsellors; on them he relies, and consults not the
ark, though he had that with them. But miserable
counsellors were they both; for,

I. Hushai would never counsel him to do wisely;
he was really his enemy, and designed to betray
him, while he pretended to be in his interest; so that
he could not have a more dangerous man about him.

1. Hushai complimented him upon his accession to
the throne, as if he were abundantly satisfied in his
title, and was pleased that he was come to the pos-
session, v. 16. What arts of dissimulation are these
tempted to use, who govern themselves by fleshly
wisdom; and how happy are they, who have not
known these depths of Satan, but have their con-
versation in the world with simplicity and godly sincer-
ity! 2. Absalom is surprised to find him for him,
who was known to be David's intimate friend and
confidant. Is this thy kindness to thy friend? (v. 17.) pleasing himself with this thought,
that all would be his, since Hushai was. He doubts
not of his sincerity, but easily believes what he
wishes to be true, that David's best friends were so
in love with him, as to take the first opportunity to
declare for him, though the pride of his heart de-
cewed him, Obad. 3. Hushai still makes him be-
lieve he is hearty for him. For though David is his
friend, yet he is for the king in succession, (v. 18.)
Whom the people choose, a Providence makes
upon, he will be faithful to; and he is for the king in
succession, (v. 19.) the rising sun. It was true,
he loved his father; but he had had his day, and it
was over; and why should he not love his successor
as well? Thus he pretends to give reasons for a re-
solution he abhorred the thought of.

II. Ahithophel did counsel him to do wickedly,
and so did as effectually betray him; he, who was
designingly false to him, yet they that advise
men to sin, certainly advise them to their hurt; and
that government which is founded in sin, is founded
in the sand. It seems, Ahithophel was noted as a
deep politician; his counsel was as if a man had in-
quired at the oracle of God, v. 23. Such reputa-
tion was he in for subtlety and sagacity in public af-
fairs, such reaches had he beyond other privy-coun-
sellors, such reason would he give for his advice,
and such success, generally, his projects had, that
all people, good and bad, both David and Absalom,
had a profound regard to his sentiments, too much
by far, when they regarded him as an oracle of God:
shall the prudence of any mortal compare with Him
who is only wise? Let us observe from this ac-
count of Ahithophel's fame for policy, 1. That many ex-
cel in worldly wisdom, who are utterly destitute of
heavenly grace; because they act in things
for themselves, are apt to despise the oracles of
God. God has chosen the foolish things of the
world, and the greatest statesmen are seldom the
greatest saints. 2. That frequently the great poli-
citicians act most foolishly for themselves. Ahitho-
ephel is cried up for an oracle, and yet very unwise-
ly takes part with Absalom, who was not only a usurper, but a rash youth, never likely to come
with any success, and when he fell of all that adhered
to him, any one, with the tenth part of the policy
that Ahithophel pretended to, might foresee. Well,
after all, honesty is the best policy, and will be found
so in the long run.

Observe, (1.) The wicked counsel Ahithophel
gave to Absalom: finding that David had left his
concubines to keep the house, he advises him to lie
with them, (v. 18.) in very wicked things, because
law had made it a capital crime, Lev. 20. 11. The
apostle speaks of it as a piece of villany, not so much
as named among the Gentiles, 1 Cor. 5. 1. Reuben
lost his birth-right for it. But Ahithophel advised
to it as a political thing, because it would give assu-
rance to all Israel, [1.] That he was in good ear-
nest in his pretensions; no doubt, he resolved to
make himself master of all that belonged to his pre-
decessor, when he began with his concubines. [2.]}
That he was resolved never to make peace with his father upon any terms; for, by this, he would render himself so odious to his father, that he would never be reconciled to him, which, perhaps, the people were jealous of, and that they must be sacrificed to the reconciliation. Having drawn the word, he did, by this provocation, throw away the scalarb, which should strengthen the hands of his party, and keep them tight to him. This was his cursed policy, which bespoke him rather an oracle of the Devil, than of God.

(2.) Absalom's compliance with this counsel. It entirely suited his Lewd and wicked mind, and he delayed not to put it in execution, v. 22. When an unnatural rebellion was the opera, what fitter prologue can be added than such unnatural lust? Thus was his wickedness all of a piece, and such as a conscience, not quite seared, could not entertain the thoughts of without the utmost horror. Nay, the client outdoes what his counsel advises: Ahithophel bid him do it, that all Israel might hear of it: but as if that were not enough, so perfectly lost is he to all honour and virtue, he will do it, and all Israel shall see it. A tent is, accordingly, spread on the hither side the Valley of Adamah, that all the purpose did he declare his sin as Sodom. Yet, in this, the word of God was fulfilled in the letter of it: God had threatened, by Nathan, that, for his defiling of Bath-sheba, he should have his own wives publicly debauched; (ch. 12. 11, 12.) and some think that Ahithophel, in advising it, designed to be revenged on David for the injury done to Bath-sheba, who was his grand-daughter: for according to this choler of Eliam, (ch. 11. 3.) who was the son of Ahithophel, ch. 23. 34. Job speaks of a circumstance like this, as the just punishment of adultery, (ch. 31. 9, 10.) and the prophet, Hos. 4. 13, 14. What to think of these concubines, who submitted to this wickedness, it was easy to say; but how unrighteous soever Absalom and they are, we must say, The Lord is righteous: nor shall any word of his fall to the ground.

CHAP. XVII.

The contest between David and Absalom is now drawing towards a crisis. It must be determined by the sword, and the threatening cloud is at hand. Accordingly, in this chapter 1. Absalom calls a council of war, in which Ahithophel urges to despatch, (v. 1-4.) but Hushai recommends deliberation, (v. 5-13.) and Hushai's counsel is agreed to, (v. 14.) for vexation at which Ahithophel hangs himself. The counsel of Ahithophel, that intelligence is sent to David, (but with much difficulty,) of their proceedings, v. 15-21. III. David marches to the other side Jordan, v. 22-24.) and there his camp is victualled by some of his friends in that country, v. 27-29. IV. Absalom and his forces march after him into the land of Gilead on the other side Jordan, v. 25, 26. There we shall, in the next chapter, find the cause decided by a battle: hitherto, every thing has looked black upon poor David, but now the day of his deliverance begins to dawn.

1. Moreover, Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: 2. And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak-handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only. 3. And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seestkest is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace. 4. And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel. 5. Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite

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also, and let us hear likewise what he saith. 6. And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do after his saying? if not, speak thou. 7. And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time. 8. For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people. 9. Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some other place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom. 10. And he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men. 11. Therefore I counsel, that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that thou go to battle in thine own person. 12. So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that are with him there shall not be so much as one. 13. Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there. 14. And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom.

Absalom is in peaceable possession of Jerusalem, the palace-royal is his own, and the thrones of judgment, even the thrones of the house of David. His good father reigned in Hebron, and only over the tribe of Judah, above seven years, and was not sent to destroy his rival: his government was built upon a divine promise, which he was sure of the performance of in due time, and therefore he waited patiently in the mean time. But the young man, Absalom, not only hastens from Hebron to Jerusalem, but is impatient there, till he has destroyed his father; cannot be content with his throne till he has his life; for his government is founded in iniquity, and therefore feels itself tittering, and thinks itself obliged to do every thing with violence. That so profligate a wretch as Absalom should aim at the throne of so good a father, is not so strange; (there are here and there monsters in nature;) but that the body of the people of Israel, to whom David had been so great a blessing in all respects, should join with him in it, is very amazing. But their fathers
often mutinyed against Moses. The best of parents, and the best of princes, will not think it strange, if they be made uneasy by those who should be their support and joy, when they consider what sons and what subjects David himself had.

David, and all that adhered to him, must be cut off. That is resolved, for aught that appears, nemine contradicente—unanimously. None dares mention his personal merits, and great services done to his country, in opposition to this resolution, nor so much as ask, "Why, what evil has he done, to forfeit his crown, much less his head?" None dares propose that his banishment suffice, for the present, or that agents be sent to treat with him to resign the crown, which, having so tamely quitted the city, they might think he would easily be persuaded to do. It was not long since Absalom himself fled for a crime, and David contented himself with his being an exile, though he deserved death, and he mourned and longed for him; but so perfectly void of all natural affection is this ungrateful Absalom, that he perfectly thirsts after his own father's blood. It is past dispute, David must be destroyed, all the question is, how it may be done.

1. Ahithophel advises that he be pursued immediately, this very night, with a flying army, which he himself undertakes the command of, that the king only be smitten and his forces dispersed, that he himself may with his brave and good soldiers fall in with Absalom, of course, and there would not be such a long war as had been between the house of Saul and David, v. 1. 3, The man whom thou seestest, is as if all returned. By this, it appears that Absalom had declared his design to be upon David's life, and Ahithophel concurs with him in it; Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and be an easy prey to the wolf. Thus he contributes to the murder of Ahijah, which he did, by finding them neither with small nor great, but the king of Israel only, and to conclude it in a little time, by falling upon him immediately. Nothing could have been more fatal to David, than the taking of these measures. It was too true, that he was weary and weak-handed; that a little thing would make him afraid, else he had not fled from his house, upon the first alarm of Absalom's rebellion. It was probably from a recent attack, especially in the night, the small force he had, would be put into confusion and disorder, and it would be an easy thing to smite the king only, and then the business was done, the whole nation would be reduced, of course, and all the people, says he, shall be in peace. See how a general ruin is called, by usurpers, a general peace; but thus the Devil's palace is in peace, while he, as a strong man armed, keeps it. Compare with this the plot of Caliphas (that second Ahithophel) against the Son of David, to crush his interest by destroying him; Let that one man die for the people, John 11. 50. Kill the heir, and the inheritance shall be our's. Matt. 21. 38. But the counsel of them both was turned into foolishness. Yet the children of light may, in their generation, learn wisdom from the children of this world. What our hand finds to do, let us do quickly, and with all our might. It is to be done as vigorously and expeditiously, and not to lose time. Particularly in our spiritual warfare, if Satan flee from us, let us follow our blow. They that have quarrelled with crowned heads, have generally observed the decorum of declaring only against their evil counsellors, and calling them to an account, the king himself can do no wrong, it is they that do it; but Ahithophel would strike at the king directly, nay, at the king only; for, (would you think it?) this saying, I will smite the king only, pleased Absalom well; (v. 4.) nor had he so much sense of honour and virtue left him, as to pretend tostarter at it, or even to be reluctant in this barbarous and monstrous resolution. What good can stand before the heat of a furious ambition?

2. Hushai advises that they be not too hasty in pursuing David, but take time to draw up all their force against him, and to overpower him with numbers, as Ahithophel had advised to take him by surprise. Now Hushai, in giving this counsel, truly intended only to divert David and his interest; that he might have time to send him notice of his proceedings, and that David might gain time to gather an army, and to remove into those countries beyond Jordan, which, lying more remote, Absalom, probably, had got least interest in. Nothing would be of greater advantage to David in this juncture, than to time to turn himself in; that he may have that, Hushai counsels Absalom to do nothing rashly, but to proceed with caution, and secure his success by securing his time. Thus he advised David to be more cautious, and to proceed with more prudence, which may be said to be the advice that the oracle, in representing to Hushai, that his counsel was not the counsel of the Lord, v. 5. Let us hear what he saith. Herein he thought he did wisely, (two heads are better than one,) but God taketh the wise in their own craftiness. See Mr. Poole's note on this. 2. Hushai gave the advice that was most needed.

(1.) He argued against Ahithophel's counsel, and undertook to show the danger of following his advice. It is with modesty, and all possible deference to his settled reputation, that he begs leave to differ from him, v. 7. The counsel of Ahithophel is usually the best, and such as may be relied on; but, with submission to that noble peer, he is of opinion that his counsel is not good at this time, for it was not only a thing that was means to secure his end, to remove the nation into a place, in which they were now engaged, upon so small a number, and such a hasty sally, as Ahithophel advised; remembering the defeat of Israel before Ai, Josh. 7. 4. It has often proved of bad consequence to despise an enemy, See how plausibly Hushai reasons: [1.] He insists much upon it, that David was a great soldier, a man of great conduct, courage, and experience; all knew and owned this, even Ahithophel himself; Thy father is a man of war, (v. 8.) a mighty man, (v. 10.) and not so weary and weak-handed as Ahithophel imagines. He, retreating from Jerusalem must be impetuous, not to his cowardice, but to his prudence. [2.] His attendants, though few, were mighty men, (v. 8,) valiant men, (v. 10.) men of celebrated bravery, and versed in all the arts of war. Ahithophel, who perhaps had worn the gown more than the sword, would find himself an unequal match for them. One of them would chase a thousand. [3.] They were all exasperated against Absalom, who was the author of all this mischief, were chafed in their minds, and would fight with the utmost fury; so that, what with their courage, and what with their rage, there would be no standing before them, especially for such raw soldiers as Absalom's general-who were. Thus does he represent them as formidable as Ahithophel had made them despicable. [4.] He suggests that, probably, David and some of his men would lie in ambush, in some pit, or other close place, and fall upon Absalom's soldiers before they were aware, the terror of which would put them to flight; and the defeat, though of a small party, would dispirit all the rest, especially their own consciences, at the same time accusing them of the treason against the king, which was not only God's anointed, but a man after his own heart, v. 9. "It will soon be given out, that there is a slaughter among Absalom's men, and then they will all make the best of their way, and
the heart of Ahithophel himself, though now it seems like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt away. In short, he will not need to do any matter to deal with David and his men as he thinks it is; and if he be foiled, we are all routed."

(2.) He offered his own advice; and gave his reasons and:

[1.] He counselled that which he knew would gratify Absalom's proud vain-glory and humour, though it would not be really serviceable to his interest. First, He advices that all Israel should gather together, that is, the militia of all the tribes; his taking it for granted that they were all for him, and giving him an opportunity to see them altogether under his command, would gratify him as much as any thing. Secondly, He advises that Absalom go to battle in his own person, as if he looked upon him to be a better soldier than Ahithophel, more fit to give command, and have the hommage of them, for bringing them all over to his side. He put a slight upon him, in offering to go without him: see how easy it is to betray proud men, by applauding them, and feeding their pride.

[2.] He counselled that which seemed to secure the success, at last, infallibly, without running any hazard. For if they could raise such vast numbers as they promised themselves, wherever they found him, they should not fail to crush him. First, If in the course of God, it were possible for him to cover the face of the ground, and cut off all his men with him, v. 12. Perhaps, Absalom was better pleased with the design of cutting off all the men that were with him, having a particular antipathy to some of David's friends, than with Ahithophel's project of smiting the king only. Thus Hushai gained his point by humouring his revenge, as well as his pride. Secondly, If in a city, they might serve him, for they had hands enough, if occasion were, to draw the city itself into its river with ropes, v. 13. This strange suggestion, how impracticable soever, being new, served for an amusement, and recommended itself by pleasing the fancy, for they would all smile at the humour of it.

By these arts, Hushai gained not only Absalom's approbation of his advice, but the unanimous concurrence of this great council of war: they all agreed that the counsel of Hushai was better than the counsel of Ahithophel, v. 14. See here, First, How much the policy of man can do: if Hushai had not been there, Ahithophel's counsel had certainly prevailed; and though all had given their opinion, nothing could be really more for Absalom's interest than that which he advised, yet Hushai, with his man of dexterity, won them all over to his side; thus none of them are aware, that he says all this in favour of David and his interest, but all say as he says. See how the unthinking part are imposed upon by the designing part of mankind; what tools, what fools, great men make of one another by their intrigues; and what tricks there are often in courts, and councils, which they are happiest that are least conversant with. Secondly, See how much more the providence of God can do: Hushai managed the plot with dexterity, yet the success is ascribed to God, and his agency on the minds of those concerned; The Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel. Be it observed, to the comfort of all that fear God, he turns all men's hearts as the rivers of waters, though they know not the thoughts of the Lord. He sways in the congregation of the mighty, has an overruling hand in all counsels, and a negative voice in all resolves, and laughs at men's projects against his anointed.

15. Then said Hushai unto Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Thus and thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and thus have I counselled. 16. Now therefore send quickly, and tell David, saying, Lodge not this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily pass over; lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people that are with him. 17. Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed by En-rogel, (for they might not be seen to come into the city:) and a wench went and told them; and they went and told king David. 18. Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom: but they went both of them away quickly, and came to a man's house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court, whither they went down. 19. And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon; and the thing was not known. 20. And when Absalom's servants came to the woman to the house, they said, Where is Ahimaaz and Jonathan? And the woman said unto them, They be gone over the brook of water. And when they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem. 21. And it came to pass, after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, Arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you.

We must now leave David's enemies pleasing themselves with thoughts of a sure victory, by following Hushai's counsel, and sending a summunis, no doubt, to all the tribes of Israel, to come to the general rendezvous at where Absalom appointed to that counsel; and we next find David's friends consulting how to get him notice of all this, that he might steer his course accordingly. Hushai tells the priests what had passed in council, v. 15. But, it should seem, he was not sure, but that yet Ahithophel's counsel might he followed, and was there fore jealous, lest, if he made not the best of his way, the King would be swallowed up, and all the people that were with him, v. 16. Perhaps, as he was called in to give his advice, (v. 5.) so he was dismissed before they came to that resolve, (v. 14.) in favour of his advice. Or he feared they might afterward change their mind. However, it was good to provide against the worst, and therefore to hasten those valuable lives out of the reach of these destroyers.

Such strict guards did Absalom set upon all the avenues to Jerusalem, that they had much ado to get this necessary intelligence to David. 1. The young priests that were to be the messengers, were forced to retire secretly out of the city, by En-rogel; which signifies, as some say, the fountain of a sky. Surely it went ill with Jerusalem, when two such faithful priests as they were, might not be seen to come into the city. 2. Instructions were sent to them by a poor simple young woman, who, probably, went to that well under pretence of fetching water, v. 17. If she carried the message by word of mouth, there was danger of her making some mistake or blunder in it; but Providence can make an ignorant girl a trusty messenger, and serve its
wise counsels by the foolish things of the world. 3. Yet, by the vigilance of Absalom's spies, they were discovered, and information brought to Absalom of their motions. A lad saw them, and told him, v. 18. 4. They being aware that they were discovered, sheltered themselves in a friend's house in Bahurim, where David had refreshed himself but just before, ch. 16. 14. There they were happily hid in a well, which now, in summer time, perhaps was dry, v. 18. The woman of the house very ingeniously covered the mouth of the well with a cloth, on which she spread corn to dry, so that the pursuers were not aware that there was a well; else they had searched it, v. 19. Thus far, the woman did well; but we know not how to justify her further concealing them with a lie, v. 20. We must not do evil that good may come of it. However, hereby the messengers were protected, and the pursuers were defeated, and returned to Absalom without their prey. It was well that Absalom did not, hereupon, fall upon their two fathers, Zadok and Abiathar, as Saul on Ahimelech for his kindness to David; but God restrained him. Being thus preserved, they brought their intelligence very faithfully to David, (v. 21.) with this advice of his friends, that he should not delay to pass over Jordan, near to which, it seems, he now was. There, as some think, he penned the 42d and 43d Psalms, looking back upon Jerusalem from the land of Jordan, Ps. 42. 6.

22. Then David arose, and all the people that were with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan. 23. And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and got him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father. 24. Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom passed over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him. 25. And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa was a man's son whose name was Ithra, an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah, Joab's mother. 26. So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead. 27. And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, 28. Brought beds, and basins, and carriages, and sheep, and goats, and camels, and ass, and money, 29. And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.

Here is, I. The transporting of David and his forces over Jordan, pursuant to the advice he had received from his friends at Jerusalem, v. 22. He, and all that were with him, went over in the night, whether in ferry boats, which, probably, always plied there, or through the fords, does not appear. But special notice may be taken of this, that there lacked not one of them; none deserted him, though his distress was great, none stayed behind sick or weary, not were any but were cast away. Herein some make him a type of the Messiah, who said, in a difficult day, Of all that thou hast given me I lost none. Being got over Jordan, he marched many miles forward to Mahanaim, a Levites' city in the tribe of Gad, in the utmost border of that tribe, and not far from Rabba, the chief city of the Ammonites. This city, which Ishbosheth made his royal city, (ch. 2. 8.) David now made his head-quarters from, v. 26. And now he had time to raise an army, wherewith to oppose the rebels, and give them a warm reception.

II. The death of Ahithophel, v. 23. He died by his own hands, feo de se—a suicide: he hanged himself for vexation that his counsel was not followed; for thereby, 1. He thought himself slighted, and an intolerable slur cast upon his reputation for wisdom. 2. He could not serve the council-board, but now another's opinion is thought wiser and better than his; his proud heart cannot bear the affront, it rises and swells, and the more he thinks of it, the more violent his resentments grow, till they bring him, at last, to this desperate resolve, not to live to see another preferred before him. All men think him a wise man, but he thinks himself the only wise man; and therefore, to be avenged upon mankind for not thinking so, he will die, that wisdom may die with him. The world is not worthy of such an oracle as he is, and therefore will make them know the want of him. See what real enemies they are to themselves, that think too well of themselves, and what mischiefs they run upon, that are impatient of contempt. That will break a proud man's heart, that will not break an humble man's sleep. 2. He thought himself endangered, and his life exposed. He concluded, that, because his counsel was not followed, Absalom's cause would certainly miscarry, and then, whoever would find David's mercy, he concluded, that he, who was the greatest criminal, and had particularly advised him to lie with his father's concubines, must be sacrificed to his justice; to prevent therefore the shame and terror of a public execution, he does justice upon himself, and after all his reputation for wisdom, and that act, puts a far greater disgrace upon himself than Absalom's privy counsel had put upon him, and answers his name Ahithophel, which signifies, the brother of a fool. Nothing indicates so much folly as self-murder. Observe how deliberately he did it, and of malice prepense against himself; not in a heat, but he went home to his city, to his house, to die. And the story is strange, too; he did not make an end of it, and yet did it. And, to prove himself compas mens; in his senses, when he did it, he first put his household in order, made his will as a man of sane memory and understanding, settled his estate, balanced his accounts; yet he that had sense and prudence enough to do this, had not consideration enough to revive the sentence his pride and passion had passed upon his own neck, or so much as to suspend the execution of the sentence of Absalom's rebellion. Now herein we may see, (1.) Contempt poured upon the wisdom of man; he that was more renowned for policy than any man, plays the fool with himself more abundantly. Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, when he sees him that was so great an oracle, dying as a fool dies. (2.) Honour done to the justice of God. When the wicked are thus snared in the work of their own.
hands, and sunk in a pit of their own digging, the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth, and we must say Higgiaon, Seilah; it is a thing to be marked and meditated upon, Ps. 7. 15, 16, (3.) Perhaps he was even more, even in a day, self-handed over by his enemies. Now, as David had prayed, Ahithophel's counsel was turned into foolishness to himself. Dr. Lightfoot supposes that David penned the 55th Psalm, upon occasion of Ahithophel's being in the plot against him, and that he is the man complained of, (v. 13,) that had been his equal, his guide, and his acquaintance; and if so, this was an immediate answer to his prayer there, (v. 15.) Let death seize upon them, let them go down quick into hell. Ahithophel's death was an advantage to David's interest; for he digested that affront, (as those must resolve often to do, that will live in this world,) and continued his post at Absalom's elbow, he might have given him counsel afterward, that might have been of pernicious consequence to David. It is well that that breath is stopped, and that head laid, from which nothing could be expected but mischief. It seems, it was not then usual to disgrace the dead bodies of self-murderers, for Ahithophel was buried, we may suppose, honourably buried, in the sepulchre of his father, though he deserved no better than the burial of an ass: see Es. 8. 10.

III. Absalom's pursuit of his father; he had now got all the men of Israel with him, as Hushai advised, and he himself at the head of them over Jordan, v. 24. Not content that he had driven his good father to the utmost corner of his kingdom, he resolved to chase him out of the world. He pitched in the land of Gilead with all his forces, ready to give David battle, v. 26. Absalom made one Amasa his general, (v. 25,) whose father was, by birth, Jether, an Ishmaelite, (1 Chron. 2. 17,) but, by religion, Ithra, (as he is here called,) an Israelite; probably, he was not only well married and well provided for, who had the commission of David's, was, by some act of the state, naturalized, and is therefore called an Israelite. His wife, Amasa's mother, was Abigail, David's sister, whose other sister, Zeruiah, was Joab's mother, 1 Chron. 2. 16. So that Amasa was the same relation to David that Joab was. In honour to his family, even while he was in arms against his father, Absalom made him commander in chief of all his forces. Jesse is here called Nahash, the many had two names; or perhaps it was his wife's name.

IV. The friends David met with in this distant country. Even Shobi, a younger brother of the royal family of the Ammonites, was kind to him, v. 27. It is probable that he had detected the indignity which his brother Hanun had done to David's ambassadors, and, for that, had received favours from David, which he now returned. This is that think their prosperity most confirmed, know not but, some time or other, they may stand in need of the kindness of those that now lie at their mercy, and may be glad to be beholden to them; which is a reason, why we should, as we have opportunity, do good to all men, for he that watereth, shall be watered also himself, when there is occasion. Maachah, the son of Ammiel, was he that maintained Mahanaim, (ch. 9. 4.) till David eased him of that charge; and is now repaid for it by that generous man, who, it seems, was the common patron of distressed princes. Barzillai we shall hear of again. These, compassionating David and his men, now that they were weary with a long march, brought him furniture for his house, beds and basins; and provisions for his table, wheat and barley, &c. v. 28, 29. He did not put them under contribution, did not compel them to supply him, much less, plunder them; but, in token of their dutiful affection to him, their firm adherence to his government, and their sincere concern for him in his present straits, of their own will they brought in plenty of all that which he had occasion for. Let us learn hence to be generous and open-handed, according as our ability is, to all in distress, especially great men, to whom it is most grievous, and good men, who deserve better treatment. Observe here, how God sometimes makes up to his people that comfort from strangers, which they are disappointed of in their own families.

CHAP. XVIII.

This chapter puts a period to Absalom's rebellion and life, and so makes way for David to his throne again, whither the next chapter brings him back in peace and triumph. We have here, 1. David's preparations to engage the rebels, v. 1. 5. II. The total defeat of Absalom's party, and their destruction, v. 6. 8. III. The death of Absalom, and his burial, v. 9. 18. IV. The bringing of the tidings of it to David, who laved at Mahanaim, v. 19. 32. V. His bitter lamentations of Absalom, v. 33.

1. AND David numbered the people that were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them. 2. And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also. 3. But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die will they care for us: but now thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city. 4. And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best I will do. And the king stood by the gate side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands. 5. And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom. 6. So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim; 7. Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David; and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men. 8. For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

Which way David raised an army here, and what reinforcements were sent him, we are not told; many, it is likely, from all the coasts of Israel, at least, from the neighbouring tribes, came in to his assistance, so that, by degrees, he was able to make head against Absalom, as Ahithophel foresaw. Now here we have,

I. His army numbered and marshalled, v. 1, 2.
He had, no doubt, committed his cause to God by prayer, for that was his relief in all his afflictions; and then he took an account of his forces; Josephus says they were, in all, about four thousand; these he divided into regiments, and companies, to each of which he appointed proper officers, and then disposed them, as is usual, into the right wing, the left wing, and the centre, two of which he committed to his two old experienced generals, Joab and Abishai, and the third to his new friend Ittai. Good order and good conduct may sometimes be as necessary, as ye say, as genius. Wisdom teaches us to make the best of the strength we have, and let it reach to the utmost.

II. Himself over-persuaded not to go in person to the battle. He was Absalom's false friend, that persuaded him to go, and served his pride more than his prudence; David's true friends would not let him go, remembering what they had been told of Ahithophel's design to "smite the king only." David showed his affection to them by being willing to venture with them; (v. 2) and they showed their's to him by opposing it. We must never reckon it an affront to be gain sayed for our good, and by those that therein consult our interest. 1. They would by no means have him expose himself, for, (say they,) "Thou art worth ten thousand of us." Thus ought good princes to be valued by their subjects, who under no pretense must he long expose themselves. 2. They would not so far govern the enemy, who would rejoice more in his fall, than in the defeat of the whole army. 3. He might be more serviceable to them by tarrying in the city, with a reserve of his forces there, whence he might send them recruits. That may be a post of real service, which yet is not a post of danger. The king acquired as an object of their love, and changed his purpose; (v. 4.) What seemeth you best, I will do. It is no piece of wisdom to be stiff in our resolutions, but to be willing to hear reason, even from our inferiors, and to be overruled by their advice, when it appears to be for our own good. Whether the people's prudence had an eye to it or no, God's providence wisely ordered it, that David should not be in the field of battle: for then his tenderness had certainly interposed to save Absalom's life, whom God had in his mind for a prince, (xviii. 10.)

III. The charge he gave concerning Absalom, v. 5. When the army was drawn out, rank and file, Josephus says, he encouraged them, and prayed for them, but withheld them all take heed of doing Absalom any hurt. How does he render good for evil! Absalom would have David only smitten, David would have Absalom only spared. What folly are these to each other! Never was hatred to a father more strong than in Absalom; nor was ever natural affection to a child more strong than in David; each did his utmost, and showed what he could do; how bad it is possible for a child to be to the best of fathers, and how good it is possible for a father to be to the worst of children; as if it were designed to be a resemblance of man's wickedness towards God, and God's mercy toward man, of which it is a type, and in which is more amazing. "Deal gently," says David, "by all means, with the young man, even with Absalom, for my sake; he is a young man, rash and heady, and his age must excuse him; he is mine, whom I love; if ye love me, be not severe with him." This charge supposes David's strong expectation of success, having a good cause, and a good God: he doubts not but Absalom would be at their mercy, and therefore bids them deal gently with him, spare his life, and reserve him for his judgment. Bishop Hall thus descants on this; "What means this ill-placed love? This unjust mercy? Deal gently with a traitor? Of all traitors, with a son?

Of all sons, with an Absalom? That graceless daring of so good a father! And all this, for thy sake, whose crown, whose blood, he hunts after! And by what a cruel verity! For what a sake must he be purged, if for Absalom's sake? Must the cause of the quarrel be the native of mercy? Even in the holiest parents, nature may be guilty of an injurious tenderness, of a bloody indulgence. But was not this done in type of that unmeasurable mercy of the true King and Redeemer of Israel, who prayed for his persecutors, for his murderers; Father, forgive them. Deal gently with the child, when God's affections to correct his children, it is with, this charge, "Deal gently with them for my sake," for he knows our frame.

IV. A complete victory gained over Absalom's forces. The battle was fought in the wood of Ephraim, (v. 6.) so called from some memorable action of the Ephraimites there, though it lay in the tribe of God. David thought fit to meet the enemy with his forces at some distance, before they came up to Mahanaim, lest he should bring that city into trouble, which had so kindly sheltered him. The cause shall be decided by a pitched battle. Josaph represents the fight as very obstinate, but the rebels were at length totally routed, and 20,000 of them slain, v. 7. Now they smarted justly for their treason against their lawful prince, their unceasing enmity against so good a government, and their base ingratitude to so great a favour, and found what it was to take up arms for an usurper, who with his kisses and caresses, had wheedled them into their own ruin. Now where are the rewards, the preferments, the golden days, they promised themselves from him? Now they see what it is to take counsel against the Lord, and his anointed, and to think of breaking his bands asunder. And that they might see that God fought against them, 1. They are conquered by a few, an army, in all probability, much inferior to theirs in number. 2. By that flight with which they hoped to save themselves, they destroy ed themselves; the wood, which they sought to for shelter, devoured more than the sword: that they might see how, when they thought themselves safe from David's men, and said, Surely the bitterness of death is past, yet the justice of God pursued them, and caused them to perish, and can rebels find from divine vengeance? The pits and bogs, the stumps and thickets, and, as the Chaldee paraphrast understands it, the wild beasts of the wood, were, probably, the death of multitudes of the dispersed distracted Israelites, beside the 20,000 that were slain with the sword. God herein fought for David, and yet fought against him; for all these things were slain were his own subjects, and the common interest of his kingdom was weakened by it. The Romans allowed no triumph for a victory in a civil war.

9. And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away. 10. And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak. 11. And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest him; and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? and I would have given thee ten shekels of silver and a girdle. 12. And the man said unto
Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king’s son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom. 13. Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldst have set thyself against me. 14. Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. 15. And ten young men that bare Joab’s armour compassed about, and smote Absalom, and slew him. 16. And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people. 17. And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent. 18. Now Absalom in his life-time had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king’s dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom’s Place.

Here is Absalom quite at a loss; at his wit’s end, first, and then at his life’s end. He that began the fight, big with the expectation of triumphing over David himself, with whom, if he had had him in his power, he would not have dealt gently, is now in the greatest consternation, when he meets the servants of David, v. 9. Though they were forbidden to meddle with him, he durst not let them go unpunished: he might, and did, meddle with them, and actually smote Absalom, because he had forsaken his father’s house and abjured his allegiance. He shall fall into the pit, and he that getteth up out of the pit, shall be taken in the snare, Jer. 48. 44. David is inclined to spare him, but divine justice passes sentence upon him as a traitor, and sees it executed; that he hang by the neck, be caught alive, be embowelled, and his body disposed of disgracefully.

I. He is hanged by the neck. Riding furiously under the thick boughs of a great oak which hung low, and had been never cropped, either the twisted branches, or some one forked bough of the oak, caught hold of his head, either by his neck, or, as some think, by his long hair, which had been so much his pride, and was now justly made a halter for him, and there he hung, astonished, that he could not use his hands to help himself; or so entangled, that his hands could not help him, but the more he struggled the more he was embarrassed. This set him up for a fair mark to the servants of David, and he had the terror and shame of seeing himself thus exposed, while he could do nothing for his own relief, neither fight nor fly.

Observe concerning this, 1. That his name went away from under him, as if glad to get clear of such a burthen, and resign it to the ignominious tree. Thus the whole creation groans under the burthen of man’s corruption, but shall shortly be delivered from its load, Rom. 8. 21, 22. 2. That he hung between heaven and earth, as unworthy of either, as abandoned of both; earth would not keep him, heaven would not take him, hell therefore opens her mouth to receive him. That this was a very surprising unusual thing; it was fit that it should be so, his crime being so monstrous: if, in his flight, his male had thrown him, and left him half dead upon the ground, till the servants of David had come and dispatched him, the same thing had been done as effectually; but that had been too common a fate for so uncommon a criminal; God will here, as in the case of the death of the Lord Jesus,(rule. 7. 16. 29. 30. Absalom is here hung up, in terror—to frighten children from disobedience to their parents; see Prov. 30. 17.

II. He is caught alive by one of the servants of David, who went straight, and told Joab in what posture he found that arch rebel, v. 10. Thus was he set up for a spectacle, as well as a mark, that the righteous might see him, and laugh at him, (Ps. 52. 6.) while he has this further vexation in his breast, that of all the friends he had courted and confided in, and thought he had sure in his interest, though he hung long enough to have been relieved, yet he had none at hand to disentangle him. Joab chides the man for not despatching him, (v. 11.) telling him, if he had given that bold stroke, he might have saved him, whom he bad with ten half crowns, and a girdle, that is, a captain, as those who were to his service, perhaps, was signified by the delivery of a belt or girdle; see Isa. 22. 21. But the man, though zealous enough against Absalom, justified himself in not doing it: “Despatch him!” says he, “not for all the world; it would have cost me my head: and thou thyself wast witness to the king’s charge concerning him,” (v. 12.) and, for all thy talk, wouldst thou have been in the posture to do it. 13. Those that love the treason, hate the traitor. Joab could not deny this, nor blame the man for his caution, and therefore makes him no answer, but breaks off the discourse, under colour of haste; (v. 14.) I may not tarry thus with thee. Superiors should consider a reproof before they give it, lest they be ashamed of it afterward, and find themselves unable to make it good.

III. He is embowelled and quartered, as traitors are, so pitifully mangled is he as he hangs there, and receives his death in such a manner, as to see all its terrors, and feel all its pains. 1. Joab throws three darts into his body, which put him, no doubt, to exquisite torment, while he is yet alive in the midst of the oak, v. 14. I know not whether Joab could be justified in this direct disobedience to the command of his sovereign; was this to deal gently with the traitor? Did David have suffered him to do it, if he had been upon the spot? Yet this may be said for him, that while he broke the order of a too indulgent father, he did real service both to his king and country, and would have endangered the welfare of both, if he had not done it. Salus populi suprema lex— The safety of the people is the supreme law. 2. Joab’s young men, ten of them, cut off the head of the man, and threw it to Joab, so that it was despatched, v. 15. They seem to have admired the way he made a ring about him in triumph, and then smote him, and slew him. So let all thine enemies perish, 0 Lord. Joab, hereupon, sounds a retreat; (v. 16.) the danger is over now that Absalom is slain; the people will soon return to their allegiance to David, and therefore no more blood shall be spilt; no prisoners are taken, to be tried as traitors, and made examples: let every man return to his tent; they are all the king’s subjects, all his good subjects again.

IV. His body is disposed of disgracefully, v. 17,
18. They cast it into a great pit in the wood; they would not bring it to his father (for that circumstance would have added to his grief), nor would they preserve it to be buried, according to his order, but they threw it into the next pit with indignation. Where is the beauty he had been so proud of? and for which he had been so much admired? Where are his aspiring projects, and the castles he had built in the air? His thoughts perish, and he with them. And, to signify how heavy his iniquity lay upon his bones, as the prophet speaks, (Ezek. 32. 27.) they raised a great heap of stones upon him, to be a monument of his villany, and to signify that he ought to have been stoned as a rebellious son. Deut. 21. 21. Travellers say, that the place is taken notice of to this day, and that it is common for passers to throw a stone to this heap, with words to this purport; Cursed be the memory of rebellious Absalom, and cursed for ever be all wicked children that rise up in rebellion against their parents. To aggravate the ignominy of Absalom's burial, the historian takes notice of a pillar he had erected in the valley of Kidron, near Jerusalem, to be a monument for himself, and keep his name in remembrance, (v. 18.) at the foot of which, it is probable, he designed to be buried. What foolish insignificant projects do proud men fill their heads with! And what care do many people take about the disposal of their bodies, when they are dead, that have no care at all what shall become of their precious souls. Absalom had made his monuments, (ch. 14. 27.) but, it seems, now he had none; God had taken them away by death; and justly is a rebellious son written childless; to make up the want, he erects this pillar for a memorial; yet, in this also, Providence crosses him, and a rude heap of stones shall be his monument instead of this marble pillar. Thus they that exalt themselves, shall be abased. His care was, to have his name written in remembrance, and it is so, to his everlasting dishonour. He could not be content in the obscurity of the rest of David's sons, of whom nothing is recorded but their names, but would be famous, and is therefore justly made for ever infamous. The pillar shall bear his name, but not to his credit; it was designed for Absalom's glory, but proved Absalom's folly.

19. Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run and bear the king tidings, how that the Lord hath avenged him of his enemies. 20. And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day; but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead. 21. Then said Joab to Cushi, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cushi bowed himself unto Joab, and ran. 22. Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, yet again to Joab, But, howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cushi. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready? 23. But, howsoever, said he, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cushi. 24. And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, a man running alone.

25. And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near. 26. And the watchman saw another man running, and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold, another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings. 27. And the watchman said, Methinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings. 28. And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king. 29. And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was. 30. And the king said unto him, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still. 31. And, behold, Cushi came; and Cushi said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee. 32. And the king said unto Cushi, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushi answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is. 33. And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!
19. This he desired, not so much in hope of a reward, (as was above that,) as that he might have the pleasure and satisfaction of bringing the king, whom he loved, this good news. Joab knew David better than Ahimaaz did, and that the tidings of Absalom's death, which must conclude the story, would spoil the acceptableness of all the rest; and therefore he seems to have had in his view the message of those tidings, (v. 20.) and they must be to be brought by a footman than by a priest. However, when Cushi was gone, Ahimaaz begged hard for leave to run after him, and with great importunity obtained it, v. 22, 23. One would wonder why he should be so very fond of this office, when another was employed in it. (1.) Perhaps it was to show his swiftness; observing how heavily Cushi ran, and that he could not, in his hurry, think of the business he had a mind to show how fast he could run and take what steps he could go the furthest way about, and yet beat Cushi. No great praise for a priest to be swift of foot, yet perhaps Ahimaaz was proud of it. (2.) Perhaps it was in prudence and tenderness to the king, that he desired it. He knew he could get before Cushi, and therefore was willing to prepare the king, with an amusing story, for the plain truth Cushi would presently tell him. If bad news must come, it is best that it come gradually, and will be the better borne.

3. They are both discovered by the watchman on the gate of Mahanaim, Ahimaaz first, (v. 24.) for though Cushi had the lead, he soon overran him; but, presently after, Cushi appeared, v. 26. (1.) When the king hears of one running alone, he concludes he has an express; (v. 25.) If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth; for if they had been beaten, and were flying back from the enemy, there would have been many. (2.) When he hears it is Ahimaaz, he concludes he brings good news, v. 27. Ahimaaz, it seems, was so famous for running, that he was known by it at a distance; and so eminently good, that it was taken for granted, if he be the messenger, the news must needs be good: he is a good man, zealously affected to the king's interest, and would not bring bad news. It is a pity but the good tidings of the gospel should always be brought by good men; and how welcome should they be to us for their message-sake?

4. Ahimaaz is very forward to proclaim the victory; (v. 28.) cries at a distance, Peace, there is peace: peace after war, which is doubly welcome. All is well, my lord O king: the danger is over, and we may return, when the king pleases, to Jerusalem. And when he comes near, he tells him the news more particularly. They are all cut off, that lifted up their hand against the king; and, as becomes a priest, while he gives the king the joy of it, he gives God the glory of it, the God of peace and war, the God of salvation and victory; Blessed be the Lord thy God, that has done this for thee, as thy God, pursuant to the promises made to uphold thy throne, ch. 7. 16. When he said this, he fell down upon his face, not only as a sign of reverence to the king, but in humble adoration of God, whose name he praises for this success. By directing David thus to give God thanks for his victory, he prepares him for the approaching news of its ally. The more our hearts are fixed, and enlarged, in thanksgiving to God for our mercies, the better disposed we shall be to bear with patience the afflicted times. David is so much a father, that he forgets he is a king; and therefore cannot rejoice in the news of a victory, till he know whether the young man Absalom be safe; for whom his heart seems to tremble, almost as Elia's, in a like case, for theark of God. Ahimaaz soon discerns what Joab intimated to him, that the death of the King's son would make the tidings of the day very unwelcome, and therefore in his report leaves that matter doubtful; and though he gives occasion to suspect how it was, yet, that the thunderclap might not come too suddenly upon the poor perplexed king, he refers him to the next messenger, whom they saw coming, for a more particular account of it. "When Joab met the king's servant, namely, Cushi, and me thy servant, to tell thee good tidings, I perceived by his manner occasioned by something extraordinary, as you will hear by and by; but I have nothing to say about it, I have delivered that which was my message, Cushi is better able to inform you than I am. I will not be the messenger of evil tidings; nor will I pretend to know that which I cannot give a perfect account of." He is therefore bid to stand by till Cushi came; (v. 30.) and now, we may suppose, he gives the king a more particular account of the victory, which was the thing he came to bring the news of.

5. Cushi, the slow post, proves the sure one, and besides the confirmation of the news of the victory which Ahimaaz had brought, v. 31. The Lord has avenged thee with all of them that rose up against thee; he satisfies the king's inquiry concerning Absalom, v. 32. Is he safe? says David; Yes, says Cushi, he has set his head against his breast; but when the news so properly, that, how unwelcome soever the message was, the messenger could have no blame. He does not tell him plainly that Absalom was hanged, and run through, and buried under a heap of stones; but only that his fate was what he desired might be the fate of all that were traitors against the king, his crown and dignity. The enmity of my lord the king, whom you are, and all that are true to the king, the same is as that young man is; I need wish them no worse.

II. We are told how David received the intelligence; he forgets all the joy of his deliverance, and is quite overwhelmed with the sorrowful tidings of Absalom's death, v. 33. As soon as he perceived by Cushi's expression that Absalom was dead, he asked no more questions, but fell into a passion of weeping, retired from company, and abandoned himself to his grief. As there was no chamber, he was overheard to say, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom; alas, for thee! I lament thee: how art thou fallen! Would God I had died for thee, and that thou hast remained alive this day; so the Chaldee adds, O Absalom, my son, my son. I wish I could see reason to think that this arose from a concern about Absalom's everlasting state, and that he was not willing that he should die for him, because he had good hopes of his own salvation, and of Absalom's repentance, if he had lived: it rather seems to have been spoken inconsiderately, and in a passion, and it was his infirmity. He is to be blamed, 1. For shewing so great a fondness for a graceless, however handsome and witty son, that was justly abandoned both of God and man. 2. For quarelling, not only with Divine Providence, but with the dispositions of which he ought secretly to acquaint himself, in, but divine justice, the judgments of which ought to be held sacred, and subscribe to: see how Bildad argues, (Job 8. 3, 4.) If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cost them away in their transgression, thou shouldst submit, for doth God pervert judgment? See Lev. 10. 3. For opposing the justice of the nation, which, as king, he was intrusted with the administration of, and which, to him, he was under a public trust, he ought to refer before any natural affection. 4. For despising the mercy of his deliverance, and the deliverance of his family and kingdom, from Absalom's wicked designs, as if these were no mercy, nor worth giving thanks for, because it cost the life of Absalom. 5. For indulging a strong passion, and speaking unad-
wisely with his lips. He now forgot his own reasons upon the death of another child, (Can I bring him back again?) and his own resolution to keep his mouth as with a bridle, when his heart was hot within him, as well as his own practice at other times, when he guiltied himself as a child that was weaned from his mother. The best men are not always in a good frame; what we over-loved, we are apt to over-grieve for: in each affection, therefore, it is wisdom to have rule over our own spirits, and to keep a strict guard upon ourselves when that is removed from us, which was very dear to us. Losers think they may have leave to speak; but little is said is soon amended. The repentant patient sufferer sitteth alone, and keepeth silence; (Lam. 3. 28.) or rather, with Job, says Blessed be the name of the Lord.

CHAP. XIX.

We left David's army in triumph, and yet David himself in tears: now here we have, I. His return to himself, by the persuasion of Joab, v. i. 8. II. His return to his kingdom from his present banishment. 1. The men of Israel were forward with themselves to bring him back, v. 9, 10. 2. The men of Judah were dealt with by David's agents to do it, (v. 11, 14.) and did it, v. 15. III. At the king's coming over Jordan, Shimel's treason is pardoned, (v. 16, 23.) Mephibosheth's failure is excused, (v. 24. 30.) and Barzillai's kindness is thankfully owned, and recompensed to his son, v. 31. 40. IV. The men of Israel quarrelled with the men of Judah not calling them to the ceremony of the king's restoration, which occasioned a new rebellion in the next chapter, v. 41. 43.

1. AND it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom. 2. And the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son. 3. And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. 4. But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son! 5. And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons, and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines; 6. In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends: for thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well. 7. Now therefore, arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the Lord, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now. 8. Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king; for Israel had fled, every man to his tent.

Soon after the messengers had brought the news of the defeat and death of Absalom to the heart of Mahanaim, Joab and his victorious army followed, to grace the king's triumphs, and receive his further orders. Now here we are told, I. What a dump it was to them to find the king in tears for Absalom's death, which they construed as a token of his displeasure against them for what they had done, whereas they expected him to have met them with joy and thanks for their good services. It was told Joab, v. 1. The report of it ran through the army, (v. 2.) how the king was grieved for his son. The people will take particular notice what their princes say and do: the more eyes we have upon us, and the greater our influence is, the more need we have to speak and act wisely, and to govern our passions strictly.

When they came to the city, they found the king in close mourning, v. 4. He covered his face, and would not so much as look up, nor take any notice of the generals, when they attended him. It could not but surprise them to find, 1. How the king proclaimed his passion, which he ought to have been ashamed of, and which he should have striven to smother and conceal, if he had consulted either his reputation or courage, which was lessened by his mean submission to the tyranny of so absurd a passion, or his interest in the people, which would be prejudiced by his disowning what was not done in zeal for his honour and the public safety. Yet see how he avows his grief, He cries with a loud voice, O my son Absalom. "My servants are all come home safe, but where is my son? He is dead; and, dying in sin, I fear, he is lost for ever: I cannot now say, I shall go to him, for my soul shall not be gathered with such sinners; what shall be done for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son?" 2. How he prohibited passions, till the army was come up to him, which must be some time after he received the first intelligence. If he had contented himself with giving vent to his passion for an hour or two, when he first heard the news, it had been excusable, but to continue it thus for so bad a son as Absalom, like Jacob for so good a son as Joseph, with a resolution to go to the grave mourning, and to stain his triumphs with his tears, was very unwise and unworthy.

Now, see how ill this was taken by the people. They were loath to blame the king, for whatever he did used to please them, (ch. 3. 36.) but they took it as a great mortification to them. Their victory was turned into mourning, v. 2. They stole into the city as men ashamed, v. 3. In compliment to their sovereign, they would not rejoice in that which they perceived was a reproach to him, and yet they could not but be uneasy that they were thus obliged to conceal their joy. Superiors ought not to put such hardships as these on their inferiors. II. How plainly and vehemently Joab reproved David, for this indiscreet management of himself in this critical juncture. David never more needed the hearts of his subjects than now, nor was ever more concerned to secure their interest in their affections; and therefore, when it was expedient to engage them now, with the most impolitic thing he could do, and the greatest wrong imaginable to his friends that adhered to him. Joab therefore censures him, v. 5-7. where he speaks a great deal of reason, but not with the respect and deference which he owed to his prince. Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? A plain case may be fairly pleaded with those that are above us, and they may be reproved for what they do amiss, but it must not be done with rudeness and insolence.
David did indeed need to be roused and alarmed; and Joab thought it no time to dally with him. If superiors do that which is foolish, they must neither think it strange, nor take it ill, if their inferiors tell them of it, perhaps too bluntly. 1. Joab magnifies the services of David's soldiers; "The day thou savedst thy life, and therefore deserve to be taken notice of, and have reason to resist it, if they be not." It is implied, that Absalom, whom he honoured with his tears, sought his ruin, and the ruin of his family, while those, whom by his tears he puts a slight upon, were such as preserved from ruin him and all that was dear to him. Great mischiefs have arisen to princes from their contempt of great ministers. 2. He adjures the confusors of David's justice, that his own conscience, and the testment David had given them; "Thou hast shamed their faces, for while they have shown such a value for thy life, thou hast shown no value for their's, but preferrest a spoiled wicked youth, a false traitor to his king and country, whom we are happily rid of, before all thy wise counsellors, brave commanders, and loyal subjects. What can be more absurd than to love thine enemies and hate thy friends?" 3. He advises him to present himself immediately at the head of his troops, to smile upon them, welcome them home, congratulate their successes, and return them thanks for their services. Even those that may be commanded, yet expect to be thanked, when they do well, and ought to be. 4. He threatens him with another rebellion if he would not do this, intimating, that rather than serve so ungrateful a prince, he himself would head a revolt from him, and then, (so confident is Joab of his own interest in the people,) "There will not tarry with thee one man. If I go, they all go. Thou hast now nothing to mourn for; but if thou persist in thy murmurs, I will bring upon thee" (as Josephus expresses it) "real and more bitter sorrow." 3. It is strange that David did not immediately, upon the defeat and dispersion of Absalom's forces, march with all expedition back to Jerusalem, to regain the possession of his capital city, while the rebels were so little assisted. Could they, therefore, rally again? What occasion was there to bring him back? Could not he himself go back with the victorious army he had with him in Gilead? He could, no doubt; but, 1. He would come back as a prince, with the consent and unanimous approbation of the people, and not as a conqueror forcing his way: he would restore their liberties, and not take occasion to seize them, or encroach upon them. 2. He would come back in peace and safety, and be set that he should meet with no difficulty or opposition in his return; and therefore would be satisfied that the people were well affected to him before he would stir. 3. He would come back in honour, and like himself; and therefore would come back, not at the head of his forces, but in the arms of his subjects; for the prince that has wisdom and goodness enough to make himself his people's darling, without doubt, loses prestige, and makes a much better figure, than the prince that has strength enough to make himself his people's terror. It is resolved therefore that David must be brought back to Jerusalem his own city, and his own house there, with some ceremony, and here we have that matter concerted. I. The men of Israel (that is, the ten tribes) were the first that talked of it, v. 9, 10. The people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom. 10. And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now, therefore, why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back? 11. And king David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, even to his house. 12. Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king? 13. And say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab. 14. And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man; so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants. 15. So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.
rest. David had intelligence of the good disposition of all the rest toward him, but nothing from Judah, though he had always been particularly careful of them. But we do not always find the most kindness from those whom we have most reason to expect it. Yet David would not return till he knew the sense of his own tribe, (Judah was his lawgiver.) Ps. 60. 7.) that his way home might be the more clear.

1. He employs Zadok and Abiathar, the two chief priests, to treat with the elders of Judah, and to excite them to give the king an invitation back to his house, even to his house, which was the glory of their tribe, v. 11. 12. No men more proper to negotiate this affair than the two priests, who were firm to David's interest, were prudent men, and had great influence with the people. Perhaps the men of Judah were remiss and careless, and did not return them on to do it, and then it was proper to stir them up to do it. Many will follow who, in a good work, will not lead; it is a pity that they should continue idle for want of being spoken to. Or, perhaps, they were so sensible of the greatness of the provocation they had given to David that Absalom, the more afraid to bring him back, desparing of his favour, he therefore warrants his agents to assure them of it, with this reason, "Ye are my brethren, my bone and my flesh, and therefore I cannot be severe with you." The Son of David has been pleased to call us brethren, his bone and his flesh, which encourages us to hope that we shall find favour with him. Or, perhaps, they were willing to see what the rest of the tribes would do, before they stirred, with which they are here upbraided; "The speech of all Israel is come to the king to invite him back, and shall Judah be the last, that should have been the first? Where is now the celebrated bravery of that royal tribe? Where its loyalty?" Note, We should be stirred up to that which is great and good, by the examples both of our ancestors and of our neighbours, and by the consideration of our rank. Let not the first in dignity be last in duty.

2. He particularly courts into his interest Amasa, who had been Absalom’s general, but was his own nephew as well as Joab, v. 13. He owns him for his kinsman, and promises him that, if he would appear for him now, he would make him captain-general of all his forces in the room of Joab, would not only pardon him, (which, it may be, Amasa questioned,) but prefer him. Sometimes there is not a danger in using the friendship of those that have been an enemy. Amasa’s interest might do David good service at this juncture. But if David did wisely for himself in designating Amasa for this post, (Joab being now grown intolerably haughty,) he did not do kindly by Amasa in letting his design be known, for it occasioned his death by Joab’s hand, ch. 20. 10. 11. And profit was hereby gained. He bowed the heart of the men of Judah to pass a vote, nemine contradicente—unanimously, for the recall of the king, v. 14. God’s providence, by the priests’ persuasions and Amasa’s interest, brought them to this resolve. David stirred not till he received this invitation, and then he came as far back as Jordan, at which river they were to meet him, v. 15. Our Lord Jesus, will rule in the heart that invites him to his throne in their hearts, and not till he is invited. He first bows the heart, and makes it willing in the day of his power, and then rules in the midst of his enemies, Ps. 110. 2, 3.

16. And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which was of Bahurim, hasted, and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David. 17. And there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king. 18. And there went over a ferry-boat to carry over the king’s household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan; 19. And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that thy servlant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. 20. For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph, to go down to meet my lord the king. 21. But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord’s anointed? 22. And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? For do not I know that this day king over Israel? 23. Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him.

Perhaps Jordan was never passed with so much solemnity, nor with so many remarkable occurrences, as it was now, since Israel passed it under Joshua. David, in his affective flight, remembered God particularly from the land of Jordan, (Ps. 42. 6.) and now that land, more than any other, was graced with the glories of his return. David’s soldiers furnished themselves with accommodations for their passage over this river, but, for his own family, a ferry boat was sent on purpose, v. 18. A fleet of boats, say some; a bridge of boats was made, say others; the best convenience they had to serve him with.

Two remarkable persons met him on the banks of Jordan, who had abused him wretchedly when he was in his flight.

I. Ziba, who had abused him with his foul tongue, and, by accusing his master, had obtained from the king a grant of his estate, ch. 16. 4. A greater abuse he could not have done him, than, by imposing upon his credibility, to draw him in to do a thing so unkind to the son of his friend Jonathan. He comes now, with a retinue of sons and servants, to meet the king, (v. 17.) that he might obtain the king’s favour, and so come off the better, when Mephibosheth would shortly undeceive him, and clear himself, v. 26.

II. Shimei, who had abused him with his foul tongue, railed at him, and cursed him, ch. 16. 5. If David had been defeated, no doubt, he would have continued to trample upon him, and to glorify in what he had done; but now that he sees him coming home in triumph, and returning to his throne, he thinks it his interest to make his peace with him. Those who now slight and abuse the Son of David, would be glad to make their peace too, when he shall come in his glory; but it will be too late. Shimei, to recommend himself to the king, 1. Came with good company, with the men
of Judah, as one in their interest. 2. He brought a regiment of the men of Benjamin with him, a thousand, of which, perhaps, he was chilarch, or commander in chief, offering his own and their service to the king; or, perhaps, they were volunteers, whom by his interest he had got together to meet the king, which was the more obliging, because of all the tribes of Israel, there were none, except these and Judah, that appeared ready to come. 3. What did he do? He hastened to do; he lost no time; Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way. Here is, (1.) The criminal's submission; (v. 18-20.) He fell down before the king, as a penitent, as a supplicant; and that he might be thought sincere, he did it publicly before all David's servants, and his friends the men of Judah, yea, and before his own substance, in a sight special, for he had this reticence to keep, that he was incapable of doing; or, the submission ought to be so. He owns his crime, Thy servant doth know that I have sinned; he aggravates it, I did perversely; he begs the king's pardon, Let not the king impute iniquity to thy servant, that is, deal with me as I deserve: he intimates, that it was below the king's great and generous mind to take it to his heart; and pleads his early return to his allegiance, that he was the first of all the princes of Israel; which in the beginning of David's reign had distinguished themselves from Judah, by their adherence to Ishbosheth (ch. 2. 10.) that came to meet the king. He came first, that by his example of duty, the rest might be disposed, and by his experience of the king's clemency, the rest might be encouraged, to follow. (2.) A motion made for judgment against him; (v. 21.) Shall not Shimei be put to death for a traitor? Let him, of all men, be made an example. Abishai moved it, who would have ventured his life to have been his death, then when he was cursing, ch. 16. 9. David did not think fit to have it done then, because his judicial power was cut short, but now that it was restored, why should not the law have its course? Abishai herein consulted what he supposed to be David's feelings more than his true interest. Princes have need to arm themselves against temptations to severity. (3.) His discharge by the king's order, v. 22, 23. He rejected Abishai's motion with displeasure; What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? The less we have to do with those who are of an angry revengeful spirit, and who put us upon doing what is harsh and rigorous, the better. He locks upon these persecutors as adversaries to him, though they pretended friendship and zeal for his honour. Those who advise us to what is wrong, are really Satan's adversaries to us. [1.] They were adversaries to his inclination, which was to clemency. He knew that he was this day king in Israel, restored to, and re-established in, his kingdom, and therefore his honour inclined him to forgive. It is the glory of kings to forgive those that humble and surrender themselves. Solomon est piissimus leonis. He suffices the lion, that he has laid his victim prostrate. His joy inclined him to forgive: the pleasantness of his spirit on this great occasion forbade the entrance of any thing that was sour and peevish: joyful days should be forgiving days. Yet this was not all; his experience of God's mercy in restoring him to his kingdom, his exclusion from which, he attributed to his sin, inclined him to show mercy to Shimei. Two that inclined, must forgive. David had severely revenged the abuses done to his ambassadors by the Ammonites (ch. 12: 31.) but easily passes by the abuse done to himself by an Israeliite. That was an affront to Israel in general, and touched the honour of his crown and kingdom; this was purely personal, and therefore (according to the usual disposition of good men) he could the more easily forgive it. [2.] They were adversaries to his interest; if he should put Shimei to death, who cursed him, they would expect the same fate, who had taken up arms, and actually levied war against him, which would drive them from him, while he was endeavouring to draw them to him. Acts of severity are seldom acts of policy: The throne is established by mercy. Shimei, hereupon, has his pardon signed and sealed with an oath; yet bound, no doubt, to his good behaviour, and liable to be prosecuted if he afterward misbehaved; and thus he was reserved to be, in due time, as much a monument of the justice of the government, as he was now of its clemency, and in both of its prudence. 24. And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace. 25. And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, Wherefore wentest thou not with me, Mephibosheth? 26. And he answered, My Lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant is lame. 27. And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God: do, therefore, what is good in thine eyes. 28. For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right, therefore, have I yet to cry any more unto the king? 29. And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land. 30. And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house. The day of David's return was a day of bringing to remembrance, a day of account, in which what had past in his flight, was called over again; among other things, after Shimei's, comes Mephibosheth's case, to be inquired into, and he himself brings it on. 1. He went down in the crowd to meet the king; (v. 24.) and, as a proof of the sincerity of his joy in the king's return, we are here told what a true mourner he was for the king's banishment. During that melancholy time, when one of the greatest glories of Israel was departed, Mephibosheth continued in a very melancholy state. He was never trimmed, nor put on clean linen, but wholly neglected himself, as one abandoned to grief for the king's affliction, and the kingdom's misery. In times of public calamity, we ought to abridge ourselves of the delights of sense, in conformity to the season. There are times when God calls to weeping and mourning, and we must comply with the call. 2. When the king came to Jerusalem, (since he
could not sooner have an opportunity:) he made his appearance before him, v. 25. And when the king asked him, why he, being one of his family, had stayed behind, and not accompanied him in his exile, he opened his case fully to the king. (1.) He complains of Ziba, his servant, who should have been his friend, but had been, two ways, his enemy: for, first, he had hindered him from going along with the king, by taking the ass himself, which he was ordered to make ready for his master, (v. 26.) basely taking advantage of his lameness, and his inability to help himself; and, secondly, he had accused him to David of a design to usurp the government, v. 27. How much mischief is it in the power of a wicked servant to do to the best master! (2.) He gratefully acknowledges the king's great kindness to himself, when he and all his father's house lay at the king's mercy. When he might have justly been dealt with as a rebel, he was treated as a friend, as a child: Thou didst set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. This shows that Ziba's suggestion was improbable: for could Mephibosheth be so foolish as to aim higher, when he lived so easily, so happily, as he did? And could he be so very disingenuous as to design any harm to David, of which he knew, kind as he was, he could never have been guilty? (3.) He refers himself to the king's pleasure, Do what is good in thine eyes, with me and my estate; depending on the king's wisdom, and his ability to discern between truth and falsehood: My lord the king is as an angel of God; and disclaiming all pretensions of his own merit: "So much kindness I have received above what I deserved, and what right have I to cry any more unto the king? Why should I trouble the king with my complaints, who have already been so troublesome to him? Why should I think any thing hard that is put upon me, who have lightherto been so kindly treated?" We were all as dead men before God; yet he has not only spared us, but taken us to sit at his table. How little reason have we to complain of any trouble we are in: and how much reason to take all well that God does.

David hereupon recalls the sequesterment of Mephibosheth's estate, being deceived in his grant, he revokes it, and confirms his former settlement of it; I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land; (v. 29.) that is, "Let it be as I first ordered it, (ch. 9. 10.) the property shall still be vested in thee, but Ziba shall have the occupancy, he shall till the land, paying thee a rent." Thus Mephibosheth is where he was, no harm is done, only Ziba goes away unpunished for his false and malicious information against David either feared him too much, or loved him too well, to do justice upon him according to that law, Deut. 19. 18, 19. and he was now in the humour of forgiving, and resolved to make every body easy.

4. Mephibosheth drows all cares about his estate in his joy for the king's return; (v. 30.) "Yea, let him take all, the presence and favour of the king shall be to me instead of all else." A good man can contentedly bear his own private losses and disappointments, while he sees Israel in peace, and the throne of the Son of David exalted and established. Ziba, take all, so that David may be in peace.

31. And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan. 32. Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man. 33. And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem. 34. And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? 35. I am this day fourscore years old; and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing-men and singing-women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king? 36. Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king; and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward? 37. Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother: but, behold, thy servant Chimham, let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee. 38. And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, that will I do for thee. 39. And all the people went over Jordan. And when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned unto his own place.

David had already graced the triumphs of his restoration with the generous remission of the injuries that had been done him; we have him here gracing them with the no less generous reward of the kindnesses that had been shown him. Barzillai, the Gileadite, who had a noble seat at Rogelim, not far from Mahanaim, was the man who, of all the nobility and gentry of that country, had been most kind to David in his distress. If Absalom had prevailed, it is likely he might have suffered for it; but now he and his shall be no losers by it.

Here is,

1. Barzillai's great respect to David, not only as a good man, but as his rightful sovereign. He provided him with sustenance, for himself and family, while he lay at Mahanaim, v. 32. God had given him a large estate, for he was a very great man, and, it seems, he had a large heart to do good with it: what else but that, is a large estate good for? To reduced greatness, generosity oblieth us, and to oppressed goodness, piety oblieth us, to be in a particular manner kind, to the utmost of our power. Barzillai, to show that he was not weary of David, though he was so great a charge to him, attended him to Jordan, and went over with him, v. 31. Let subjects learn hence, to render tribute to whom tribute is due, and honour to whom honour, Rom. 13. 7.

11. The kind invitation David gave him to court, (v. 33.) "Come thou over with me." He invited him, 1. That he might have the pleasure of his company, and the benefit of his counsel; for we may suppose that he was very wise and good, as well as very rich, else he had not been called here a very great man; for it is what a man is, more than what he has, that bespeaks him truly great. 2. That he might have an opportunity of returning his kindness; "I will feed thee with me, then shalt fare as sumptuously as I fare, and this, at Jerusalem, the
III. Barzillai's answer to this inquiry is, Why should the king's generosity in making him this offer, lessening his service, and magnifying the king's return for it? Why should the king recompense it with such a reward? v. 36. Will the master thank that servant who only does what was his duty to do? He thought he had done himself honour enough, in doing the king any service. Thus when the saints shall be called to inherit the kingdom, in consideration of what they have done, they shall be amazed at the disproportion between the service and the recompense; (Matth. 25. 37.) Lord when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee?

2. He declines accepting the invitation, begs his majesty's pardon for refusing so generous an offer; he should think himself very happy in being near the king, but, (1.) He is old, and unfit to remove to all, especially to country old, for the business of the court; Shall I go up with the king to Jerusalem? I can do him no service there, in the council, the camp, the treasury, or the courts of justice; for how long have I to live? v. 34. Shall I think of going into business, now that I am going out of the world? Old, and unfit for the diversions of the court, which will be ill-bestowed, and even thrown away, upon one that can relish them so little, v. 35. As it was in Moses's time, so it was in Barzillai's, thinking it was nowise, that if men be so strong that they come to fourscore years, their strength then islabour and sorrow, Ps. 90. 10. These were then, and are still, years of which men say they have no pleasure in them, Eccl. 12. 1. Dainties are insipid, when desire fails; and songs to the aged ear are better little than those sung to a heavy heart; how should they choose, when the daughters of music are brought low? Let those that are old, learn of Barzillai to be dead to the delights of sense; let grace second nature, and make a virtue of the necessity. Nay, Barzillai, being old, thinks he shall be a burthen to the king, rather than any credit to him; and a good man would not go any where to be burthensome, or, if he must be so, will rather be so to his own house than to another's. (2.) He is dying, and must begin to think of his long journey, his removal out of the world, v. 37. It is good for us all, but it especially becomes old people, to think and speak much of dying. "Talk of going to court!" says Barzillai; "let me go home and die in my own city, the place of my father's sepulchre; let me die by the grave of my father, that my bones may be quietly carried to the place of their rest. The grave is ready for me, let me go and get ready for it, go and die in my nest." He desires the king to be kind to his son Chimham, Let him go over with my lord the king, and have preferment at court; what favour is done to him, Barzillai will take as done to himself. They that are old must not grudge young people those delights which they themselves are past the enjoyment of, nor oblige them to retire as they do. Barzillai will go back himself, but he will not make Chimham go back with him; though he could ill spare Chimham, he would gratify and improve him, he is willing to do it.

IV. David's farewell to Barzillai. 1. He sends him back into his country with a kiss and a blessing, (v. 39.) signifying that, in gratitude for his kindness, he would love him and pray for him; and with a promise that, whatever request he should at any time make to him, he would be ready to oblige him; (v. 48.) Whatever thou shalt think of, when thou comest home, to ask of me, that wilt I do for thee. What is the chief excellency of power, but this, that gives men a capacity of doing the more good? 2. He takes Chimham forward with him, and leaves it to Barzillai to choose him his preferment; I will do to him what shall seem good unto thee, v. 38. And, it should seem, Barzillai, who had experienced the innocence and safety of retirement, begged a country-seat for him near Jerusalem, but not in it; for, long after, we read of a place near Beth-lehem, David's city, which is called, The habitation of Chimham, allotted him, probably, not out of the crown-lands, or the forfeited estates, but David's paternal estate.

40. Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel. 41. And, behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren, the men of Judah, stolen thee away, and have brought the king and his household, and all David's men with him, over Jordan? 42. And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king is near of kin to us; wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king's cost? or hath he given us any gift? 43. And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more right in David than ye; why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

David came over Jordan, attended and assisted by the men of Judah; when he was advanced as far as Gilgal, the first stage on this side Jordan, half the people of Israel, that is, of their elders and great men, were come to wait upon him, to kiss his hand, and congratulate him on his return, but found they came too late to witness the solemnity of his first appearance. This put them out of humour, and occasioned a quarrel between them and the men of Judah, which was a damp to the joy of the day, and the beginning of further mischief.

Here is, 1. The complaint which the men of Israel brought to the king against the men of Judah, (v. 41.) that they had performed the ceremony of bringing the king over Jordan, and not given them credit; that they might have joined with them, and been reflected upon them, as if they were not so well affected to the king and his restoration as the men of Judah were, whereas the king himself knew that they had spoken of it, before the men of Judah thought of it, v. 11. It seemed likewise as if they intended to monopolize the king's favours when he was come back, and to be locked upon as his only friends. See what mischief comes from pride and jealousy.

2. The excuse which the men of Judah made for themselves, v. 42. (1.) They plead relation to the king; "He is near of kin to us, and therefore, in a matter of mere ceremony, as this was, we may claim precedence. It was into our country that he was to be brought, and therefore who so fit as we to bring
1. His subjects revolting from him at the instigation of a man of Belial, whom they followed when they forsook the man after God's own heart. Observe, 1. That this happened immediately upon the crushing of Absalom's rebellion. We must not think it a slight thing if, while we are in this world, if the end of one trouble be the beginning of another: deep sometimes calls unto deep. 2. That the people were now just returning to their allegiance, when, of a sudden, they flew off from it. When a reconciliation is newly made, it ought to be handled with great tenderness and caution, lest the peace break again before it be settled. A broken bone, when it is set, must have time to knit. 3. That the ring-brethren are the rebels of this chapter: a constant enmity between the elders of Israel and the elders of Judah, about bringing the king back. It was a point of honour that was disputed between them, which had most interest in David; "We are more numerous," say the elders of Israel; "We are nearer akin to him," say the elders of Judah. Now one would think David very safe and happy, when his subjects are striving which shall love him best, who will be more prompt to do him service, yet that strife proves the occasion of a rebellion. The men of Israel complained to David of the slight which the men of Judah had put upon them; if he had now countenanced their complaint, commended their zeal, and returned them thanks for it, he might have confirmed them in his interest; but he seemed partial to his own tribe: their words prevailed above the words of the men of Israel; as some read the last words of the foregoing chapter. David inclined to justify them; which when the men of Israel perceived, they flew off with indignation; "If the king will suffer himself to be engrossed by the men of Judah, let him and them make the best of one another, and we will set up one for ourselves. We thought we had ten parts in David, but that will not be allowed us; the men of Judah tell us, in effect, that we have no part in him, and we will none, nor will we attend him any further, in his return to Jerusalem, nor own him for our king." This Sheba exclaimed, (v. 1.) who, probably, was a man of note, and had been active in Absalom's rebellion; the disgusted Israelites took the hint, and went up from after David to follow Sheba, (v. 2.) that is, the generality of them did so, only the men of Judah adhered to him.

Learn hence, 1. (That) it is as impolitic for princes to be partial in their attentions to their subjects, as it is for parents to be so to their children; both should carry it with an even hand. (2.) Those know not what they do, that make light of the affections of their inferiors, by not countenancing and accepting them. Their hatred may be feared, whose love is not. (3.) Though the beginning of strife is as the letting forth of water; it is therefore so to be dealt with, to leave it off before it be meddled with, Prov. 17. 14. How great a matter both a little of this fire kindle! (4.) The perverting of words is the subverting of peace: and much mischief is made by forcing invidious constructions upon what is said and written, and drawing consequences that were never intended. The men of Judah said, "The king is near to us, by which, they say the men of Israel, and mean, We have no part in him; whereas they meant no such thing. (5.) People are very apt to run into
II. SAMUEL, XX.

exemptions. We have ten parts in David, said they; and almost in the next breath, We have no part in him. To-day, Hosanna, to-morrow, Crucify.

11. His consciences shut up and imprisoned for life, and he himself under the necessity of doing it, because they had been defied by Absalom, v. 3. David had multiplied wives, contrary to the law, and they proved a grief and shame to him. Those whom he had simply taken pleasure in, he was now, 1. charged, in duty, to put away, they being rendered unclean to him, by the very uncleanness his son had committed with them. They whom he had loved, must now be loathed. 2. Obliged, in prudence, to shut up in privacy, not to be seen abroad for shame, lest the sight of them should give occasion to people to speak of what Absalom had done to them, which ought not to be so much as named, I Cor. 5. 1. That that villany might be buried in oblivion, they must be buried in obscurity. 3. Obliged, in justice, to shut up in prison, to punish them for their easy submission to Absalom's lust, despairing, perhaps, of David's return, and giving him up for gone. Let none expect to do ill, and fare well.

4. Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present. 5. So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah; but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him. 6. And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us.

7. And there went out after him, Joab's men, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri. 8. When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them. And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out. 9. And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him. 10. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand; so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri. 11. And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoureth Joab, and he that is for David, let him go after Joab. 12. And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him stood still. 13. When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

We have here Amasa's fall, just as he began to rise. He was nephew to David, (ch. 17. 25.) had been Absalom's general, and commander in chief of his rebellions. But this being routed, he came over into David's interest, upon a promise that he should be general of his forces instead of Joab. Sheba's rebellion gives David an occasion to make good that promise sooner than he could wish, but Joab's envy and emulation made it injurious both to him and David.

I. Amasa has a commission to raise forces for the suppressing of Sheba's rebellion, and is ordered to go with all his forces, (v. 6.) It seems, the men of Judah, though forward to attend the king's triumphs, were backward enough to fight his battles; else, when they were all in a body attending him to Jerusalem, they might immediately have pursued Sheba, and have crushed that cockatrice in the egg; but most love a loyalty, as well as a religion, that is cheap and easy. Many boast of their being akin to Christ, that yet are very loth to venture for him. The advice is sent to assemble the men of Judah within three days; but he finds them so backward and uneasy, that he cannot do it within the time appointed, (v. 5.) though the promotion of Amasa, who had been their general under Absalom, was very agreeable, and a proof of the clemency of David's government.

II. Upon Amasa's delay, Abishai, the brother of Joab, is ordered to take the guards and standing forces, and with them to pursue Sheba, (v. 6, 7.) for nothing could be of more dangerous consequence than to give him time. David gives these orders to Abishai, because he resolves to mortify Joab, and degrade him, not so much, I doubt, for the blood of Abner, which he shed basely, as for the blood of Absalom, which he had shed justly and honourably.

Now," (says Bishop Hall,) "Joab smarteth for a loyal disobedience. How slippery are the stations of earthly honours, and subject to continual mutability! Happy are they who are in favour with Him in whom there is no shadow of change." Joab, without orders, though in disgrace, goes along with his brother, knowing he might be serviceable to the public, or perhaps now meditating the removal of his rival.

III. Joab, near Gibeon, meets with Amasa, and barbarously murders him, v. 8-10. It should seem, the great stone in Gibeon was the place appointed for the general rendezvous: there the rivals met; and Amasa, relying upon his commission, went before, as general both of the new-raised forces which he had got together, and of the veteran troops which Abishai had brought in; but Joab there took an opportunity to kill him with his own hand; and, 1. He did it subtilly and with contrivance, and not upon a sudden provocation. He girds his coat about him; and that might not hang in his way, and parites his girdle belt upon his coat, that his sword might be the readier to him; he puts his sword in a sheath too big for it, that, whenever he pleased, it might, upon a little shake, fall out, as if it fell by accident, and so he might take it into his hand, unsuspected, as if he were going to return it into the scabbard, when he designed to sheath it in the bowels of Amasa. The stones were there but for a spot in the verse is. 2. He did it treacherously, and under pretence of friendship, that Amasa might not be upon his guard. He called him brother, (for they were own cousins) inquired of his welfare, Art thou in health? and took him by the beard, as one he was free with, to kiss him, while with the drawn sword in his other hand he was aiming at his heart. Was this done like a
gentleman, like a soldier, like a general? No, but like a villain, like a base coward. Just thus he slew Abner, and went unpunished for it, which encouraged him to do the like again. 3. He did it impudently, not in a corner, but at the head of his troops, and in their sight, as one that was neither ashamed nor afraid to do it, that was so hardened in blood and murders, that he could neither blush nor tremble. 4. He did it at one blow, gave the fatal push with a good will, as we say, so that he needed not strike him again; with such a strong and steady hand he gave this one stroke that it was fatal. 5. He did it in contempt and defiance of David, and the commission he had given to Amasa; for that commission was the only ground of his conduct with Abner. 6. David deserted his army through the side of Amasa; and it was, in effect, told to his face, that Joab would be general, in spite of him. 6. He did it very unseasonably, when they were going against a common enemy, and were concerned to be unanimous. This ill-timed quarrel might have scattered their forces, or engaged them one against another, and so have made them all an easy prey to the enemy. So contentedly could Joab sacrifice the interest both of king and kingdom to his personal revenge.

IV. Joab immediately resumes his general's place, and takes care to lead the army on in pursuit of Sheba, that, if possible, he might prevent any prejudice to the common cause by what he had done. 1. He leaves one of his men to make proclamation to the forces that were coming up, that they were still engaged in David's cause, pursued a traitor, and how, under such a heavy load of guilt, he had courage to enter upon danger; his conscience was seared with a hot iron. 2. Care is taken to remove the dead body out of the way, because at that they made a stand, (as ch. 2, 23,) and to cover it with a cloth. v. 12, 13. Wicked men think themselves safe in their wickedness, if they can but conceal it from the eye of the world: if it be hidden, it is with them a revenue for their lives. If the conscience of blood with a cloth cannot stop its cry in God's ear for vengeance, or make it the less load. However, since this was no time to arraign Joab for what he had done, and the common safety called for expedition, it was prudent to remove that which retarded the march of the army; and then they all went on after Joab, while David, who, no doubt, had notice soon brought him of this tragedy, could not but reflect upon it with regret, that he had not formerly done justice upon Joab for the death of Abner, and that he now exposed Amasa by preferring him. And, perhaps, his conscience reminded him of his employing Joab in the murder of Uriah, which had helped to harden him in cruelty.

14. And he went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel, and to Beth-maachah, and all the Berites; and they were gathered together, and went also after him. 15. And they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maachah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench; and all the people that were with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down. 16. Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear, say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee. 17. And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, Art thou Joab? And he answered, I am he. Then she said unto him, Hear the words of thine handmaid. And he answered, I do hear. 18. Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask counsel at Abil: and so they ended the matter. 19. I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seestkest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord? 20. And Joab answered and said, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy. 21. The matter is not so: but a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, even against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall. 22. Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom: and they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast it out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

We have here the conclusion of Sheba's attempt. I. The rebel, when he had rambled over all the tribes of Israel, and found them not so willing, upon second thoughts, to follow him, as they had been, upon a sudden provocation, to desert David, (having only picked up a few like himself, that sided with him,) entered Abel Beth-maachah a strong city in the north, in the lot of Naphtali, where we find it placed, 2 Kings 15. 29. Here he took shelter, whether by force, or with consent, does not appear, but his adherents were mostly Berites of Beem, and Benjamin, v. 14. One bad man will find and make more.

II. Joab drew up all his force against the city, besieged it, battered the wall, and made ready for a general storm, v. 15. Justly is that place attacked with all this fury, which dares harbour a traitor; nor will that heart fare better, which indulges these rebellious lusts that will not have Christ to reign over them.

III. A discreet good woman of the city of Abel brings this matter, by her prudent management, to a good issue, so as to satisfy Joab, and yet save the city. Here is,

1. Her treaty with Joab, and her capitulation with him by which he is engaged to raise the siege, upon condition that Sheba be delivered up. It seems, none of all the rest of Abel, none of the elders on magazine, offered to treat with Joab, no, not when they were reduced to the last extremity; either they were stupid, and unconcerned for the public safety, or they stood in awe of Sheba, or they despaired of gaining any good terms with Joab, or they had not wit enough to manage the treaty. But this one woman with her wisdom saved the city. Souls know no difference of sexes; though the man be the head, it does not therefore follow that he has the mone-
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poly of the brains, and therefore he ought not, by any saline law, * to have the monopoly of the crown; a many a masculine heart, and more than masculine, has been found in a female breast; nor is the treasure of wisdom the less valuable for being lodged in the weaker vessel.

In the treaty between this nameless heroine and Job,

1. [She gains his audience and attention, v. 16, 17.] We may suppose it was the first time he had ever treated with a woman on important affairs.

2. [She reasons with him on behalf of her city, and very ingenuously. [1.] That it was a city famous for wisdom, (v. 18.) as we translate it; she pleads that this city had been long in such reputation for prudent knowing men, that it was the common refuge of the country, and all agreed to abide by the award of its elders. Their sentence was worded, and the matter was ended, all sides will acquiesce. Now, shall such a city as this be laid in ashes, and never treated with? [2.] That the inhabitants were generally peaceable and faithful in Israel, v. 19. She could speak, not for herself only, but for all those whose cause she pleaded, that they were not of turbulent and seditious spirits, but of known fidelity to their prince, and peaceableness with their fellow-subjects; neither licentious. [3.] It was a mother in Israel, a guide and nurse to the towns and country about; and that it was a part of the inheritance of the Lord, a city of Israelites; not of heathens; and the destruction of it would lessen and weaken that nation which God had chosen for his heritage.

[4.] That they expected him to offer them peace, before he made an attack upon them, according to that known law of war, Deut. 20. 16. So the margin reads, v. 18. They plainly spoke in the beginning, (of the siege,) saying, Surely they will ask of Abel; that is, The besiegers will demand the traitor, and will ask us to surrender him; and if they do, we will soon come to an agreement, and so the matter. Thus she tacitly upbraids Job for not offering them peace, but hopes it is not too late to beg it.

2. [Job and Abel’s advocate soon agree that Sheba’s head shall be the ransom of the city. Job, though, in a personal quarrel, he had lately swallowed up and destroyed Amasa, yet, when he acts as a general, will by no means bear the imputation, Far be it from me that I should delight to swallow up or destroy, or design it, but when it is necessary for the public safety, v. 20. The matter is not so, our quarrel is not with your city, we would have no wish to injure our fellow-countrymen, and we pay the traitor that is harboured among you; deliver him up, and we have done.” A great deal of mischief would be prevented, if contending parties would but understand one another. The city obstinately holds out, believing Job aims at its ruin: Job furiously attacks it, believing the citizens all confederates with Sheba; whereas both were mistaken; let both sides be undeceived, and the matter is soon accommodated. The single condition of peace, is, the surrender of the traitor; it is so in God’s dealing with the soul, when it is besieged by conviction and distress; sin is the traitor; the belovred lust is the rebel: part with that, cast away the transgressions, and all shall be well. No peace on any other terms. Our wise woman immediately agrees to the proposal: Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee presently.

2. [She goes to them in her wisdom, (and perhaps she had as much need of it in dealing with them, as in dealing with Job,) and persuaded them to cut off Sheba’s head, probably, by some public order of their government, and it was thrown over the wall to Joab. He knew the traitor’s face, and therefore looked no further, intending not that any of his adherents should suffer. The public safety was secured, and he felt no wish to gratify the public revenge. Joab, hereupon, raised the siege, and marched back to Jerusalem, with the trophies rather of peace than victory.

23. Now Joab was over all the host of Israel; and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites, and over the Pelethites; 24. And Adoram was over the tribute; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; 25. And Sheva was scribe; and Zadok and Abiahar were the priests:

26. And Ira also, the Jairite, was a chief ruler about David.

Here is an account of the state of David’s court, after his restoration. Joab was continued general, being too great to be displaced, Benaiah, as before, captain of the guards. Here is one new office erected, which we had not, ch. 8. 16. that of treasurer, or one over the tribute, for it was not till to ward the latter end of his time, that he began to raise taxes. Adoram was long in this office, but it cost him his life at last, 1 Kings 12. 18.

CHAP. XXI.

The date of the events of this chapter is uncertain. I incline to think that they happened as they are here placed, after Absalom and Sheba’s rebellion, and toward the latter end of David’s reign. That the battles with the Philistines, mentioned here, were long after the Philistines were subdued, appears by comparing 1 Chron. 18. 1. with ch. 20. 4. The numbering of the people was just before the Exting of the place of the temple. (as appears, 1 Chron. 22. 1.) and that was toward the close of David’s life; and, it should seem, the people were numbered just before the three years’ famine for the Gibeonites, for that which is threatened as three years’ famine, 1 Chron. 21. 12, is called seven years, 2 Sam. 24. 12, 13. Three more, with the year current, added to those three. We have here, I. The Gibeonites avenged. 1. By a famine in the land, v. 1. But this may be putting an extra, generality to death, (v. 5.) care, however, being taken of their dead bodies, and of the bones of Saul, v. 10. 14. II. The giants of the Philistines slain in several battles, v. 15. 22.

1. THEN there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David inquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites. 2. And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them; and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah;) 3. Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord? 4. And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What you shall say, that will I do for you. 5. And they an-
swered the king. The man that consumed us, and that devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel. 6. Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the Lord in Gibeah of Saul, whom the Lord did choose. And the king said, I will give them. 7. But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the Lord's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul. 8. But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite; 9. And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the Lord: and they fell all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley-harvest.

Here, I. We are told of the injury which Saul had, long before this, done to the Gibeonites, which we had no account of in the history of his reign, nor should have heard of here, but that it came now to be reckoned for. The Gibeonites were of the remnant of the Amorites, (v. 2.) who by a wife had made peace with Israel, and had the public fifth pledged to them by Joshua for their safety. We had the story, Josh. 9. where it was agreed (v. 25.) that they should be secured of their lives but deprived of their lands and liberties, that they and their's should be tenants in vassallage to Israel. It does not appear that they had broken their part of the covenant, either by denying their service, or attempting to recover their lands or liberties, nor was it pretended; but Saul, under colour of zeal for the honour of Israel, that it might not be said that they had any of the natives among them, aimed to root them out, and, in order to that, slew many of them. Thus he would seem wiser than his predecessors the judges, and perhaps would make it appear to be a kind of punishment for their sin. It was a heavy charge, and one of the most important that he brought upon the Gibeonites at the same time when he put away the witches; (1 Sam. 28. 3.) or perhaps many of them were remarkably pious, and he sought to destroy them when he slew the priests their masters. That which made this an exceedingly sinful sin, was, that he not only shed innocent blood, but therein violated the solemn oath by which the nation was bound to protect them. Saul's house was a bloody house.

II. We find the nation of Israel chastised with a sore famine, long after, for this sin of Saul. Observe, 1. Even in the land of Israel, that fruitful land, and in the reign of David, that glorious reign, there was a famine, not extreme, for then it would sooner have been taken notice of, and inquiry made into the cause of it, but great drought, and scarcity of provisions, the consequence of it, for three years together. If corn miss one year, commonly the next makes up the deficiency; but if it miss three years successively, it will be a sore judgment; and the man of wisdom will by it hear God's voice crying to the country, to repent of the abuse of plenty. 2. David inquired of God concerning it. Though he was himself a prophet, he must consult the oracle, and not act in God's appointed way. Note, When we are under God's judgments, we ought to inquire into the grounds of the controversy. Lord show me wherefore thou contendest with me. It is strange that David did not sooner consult the oracle, not till the third year; but, perhaps, till then, he apprehended it not to be an extraordinary judgment for some particular sin. Even God's judgments were not often slack and remiss in doing their duty. We continue in ignorance, and under mistake, because we delay to inquire. 3. God was ready in his answer, though David was slow in his inquiries. It is for Saul. Note, God's judgments often look a great way back, which obliges us to do so, when we are under his rebukes. It is not for us to object against the people's smarting for the sins of their king, perhaps they were aiding and abetting, and so, in effect, did suffer the sin. God often visits the sins of the fathers upon the children, and his judgments are a great deep; he gives not account of any of his matters. Time does not wear out the guilt of sin; nor can we build hopes of impunity upon the delay of judgments. There is no statute of limitation to be pleaded against God's demands. Nullum tempus occurrit Deo. God may punish when he pleases. III. was a divine vengeance taken upon the house of Saul, for the turning away of God's wrath from the land, which, at present, smarted for his sin. 1. David, it is probable by divine direction, referred it to the Gibeonites themselves, to prescribe what satisfaction should be given them for the wrong that had been done them, v. 3. They had many years remained silent, had not appealed to David, nor given the kingdom any disturbance with their complaints or demands; and now, at length, God speaks for them; I heard not, for thou wilt hear; (Ps. 38. 14, 15.) and they are recompensed for their patience with this honour, that they are made judges in their own cause, and have a blank given them to write their demands on. What ye shall say, that will I do, (v. 4.) that atonement may be made, and that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord, v. 3. It is said that Saul's famish was a motion for the prayers of oppressed innocence against them, and therefore the expense of a just restitution is well bestowed for the retrieving of the blessing of those that were ready to perish, Job 29. 13. "My servant Job, whom you have wronged, shall pray for you," says God, "and then I will be reconciled to you, and not till then." Those understand not themselves, that value not the prayers of the poor among them.

2. They desired that seven of Saul's posterity might be put to death, and David granted them their demand. (1.) They required no silver, nor gold, v. 4. Note, Money is no satisfaction for blood; see Num. 35. 31—33. It is the ancient law, Blood calls for blood; (Gen. 9. 6.) and those over-value money, and underrate value of life, that set the value of provisions for corruptible things, such as silver and gold. The Gibeonites had now a fair opportunity to get a discharge from their servitude, in compensation for the wrong done them, according to the equity of that law, (Exod. 21. 26.) If a man strike out his servant's eye, he shall let him go free for his eye's sake. But they did not insist on this; though the covenant was broken on the other side, it should not be broken on their's. They were Vindicating, given
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for. (v. 4.) but we will do it ourselves, we will hang them up unto the Lord," (v. 6.) that if there were any hardship in it, they might bear the blame, and not David or his house. By our old law, if a murder was found against him upon an appeal, the relations that appeared, had the executing of him.

They did not require this, out of malice against Saul or his family, (had they been revengeful, they would have moved it themselves long before,) but out of love to the people of Israel, whom they saw plagued for the injury done to them. "We do it for the Lord, that we may satisfy his justice, not to gratify any revenge of our own; for the good of the public, not for our own reputation."

The nomination of the persons they left to David; who took care to secure Mephibosheth for Jonathan's sake, that while he was avenging the breach of one oath, he might not himself break another; (v. 7.) but he delivered up two of Saul's sons to be hanged, and five of his grandsons, whom his daughter Merab bore to Adriel, (1 Sam. 18. 19.) but his daughter Michal brought up, v. 8. Now Saul's treachery was punished, in giving Merab to Adriel, when he had promised her to David, with a design to provoke him. "It is a dangerous matter," says Bishop Hall, upon this, "to offer injury to any of God's faithful ones; if their meekness have easily remitted it, their God will not deliver without a severe retribution, though it may be long first."

The place, time, and manner, of their execution, all added to the solemnity of their being sacrificed to divine justice. [1.] They were hanged up as anathemas, under a peculiar mark of God's displeasure: for the law had said, He that is hanged, is accursed of God, Deut. 21. 23. Gal. 3. 13. for the body of Christ was hanged upon the tree to satisfy for our sins, and to turn away the wrath of God, became obedient to this ignominious death. [2.] They were hanged up in Gibeah of Saul, (v. 8.) to show that it was for his sin that they died. They were hanged, as it were, before their own door, to expiate the guilt of the house of Saul; and thus God accomplished the ruin of that family, for the blood of the priests, and their families, which, though sworn long before, though obtained by a wile, and the promise made to Canaanites, yet is thus severely reckoned for. The despising of the oath, and breaking of the covenant, will be recompensed by the hand of those who thus profane God's sacred name. Ezek. 17. 18. 19. And thus God would show, that with him rich and poor meet together. Even royal blood must go to atone for the blood of Gibeonites, who were but the vassals of the congregation. [3.] They were put to death in the days of harvest, (v. 9.) at the beginning of harvest, (v. 10.) to show that they were thus sacrificed for the turning away of that wrath of God, which had withheld from them their harvest formerly for some years past, and to obtain his favour in the present harvest. Thus there is no way of appeasing God's anger, but by mortifying and crucifying our lusts and corruptions. In vain do we expect mercy from God, unless we do justice upon our sins. These executions must not be complained of as cruel, which are become necessary to the public welfare. Better that seven of Saul's bloody house be hanged, than that all Israel be famished.

10. And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night. 11. And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done. 12. And David went and took the bones of Saul, and the bones of Jonathan his son, from the men of Jabesh-gilead, which had stolen them from the street of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa: 13. And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged. 14. And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father; and they performed all that the king commanded: and after that, God was entreated for the land.

Here we have,

Saul's sons not only hanged, but hanged in chains, their dead bodies left hanging, and exposed, till the judgment ceased, which their death was to turn away, by the sending of rain upon the land. They died as sacrifices, and thus they were, in a manner, offered up, not consumed all at once by fire, but gradually by the air. They died as anathemas, and by this ignominious usage they were represented as execrable, because iniquity was laid upon them. When our blessed Saviour was made sin for us, he was made a curse for us. But how shall we reconcile this with the law, which expressly obliged to bury those that were hanged, the same day? Deut. 21. 23. One of the Jewish Rabbins wished this passage of story were expounded, that the name of God might be sanctified, which, he said, is dishonoured by his acceptance of that, which was a violation of his law; but this was an extraordinary case, and did not fall within that law: nay, the very reason for that law is a reason for this
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when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, in token of that and of God's acceptance of it, they took him down and laid him in a sepulchre.

15. Moreover, the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines: and David waxed faint.

16. And Ishbi-benob, which was of the sons of the giant, (the weight of whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass in weight,) he, being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David:

17. But Abishai the son of Zeruiah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.

18. And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbecai the Hushathite slew Saph, which was of the sons of the giant.

19. And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where El-hanan the son of Jaare-oregim, a Beth-lehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

20. And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of great stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant.

21. And when he defied Israel, Jonathan, the son of Shimeah, the brother of David, slew him. 22. These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

We have here the story of some conflicts with the Philistines, which happened, as it should seem, in the latter part of David's reign. Though he had so subdued them, that they could not bring any great numbers into the field, yet, as long as they had any giants among them to be their champions, they would never be quiet, but took all occasions to disturb the peace of Israel, to challenge them, or to make incursions upon them.

1. David himself was engaged with one of the giants: the Philistines began the war yet again, v. 15. The enemies of God's Israel are restless in their attempts against them. David, though old, desired not a writ of ease from the public service, but he himself went down in person, to fight against the Philistines. Senecis, non segrescit—He grows old, but not indolent. A sign that he fought not for his own glory, (at this age he was loaded with that, and needed no more,) but for the good of his kingdom. But in this engagement, Woffington was killed, and in distress and danger. He thought he could bear the fatigues of war as well as he had done formerly; his will was good, and he hoped he could do as at other times; but he found himself deceived, age had cut his hair, and, after a little toil, he waxed faint. His body could not keep pace with his mind. The champion of the Philistines was soon aware of his advantage, perceived that David's strength failed him, and, being himself strong and well armed, he thought to have slain David; but God was not in his thoughts, and therefore in that very day they
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all perished. The enemies of God's people are often very strong, very subtle, and very sure of success, like Ishi-benob, but there is no strength nor counsels against the mighty. 2 Wonderfully rescued by Abishai, who came seasonably in to his relief, v. 17. Herein we must own Abishai's courage and fidelity to his prince, to save whose life he bravely ventured his own; but, much more, the good providence of God, which brought him in to David's succour, in the minute of his extremity. Such a cause and such a champion, though distressed, shall not be deserted. When Abishai succoured him, gave him a cordial, it may be, to relieve his fainting spirits, or appeared as his second, he (namely, David, so I understand it) smote the Philistines, and killed him: for it is so, (v. 22.)

David had himself a hand in slaying the giants. David lacked, but he did not flee; though his strength failed him, he bravely kept his ground, and then God sent him this help in the time of need, which, though brought him by his junior and inferior, he thankfully accepted, and, with a little recruiting, gained his point, and came off a conqueror. Christ, in his agonies, was strengthened by an angel. In spiritual conflicts, even strong saints sometimes wax faint; then Satan attacks them furious; but they that stand their ground and resist him, shall be relieved, and made more than conquerors. 3. David's servants, hereupon, resolved that he should never lose any more, but easily persuaded him not to fight against Absalom, (ch. 18. 3.) but against the Philistines he would go, till, having had this narrow escape, it was resolved in council, and confirmed with an oath, that the light of Israel (its guide and glory, so David was) should never be put again into such hazard of being blown out. Such valuable lives as David's was, ought to be preserved with a double care, both by them selves and his friends.

II. The rest of the giants fell by the hand of David's servants. 1. Saph was slain by Sibbecai, one of David's worthies, v. 18. 1 Chron. 11. 29.

2. Another, who was brother to Goliath, was slain by El-hanan, who is mentioned, ch. 23. 24. 3. Another, who was of such an unusual bulk, that he had more fingers and toes than other people, (v. 20.) and such an unparalleled insolence, that, though he had seen David fail of all his giants, yet he defied Israel, was slain by Jonathan the son of Shimea. Shimea had one son named Jonadab, 2 Sam. 13. 3. I should have taken it for the same with this Jonathan; but that was noted for subtily, this for bravery. These giants, probably, were the remains of the sons of Anak, who, though long feared, fell at last.

Now observe, (1.) It is folly for the strong man to glory in his strength; David's servants were no longer or stronger than other men; yet thus, by divine assistance, they mastered one giant after another. God chooses by the weak things to confound the mighty. (2.) It is common for those to go down slain to the pit, who have been the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, Ezek. 32. 27. (3.) The most powerful enemies are often reserved for the last conflict. David began his glory with the conquest of one, and here it concludes with the conquest of four. Death is a Christian's last enemy, and a son of Anak; but through Him that triumphed for us, we hope, even over that enemy, to be more than conquerors at last.

CHAP. XXII.

This chapter is a psalm, a psalm of praise; we find it afterward inserted among David's psalms, (Ps. 18.) with some little variation. We have it here, as it was at first composed for his own closet, and his own harp, but there we have it, as it was afterward delivered to the musician for the service of the church: a second edition with some amendments; for though it was calculated primarily for David's case, it might indifferently serve the devotion of others, in giving thanks for their deliverances: or, it was intended that his people should thus join with him in his thanksgivings, because, being a public person, his deliverances were to be accounted public blessings, and called for public acknowledgments. The inspired historian, having largely related David's deliverances, in this and the following book, and one particularly in the close of the foregoing chapter, thought fit to record this sacred poem, as a Memorial of all David's deliverances, and that related. Some think that David penned this psalm when he was old, upon a general review of the mercies of his life, and the many wonderful preservations God had blessed him with, and his public services, and the manner of them, which, as it were, set him apart, and distinguished him, and taught him, and taught others. In the expectations he had of his further favours. These are intermixed throughout the whole psalm.

1. AND David spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul:

Observe here, 1. That it has often been the lot of God's people to have many enemies, and to be in imminent danger of falling into their hands. David was a man after God's heart, but not after men's heart; many were those that hated him, without any reason, because he was his ruin; Saul is particularly named, either, (1.) As distinguished from his enemies of the heathen nations; Saul hated David, but David did not hate Saul, and therefore would not reckon him among his enemies; or, rather, (2.) As the chief of his enemies, that was more malicious and powerful than any of them. Let not these whom God loves, marvel if the world hate them.

2. They that trust God in the way of duty, shall find him a present Help to them in their greatest dangers. David did so; God delivered him out of the hand of Saul: he takes special notice of that. Remarkable preservations should be mentioned in our praises with a particular emphasis. He delivered him also out of the hand of all his enemies, one after another; sometimes in one way, sometimes in another: and David, from his own experience, has assured us, that though many are the troubles of the righteous, yet the Lord delivers them out of all them, Ps. 34. 19. We shall never be delivered from all our enemies till we get to heaven; and to that heavenly kingdom God will preserve all his, 2 Tim. 4. 18.

3. Those that have received many signal mercies from God, ought to give him the glory of them. Every new mercy in our hand should put a new song into our mouth, even praises to our God. Where there is a grateful heart, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak; David spake, not to himself, only for his own pleasure, or to those about him, only for their instruction; but to the Lord, for his honour, the words of this song. Then we sing with grace, when we sing to the Lord. In distress he cried with his voice, (Ps. 142. 1.) therefore with his voice he gave thanks: that is the sweetest music.

4. We ought to be speedy in our thankful returns to God: in the day that God delivered him, he sang
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this song. While the mercy is fresh, and we are most afflicted with it, let the thank-offering be brought, to be kindled with the fire of that affliction.

2. And he said, The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; 3. The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. 4. I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. 5. When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid; 6. The snares of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me. 7. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God; and he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears. 8. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth. 9. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. 10. He bowed the heavens also and came down; and darkness was under his feet. 11. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly; and he was seen upon the wings of the wind. 12. And he made darkness pavilions round about him, dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies. 13. Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled. 14. The Lord thunders from heaven, and the Most High uttereth his voice. 15. And he sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them. 16. And the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the Lord, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils. 17. He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters; 18. He delivered me out of my strong enemy, and from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me. 19. They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the Lord was my stay. 20. He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me. 21. The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. 22. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. 23. For all his judgments were before me: and as for his statutes, I did not depart from them. 24. I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity. 25. Therefore the Lord hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eyesight. 26. With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright. 27. With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself unsavoury. 28. And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes are upon the haughty, that thou mayest bring them down. 29. For thou art my lamp, O Lord; and the Lord will lighten my darkness. 30. For by thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall. 31. As for God, his way is perfect, the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all them that trust in him. 32. For who is God, save the Lord? and who is a rock, save our God? 33. God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect. 34. He maketh my feet like hinds’ feet; and setteth me upon my high places. 35. He teacheth my hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. 36. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy gentleness hath made me great. 37. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip. 38. I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them; and turned not again until I had consumed them. 39. And I have consumed them, and wounded them, and they could not arise: yea, they are fallen under my feet. 40. For thou hast girded me with strength to battle: them that rose up against me hast thou subdued under me. 41. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me. 42. They looked, but there was none to save; even unto the Lord, but he answered them not. 43. Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the mire of the street, and did spread them abroad. 44. Thou also hast delivered me from the strivings of my people, thou hast kept me to be head of the heathen: a people which I knew not shall serve me. 45. Strangers shall submit themselves unto me: as soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me. 46. Strangers shall fade away, and they shall be afraid out of their close places. 47. The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation. 48. It is God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me, 49. And that bringeth me forth from mine enemies: thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. 50. Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name. 51. He is the tower of salvation for his king; and
showeth mercy to his anointed, unto David, and to his seed for evermore.

Let us observe, in this song of praise, I. How David adores God, and gives him the glory of his infinite perfections. There is none like him, nor any to be compared with him; (v. 32.) Who is God, save the Lord? All others that are adored as deities, are counterfeit and pretenders. None are to be relied on besides. Who is a rock, save our God? They are dead, but the Lord liveth, v. 47. They disappoint their worshippers, when they most need them. But as for God, his way is perfect, v. 51. Men begin in kindness, but end not, promise, but perform not; but God will finish his work, and his word is tried, and what we may trust.

II. How he triumphs in the interest he had in this God, and his relation to him, which he lays down as the foundation of all the benefits he had received from him. He is my God; as such he cries to him, (v. 7.) and cleaves to him; (v. 22.) and if my God, then, my Rock; (v. 2.) that is, my Strength and my Power, (v. 33.) the Rock under whose shadow we are to take shelter, and with which, to me as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; the Rock on which I build my hope, v. 3. Whatever is my strength and support, it is the God of my rock that makes it so; nay, he is the God of the rock of my salvation, (v. 47.) my saving strength is in him and from him. David often hides himself in a rock, (1 Sam. 24. 2.) but God was his chief hiding-place. He is my Fortress, in whom I am safe, and think myself safe, my High Tower, or Strong-hold, in which I am out of the reach of evil; the Tower of salvation, (v. 51.) which can neither be scaled, nor battered, nor undermined; salvation itself saves me. Am I in distress? He is my Deliverer: Struck at? Shot at? He is my Shield: Pursued? He is my Refuge: Oppressed? He is my Saviour, that rescues me out of the hand of those that seek my life; Nay, he is the Horn of my salvation, by which I am strongly protected, and my enemies strongly pushed. Christ is spoken of as the Horn of salvation in the house of David, Luke 1. 69. "Am I burthened, and ready to sink? The Lord is my Stay, (v. 19.) by whom I am supported. Am I in the dark, benighted, at a loss? Thou art my lamp, O Lord, to show me my way, and wilt lighten my darkness," v. 29. If we sincerely take the Lord for our God, all this, and much more, he will be to us, all we need and can desire.

III. What improvement he makes of his interest in God. If he be mine, 1. In him will I trust; (v. 3.) that is, "I will resign myself to him, and then depend upon his power, and wisdom, and goodness, to conduct me well. 2. On him will I call, (v. 4.) for he is worthy to be praised. What we have found in God, that is worthy to be praised, should engage us, and thereby we do, in effect, praise him, and give glory through him, I give thanks, (v. 50.) and that publicly; when he was among the heathen, he would neither be afraid nor ashamed to own his obligations to the God of Israel.

IV. The full and large account he keeps for himself, and gives to others, of the great and kind things God had done for him. This takes up most of the song, and we are at length told both of his deliverances, and of his successes; showing both the perils he was delivered from, and the power he was advanced to.

1. He magnifies the great salvation God had wrought for him. God sometimes brings his people into very great difficulties and dangers, that he may have the honour of saving them, and they the comfort of being saved by him. He owns, Thou hast saved me from violence, (v. 3.) from mine enemies, (v. 4.) from my strong enemy, meaning Saul, who, if God had not succoured him, would have been too hard for him, v. 18. Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation, v. 36. To magnify the salvation, he observes,

(1.) That the danger was very great and threatening, out of which he was delivered. Men rose up against him, (v. 40, 49.) that hated him; (v. 41.) a violent man, (v. 49.) namely, Saul, who was malicious in his designs against him, and vigorous in his pursuits. This is expressed figuratively, v. 5, 6. He was surrounded with death on every side, threatened to be overwhelmed, and saw no way of escape. So violently did the waves of death beat upon him, that either the comers and goers, or the perils and perils of death hold him, that he could not help himself; no more than a man in the grave can. The floods of Belial, the wicked one, and his wicked instruments, made him afraid; he trembled to see not only earth, but death and hell, in arms against him.

(2.) That his deliverance was in answer to prayer, v. 7. He has here left us a good example, when we are in distress, to cry unto God with importunity, and not to forbear, but to continue praying, as David, and his parents; and great encouragement to do so, in that he found God ready to answer prayer out of his temple in heaven, where he is continually served and adored.

(3.) That God appeared in a singular and extraordinary manner for him, and against his enemies: the expressions are borrowed from the descent of the Divine Majesty upon mount Sinai, v. 8, 9, &c. We do not find that in any of David's battles, God fought for him, either with thunder, as in Samuel's time, or with hail, as in Joshua's time, or with the stars in their courses, as in Deborah's time: but those lofty metaphors are used, [1.] To set forth the glory of God, which was manifested in his deliverance. His wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness, his justice and holiness, and his sovereign dominion over all the creatures and all the counsels of men, which appeared in favour of David, were as clear and bright a discovery of God's glory to an eye of faith, as those would have been to an eye of sense. [2.] To set forth God's displeasure against his enemies. God so espoused his cause, that he showed himself an Enemy to all his enemies. His anger is set forth by a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth; (v. 9.) coals kindled, (v. 13.) arrows, v. 15. Who knows the power and terror of his wrath? [3.] To set muy the vast confusion which his enemies were put into, and the consternation that seized them; as if the earth had trembled, and the foundations of the world had been discovered, v. 8, 16. Who can stand before God, when he is angry? [4.] To show how ready God was to help him; he rode upon a cherub, and did fly, v. 11. God hastened to his succour, and came in to him with seasonable relief, though he had seemed at a distance. He was a God hiding himself, (Isa. 45. 15.) for he made darkness his pavilion, (v. 12.) for the amazement of his enemies, and the protection of his own people.

(4.) That God manifested his particular favour and kindness to him in these deliverances; (v. 20.) He delivered me, because he delighted in me. The deliverance came not from common providence, but covenant-love; he was herein treated as a favourite; we perceive here that the great grace and comfort to his soul, with these deliverances, and the communion he had with God in them. Herein he was a type of Christ, whom God upheld, because he delighted in him, Isa. 42. 1, 2.

2. He magnifies the great successes God had crowned him with; he had not only preserved, but...
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prospered him. He was blest, (1.) With liberty and enlargement. He was brought into a large place, (v. 20.) where he had room to thrive; and his steps were enlarged under him, so that he had room to stir, (v. 37.) no longer stranded and confined. (2.) With military skill, and strength, and swiftness: though he was bred up to the crook, he was well instructed in the arts of war, and qualified for the tills and perils of it. God, having called him to fight his battles, gave him the sword, which made him very ingenious: He teacheth my hands to war; (v. 35.) and this ingenuity was as good as strength, for it follows, so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms, not so much by main force, as by dexterity. He was also very vigorous and valiant: Thou hast girded me with strength to battle, v. 46. He gives God the glory of all his courage and ability for service. He was very expeditious to make his feet swift like hinds' feet, (v. 34.) which is of great advantage, both in charging and retreating. (3.) With victory over his enemies, not only Saul and Absalom, but the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians, and other neighbouring nations, whom he subdued, and made tributaries to Israel. His wonderful victories are here described, v. 38-43. They were speedy victories; I turned not again till I had consumed them; (v. 38.) and the victories of Israel over their enemies were wounded, destroyed, consumed, fell under his feet, trampled upon, and disabled to rise, and their heads lay at his mercy. They cried both to earth and heaven for help, but in vain, there was none to save, none that durst appear for them; God answered them not, for they were not on his side, nor did they cry unto him, till they were brought to the last extremity; being thus abandoned, they became an easy prey to David's righteous and irrevocable sword, so that he beat them as small as the dust of the earth, which is scattered by the wind, and trodden on by every foot. (4.) With advancement to honour and power. To this he was anointed before his troubles began, and at length, post tot discriminorum—for all his dangers and disasters, he gained his point. God made his way perfect, (v. 33.) gave him success in all his undertakings, set him up for a king, (v. 47.) and enriched him with riches, substance, and dignity. God's gentleness, his grace, and tender mercy, made him great, (v. 36.) gave him great wealth, and great authority, and a name like that of the great men of the earth. He was kept to be the head of the heathen; (v. 44.) his signal preservations evinced that he was designed and reserved for something great—to rule over all Israel, notwithstanding the strivings of the jeep, and so that none to whom he had not known to should serve him, many of the nations that lay remote. Thus he was lifted up on high, as high as the throne, above those that rose up against him, v. 49.

V. The comfortable reflections he makes upon his own integrity, which God, by those wonderful deliverances, had graciously owned, and witnessed to, v. 21-23. He means especially his integrity with reference to Saul and Ish-bosheth, Absalom and Sheba, and those who either opposed his coming to the crown, or endeavored to dethrone him; they falsely accused him, and misrepresented him, but he had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he was not an ambitious aspiring man, a false and bloody man, as they called him; that he had never taken any indirect unlawful courses to secure or raise himself, but in his whole conduct had kept in the way of his duty: and that in the whole course of his battles, God had thus far prospered him, in religion his business, so that he could take God's favours to him, as the rewards of his righteousness, not of debt, but of grace; God had recompensed him, though not for his righteousness, as if that had merited anything at the hand of God, yet according to his righteousness, which he was well pleased with, and had an eye to.

His conscience witnessed for him, 1. That he had made the word of God his rule, and had kept to it, v. 23. Wherever he was, God's judgments were before him as his guide; whithersoever he went, he took his religion along with him; and though he had forsook those that depart from his country, and sent, as it were, before other gods, yet, when he kept God's statutes, he did not depart from them, but kept the way of the Lord, and walked in it. 2. That he had carefully avoided the by-paths of sin. He had not wickedly departed from his God; he could not say but that he had taken some false steps, but he had not deserted God, or forsaken his way. Sins of infirmity he could not acquit himself from, but the grace of God had kept him from prevarications. Though he had sometimes weakly departed from his duty, he had never wickedly departed from his God. By this it appeared that he was upright before God, or to God, in his sight, and with an eye to—that he kept himself from his own iniquity: not only from that particular sin of killing Saul, when it was in the power of his hand to do it, but, in general, he was afraid of sin, and watchful against it, and made conscience of what he had done. He had neither a rival nor a greater of Israel, but the whole nations; he was iniquity: not only from that particular sin of killing Saul, when it was in the power of his hand to do it, but, in general, he was afraid of sin, and watchful against it, and made conscience of what he had done. He had neither a rival nor a greater threat to him, nor a more terrible of Uriah, an exception, (1. Kings 15. 5.) like that in Hezekiah's character, 2 Chron. 32-33. Note, A careful abstaining from our own iniquity, is one of the best evidences of our own integrity; and the testimony of our conscience for us that we have done so, will be such a rejoicing, as will not only lessen the griefs of an afflicted state, but increase the comforts of an advanced state. David reflected with more comfort upon his victories over his own iniquity, than upon his conquest of Goliath and all the hosts of the uncircumcised Philistines; and the witness of his own heart to his uprightness, was sweeter, though more silent music, than their's that sang, David has slain his ten thousands. If a great man be a good man, his goodness will be much more his satisfaction than his greatness. Let favour be shown to the upright, and his uprightness will sweeten it, will double it.

The consciousness of God's further favour; as he looks back, so he looks forward, with pleasure, and assures himself of the kindness God had in store for all the saints, for himself and his seed.

1. For all good people, v. 26-28. As God had dealt with him according to his uprightness, so he will with all others. He takes occasion here to lay down the established rules of God's proceedings with his children of men: (1.) That he will do good to those that are upright in their hearts. As we are found toward God, he will be found toward us. [1.] God's mercy and grace will be the joy of those that are merciful and gracious: even the merciful need mercy, and they shall obtain it. [2.] God's uprightness, his justice and faithfulness, will be the joy of those that are upright, just, and faithful, toward God and man. [3.] God's purity and holiness will be the joy of those that are pure and holy, who therefore give thanks at the remembrance of it. And if any of these good people be afflicted people, he will save them, either out of their afflictions, or by and after them. On the other hand, (2.) That those who turn aside to crooked ways, he will lead forth with the workers of iniquity, as he says in another place, With the forward he will wrestle; and then he will call them, Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! He will walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him, and be displeased with those that are displeased with him. As for the haughty, his eyes are upon them, marking them
out, as it were, to be brought down: for he resists the proud.

2. For himself. He foresees that his conquests and kingdom should be yet further enlarged, 5, 45, 46. Even the sons of the stranger, that should hear the report of his victories; and the tokens of God's presence with him, should be possessed with a fear of him, should be forced to submit to him, though feignedly, and should be obedient to him. The successes which he had had, he looked upon as earnest of more, and means of more: who durst oppose him, whom so many had been overcome by? Thus the Son of David goes on, conquering and to conquer, Rev. 5. 2. His gospel, which has been victorious, shall be so more and more triumphant, and his success shall be so more and more manifest.

3. For his seed. He showed mercy to his Messiah, (v. 51.) not only to David himself, but to that Seed of his for evermore. David was himself anointed of God, not an usurper, but duly called to the government, and qualified for it, therefore he doubted not but God would show mercy to him: that mercy he had promised not to take from him, nor from his posterity; (ch. 7. 15, 16.) on that promise he depends, with an eye to Christ, who alone is his Seed for evermore, whose throne and kingdom still continue, and will, to the end, whereas the seed and lineage of David are long since extinct. See Ps. 89. 28, 29. Thus all his joys and all his hopes terminate, as our sould, in the great Redeemer.

II. The historian is now drawing toward a conclusion of David's reign, and therefore gives us an account here, I. Of some of his last words, which he spake by inspiration, and which seem to have reference to his Seed that was to be for his posterity; (of in the close of the foregoing chapter, v. 1...7.) II. Of the great men, especially the military men, that were employed under him; the first three, (v. 8...17.) two of the next three, (v. 18...23.) and then the thirty, v. 24...39.

1. NOW these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, 2. The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. 3. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: 4. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. 5. Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. 6. But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands. 7. But the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear: and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place.

We have here the last will and testament of king David, or a codicil annexed to it, after he had settled the crown upon Solomon, and his treasures upon the temple which was to be built. The last words of great and good men are thought worthy to be, in a special manner, remarked and remembered; David would have those taken notice of, and recorded, either in his Psalms, (as they are here to that in the foregoing chapter,) or in the record of his reign. These words especially, v. 5. though recorded before, we may suppose he often repeated for his own consolation, even to his last breath, and therefore they are called his last words. When we find death approaching, we should endeavour both to honour God, and to edify those about us, with our last words. Let those that have had long experience of God's goodness, and the pleasantness of wisdom, when they come to close their course, leave a record of that experience, and bear their testimony to the truth of the promise. We have upon record the last words of Jacob and Moses, and here of David, designed, as those, for a legacy to them that were left behind. We are here told,

I. Whose last will and testament this is. This is related, either, as is usual, by the testator himself, or, rather, by the historian, v. 1. He is described, 1. By the meanness of his sayings, which was the son of Jesse. It is good for those who are advanced to be corner-stones and top-stones, to be reminded, and often to remind themselves, of the rock out of which they were hewn. 2. By the height of his elevation: he was raised up on high, as one favoured of God, and designed for something great; raised up as a prince, to sit higher than his forerunners, and as a prophet, to see further; for, (1.) He was the anointed of the God of Jacob, and so was serviceable to the people of God in their civil interests, the protection of their country, and the administration of justice among them. (2.) He was the sweet psalmist of Israel, and so was serviceable to them in their religious exercises: he penned the psalms, set the tunes, appointed both the singers and the instruments of music, by which the devotion of Israel, and people were much excited and enlarged. Note, Singing of psalms is a sweet ordinance, very agreeable to those that delight in praising God. It is reckoned among the honours to which David was raised up, that he was a psalmist: in that he was as truly great, as in his being the anointed of the God of Jacob. Note, It is true pre- ferment to be serviceable to the church in acts of devotion, and instrumental to promote the blessed work of praising God in these latter days. Was David a prince? He was so for Jacob. Was he a psalmist? He was so for Israel. Note. The dispensation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, and therefore, as every man has received the gift, so let him minister the same.

II. What the purport of it is. It is an account of his communion with God. Observe, 1. What God said to him, both for his direction and for his encouragement. king, and to be, in like manner, of use to his successors. Pious persons take a pleasure in calling to mind what they have heard from God, in recollecting his word, and reviving it in their minds. Thus what God spake once, David heard twice, yea often. See here, (1.) Who spake? The Spirit of the Lord; the God of Israel, and the Rock of Israel; which, some think, is an intimation of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead; the Father, God, Israel, the Son, the Rock of Israel, and the Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, who spake by the prophets, and particularly by David, and whose word was not only in his heart, but in his tongue, for the benefit of others. David here avows his divine inspiration, that in his Psalms, and in this composition here, the Spirit of God spake by him. He, and other holy men, spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. This puts an
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11. 1. 5.—32. I. 2, Ps. 72. 2. God, by the Spirit, gave David the foresight of this, to comfort him under the many calamities of his family, and the melancholy prospects he had of the degeneracy of his house.

2. What comfortable use he made of this which God spake to him, and what were his devout meditations on it, by way of reply, v. 5. It is not unlike his meditation, on occasion of such a message, 2 Sam. 7, 18, &c. What goes before, the Rock of Israel spake to him; this the Spirit of God spake by him, and it is a most excellent confession of his faith and hope in the everlasting covenant.

Here is, (1.) Trouble supposed. Although my house be not so with God, and although he make it not to grow. David’s family was not so with God, as is described, (v. 3, 4.) and as he could wish; nor so good, nor so happy; it had not been so while he lived, he foresees it would not be so when he was gone; that his house would be neither so pious nor so prosperous as one might have expected the offspring of such a father to be. [1.] Not so with God. Note, We and our are that really, which we are with God. This was it that David’s heart was upon concerning his children, that they might be right with God, faithful to him, and zealous for him. But the children of godly parents are often neither so holy nor so happy as might be expected. We must be made to know, that it is corruption, and not grace, that makes the difference: they are more content to the swift, but that God gives the Spirit as a free Agent. [2.] Not made to grow, in number, in power; it is that God that makes families to grow, or not to grow, Ps. 107. 41. God men have often the melancholy prospect of a declining family. David’s house was typical of the church of Christ, which is his house, Heb. 3. 3. Suppose this be not so with God as we could wish, suppose it be diminished, distressed, disgraced, and weakened, by errors and corruptions, yea, almost extinct, yet God has made a covenant with the church’s Head, the Son of David, that he will preserve to him a seed, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his house. This our Saviour comforted himself with, in his sufferings, that the covenant with him stood firm, Isa. 53. 10, 11, 12.

(2.) God in answer to his complaint, and made with me an everlasting covenant. Whatever trouble a child of God may have the prospect of, still he has some comfort or other to balance it with, (2 Cor. 4, 8, 9.) and none like this here. [1.] It may be understood of the covenant of royalty, (in the type,) which God made with David and his seed, touching the kingdom, Ps. 132. 11, 12. But, [2.] It must look further, to the covenant of grace, made with all believers, that God will be, in Christ, to them a God, which was signified by the covenant of royalty, and therefore the promises of the covenant are called, the sure mercies of David, Isa. 55. 3. It is this only that is the everlasting covenant, and it cannot be imagined that David, who, in so many of his Psalms, speaks so clearly concerning Christ, and the grace of the gospel, should forget it in his last will and testament. God has made covenant of grace with us in Jesus Christ, and we are here told, First, That it is an everlasting covenant, from everlasting, in the contrivance and counsel of it, and to everlasting, in the continuance and consequences of it. Secondly, That it is ordered, well-ordered in all things, admirably well, to advance the glory of God, and the honour of the Mediator, together with the holiness and comfort of believers. It is herein well-ordered, that whatsoever is required in the covenant, is promised, and that every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant, and that it puts our salvation, not in our

honour upon the book of Psalms, and recommends them to our use in our devotions, that they are words which the Holy Ghost teaches.

(2.) What was spoken. Here is need to be a distinction made between what the Spirit of God spake by David, which includes all his Psalms, and what the Rock of Israel spake to David, which concerned himself and his family. Let ministers observe, that those by whom God speaks to others, are concerned to hear and heed what he speaks to themselves. They whose office it is to teach others their duty, must be sure to learn and do their own. Now that which is here said, (v. 3, 4.) may be considered,

[1.] With application to David and his royal family. And so here is, First, The duty of magistrates enjoined them. When a king was spoken to from God, he was not to be complimented with the height of his dignity, and the extent of his power, but to be told his duty; he must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and so must all inferior magistrates in their places. Let rulers remember that they rule over men; not over beasts whom they may enslave and abuse at pleasure, but over reasonable creatures, and of the same rank with themselves. They rule over men that have their follies and firmities, and therefore must be borne with. They rule over men, but under God, and for him; and therefore, 1. They must be just, both to those over whom they rule, in allowing them their rights and privileges, and in using their power to right the injured against the injurious; see Deut. 1. 16, 17. It is not enough that they do no wrong, but they must not suffer wrong to be done. 2. They must rule in the fear of God; that is, they must themselves be possessed with a fear of God, by which they will be effectually restrained from all acts of injustice and oppression: Nehemiah was so; (ch. 5. 15.) So did not I, because of the fear of God; and Joseph, Gen. 42. 18. They must also endeavour to promote the fear of God, that is, the practice of religion, among those over whom they rule. The magistrate is to be the keeper of both tables, and to protect both godliness and honesty. Secondly, Prosperity promised them, if they do this duty. He that rules in the fear of God, shall be as the light of the morning, v. 4. Light is sweet and pleasant, and he that does his duty will have the comfort of it; his rejoicing will be the testimony of his conscience. Light is bright, and a good prince is illustrious; his justice and piety will be his honour. Light is a blessing, nor are there greater and more extensive blessings to the public, than princes that rule in the fear of God. It is like the light of the morning, which is most welcome after the darkness of the night; so was David’s government after Saul’s; (Ps. 75. 3.) and which is increasingly precious to the perfect day: such is the growing lustre of a good government. It is likewise compared to the tender grass, which the earth produces for the service of man; it brings with it a harvest of blessings. See Ps. 72. 6, 16. which were also some of the last words of David, and seem to refer to these here.

[2.] With application to Christ, the Son of David, and his church. All believers shall be in, and the original will be in it; There shall be a ruler among men, or over men, that shall be just, and shall rule in the fear of God, that is, shall order the affairs of religion, and divine worship, according to his father’s will; and he shall be as the light of the morning, &c. for he is the Light of the world, and as the tender grass, for he is the Branch of the Lord, and the Fruit of the earth, Isa. 4. 2. Compare this with those promises of Christ, which speak of his reigning in righteousness, and being of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, Isa.
and slew the Philistines: and the Lord wrought a great victory. 13. And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest-time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim. 14. And David was then in a hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Beth-lehem. 15. And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, which is by the gate! 16. And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Beth-lehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord; 17. And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men. 18. And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief among three; and he lifted up his spear against three hundred, and slew them, and had the name among three. 19. Was he not most honourable of three? therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the first three. 20. And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts; he slew two lion-like men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow. 21. And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear. 22. These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men. 23. He was more honourable than the thirty, but he attained not to the first three: and David set him over his guard. 24. Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Beth-lehem, 25. Shammah the Harodite, Elia the Harodite, 26. Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikhez the Tekoite, 27. Abiezer the Anathothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite, 28. Zalmun the Abhite, Maharai the Netophathite, 29. Heleb the son of Baanah, a Netophathite; Ittai the son of Ribai, out of Gibeah of the children of Benjamin, 30. Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash, 31. Abielbon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Bahumite, 32. Eliahba the Shaalbonite; of the sons of Jashen Jonathan, 33. Shammah the Haranite, Ahiam the son of Sharar,
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The harare, 34. Eliphelet the son of Ahashni, the son of the Maachathite; Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, 35. Hezrai the Carmelite, Peraar the Arbite, 36. Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, 37. Zelek the Ammonite; Naharai the Beerothe, armour-bearer to Joab the son of Zeruiah, 38. Ira an Ithrite, Gareb an Ithrite, 39. Uriah the Hitite: thirty and seven in all.

The catalogue which the historian has here left upon record of the greatest soldiers that were in David's time, is intended, 1. For the honour of David, who trained them up in the arts and exercises of war, and set them an example of conduct and courage. It is the reputation, as well as the advantage, of a prince, to be attended and served by such brave men as are here described. 2. For the honour of these worthies themselves, who were instrumental to bring David to the crown, settle and protect him in the throne, and enlarge his conquests. Note, Those that in public stations venture themselves, and lay out themselves, to serve the interests of their country, are worthy of double honour, both to be respected by those of their own age, and to be remembered by posterity. 3. To excite those that come after, to a generous emulation. 4. To show how much religion contributes to the inspiring of men with true courage. David, both by his Psalms, and by his offerings for the service of the temple, greatly promoted piety among the grandees of the kingdom; (1 Chron. 29. 6.) and when they became famous for piety, they became famous for bravery.

Now these mighty men are here divided into three ranks.

1. The first three, who had done the greatest exploits, and thereby gained the greatest reputation. Adino, (v. 8.) Eleazar, (v. 9. 10.) and Shammah, v. 11, 12. I do not remember that we read of any of these, or of their actions, any where in all the story of David, but here, and in the parallel place, 1 Chron. 11. Many great and remarkable events are passed by in the ann ls, which relate rather the blemishes, than the glories, of David's reign, especially after his sin in the matter of Uriah; so that we may conclude it to have been more illustrious than it has appeared to us while reading the records of it.

The exploits of this brave triumvirate are here recorded. Theysignalized themselves in the wars of Israel against their enemies, especially the Philistines. 1. Adino slew eight hundred at once, with his spear. 2. Eleazar defied the Philistines, as they, by Goliath, had defied Israel, but with better success, and greater bravery; for when the men of Israel were gone away, he only kept his post, and put it, and smote the Philistines, on whom God struck a terror, equal to the courage with which this great hero was inspired. His hand was weary, and yet it clave to his sword; as long as he had any strength remaining, he held his weapon, and followed his bow. Thus, in the service of God, we should keep up the willingness and resolution of the spirit, notwithstanding the weakness and weariness of the body. (Job. 8. 4.) the hand weary, yet not quitting the sword. Now that Eleazar had beaten the enemy, the men of Israel, who were gone away from the battle, (v. 9.) returned to spoil, v. 10. It is common for those who quit the field, when anything is to be done, to hasten to it, when any thing is to be gotten. 3. Shammah met with a party of the enemy, that were foraging, and routed them, v. 11, 12. But observe both concerning this exploit and the former, it is here said, The Lord wrought a great victory. Note, How great soever the bravery of the instrumentality, the special work of the achievement must be given to God. These fought the battles, but God wrought the victory. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, or any of his military operations, but let him that glories, glory in the Lord.

II. The next three were distinguished from, and dignified above, the thirty, but attained not to the first three, v. 23. All great men are not of the same degree of exceeding honour and brilliant success, as this is, which is not of the first magnitude; and many a good ship not of the first rate; of this second triumvirate, two only are named, Abishai and Benaiah, whom we have often met with in the story of David; and who seem to have been not inferior in ser viceableness, though they were in dignity, to the first three.

Here is, 1. A brave action of these three in conjunction. They attended David in his troubles, when he absconded in the cave of Adullam, (v. 13.) suffered with him, and therefore were afterward preferred by him. When David and his brave men who attended him, who had acted so vigorously against the Philistines, were, by the iniquity of the times, in Saul's reign, driven to shelter themselves from his rage in caves and strong holds, no marvel that the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim, and put engagements even in Beth-lem itself, v. 13, 14. If the church's guides are so misled, as to persecute some of her best friends and champions, the common enemy will, no doubt, get advantage by it. If David had had his liberty, Beth-lem would not have been now in the Philistine's hands.

But being so, we are here told, (1.) How earnestly David longed for the water of the well of Beth-lem. Some make it a public-spirited wish, and that he meant, If that we could drive the garrison of the Philistines out of Beth-lem, and make that beloved city of mine our own again; the well being put for the city, as the river often signifies the country it passes through. But if he meant so, those about him did not understand him; therefore it seems rather to be an instance of his weakness. It was harvest-time, the weather was hot, he was thirsty, perhaps good water was scarce, and therefore he earnestly wishes, O that I could but have one draught of the water of the well of Beth-lem! With the water of that well he had often refreshed himself when he was a youth, and nothing now will serve him but that, though it is almost impossible to come at it. He strangely indulged a humour which he could give no reason for. Other water might quench his thirst as well, but he had a fancy for that above any. It is folly to entertain such fancies, when we have no exact reason for them, and no assurance of their perfection. We ought to check our appetites, when they go out inordinately toward those things that really are more pleasant and grateful than other things. Be not desirous of dainties, much more, when they are thus set upon such things as only please a humour. (2.) How bravely his three mighty men, Abishai, Benaiah, and another not named, ventured through the camp of the Philistines, seven hundred on foot, and fetched water from the well of Beth-lem, without David's knowledge. When he wished for it, he was far from desiring that any of his men should venture their lives for it; but those three did, (v. 16.) to show, (1.) How much they valued their prince, and with what pleasure they could run the greatest hazards, and undergo the greatest hardships, in his service. David, though annoyed
king, as yet, an exile, a poor prince that had no external advantages to recommend him to the affection and esteem of his attendants, nor was he in any capacity to prefer or reward them; yet those three were thus zealous for his satisfaction, firmly believing the time of recompense would come. Let us be willing to venture in the cause of Christ, even when it is a suffering cause, as those who are assured that it will prevail, and that we will still be able to show ourselves, upon the last day, to the least hint of their prince’s mind, and so ambitious to please him? And shall not we covet to approve our se to our Lord Jesus, by a ready compliance with every intimation of his will, given us by his word, Spirit, and providence? [2.] How little they feared the Philistines. They were glad of an occasion to defy them. To destroy, they broke their way, sword in hand. But see, (3.) How self-denyingly David, when he had this far-fetched, dear-bought water, purchased it before the Lord, v. 16.

1. Thus he would show the tender regard he had to the lives of them, by what occasion he was from being prodigal of their blood, Ps. 72. 14. In God’s sight, the death of his saints is precious. [2.] Thus he would testify his sorrow for speaking that foolish word which occasioned those men to put their lives in their hands. Great men should take heed what they say, lest any bad use be made of it by those about them. [3.] Thus he would prevent the like rashness in any of his men for the future. Thus he would cross all his foolish fancy, and punish himself for entertaining and indulging it, and show that he had sober thoughts to correct his rash ones, and knew how to deny himself even in that which he was most fond of. Such generous mortifications become the wise, the great, and the good. [5.] Thus he would honour God, and give glory to him; the water purchased at this rate, he thought too precious for his own drinking; and fit only to be preserved out to God as a drink-offering. If it was the blood of these men, it was God’s due, for the blood was always his. [6.] Bishop Patrick speaks of some who think that David hereby showed that it was not material water he longed for, but the Messiah, who had the water of life; who, he knew, should be born at Beth-lehem, which the Philistines therefore should not be able to destroy. Lady, Dhr. David took a chin that water as very precious, which was got at the hazard of these men’s blood, and shall not we much more value those benefits, for the purchasing of which our blessed Saviour shed his blood? Let us not undervalue the blood of the covenant, as they do, that undervalue the blessings of the covenant.

2. The brave actions of two of them on other occasions. Abishai slew three hundred men at once, because he did many great things: (1.) He slew two Moabites that were lion-like men, so bold and strong, so fierce and furious. (2.) He slew a lion in a pit, either in his own defence, as Samson, or, perhaps, in kindness to the country, a lion that had done mischief. It being in a time of snow, he was more stiff, and the lion more fierce and ravenous, and yet he mastered him. (3.) He slew an Egyptian of a great stature, who was well armed, but Beniah attacked him with no other weapon than a walking-staff, dexterously wrested his spear out of his hand, and slew him with it, v. 21. For these, and the like exploits, David preferred him to be captain of the life-guard of standing forces, v. 23.

III. Inferior to the second three, but of great note, were the thirty-one here mentioned by name, v. 24, &c. Asahel is the first, who was slain by Abner in the beginning of David’s reign, but lost not his place in this catalogue. Elhanan is the next, brother to Eleazar, one of the first three, v. 9. The surnames here given them, are taken, as it should seem, from the places of their retirement, or habitation; as it is mentioned in the council-board. From all parts of the nation, the valiant and valiant were picked up to serve the king. Several of these here named, we find captains of the twelve courses which David appointed, one for each month in the year, 1 Chron. 27. That they did worthily, were preferred according to their merits. One of them was the son of Achithophel; (v. 54.) the son famous in the Psalms, Ps. 69. 28. But to find Uriah the Hittite bringing up the rear of these worthies, as it revives the remembrance of David’s sin, so it aggravates it; that a man who deserved so well of his king and country should be so ill treated. Joab is not mentioned among all these, either. Because he was so great, that he did not need to be mentioned; the first of the first three, sat chief among the captains, but Joab was not among them as general. Or, 2. Because he was so bad, that he did not deserve to be mentioned; for though he was confessedly a great soldier, and one that had so much religion in him as to dedicate of his spoils to the house of God, (1 Chron. 26. 28.) yet he lost as much honour by slaying two of David’s friends, as ever he got by slaying his enemies.

Christ, the Son of David, has worthies too, who, like David’s, are influenced by his example, fight his battles against the spiritual enemies of his kingdom, and in his strength are more than conquerors. Christ’s apostles were his immediate attendants, did suffer great things for him, and, at length, came to reign with him. They are mentioned with honour in the New Testament, as these in the Old, especially, Rev. 21. 14. Nay, all the good soldiers of Jesus Christ have their names better preserved than even these worthies have; for they are written in heaven. This honour have all his saints.

CHAP. XXIV.

The last words of David, which we read in the chapter before, were admirably good, but in this chapter we read some of his last words, which were more of a father’s heart, yet he repeated them of his first words again, and so he finished well. We have here, I. His sin, which was, numbering the people in the pride of his heart, v. 1. 2. II. His conviction of the sin, and repentance for it, v. 9. 10. III. The judgment inflicted upon him for it, v. 14. 15. IV. The staying of the judgment, v. 16, 17, 18. V. The erecting of an altar in token of God’s reconciliation to him and his people, v. 18. 25.

1. AND again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah. 2. For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people. 3. And Joab said unto the king, Now the Lord thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, a hundred fold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing? 4. Notwithstanding the king’s word prevailed
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against Joab, and against the captains of the host: and Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel. 5. And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Aroer, on the right side of the city that lieth in the midst of the river of Gad, and toward Jazer: 6. Then they came to Gilgal, and to the land of Tahhtim-hodshi; and they came to Dan-jaan, and about to Zidon. 7. And came to the strong hold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites: and they went out to the south of Judah, even to Beer-sheba.

8. So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. 9. And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

Here we have,

I. The orders which David gave to Joab to number the people of Israel and Judah, v. 1, 2. Two things here seem strange.

1. The sinfulness of this. What harm was there in it? Did not Moses twice number the people, without an office? Does not political arithmetic continue in among the other policies of a prince? Should not the shepherd know the number of his sheep? Does not the Son of David know all his own by name? Might not he make good use of this calculation? What evil has he done, if he do this? Answer. It is certain that it was a sin, and a great sin; but where the evil of it lay is not so certain. (1.) Some think that the fault was, that he numbered the armies. The census was not, in general, that of the whole land, if they were but of stature and strength able to bear arms; and that was the reason why this account was not enrolled, because it was illegal, 1 Chron. 27. 23, 24. (2.) Others think the fault was, that he did not require the half-shekel which was to be paid for the service of the sanctuary, whenever the people were numbered, as a ransom for their souls, Exod. 30. 12. (3.) Others think that he did it with a design to imitate a tribute upon them for himself, and to be put into his treasury; this by way of poll, which, when he knew their numbers, he could tell what it would amount to: but nothing of this appears, nor was David ever a raiser of taxes. (4.) This was the fault, that he had no orders from God to do it, nor was there any occasion for the doing of it. It was a needless trouble both to himself, and to the people, and a waste of God's goods. (5.) That which was the worst thing in numbering the people, was, that David did it in the pride of his heart, which was Hezckiah's sin in showing his treasures to the ambassadors. [1.] It was a proud conceit of his own greatness, in having the command of so numerous a people, as if their increase had been owing to any conduct of his, which was to be ascribed purely to the blessing of God. [2.] It was a proud confidence in his own strength. By publishing among the nations the number of his people, he thought to appear the more formidable; and doubted not, if he should have any war, that he should overpower his enemies with the multitude of his forces; trusting in an arm of flesh, more than he should have done, who had written, and had decreed the means of trusting in God only. God judges not of sin as we do; it appears harmless, or, at least, but a small offence, may be a great sin in the eye of God, who sees men's principles, and is a Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. But his judgment, we are sure, is according to truth.

2. The spring from which it is here said to arise, yet more strange, v. 1. It is not strange that the anger of the Lord should arise against Israel; there was cause enough for it, they were unthankful for the blessings of David's government, and strangely drawn in to take part with Absalom first, and afterward with Sheba: we have reason to think that their peace and plenty made them secure and sensual, and for this, God was displeased with them; but that, in this displeasure, he should give David to number the people, is very strange. We are told (Ps. 51. 19.) that God is a merciful Father, and the tempts no man: we are told (1 Chron. 21. 1.) that Satan provoked David to number Israel; Satan, as an enemy, suggested it for a sin, as he put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ. God, as a righteous Judge, permitted it, with a design, from this sin of David, to take an occasion to punish other sins of Israel, which he might justly have punished them for without this. But, as before, he brought it upon them for the sin of Saul, so now, a pestilence for the sin of David; that princes may, from these instances, learn, when the judgments of God are abroad, to suspect that their sins are the ground of the controversy, and may therefore repent and reform themselves, which should have a great influence upon national repentance and reformation; and that people may learn to pray for those in authority, that God would keep them from sin; for he they are in danger to bring small s.

II. The opposition which Joab made to these orders. Even he was aware of David's folly and vanity in this design. He observed that David gave no reason for it, only, Number the people, that I may know the number of the people; and therefore endeavours to divert his pride, and in a much more decent manner than he had before endeavoured to divest his passion upon the death of Absalom; then he spoke rudely and insolently, (ch. 19. 5-7.) but now, as became him, (v. 3.) Now the Lord thy God add unto the people a hundred fold. There is no occasion either to tax them, or enlist them, or make any distribution of them. They are all e sy and happy; and it is his wish, both that their number might increase, and that the king, though old, might live to see it, and have the satisfaction of it. But what is the fruit of all these good things? What thing? What need is there of doing it? Panthea est numerare pecus—Leave it to the poor to count their flocks. Especially, why should David, who speaks so much of delighting in God, and the exercises of devotion, and who, being old, one would think, should have put away childish things, take a pleasure (so he calls it modestly, but means taking a pleasure) in a thing of this nature? Many things, not in themselves sinful, turn into sin to us by our inordinate delighting in them. Joab was aware of David's vanity herein, but he himself was not. It would be good for us to have a friend that would faithfully admonish us, when we say or do any thing proud or vain-glorious, for we often do so, and are not ourselves aware of it.
Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.

We have here David repenting of the sin, and yet punished for it; God repenting of the judgment, and David thereby made more penitent.

I. Here is David's penitent reflection upon, and confession of, his sin in numbering the people. While the sin was in doing; during all those nine months, we do not find that David was sensible of his sin, (for then he would have countermanded the orders he had given,) but when the account was finished, and laid before him, that very night, his conscience was awakened, and he felt the pain of it, just then when he promised himself the pleasure of it. When he was about to feast on the satisfaction of the numbers of his people, it was turned into the gall of asps within him; sense of the sin cast a damp upon the joy, v. 10. 1. He was convinced of his sin; his heart smote him, before the prophet came to him, (I think it should not be read for, v. 11,) but, and when David was up, so it is in the original,) his conscience showed him the evil of what he had done; now that appeared sin, and exceeding sinful, which, before, he saw no harm in. He reflected upon it with great regret, and his heart reproached him for its guilt; it is a good thing, when a man has sinned, to have a heart with-in him to smite him for it: it is a good sign of a principle of grace in the heart, and a good step toward repentance and reformation. 2. He confessed it to God, and begged earnestly for the forgiveness of it. (1.) He owns he had sinned, sinned greatly, though to others it might seem no sin at all, or a very little element of repentance, whose consciences are tender and well informed, see that evil in sin, which others do not see. (2.) He owns he had done foolishly, very foolishly, because he had done it in the pride of his heart; and it was folly for him to be proud of the numbers of his people, when they were God's people, not his, and as many as they were, God could soon make them fewer. (3.) He cries to God for pardon: I beseech thee, O Lord, take away thyiad, and be merciful unto me. 1. He fills us sins, we may pray in faith that God will forgive them, and take away, by pardoning mercy, that iniquity which we cast away by sincere repentance.

II. The just and necessary correction which he suffered for this sin. David had been full of tossings to and fro, all night, under the sense of this sin, no rest to his bones because of it, and he arose in the morning, expecting to hear of God's displeasure against him for what he had done, or designing to speak with Gad his seer concerning it: Gad is called his seer, because he had him always at hand to advise with in the things of God, and made use of him as his confessor and counsellor, but God prevented him, and directed the prophet Gad what to say to him; (v. 11,) and it is taken for granted, 1. That David did not repent for this fault; it is too great a crime, and reflects too good a dishonour upon God, to go unpunished, even in David himself: of the seven things that God hates, pride is the first, Prov. 6. 17. Note, Those who truly repent of their sins, and have them pardoned, yet are often made to smart for them in this world. 2. The punishment must answer to the sin. He was proud of the numbers of his people, and therefore the judgment must be chastis'd with for this sin, must be such as will make them fewer.

Note, What we make the matter of our pride, it is just with God to take from us, or imbitter to us, and some way or other, to make the matter of our
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penishment. 3. It must be such a punishment as the people must have a large share in, for God's anger was kindled against Israel, v. 1. Though it was David's sin that immediately opened the sluice, the sins of the people all contributed to the deluge.

Now as to the punishment that must be inflicted, (1.) David is bid to choose what rod he will be cut off with, v. 12, 13. His heavenly Father must correct him, but, to show that he does not do it willingly, he gives David leave to make choice whether it shall be by war, famine, or pestilence, three sore judgments, and which greatly weaken and diminish a people. God, by putting him thus to his choice, designed, [1.] To humble him the more for his sin, which will be to his shame; and the useful, good, and wise, who he came to consider each of these judgments as exceedingly dreadful. [2.] To upbraid him with the proud conceit he had of his own sovereignty over Israel: he that is so great a prince, begins to think he may have what he will; "Come," says God, "then, which wilt thou have of these three things?"

Compare Jer. 34. 17, I proclaim a liberty for you, but it is such a liberty as this of David's, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; Jer. 15. 2. as for the sword, to death, to death. Or, [3.] To give him some encouragement under the correction, letting him know that God did not cast him out of communion with himself, but that still his secret was with him, and in afflicting him, he considered his frame, and what he could best bear. Or, [4.] That he might be more patiently bear the rod, when it was a rod of his own choosing. The prophet bids him advise with himself; and then tell him what answer he should return to him that sent him. Note, Ministers are sent of God to us, and they must give an account of the success of their embassy; it concerns us therefore to consider, what answer they shall return from us, that they may give up their account of us with joy.

[2.] He excepts only against the judgment of the sword, and, for the other two, he refers himself to God, but intimates his choice of the pestilence rather; (v. 14.) I am in a great strait, and well he might be, when fear, and the fit, and the snare are before him, and if he escape one, he inevitably falls into the other, Jer. 48. 43, 44. Note, Sin brings men into straits; wise and good men often distress themselves by their own folly. [1.] He begs that he may not fall into the hand of man; whatever comes, Let us not flee three months before our enemies; that will spoil all the glory of David's triumph, and give occasion to the enemies of God and Israel to behaviour themselves proudly. See Dent. 32. 26, 27. Their tender mercies are cruel; and in three months they will do that damage to the nation, which many years will not repair. But, [2.] He casts himself upon God; Let us fall now into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great. Men are God's hand, so they are called, Ps. 17. 14. the sword of his sending, yet there are some judgments which come more immediately from his hand than others, as famine and pestilence; and which of these shall be the scourge, he refers it to God, who chooses the shortest, that he might the sooner testify his being reconciled. But some think that David, by these words, intimates his choice of the pestilence. The land had not yet recovered the famine under which it smarted three years upon the Gibeonites' account, and therefore let us not be corrected, that we may not be the first who come to the triumph of our neighbours; hence we read of the reproof of famine; (Ezek. 36. 30.) but, if Israel must be diminished, let it be by the pestilence, for that is falling into the hands of the Lord, who usually inflicted that judgment by the hand of his own immediate servants, the angels, as in the death of the first-born of Egypt. That is a judgment to which David himself, and his own family, lie as open as the meanest subject, but not so, either to famine or sword, and therefore David, tenderly conscious of his guilt, chooses that. Sword and famine will come likewise as well as another; but, it may be thought, the destroyer will be more powerful against those who are known to God to be most guilty. This will be of the shortest continuance, and he dreads the thought of lying long under the tokens of God's displeasure. It is a dreadful thing, the apostle says, to fall into the hands of the living God; (Heb. 10. 31.) a fearful thing indeed for sinners that have, by their impenitency, shut themselves out of the hope of his mercy: but David, a penitent, dares cast himself into God's hand, knowing he shall find that his mercies are great.

Good men, even when they are under God's frowns, yet will entertain no other than good thoughts of him. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.

(3.) A pestilence is, accordingly, sent, (v. 15.) from Dan to Beer-sheba, from one end of the kingdom to the other, which shows it to come immediately from God's hand, and not from any natural causes: David does not choose, or, do not, but let, as he was the other two, with ease, not by ordinary means. For the continuance of it, it lasted from morning (this very morning on which it was put to David's choice) to the time appointed, that is, to the third day, so Mr. Poole: or only to the evening of the first day, the time appointed for the evening sacrifice, so Bishop Patrick and others, who reckon that the pestilence lasted but nine hours, and that, in compassion to David, God shortened the time he had first mentioned. The execution the pestilence did, was very severe, there died seventy thousand men, that were all well, and sick, and dead, in a few hours. What a great cry, may we suppose, was there now throughout all the land of Israel, as there was in Egypt when the first-born were slain: but that was at midnight, this, in the day-time, Ps. 91. 6. See the power of the angels, when God gives them commission, either to save or to destroy: Joab is nine months in passing with his pen, the angel but nine hours in passing with his sword, through all the coasts and corners of the land of Israel. See how easily God can bring down the proudest sinners, and how much we owe daily to the divine patience. David's adultery is punished, for the present, only with the death of one infant, his pride, with the death of all these thousands, so much does God hate pride. The number slain attains not to a half decent funeral; seventy thousand was about one in twenty: now we may suppose, David's flesh trembled for fear of God, and he was afraid of his judgments, Ps. 119. 120.

III. God's gracious relaxation of the judgment, when it began to be inflicted upon Jerusalem, v. 16. The angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem, as if he intended to do greater execution there than any where else, even to destroy it; the country had drunk of its cup, but the main cup of its doom was yet to be filled. The dregs: it should seem, that was last numbered, and therefore was reserved to be last plagued; perhaps there was more wickedness, especially more pride, (and that was the sin now chastised,) in Jerusalem than elsewhere, therefore the hand of the destroyer is stretched out upon that: but then the Lord repented of the evil, changed not his mind, but his way, and said to the destroying angel, It is enough, the city is taken, and there is no reason to rejoice against judgment. Jerusalem shall be spared for the ark's sake, for it is the place God hath chosen to put his name there. See here how ready God is to forgive, and how little pleasure he takes in punishing; and let it encourage us to meet him by repentance in the way of his judgments. This was on mount Moriah. Dr. Lightfoot observes,
that in the very place where Abraham, by a coun-
termand from heaven, was stayed from slaying his
son, this angel, by a like countermand, was stayed
from destroying Jerusalem. It is for the sake of
the great Sacrifice, that our forfeited lives are pre-
seved from the destroying angel.

IV. David’s renewed repentance for his sin upon
this occasion, v. 17. He saw the angel, (God
opening his eyes for that purpose,) saw his sword
stretched out to destroy, a flaming sword; saw him
ready to smite it, upon the orders given him to
stay proceedings; seeing this, he spoke, not to the
angel, (he knew better than to address himself to
the servant in the presence of the Master, or to give
to that honour to the creature, which is the Creature
due,) but to the Lord, and said, Lo, I have sinned.
Note, True penitents, the more they receive of
God’s sparing pardoning mercy, the more humbled
they are for sin, and the more resolved against it.
They shall be ashamed, when I am pacified toward
them, Ezek. 16. 63. Observe, 1. How he crim-
ninates himself, as if he could never speak ill enough
of his own fault; “I have sinned, and I have done
wickedly, mine is the crime, and therefore on me
be the cross; Let thy hand be against me, and my
father’s house; I am the sinner, let me be the suf-
ferer,” so willing was he to accept the punishment of
his iniquity, though he was worth ten thousand of
them. 2. How he intercedes for the people, whose
bitter lamentations made his heart to ache, and
his ears to tingle; These sheep, what have they
done? Done! Why they had done much amiss, it
was in their sin that persisted God to make David
himself to do as he did; yet, as became a penitent,
he is severe upon his own faults, while he extenu-
ates their’s. Most people, when God’s judgments
are abroad, charge others with being the cause of
them, and care not who falls by them, so they can
escape; but David’s penitent and public spirit was
otherwise affected. Let this remind us of the grace
of our Lord Jesus, who gave himself for our sins,
and was willing that God’s hand should be against
him, that we might escape. The shepherd was
smitten, that the sheep might be spared.

18. And Gad came that day to David, and said
unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in
the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 19. And
David, accord-
ing to the saying of God, went up, as the LORD
commanded. 20. And Araunah looked, and saw
the king and his servants coming on toward him;
and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the
king on his face upon the ground. 21. And Araunah
said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to
his servant? And David said, To buy the
threshing-floor of thee, to build an altar unto the
LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people.
22. And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the
king take, and offer up what seemeth good unto him:
behold, here be oxen for burnt-sacrifice, and
threshing instruments and other instruments
of the oxen for wood. 23. All these things
did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king:
and Araunah said unto the king, The LORD
thy God accept thee. 24. And the king
said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely
buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer
burnt-offerings unto the LORD my God of
that which clothe cost me nothing. So Da-
vid bought the threshing-floor and the oxen
for fifty shekels of silver. 25. And David
built there an altar unto the LORD, and
offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings.
So the LORD was entreated for the land,
and the plague was stayed from Israel.

Here is,

1. A command sent to David, to erect an altar in
the place where the angel had appeared to him, v. 18.
This was to intimate to David, 1. That, in his submis-
sion and humiliation, God was now thor-
oughly reconciled to him; for if the Lord had been
pleased to kill him, he would not have accepted an
offering, and therefore would not have ordered him
to build an altar. God’s encouraging us to offer
to him spiritual sacrifices, is a comfortable evidence
of his reconciling us to himself. 2. That peace is
made between God and sinners by sacrifice, and not
otherwise, even by Christ the great Propitiation, of
whom all the legal sacrifices were types. It is for
his sake, that the destroying angel is bid to stay his
hand. 3. That when God’s judgments are gra-
ciously stayed, we ought to acknowledge it with
thankfulness, to his praise. This altar was to be
for thank-offerings. See Isa. 12. 1.

11. The purchase which David made of the ground,
inward heart, and in a manner of course, v. 19, 20.
It is supposed that Araunah was a Jebu-
site, Araunah by name, proselyted, no doubt, to
the Jewish religion, though by birth a Gentile, and
therefore allowed, not only to dwell among the
Israelites, but to have a possession of his own in a
city, Lev. 25. 29, 30. The piece of ground was a
threshing-floor, a mean place, yet thus dignified;
for a place of labour, therefore thus dignified. Now,
1. David went in person to the owner, to treat with
him. See his justice, that he would not make
much as use it in the present exigence, though
the proprietor was an alien, though himself was a king,
and though he had express orders from God to
rear an altar there, till he had bought it, and paid
for it. God hates robbery for burnt-offering. See
his humility, how far he was from taking state;
though a king, he was now a penitent, and there-
fore, in token of his self-abasement, he neither sent
a messenger nor command, but went himself to
deal with him, but went himself; (v. 19.) and,
though it looked like a diminution of himself, he
lost no honour by it; Araunah, when he saw him,
went and bowed himself to the ground before him,
v. 20. Great men will be never the less respected
for their humility, but the more.

2. Araunah, when he understood his business, (v.
21.) gave all his property to David, not to
build his altar on, but oxen for sacrifice,
and other things that might be of use to him in the
service, (v. 22.) and all this, gratis, and a good prayer
into the bargain; The LORD thy God accept thee!
This he did, (1.) Because he had a generous spirit
with a great estate. He gave as a king, (v. 23.)
though an ordinary subject, he had the spirit of a
prince. In the Hebrew it is, He gave, even the
kingdom to the king. In this view it is supposed that
Araunah had been king of the Jebusites in that place;
or was descended from their royal family, though
now a tributary to David. (2.) Because he greatly hon-
oured David, though his conqueror, upon the score
of his personal merits, and never thought he could
do too much to oblige him. (3.) Because he had an
affection for Israel, and earnestly desired that
the plague might be stayed; and the honour of its being
stayed at his threshing-floor he would account a
valuable consideration for all he now tendered to David.
3. David resolves to pay the full value of it, and does so, v. 24. Here were two generous souls well met. Araunah is very willing to give; but David is determined to buy, and for a good reason—he will not offer that to God, which cost him nothing. He would not take advantage of the pious Jebusite’s generosity; he thanks him, no doubt, for his kind offer, but pays him now fifty shekels of silver, for the floor and the oxen, for the present service, and afterward 600 shekels of gold for the ground adjoining, to build the temple on. Note, Those know not what religion is, all whose care it is, to make it cheap and easy to themselves, and who are best pleased with that which costs them least pains or money. What have we our substance for, but to honour God with it; and how can it be better bestowed? III. The building of the altar, and the offering of the proper sacrifices upon it; (v. 25,) burnt-offerings, to the glory of God’s justice in the execution that had been done; and peace-offerings, to the glory of his mercy in the seasonable staying of the process. Hereupon, God showed (it is supposed by fire from heaven consuming the sacrifices) that he was entreated for the land, and that it was in mercy, that the plague was removed, and in token of God’s being reconciled both to prince and people. Christ is our Altar, our Sacrifice; in him alone we may expect to find favour with God, to escape his wrath, and the sword, the flaming sword, of that cherubim, which keepeth the way of the tree of life.
Many histories are books of kings and their reigns, to which the affairs of their kingdoms are reduced; it is a piece of honour that has commonly been paid to crowned heads. The holy Scripture is the history of the kingdom of God among men, under the several administrations of it; but there, the King is one, and his Name one. The particular history now before us, accounts for the affairs of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, yet with special regard to the kingdom of God among them; for still it is a sacred history, much more instructive, and not less entertaining, than any of the histories of the kings of the earth, to which (those of them that are of any certainty) it is prior in time; for though there were kings in Edom before there was any king in Israel, Gen. 36. 31. (foreigners, in that point of state, got the precedence,) yet the history of the kings of Israel lives, and will live, in holy writ, to the end of the world, whereas that of the kings of Edom is long since buried in oblivion: for the honour that comes from God, is durable, while the honour of the world is like a mushroom, which comes up in a night, and perishes in a night.

The Bible began with the story of the Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Judges, men whose converse with heaven was more immediate, (the record of which strengthens our faith,) but is not so easily accommodated to our case, now that we expect not visions, as the subsequent history of affairs like ours, under the direction of common providence; and here also we find, though not many types and figures of the Messiah, yet great expectations of him: for not only prophets, but kings, desired to see the great mysteries of the gospel, Luke 10. 24.

The two books of Samuel are introductions to the books of the Kings, as they relate the origin of the royal government in Saul, and of the royal family in David. These two books give us an account of David's successor, Solomon, the division of his kingdom, and the succession of the several kings both of Judah and Israel, with an abstract of their history down to the captivity. And as from the book of Genesis we may collect excellent rules of economics, for the good governing of families; so from these books, of politics, for the directing of public affairs. There is in these books special regard had to the house and lineage of David, from which Christ came. Some of his sons trod in his steps, and others did not. The characters of the kings of Judah may be thus briefly given:—David the devout, Solomon the wise, Rehoboam the simple, Abijah the valiant, Asa the upright, Jehoshaphat the religious, Jehoram the wicked, Ahaziah the profane, Joash the backslider, Amaziah the rash, Uzziah the mighty, Jotham the peaceable, Ahaz the idolater, Hezekiah the reformer, Manasseh the penitent, Amon the obscure, Josiah the tender-hearted, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoachin, and Zedekiah, all wicked, and such as brought ruin quickly on themselves and their kingdom. The number of the good and bad is nearly equal, but the reigns of the good were generally long, and those of the bad, short. The consideration of which will make the state of Israel not altogether so bad in this period as, at first, it seems. In this first book, we have,

I. The death of David, ch. 1. and 2.
II. The glorious reign of Solomon, and his building of the temple; (ch. 3. 10.) but the cloud his sun set under, ch. 11.
III. The division of the kingdoms in the reign of Rehoboam, and his reign and Jeroboam's, ch. 12. 14.
IV. The reigns of Abijah and Asa over Judah, Baasha and Omri over Israel, ch. 15. and 16.
V. Elijah's miracles, ch. 17. 19.
VI. Ahab's success against Ben-hadad, his wickedness and fall, ch. 20. 22. And in all this history it appears that kings, though gods to us, are men to God, mortal and accountable.
NOW king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he got no heat. 2. Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin; and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat. 3. So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. 4. And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not.

David, in the foregoing chapter, had, by the great mercy of God, escaped the sword of the destroying angel; but our deliverances from or through diseases and dangers, are but reprieves; if the candle be not blown out, it will burn out of itself. We have David here sinking under the infirmities of old age, and very vehement he laboured through the whole night, that cometh up out of the pit, shall fall into the snare; and, one way or other, 

1. It would have troubled one to see David so infirm. He was old, and his natural heat so wasted, that no clothes could keep him warm, v. 1. David had been a vigilant active man, and a man of business, and very vehement had the flame always been in his breast; and yet now his blood is chilled and stagnated, he is confined to his bed, and there can get no heat. He was now 70 years old. Many, at that age, are as lively and fit for business as ever; but David was now chastised for his former sins, especially that in the matter of Uriah, and felt from his former toils, and the hardships he had gone through in his youth, which then he made nothing of, but was now the worse for. Let not the strong man glory in his strength, which may soon be wasted by sickness, or, at last, will be weakened by old age. Let young people remember their Creator in the days of their youth, before these evil days come. What our hands find to do for God, and our souls, and our generation, let us do with all our might, because the night comes, the night of old age, in which no man can work; and when our strength is gone, it will be a comfort to remember that we used it well.

2. It would have troubled one to see his physicians so weak and unskilful, that they knew no other way of relieving him, than by outward applications. No cordials, no spirits, but, (1.) They covered him with clothes, which, where there is any inward heat, will keep it in, and so increase it; but, where it is not, they have none to communicate, no, not royal clothing. Eliphaz makes it a difficulty to understand how the great men are so afflicted in Job, 41. 17. but if God deny his blessing, men clothe them, and there is none warm; (Hag. 1. 6.) David here was not. (2.) They foolishly prescribed suppositums to one that should rather have been preparing for his fune-ral; (v. 2. 4.) but they knew what would gratify their own corruptions, and perhaps were too willing to gratify his, under colour of consulting his health; his prophets should have been consulted as well as his physicians, in an affair of this nature. However, this might be excused then, when even good men ignorantly allowed themselves to have many wives. We now have not so learned Christ, but are taught, that one man must have but one wife; (Matt. 19. 5.) and further, that it is good for a man not to touch a woman, 1 Cor. 7. 1. That Abishag was married to David before she lay with him, and was his secondary wife, appears from its being imputed as a great crime to Adonijah, that he desired to marry her, (ch. 2. 22.) after his father's death.

5. Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. 6. And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also was a very goodly man; and his mother bare him after Absalom. 7. And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they, following Adonijah, helped him. 8. But Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which belonged to David, were not with Adonijah. 9. And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zoheth, which is by En-rogel, and called all his brethren the king's sons, and all the men of Judah the king's servants: 10. But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not.

David had much affliction in his children; Amnon and Absalom had both been his grief; the one his first-born, the other his third; (2 Sam. 3. 2. 3.) his second, whom he had by Abigail, we will suppose he had comfort in; his fourth was Adonijah, (2 Sam. 3. 4.) he was one of those that were born in Hebron; we have heard nothing of him till now, and here we are told that he was a comely person, and that he was next in age, and (as it proved) next in company, to Absalom, v. 6. And further, that in his father's eyes he had been a jewel, but was now a thorn.

1. His father had made a fondling of him, v. 6. He had not displeased him at any time. It is not said, He never displeased his father; it is probable that he had done so frequently, and his father was secretly troubled at his misconduct, and lamented it before God: but his father had not displeased him, either by crossing him in his humours, or denying him any thing he had a mind to, or by calling him to an account, as to what he had done, and where he had been, or by keeping him to his book or his business, or reproving him for what he saw or heard of, that he did amiss; he never said to him, Why hast thou done so? Because he saw it was unworthy to him, and he could not bear it without fretting. It was the son's fault that he was displeased and reproved, and took it for an affront, whereby he lost the benefit of it. And it was the father's fault, that, because he saw it displeased him, he did not reprove him; and now he justly smarted for indulging him. They who honour their sons more than God
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11. Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not? 12. Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee, give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon. 13. Go and get thee into unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? why then doth Adonijah reign? 14. Behold, while thou yet talkest there with the king, I also will come in after thee, and confirm thy words. 15. And Bath-sheba went in unto the king into the chamber: and the king was very old; and Abi-shag the Shunammite ministered unto the king. 16. And Bath-sheba bowed, and did obeisance unto the king. And the king said, What wouldest thou? 17. And she said unto him, My lord, thou swarest by the Lord thy God unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne: 18. And now, behold, Adonijah reigneth; and now, my lord the king, thou knowest it not: 19. And he hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host: but Solomon thy servant hath he not called. 20. And thou, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. 21. Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders. 22. And, lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in. 23. And they told the king, saying, Behold, Nathan the prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground. 24. And Nathan said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? 25. For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest: and, behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, God save king Adonijah. 26. But me
even my thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon, hath he not called. 27. Is this thing done by my lord the king, and thou hast not showed it unto thy servant, who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him? 28. Then king David answered and said, Call me Bath-sheba. And she came into the king’s presence, and stood before the king. 29. And the king sware, and said, As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, Even as I sware unto thee by the Lord God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day. 31. Then Bath-sheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.

We have here the effectual endeavours that were used by Nathan and Bath-sheba, to obtain from David a ratification of Solomon’s succession, for the crushing of Adonijah’s usurpation. 1. David himself knew not what was doing. Disobedient children think that they were well enough off; if they can but keep their good old parents ignorant, of their bad courses; but a bird of the air will carry the voice. 2. Bath-sheba lives retired, and knew nothing of it, till He than informed her. Many get very comfortably through this world, that know little how the world goes. 3. Solomon, it is likely, knew of it, but was a deaf man that heard not. Though he had years, and wisdom above his years, yet we do not find that he stirred to oppose Adonijah, but quietly composed himself, and left it to God and his friends to order the matter. Hence David, in his Psalm for Solomon, also persuades him, in pursuit of the world, in vain rise early and sit up late, God giveth his beloved (his Jedidiah) sleep, in giving them to be easy, and gain their point without agitation, Ps. 127. 1, 2. 2. How then is the design brought about? I. Nathan the prophet alarms Bath-sheba, by acquainting her with the case, and puts her in a way to get an order from the king, for the confirming of Solomon’s title. He was concerned, because he knew God’s mind, and David’s and Israel’s interest; it was by him that God had named Solomon Jedidiah, (2 Sam. 12. 25.) and therefore he could not sit still, and see the throne usurped, which he knew was Solomon’s right, by the will of Him from whom promotion cometh. When crowns were disposed of by immediate direction from heaven, no marvel that prophets were so much interested and employed in that matter; that common providence rules the affairs of the kingdom of men. (Dan. 2. 32.) the subordinate agency must be left to common persons, and let not prophets intermeddle in them, but keep to the affairs of the kingdom of God among men. Nathan applies himself to Bath-sheba, as one that had the greatest concern for Solomon, and could have the freest access to David. He acquaints her with Adonijah’s attempt, (v. 11.) and that it was not with David’s consent or knowledge. He suggests to her, that not only Solomon was in danger of losing the crown, but that he and she too were in danger of losing their lives, if Adonijah prevailed. A humble spirit may be indifferent to a crown, and may be content notwithstanding the prospect of it, to sit down short of the possession of it. But the law of self-preservation, and the sixth commandment, obliges us to use all possible endeavours to secure our own life and the life of others. Now, says Nathan, let me give thee counsel how to save thy own life, and the life of thy son, v. 12. Such as this, is the counsel that Christ’s ministers give us in his name, to give all diligence, not only that no man take our crown, (Rev. 3. 11.) but that we save our lives, and the lives of others. He directs her, (v. 13.) to go to the king, to remind him of his word and oath, that Solomon should be his successor; and to ask him in the most humble manner, Why doth Adonijah reign? He thought David was not so cold, but this would warm him. Conscience, as well as a sense of honour, would put life into him, upon such an occasion as this; and he promises, (v. 14.) that while she was reasoning with the king upon this matter, he would come in and succeed him; as if he came accidentally, which perhaps the king might look upon as a special providence, (and he was one that took notice of such evidences, 1 Sam. 25. 32, 33.) or, however, it would help to awaken him so much the more. II. Bath-sheba, according to his advice and direction, loses no time, but immediately makes her application to the king, on the same errand that Esther came to the king, to intercede for her. She needed not wait for a call, as Esther did, she knew she should be welcome at any time; but it is remarked that when she visited the king Abishag was ministering to him, (v. 15.) and Bath-sheba took no displeasure either at him or her for it. Also that she bowed, and did obeisance to the king, (v. 16.) in token of his respect to her, both as her prince and as her husband; such a genuine daughter was she of Sarah, who obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. They that would find favour with superiors, must show them reverence, and be duteful to those whom they expect to be kind to them. Her address to the king, on this occasion, is very discreet. 1. She reminds him of his promise made to her, and confirmed with a solemn oath, that Solomon should succeed him, v. 17. She knew how fast this would hold such a conscientious man as David was; she knew the same thing which is called the temptation, which he was ignorant of; (v. 18.) "Adonijah reigns in competition with thee for the present, and in contradiction to thy promise for the future. The fault is not thine, for thou knewest it not; but now thou knowest it, thou wilt, in pursuance of thy promise, take care to suppress it." She tells him who were his guests, and who were in his interest, but Solomon thy servant has he not called, which plainly shows he looks upon him as his rival, and aims to undermine him, v. 19. It is not an oversight, but a contempt of the act of settlement, that Solomon is neglected. 3. She pleads that it was very much in his power to obviate this mischief; (v. 20.) The eyes of all Israel are upon thee, not only as a king, for we cannot suppose it to be the prerogative of any prince to bequeath his subjects by will, (as they Alah has his, and all nations,) to whom he pleased, but as a prophet. All Israel knew that David was not only himself the anointed of the God of Jacob, but that the Spirit of the Lord spake by him, (2 Sam. 23. 1, 2.) and therefore waiting for, and depending upon, a divine designation, in a matter of such importance, David’s word would be an oracle and a law to them; this therefore (says Bathsheba) they expect, and it will end the controversy, and effectually crush all Adonijah’s pretensions. A divine sentence is in the lips of the king. Note, Whatever power, interest, or influence, men have, they ought to improve it to the utmost, for the preserving and advancing of the kingdom of the Messiah, of which Solomon’s kingdom was a type. 4. She suggests the imminent peril which she and her
son would be in, if this matter was not settled in David's life-time, v. 21. If Adonijah prevail, as he is likely to do, (having Joab the general, and Abia-thar the High Priest, on his side,) Solomon and all his friends will be looked on as traitors, and dealt with accordingly; usurpers are most cruel. If Adonijah had got into the throne, he would not have dealt so fairly with Solomon, as Solomon did with him. Every thing, who stand in the way of such as, against, right, force their entrance.

III. Nathan the prophet, according to his promise, seasonably stepped in, and seconded her, while she was speaking, before the king had given his answer, lest, if he had heard Bath-sheba's representation only, his answer should have been dilatory, and only that he would consider of it: but out of the mouth of two witnesses, and one such witnesses, the word would be, in general, and he would immediately give positive orders. The king is told that Nathan the prophet is come, and he is sure to be always welcome to the king, especially, when either he is not well, or has any great affair upon his thoughts, for, in either case, a prophet will be, in a particular manner, serviceable to him. Nathan knows he must render honour to whom honour is due, and he will be careful in the same respect now, that he finds him sick in bed, as he would, if he had found him in his throne; he bowed himself with his face to the ground, v. 23. He deals a little more plainly with the king than Bath-sheba had done, in which his character would support him, and the present languor of the king's spirits made it necessary that they should be roused.

1. He makes the same representation of Adonijah's attempt, as Bath-sheba made, (v. 25, 26.) adding, that the party were already got to that height of assurance, as to shout God save king Adonijah, as if king David were already dead, taking notice also, that they had not invited him to their feast, Me, thy servant, has he not called; thereby intimating, that they resolved not to consult either God or David in the matter, for Nathan was a secretarius consilii—intimately acquainted with the minds of both. He makes David sensible how much he was concerned to clear himself from having a hand in it. Hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me? v. 24. And again, (v. 27.) "Is this thing done by my lord the king? If it be, he is not so faithful either to God's word or to his own, as we all took him to be; if it be not, it is high time that we witness against the usurpation, and declare Solomon his successor. If it be, why is not Nathan made acquainted with it, yea, with the king himself? and is it not, but is particularly concerned in this matter, having been employed to notify to David the mind of God concerning the succession; but if my lord the king know nothing of the matter, (as certainly he does not,) what daring insolence are Adonijah and his party guilty of?" Thus he endeavours to incense David against them, that he might act the more vigorously for the support of Solomon's interest. Note, God may show his people in their duty, if they be well reminded of it, and put upon it, and told what occasion there is for them to appear; and those who thus are their remembrancers, do them a real kindness, as Nathan here did to David.

IV. David, hereupon, made a solemn declaration of his firm adherence to his former resolution, that Solomon should be his successor; Bath-sheba is called before him, as acting for and on behalf of her son, the king gives thanks for these assurances. 1. He repeats his former promise and oath, owns that he had sworn unto her, by the Lord God of Israel, that Solomon should reign after him, v. 30. Though he is old, and his memory begins to fail him, yet he remembers this. Note, An oath is so sacred a thing, that the obligations of it cannot be broken, and so solemn a thing, that the impressions of it, one would think, cannot be forgotten. 2. He ratifies it with another, because the occasion called for it; As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, even so will I certainly do this day, without dispute, without delay. His form of swearing seems to be what he commonly used on solemn occasions, for we read it, 2 Sam. 4. 9. And it carries in it a grateful acknowledgment of the goodness of God to him, in bringing him safe through the many difficulties and hardships which had lain in his way; and which he now makes mention of, to the glory of God, as Jacob, when he lay a dying; (Gen. 48. 16.) thus setting to his seal, from his own experience, that that was true, which the Lord spake by him; (Ps. 34. 22.) The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants. Dying saints ought to be witnesses for God, and speak of him as they have found. Perhaps, he speaks thus, on this occasion, for the encouragement of his son and successor, to trust in God in the distresses he also might meet with.

Bath-sheba receives these assurances, (v. 31.) (1.) With great complaisance to the king's person; she did reverence to him, while Adonijah and his party afflicted him. (2.) With high respect for the king's health. Let him live. So far was she from thinking that he lived too long, that she prayed he might live for ever, if it were possible, to adorn the crown he wore, and to be a blessing to his people. We should earnestly desire the prolonging of useful lives, however it may be the postponing of any advantages of our own.

32. And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaia the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king. 33. The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon: 34. And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon. 35. Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah. 36. And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, and said, Amen: the Lord God of my lord the king say so too. 37. As the Lord hath been with my lord the king, even so be he with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David. 38. So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down, and caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon. 39. And Zadok the priest took a horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon. 40. And all the people came up after him; and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy,
so that the earth rent with the sound of them.

We have here the effectual care David took, both to secure Solomon's right, and to preserve the public peace, by crushing Adonijah's project in the bud. 46

I. The express orders he gave for the proclaiming of Solomon. The persons he entrusted with this great affair, were, Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah, men of power and interest, whom David had always reposed a confidence in, and found faithful to him, and whom Adonijah had passed by in his invitation, v. 10. David orders them forthwith, with all public solemnity, to proclaim Solomon; they must take with them the servants of their lord, the life-guards, and all the servants of the household; they must set Solomon on the mule the king used to ride, for he kept not such stables of horses as his son afterward did; he appoints them whither to go, (v. 33.) and (v. 34, 35.) what to do. 1. Zadok and Nathan, the two ecclesiastical persons, must, in God's name, anoint him king: for though he was not the first get his family, as which and David were yet, he was as a younger son, was made king by divine appointment, and his title was contested, which made it necessary that hereby it should be settled. This anointing was typical of the designation and qualification of the Messiah, or Christ, the anointed One, on whom the Spirit, that oil of gladness, was poured without measure, Heb. 1. 9. Ps. 89. 20. And all real kings, being heirs of the kingdom, (1 Sam. 2. 5.) do from heaven. Ver. 19. 1 John 2. 20. 2. The great officers, civil and military, are ordered to give public notice of this, and to express the public joy upon this occasion, by sound of trumpet, by which the law of Moses directed the gracing of great solemnities; to this must be added the acclamations of the people, "Let king Solomon live, let him prosper, let his kingdom be established and perpetuated, and let him long continue in the enjoyment of it," so it had been promised concerning him, (Ps. 72. 15.) He shall live. 3. They must then bring him in state to the city of David, and he must sit upon the throne of his father, as his substitute now, or vice-roy, to despatch public business during his weakness, and be his successor after his death; He shall be king in my stead. It would be a great satisfaction to David himself, and to all parties concerned, to have this done instantly, the sooner the better; but the king, there might be no dispute, or agitation, in the public affairs. David was far from grudging his successor the honour of appearing such in his life-time, and yet perhaps was so taken up with his devotions on his sick bed, that if he had not been put in mind of it by others, this great work, which was so necessary to the public repose, had been left undone.

II. The anointing of Solomon by Benaiah, in the name of the rest, professed in these orders. The king said, "Solomon shall reign for me, and reign after me," "Amen," (says Benaiah, heartily,) "as the king says, so say we, we are entirely satisfied in the nomination, and concur in the choice; we give our vote for Solomon, nemo contradicet unani-nmously, and since we can bring nothing to pass, much less establish it, without the concurrence of a council, let it be known to the king, the bearers of this say so too," v. 36. This is the language of his faith in that promise of God, on which Solomon's government was founded. If we say as God says in his word, we may hope that he will say as we say by his providence. To this he adds a prayer for Solomon, (v. 37.) that God would be with him as he had been with David, and make his throne greater. He knew David was none of those that envy their children's greatness, and therefore that he would not be disquieted at this prayer, nor take it as an affront, but would heartily say Amen to it. The wisest and best man in the world desires his children may be wiser and better than he, for he himself desires to be wiser and better than he is; and wisdom and goodness are true graces.

III. The immediate execution of these orders, v. 38. 40. No time was lost, but Solomon was brought in state to the place appointed, and there Zadok (who, though he was not as yet High Priest, was, we may suppose, the Suffragan, the Jews called him the Sagan, or second priest) anointed him by the direction of Nathan the prophet, and David the king, v. 39. In the tabernacle, where the ark was now lodged, was kept, among other sacred things, the holy oil, for many religious services; thence Zadok took a horn of oil, which denotes both power and plenty, and therewith anointed Solomon. We do not find that Abiathar pretended to anoint Adonijah, he was made king by a feast, not by an anointing; whom God calls he will qualify, which was signified by the anointing; usurpers had it not. Christ signifies anointed, and he is the king whom God hath set upon his holy hill of Zion, according to the decree, Ps. 2. 6, 7. Christians also are made to our God (and by him) kings, and they have an anointment from the Holy One, I John 2. 20.

The people, hereupon, express their great joy and satisfaction in the elevation of Solomon, surrounding him with their Hosannas, God save king Solomon, and attend him with their music and shouts of joy, v. 40. Hereby they declared their concur rent in the choice, and that he was not forced upon them, but cheerfully accepted by them. The power of a prince can be little satisfaction to himself, unless he knows it to be a satisfaction to his people. Every Israelite indeed rejoices in the exaltation of the Son of David.

41. And Adonijah, and all the guests that were with him, heard it, as they had made an end of eating. And when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar? 42. And while he yet spake, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came: and Adonijah said unto him, Come in; for thou art a valiant man, and bringest good tidings. 43. And Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, Verily our lord king David hath made Solomon king. 44. And the king hath sent with him Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and they have caused him to ride upon the king's mule:

45. And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon; and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again. This is the noise that ye have heard. 46. And also Solomon sitteth on the throne of the kingdom. 47. And moreover, the king's servants came to bless our lord king David, saying, God make the name of Solomon better than thy name, and make his throne greater than thy throne. And the king bowed himself upon the bed. 48. And also thus said the king, Blessed be the
Lord God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it. 49. And all the guests that were with Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way. 50. And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. 51. And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah feareth king Solomon: for, lo, he hath caught hold on the horns of the altar, saying, Let king Solomon swear unto me to-day, that he will not slay his servant with the sword. 52. And Solomon said, If he will show himself a worthy man, there shall not a hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die. 53. So king Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and bowed himself to king Solomon: and Solomon said unto him, Go to thine house.

We have here,

I. The tidings of Solomon's inauguration brought to Adonijah and his party in the midst of their jollity. They had made an end of eating, and, it should seem, it was a great while before they made an end, for all the affair of Solomon's anointing was ordered, done, and finished, while they were at dinner, glutting themselves. Thus they who serve not our Lord's kirn, but oppose him, are commonly such as serve their own belly, (Rom. 16. 18.) to make a god of it, Philip 3. 19. Their long feast intimates likewise that they were very secure, and confident of their interest, else they would not have lost so much time. The old world and Sodom were eating and drinking, secure and sensual, when their destruction came, Luke 17. 26, 8c. When they had made an end of eating, and were preparing themselves to proclaim their king, and bring him into triumph into the city, they heard the sound of the trumpet, (v. 41.) and a dreadful sound it was in their ears, Job 15. 21. Job was an old man, and was alarmed at it, apprehending the city to be in an uproar; but Adonijah is very confident that the messenger, being a worthy man, brings good tidings, v. 42. Usurpers flatter themselves with the hopes of success, and those are commonly least timorous, whose condition is most dangerous. But how can those who do evil deeds, expect to have good tidings? No, the worthiest man will bring them the worst news, as the priest's son did here to Adonijah, v. 43. "Verily, the best tidings I have to bring you, is, that Solomon is made king, so that your pretensions are all quashed.

He relates to them very particularly, 1. With what great solemnity Solomon was made king, (v. 44, 45.) and that he was now sitting on the throne of the kingdom, v. 46. Adonijah thought he had stepped into the throne before him, but Solomon was too quick for him. 2. With what general satisfaction Solomon was made king, so that that which was done, was not likely to be undone again. (1.) The people were pleased, witness their joyful acclamations, v. 43. (2.) The courtiers were pleased: They attended him with an address of congratulation upon this occasion, v. 47. We have here the heads of their address; they blessed king David, applauded his prudent care for the public welfare, acknowledged their happiness under his government, and prayed heartily for his recovery. They also prayed for Solomon, that God would make his name better than his father's, which he might well be, when he had his father's reputation to build upon; a child, on a giant's shoulders, is taller than the giant himself. (3.) The king himself is pleased; he bowed himself upon the bed, not only to signify his acceptance of his servants' address, but to offer up his own address to God; (v. 48.) "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who, as Israel's God, for Israel's good, has brought this matter to such a happy issue, mine eyes even seeing it." Note, It was a great satisfaction to good men, when they are going out of the world, to see the affairs of their families in a good posture, their children rising up in their stead to serve God and their generation, and especially to see peace upon Israel, and the establishment of it.

II. The effectual crush which this gave to Adonijah's attempt; it spoiled their sport, dispersed their company, and obliged every man to shift for his own safety. The triumphing of the wicked is short. They were building a castle in the air, which, having no foundation, would soon fall, and crush them; they were afraid of being taken in the fact, while they were together hatching their treason, and therefore each one made the best of his way.

III. The terror Adonijah himself was in, and the course he took to secure himself; he was now as much depressed as he had been elevated; (v. 42, 50.) he had despaired of his life, as not worthy to be his guest, (v. 10.) but now he dreads him as his judge; he feared because of Solomon. Thus they who opp se Christ and his kingdom, will shortly be made to tremble before him, and call, in vain, to rocks and mountains to shelter them from his wrath. He took hold on the horns of the altar, which was a figure of safety, or place of refuge; (Exod. 21. 14.) intimating hereby, that he durst not stand a trial, but threw himself upon the mercy of his prince, in suing for which, he relied upon no other plea than the mercy of God, which was manifested in the institution and acceptance of the sacrifices that were offered on that altar, and the remission of sin thereupon. Perhaps Adonijah had formerly slighted the service of the altar, and yet he courted the protection of it. Many who, in the day of their security, neglect the great salvation, under the arrest of the terrors of the Lord, would gladly be beholden to Christ and his merit, and, when it is too late, will catch hold of the horns of that altar.

IV. His humble address to Solomon for mercy. By these who brought Solomon tidings where he was, he sent a request for his life; (v. 51.) Let king Solomon swear to me that he will not slay his servant. He owns Solomon for his prince, and himself his servant; dares not justify himself, but makes supplication to his judge. It was a great change with him; he that, in the morning, was grasping at a crown, is, before night, begging for his life. Then Adonijah reigns, now Adonijah trembles, and cannot think himself safe, unless Solomon promise, with an oath, not to put him to death.

V. The orders Solomon gave concerning him. He discharged him, upon his good behaviour, v. 52, 53. He considers he is his brother; it was the first offence, perhaps; being so soon made sensible of his error, and then not persisting in his rebellion, he might prove, not only a peaceable, but a serviceable subject, and therefore, if he will conduct himself well, for the future, what has past shall be pardoned; but, if he be found disaffected, turbulent, and aspiring, this offence shall be remembered against him, he shall be called up upon his former conviction, (as our law speaks,) and execution shall
I. KINGS, II.

be a warre'd against him. Thus the son of David receives those to mercy, that have been rebellions: if they will return to their allegiance, and be faithful to their Sovereign, their former crimes shall not be mentioned against them; but if they still continue in the interests of the world and the flesh, that will be their ruin. Adonijah is sent for, and told upon what terms he stands, which he signifies his grateful submission to, and then is bid to go to his house, and live retired there. Solomon not only gave his life, but his estate, thus establishing his throne by mercy.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, we have David setting, and Solomon, at the same time, rising. 1. The conclusion of David's reign with his life. 1. The charge he gives to Solomon upon his death-bed, in general, to serve God; (v. 1-4.) in particular, concerning Joab, Barzillai, and Shimel, v. 5-9. 2. His death and burial, and the years of his reign, v. 10-11. 2. The beginning of Solomon's reign, v. 12. Though he was to be a prince of peace, he began his reign with some remarkable acts of justice, 1. Upon Adonijah, whom he put to death for his aspiring pretensions, v. 13-23. 2. Upon Abiathar, whom he deposed from the high priesthood for siding with Adonijah, v. 24-27. 3. Upon Joab, whom he put to death for his late treachery, and former murders, v. 28-39. 4. Upon Shimel, whom, for cursing David, he confined to Jerusalem, (v. 36-39,) and, three years after, for transgressing the rules, put to death, v. 39-46.

Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die: and he charged Solomon his son, saying, 2. I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; 3. And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself; 4. That the Lord may continue his word, which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel. 5. Moreover, thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet. 6. Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace. 7. But show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother. 8. And, behold, thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I swear to him by the Lord saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. 9. Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood. 10. So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David. 11. And the days that David reigned over Israel were forty years: seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem.

David, that great and good man, is here a dying man, (v. 1.) and a dead man, v. 10. It is well there is another life after this, for death stains all the glory of this, and lays it in the dust. We have here,

1. The charge and instructions which David, when he was dying, gave to Solomon, his son, and declared successor. He feels himself declining, and is not backward to own it, nor afraid to hear or speak of dying: I go the way of all the earth, v. 2. Heb. I am walking in it. Note, 1. Death is a way; not only a period of this life, but a passage to a better. 2. It is the way of all the earth, of all mankind who dwell on earth, and are themselves earth, and therefore must return to their earth. Even those sons of heaven must then be their brethren, (v. 3.) to partake of all the earth, they must needs die; but they walk with pleasure in this way, through the valley of the shadow of death, Ps. 23. 4. Prophets, and even kings, must go this way to brighter light and honour than prophecy or sovereignty. David is going this way, and therefore gives Solomon directions what to do.

1. He charges him, in general, to keep God's commandments, and to make conscience of his duty, v. 2-4. He prescribes to him, (1.) A good rule to act by, the divine will; "Govern thyself by that." David's charge to him, is, to keep the charge of the Lord his God. The authority of a dying father is much, but nothing to that of a living God. There are great trusts which we are charged with by the Lord our God, let us keep them carefully, as those that must give account; and excellent statutes, which we must be his kingdom, let us also keep them. The written word is our rule; Solomon must himself do as was written in the law of Moses. (2.) A good spirit to act with; Be strong, and show thyself a man, though, in years, but a child. Those that would keep the charge of the Lord their God, must put on resolution. (3.) Good reasons for all this; this would effectually conclude, To the promise of his kingdom; it is the way to prosper in all thou doest, and to succeed with honour and satisfaction in every undertaking. Secondly, To the perpetuity of it; that the Lord may continue, and so confirm, his word which he spake concerning me. Those that rightly value the treasure of the promise, that sacred depositum, cannot but be solicitous to preserve the entail of it, and very desirous that those who come after them, may be so desirous, and acting to continue in their own age, successively, keep God's charge, and then God will be sure to continue his word. We never let fall the promise, till we let fall the precept. God had promised David that the Messiah should come from his loins, and that promise was absolute: but the promise, that there should not fail him a man on the throne of Israel, was conditional; if his seed behave themselves as they should. If Solomon, in his day, fulfil the condition, he does as part toward the perpetuating of the promise.

The
condition, that he walk before God in all his institutions, in sincerity, with zeal and resolution; and in order hereunto, that he take heed to his way. In order to our constancy in religion, nothing is more necessary than caution and circumspection.

(2.) He gives him directions concerning some particular persons to do with them, that he might make up his deficiencies, in justice to some, and to himself. Everlastingly.

[1.] Concerning Joab, v. 5. David was now conscious to himself, that he had not done well to spare him, when he had made himself once and again obnoxious to the law, by the murder of Abner first, and afterwards of Amasa, both of them great men, captains of the hosts of Israel: he slew them treacherously, shed the blood of war in pieces; and injuriously to David; thou knowest what he did to me therein. The murder of a subject is a wrong to the prince, it is a loss to him, and is against the peace of our sovereign lord the king. These murders were particularly against David, reflecting upon his reputation, he being, at that time, in treaty with them, and hazard his interest, which they were very capable of serving. Magistrates are the avengers of the blood of these they knew the cause to be unjust, and enlightened Joab's mind, that he was not ashamed of the sin, nor afraid of the punishment, but daringly wore the girdle and shoes that were stained with innocent blood, in defiance of the justice both of God and the king. David refers him to Solomon's wisdom, (v. 6.) with an intimation that he left him to his justice. Say not, "He has a hoary head, it is a pity it should be cut off, for it will shortly fall of itself," no, let it not go down to the grave in peace. Though he has been long reprieved, he shall be reckoned with at last; time does not wear out the guilt of any sin, particularly, not of murder.

[2.] Concerning Barzillai's family, whom he orders him to be kind to for Barzillai's sake, who, we may suppose, by this time, was dead, v. 7. When David, upon his death-bed, was remembering the injuries that had been done, he could not forget the kindnesses that had been shown, but leaves it as a charge upon his son to return them. Note, The kindnesses we have received from our friends, must not be buried, either in their graves or our's, but our children must return them to their's. Hence, perhaps, Solomon fetched that rule, (Prov. 27. 10.) "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsaake not." Paul prays for the house of Onesiphorus, who refreshed his spirits, Tit. 3. 13.

[3.] Concerning Shimei, v. 8, 9. First, His crime is remembered; He cursed me with a grievous curse; the more grievous, because he insulted him when he was in misery, and poured vinegar into his wounds. The Jews say, that one thing which made this a grievous curse, was, that beside all that is mentioned, (2 Sam. 16.) Shimei upbraided him with his descent from Ruth the Moabitess. Secondly, the curse is not such as he owes he had sworn to him, that he would not himself put him to death; because he seasonably submitted, and cried Peccavi—I have sinned, and he was not willing, especially at that juncture, to use the sword of public justice for the avenging of wrongs done to himself. But, Thirdly, His case, as it now stands, is left with Solomon, as one that knew the case was already done, and would be the friend occasion. David intimated, that his pardon was not designed to be perpetual, but only a reprove for David's life; "Hold him not guiltless: do not think him any true friend to thee or thy government, or fit to be trusted; he has no less malice than he had then, though he has more wit to conceal it. He is still a debtor to the public justice, for what he did then; and though I promised him that I would not put him to death, I never promised that my successor should not. His turbulent spirit will soon give thee an occasion, which thou shouldst not fail to take, for bringing of his hoary head to the grave with blood." This proceeded not from personal revenge, but a prudent zeal for the honour of the government, and the covenant God had made with his family, the contempt of which ought not to go unpunished. Even a hoary head, if a guilty and forfeited head, ought not to be any man's protection from justice, The sinner, being a hundred years old, shall be accursed, Isa. 65. 20.

II. David's death and burial, v. 10. He was buried in the city of David; not in the burying place of his father, as Saul was, but in his own city, which he was the founder of. There were set there the thrones, and there the tabernacle of David. Now, David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell asleep, and was laid to his fathers, and saw corruption, Acts 13. 36, and see Acts 2. 39. His epitaph may be taken from 2 Sam. 23. 1. Here lies David the son of Jesse, the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel; adding his own words, (Ps. 18. 8.) My flesh also shall rest in hope. Josephus says, that beside the usual magnificence with which his son Solomon buried him, he put into his sepulchre a vast deal of money; and that 1300 years after, (so he reckons,) it was opened by Hircanus the High Priest, in the time of Antiochus, and 3000 talents taken out for the public service. The years of his reign are here computed (v. 11.) to be forty years; the odd six months which he reigned above seven years in Hebron, are not reckoned, but the even sum only.

12. Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly. 13. And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably. 14. He said moreover, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And she said, Say on. 15. And he said, Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign: howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's; for it was his from the LORD. 16. And now I ask one petition of thee, deny me not. And she said unto him, Say on. 17. And he said, Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king, (for he will not say thee nay,) that he give me Abishag the Shunammite to wife. 18. And Bath-sheba said, Well; I will speak for thee unto the king. 19. Bath-sheba therefore went unto king Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand. 20. Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee; I pray thee, say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother; for I will not say thee nay. 21. And she said, Let Abishag the Shu-
nammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife. 22. And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also; for he is mine elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah. 23. Then king Solomon swore by the Lord, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life. 24. Now therefore, as the Lord liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, who hath made me a house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day. 25. And king Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell upon him that he died.

Here is.

I. Solomon's accession to the throne, v. 12. He came to it much more easily and peaceably than David did, and much sooner saw his government established. It is happy for a kingdom, when the end of one good reign is the beginning of another, as it was here.

II. His just and necessary removal of Adonijah his rival, in order to the establishment of his throne. Adonijah had made some bold pretensions to the crown, but was soon obliged to let it fall, and throw himself upon Solomon's mercy, who dismissed him upon his good behaviour, and had he been easy, he might have been safe. But here we have him betraying himself into the hands of Solomon's justice, and falling by it; the righteous God leaving him to himself, that he might be punished for his former treason, and that Solomon's throne might be established. Many thus sin themselves, because they do not know when they are well off, nor well done to; and sinners, by presuming on God's patience, treasure up wrath to themselves. Now observe,

1. Adonijah's treasonable project, which was, to marry Abishag, David's concubine; not because he was in love with her, but because, by her, he hoped to renew his claim to the crown, which might stand him in stead, or because it was then looked upon as a branch of the government, to have the minxes of the foredresses, 2 Sam. 12. 8. Absalom thought his pretended much supported by lying with his father's concubines. Adonijah flatters himself, that if he may succeed him in his bed, especially with the best of his wives, he may by that means step up to succeed him in his throne. Restless and turbulent spirits reach high. It was but a small game to play at, as it should seem, yet he hopes to make it an after-great play, and gain that by a wife, which he could not gain by force.

2. The means he used to compass this. He durst not make suit to Abishag immediately, (he knew she was at Solomon's disposal, and he would justly resent it, if his consent were not first obtained, as even Ish-bosheth did, in a like case, 2 Sam. 5. 7.) nor durst he apply himself immediately to Solomon, knowing that he lay under his displeasure; but he engaged Bath-sheba to be his friend in this matter, who would be forward to believe it a matter of love, and not apt to suspect it a matter of policy. Bath-sheba was surprised to see Adonijah in her apartment, and asked him if he did not come with a design to do her a mischief, because she had been instrumental to crush his late attempt. "No," says he, "I come peaceably, (v. 13.) and to beg a favour;" (v. 14.) that she would use the great interest she had in her son, to gain his consent that he might marry Abishag; (v. 16, 17.) and if he may but obtain this, he will thankfully accept it, (1.) As a compensation for his loss of the kingdom. He intimates, (v. 15.) "Thou knowest the kingdom was mine, as my father's eldest son, living at the time of his death, and all Israel set their faces on me. That when I was young, they were mine upon my side; yet thus he would represent himself as an object of compassion, that had been deprived of a crown, and therefore he might well be gratified in a wife: if he may not inherit his father's throne, yet let him have something valuable that was his father's, to keep for his sake, and let it be Abishag. (2.) As his reward for his acquiescence in that loss. He owns Solomon's right to the kingdom. "It was his from the Lord, I was foolish in offering to contest it; and now that it is turned about to him, I am satisfied." Thus he pretends to be well pleased with Solomon's accession to the throne, when he is doing all he can to give him disturbance. His words were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart.

2. Bath-sheba's address to Solomon on his behalf. She promised to speak to the king for him, (v. 18.) and did so, v. 19. Solomon received her with all the respect that was owing to a mother, though he himself was a king; he rose up to meet her, bowed himself to her, and caused her to sit on his right hand, according to the law of the fifth commandment. Children, not only when grown up, but when grown great, must give honour to their parents, and behave dutifully and respectfully toward them. There was not the mother, when she is old, nor at last, (v. 21.) Let Abishag be given to Adonijah thy brother. It was strange that she did not suspect the treason, but more strange that she did not abhor the incest, that was in the proposal: but either she did not take Abishag to be David's wife, because the marriage was not consummated, or she thought it might he dispensed with, to gratify Adonijah, in consideration of his tame submission to Solomon. This was her weakness and folly; it was well that she was not regent. Note, They that have the ear of princes and great men, as it is their wisdom not to be too prodigal of their interest, so it is their duty never to use it for the assistance of sin, or the furtherance of any wicked design. Let not princes be asked that which they ought not to grant. It will become a good man to prefer a bad request, or appear in a bad case.

4. Solomon's just and judicious rejection of the request. Though his mother herself was the advocate, and called it a small petition, and, perhaps, it was the first that she had troubled him with since he was king, yet he denied it, without violation of the general promise he had made her, v. 20. If Herod had not had a mind to cut off John Baptist's head, he would not have thought himself obliged to do it by a general promise, like this made to Herodias. The best friend we have in the world must not have such an interest in us as to bring us to do a wrong thing, either unjust or unwise. (1.) Solomon convinces his mother of the unreasonable- ness of the request, and shows her the tendency of it, which before she was not aware of. His reply
is somewhat sharp, **Ask for him the kingdom also**, v. 22. To ask that he may succeed the king in his bed, is, in effect, to ask that he may succeed him in his throne; for that is what he aims at. Probably, he had information, or cause for a strong suspicion, that Adonijah was plotting with Joab and Abiathar to give him disturbance, which warranted him to put this construction upon Adonijah's request. (2.) He convict and condemns Adonijah for his pretensions, and both with oath. He convicts him out of his own mouth, v. 23. His own tongue shall fall upon him; and a heavier load a man need not fall under. Both sheba may be imposed upon, but Solomon cannot; he plainly sees what he aims at, and concludes, "He has spoken this word against his own life; he is snared in the words of his own lips; now he shows what he would be at." He condemns him to die immediately; **He shall be put to death this day**, v. 24. God had interposed himself with an oath, that he would establish David's throne, (Ps. 89. 35.) and therefore Solomon pledges the same assurance to secure that establishment, by cutting off the enemies of it. "As God liveth, that establisheth the government, Adonijah shall die, that would unsettle it." Thus the ruin of the enemies of Christ's kingdom is as sure as the stability of his kingdom, and both as sure as the being and life of God, the Founder of it. The warrant is immediately signed for his execution, and no less a man than Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, general of the army, is ordered to be the executioner, v. 25. It is strange that Adonijah may not be heard to speak for himself; but Solomon's wisdom did not see it needful to examine the matter any further; it was plain enough that Adonijah aimed at the crown, and Solomon cannot be safe while he lives. Ambitious turbulent spirits commonly prepare for themselves the instruments of death. Many a head has been lost by catching at a crown.

26. And unto Abiathar the priest said the king, Get thee to Anathoth, unto thine own fields; for thou art worthy of death: but I will not at this time put thee to death, because thou hastest the ark of the Lord God before David my father, and because thou hast been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted. 27. So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the Lord; that he might fulfil the word of the Lord, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh. 28. Then tidings came to Joab: (for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom;) and Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. 29. And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord; and, behold, he is by the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go fall upon him. 30. And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the Lord, and said unto him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay; but I will die here. And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me. 31. And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father. 32. And the Lord shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing thereof, to wit, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah. 33. Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed for ever: but upon David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the Lord. 34. So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him; and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness.

Abiathar and Joab were both aiding and abetting in Adonijah's rebellious attempt, and, it is probable, were at the head of many of the captains of the host who were for Adonijah for Abishag, and, it should seem, Solomon knew it, v. 22. This was, in both, an intolerable affront, both to God and to the government; and the worse, because of their high station, and the great influence their examples might have upon many. They therefore come next to be reckoned with: they are both equally guilty of the treason, but, in the judgment passed upon them, a difference is made, and with good reason.

I. Abiathar, in consideration of his old services, is only degraded, v. 26, 27. 1. Solomon convicts him, and by his great wisdom finds him guilty; "Thou art worthy of death, for joining with Adonijah, when thou knewest on whose head God intended to set the crown." 2. He calls to mind the respect he had formerly showed to David his father, and that he had both ministered to him in holy things, had borne before him the ark of the Lord, and also had tenderly sympathized with him in his afflictions, and been afflicted in them all, particularly when he was in exile and distress, both by Saul's persecution, and Absalom's rebellion. Note, Those that show kindness to God's people, shall have it remembered to their advantage, one time or other. 3. For this reason, he spares Abiathar's life, but devotes him from his offices, and confines him to his country-seat at Anathoth, forbids him the court, the city, the tabernacle, the altar, and all intermeddling in public business, with an intimation likewise, that he was upon his good behaviour, and that though he did not put him to death, at this time, he might, another time, if he did not conduct himself well. But, for the present, he was only thrust out from being priest, as rendered unworthy of that high station, by the opposition he had given to that which he knew to be the will of God. Saul, for a supposed crime, had barbarously slain Abiathar's father, and 85 priests, their families, and city; Solomon spares Abiathar himself, though guilty of a real crime: thus was Saul's government ruined, and Solomon's established. As men are to God's ministers, they will find him to them. 4. The depriving of Abiathar was the fulfilling of the threatening against the house of Eli, (1 Sam. 2. 36.) for he was the last Eli had of the house of Aaron, and lived above 80 years, since the ruin was threatened; but God's judgments, though not executed speedily, will be executed surely.

II. Joab, in consideration of his old sins, is put to death.
of the people in doing his duty, but would rectify their mistake, and let them know that the administration of justice is better than sacrifice, and that the holiness of any place should never countenance the wickedness of any person. They who, by a lively faith, take hold on Christ and his righteousness, with a resolution, if they perish, to perish there, shall find in him a more powerful protection than any of those who were near him, for it is possible he would not have spared him; (v. 34.) with the solemnity, no doubt, of a public execution. The law being thus satisfied, he was buried in his own house in the wilderness, privately, like a criminal, not pompously, like a soldier; yet no indignity is done to his dead body; it is not for man to lay iniquity upon the bones, whatever God does.

Lastly, Solomon pleases himself with this act of justice, not as it gratified any personal revenge, but as it was the fulfilling of his father's orders, and a real kindness to himself and his own government.

1. Guilt was hereby removed, v. 31. By returning the innocent blood that had been shed, upon the head of him that shed it, it was taken away from him, and from the house of his father; which implies, that the blood which is not required from the murderer, will be required from the magistrate, at least, there is danger lest it should. They that would have their houses safe and built up, must put away iniquity far from them. 2. Peace was hereby secured (v. 33.) upon David; he does not mean his person, but, as he explains himself in the next words, Upon his seed, his house, and his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the Lord; thus he expresses his desire that it may be so, and his hope that it shall be so. Now that justice is done, and the cry of blood is satisfied, the government will prosper. Thus righteousness and peace kiss each other. Now that such a turbulent man as Joab, is removed, there shall be peace. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness, Prov. 25. 5. Solomon, in this blessing of peace upon his house and throne, piously looks upward to God as the Author of it, and forward to eternity as the perfection of it; It shall be peace from the Lord, and peace for ever, from the Lord. The Lord of peace himself gives us that peace which is everlasting.

35. And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his room over the host; and Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of Abiathar. 36. And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee a house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth thence any whither. 37. For it shall be, that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head. 38. And Shimei said unto the king, The saying is good: as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do. And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days. 39. And it came to pass, at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away unto Achish son of Maachah, king of Gath: and they told Shimei, saying, Behold, thy servants be in Gath. 40. And Shimei arose, and saddled his ass, and went to Gath, to Achish, to seek his servants: and Shimei went, and brought his servants from
Here is, I. The preferment of Benhadad and his government, v. 35. Zadok being put to death, Benhadad was advanced to be general of the forces in his room, and Abiathar being deceased, Zadok was made High Priest in his room; and therein was fulfilled that word of God, when he threatened to cut off the house of Eli, (1 Sam. 2:35.) I will raise me up a faithful priest, and will build him a sure house. Though sacred offices may be disfigured, they shall not be destroyed, by the mal-administration of those that are intrusted with them, nor shall God's work ever stand still for want of hands to carry it on. No wonder that a king, so immediately of God's making, was empowered to make whom he thought fit, High Priest; and he did it in equity, for the ancient right was in Zadok, he being of the family of Eleazar, whereas Eli and his house were of Ithamar.

II. The course that was taken with Shimei. He is sent for, by a messenger, from his house at Bahurim, expecting, perhaps, no better than Adoni-jah's doom, being conscious of his enmity to the house of David; but Solomon knows how to make a difference of crimes and criminals. David had promised Shimei his life for his time, Solomon is not bound by that promise, and yet will not go directly contrary to it.

1. He confined him to Jerusalem, and forbade him, upon any pretence whatsoever, to go out of the city, any further than the brook Kidron, v. 36, 37. He would not suffer him to continue at his country-seat, lest he should make mischief among his neighbours, but took him to Jerusalem, where he kept him prisoner at large: this might make Shimei's confinement easy to himself, for Jerusalem, though a great city, was not only a fruitful place, but very 
favourable for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the royal city, the holy city; he had no reason to complain of being shut up in such a paradise: it would also make it the more safe for Solomon, for there he would have him under his eye, and be able to watch his motions; and he plainly tells him that if he ever go out of the rules, he shall certainly die for it; this was a fair trial of his obedience, and such a test of his loyalty, as he had no reason to complain of; he has his life upon easy terms, he shall live, if he will but be content to live at Jerusalem.

2. Shimei submits to the confinement, and thankfully takes his life upon those terms; he enters into recognition, (v. 38.) under the penalty of death, not only to remain in Jerusalem, and own the saying is good. Even they that perish, cannot but own the conditions of pardon and life unexceptionable, so that their blood, like Shimei's, must rest upon their own heads. Shimei promised with an oath, to keep within his bounds, v. 42.

3. Shimei forfeits his recognition, which was the thing Solomon expected, and God was righteous in suffering him to do it, that he might now suffer for his old crimes, and two of them he did commit, (though he was a prisoner, he lived like himself, well attended,) ran from him to the land of the Philistines, v. 59. Thither he pursued them, and thence brought them back to Jerusalem, v. 40. For the keeping of it private, he saddled his ass himself, probably went in the night, and came home, he thought, undiscovered. "Seeking his servants," (says Bishop Hall,) "he lost himself; these earthly things either we should, or perhaps, in fury and despair, commonly do we see men run out of the bounds set by God's law, to hunt after them, till their souls incur a fearful judgment!"

4. Solomon takes the forfeiture. Information is given him, that Shimei had transgressed, v. 41. The king sends for him, and, (1.) Charges him with the present crime, (v. 42, 43.) that he had put a great contempt upon the authority and wrath both of God and the king: that he had broken the oath of the Lord, and disobeyed the commandment of his prince; and by this, it appeared what manner of spirit he was of, that he would not be held by the bonds of gratitude or conscience: had he represented to Solomon the urgency of the occasion, and begged leave to go, perhaps Solomon might have given him leave; but to presume either upon his ignorance or his condescension, was to affront him in the highest degree. (2.) He condemns him for his former crime, cursing David, and throwing stones at him in the day of his affliction: the wickedness which thy heart is privy to, v. 44. There was no need to examine witnesses for the proof of the fact, his own conscience was instead of a thousand witnesses; that wickedness which men's own hearts alone are privy to, is enough, if duly considered, to fill them with conviction, and deter them from the perpetration of their own heads; for if the heart be privy to it, God is greater than the heart. Others knew of Shimei's cursing David, but Shimei himself knew of the wicked principles of hatred and malice against David, which he displayed in cursing him, and that his submission was but feigned and forced. (3.) He blessed himself and his government; (v. 45.) King Solomon shall be blessed, notwithstanding Shimei's impotent curse, which perhaps, in fury and despair, he now vented freely. Let them curse, but bless Thou. And the throne of David shall be established, by taking away those that would undermine it. It is a comfort, in reference to the enmity of the church's enemies, that, how much sewer they rage, it is a vain thing they imagine, Christ's throne is established, and they cannot shake it. (4.) He gives orders for the execution of Shimei immediately, v. 46. All judgment and disposal is with the Lord Jesus, and though he be King of peace, he will be found to be a King of righteousness; and this will shortly be his word of command concerning all his enemies, that will not have him to reign over them. Bring them forth, and slay them before me; the reproaches of them that blasphemed him, will fall on themselves, to their eternal condemnation.
CHAP. III.

Solomon's reign looked bloody in the foregoing chapter, but the necessary acts of justice must not be called cruelty; in this chapter, it appears with another face; we must not think the worse of God's mercy to his subjects, for his judgments on them. We here, 1. Solomon in marriage to Pharaoh's daughter, v. 1. II. A general view of his religion, v. 2, 4. III. A particular account of his prayer to God for wisdom, and the answer to that prayer, v. 5, 15. IV. A particular instance of his wisdom in deciding the controversy between the two harlots, v. 16, 28. And very great he looks here, both at the altar, and on the bench, and therefore on the bench, because at the altar.

1. And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about. 2. Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the Lord until those days. 3. And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. 4. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt-offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.

We are here told concerning Solomon,
I. Something that was unquestionably good, for which he is to be praised, and in which he is to be imitated. 1. He loved the Lord, v. 3. Particular notice was taken of God's love to him, 2 Sam. 12, 24: he had his name from it, Jedidiah, beloved of the Lord; and here we find he returned that love, as John, the beloved disciple, was most full of love. Solomon was a wise man, a rich man, yet the brightest encomium of him, is that which is the character of all the saints, even the poorest, He loved the Lord; he loved the worship of the Lord, so the Chaldee; all that love God, love his worship, love to hear from him, and speak to him, and so to communion with him. 2. He walketh in the statutes of David his father, that is, in the statutes that David gave him, ch. 2, 2, 3. 1 Chron. 28, 9, 10. (his dying father's charge was sacred, and a law to him;) or in God's statutes, which David his father walked in before him; he kept close to God's ordinances, carefully observed them, and diligently attended them: they that truly love God, will make conscience of walking in his statutes. 3. He was very free and generous in what he did for the honour of God; when he offered sacrifice, he offered like a king, in some proportion to his great wealth, a thousand burnt-offerings, and five hundred sacrifice, v. 11. Where God gave plentifully, he expects to reap accordingly; and those that truly love God and his worship, will not grudge the expenses of their religion. We may be tempted to say, To what purpose is this waste? Might not these cattle have been given to the poor? But we must never think that wasted, which is laid out in the service of God. It seems strange, how so many beasts should be burnt upon one altar in one feast, though it continued seven days; but the fire on the altar is supposed to be more quick and devouring than common fire, for it represented that fierce and mighty wrath of God, which fell upon the sacrifices, that the offerers might escape; Our God is a consuming fire. Bishop Patrick quotes it as a tradition of the Jews, that the smoke of the sacrifices ascended directly in a straight pillar, and was not scattered, otherwise it would have chocked those that attended, when so many sacrifices were offered as were here.

II. Here is something, concerning which it may be doubted, whether it were good or no. 1. His marrying of Pharaoh's daughter, v. 1. We will suppose she was prosectly, else it had not been lawful; yet, if so, surely it was not advisable; he that loved the Lord, should, for his sake, have fixed his love upon one of the Lord's people; unequal matches of the sons of God with the daughters of men, have often been of pernicious consequence; yet some think that he did this with the advice of his friends, that she was a sincere convert, (for the gods of the Egyptians were not reckoned among the strange gods, which his strange wives drew him into the worship of, ch. 11, 5, 6.) and that the book of Canticles, and the 45th Psalm, were penned on this occasion, by which these nuptials were made typical of the mystical espousals of the church to Christ, especially the Gentile church.

2. His worshipping in the high places, and thereby tempting the people to do so too, v. 2, 3. Abra- ham built his altars on mountains, (Gen. 12, 8.— 22. 2.) and worshipped in a grove; (Gen. 21, 33.) hence a custom was derived, and was proper, till the divine law confined them to one place, Deut. 12, 5, 6. David kept to the ark, and did not care for the high places; but Solomon, though, in other things, he walked in the statutes of his father, in this, came short of him; he showed thereby a great zeal for sacrificing, but to obey had been better: this was an irregularity, though there was as yet no house built; there was a tent pitched, to the name of the Lord, and the ark might to have been the centre of their union; it was so by divine institution, from it the high places separated; yet while they worshipped God only, and, in other things, according to the rule, he graciously overlooked their weakness, and accepted their services: it is owned that Solomon loved the Lord, though he burnt incense in high places; and let not man be more severe than God is.

5. In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. 6. And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. 7. And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father; and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. 8. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. 9. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? 10. And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this
thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; 12. Behold, I have done according to thy word: lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. 13. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

14. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then will I lengthen thy days. 15. And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt-offerings, and offered peace-offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

We have here an account of a gracious visit which God made to Solomon, and the communion he had with God in it, which puts a greater honour upon Solomon than all the wealth and power of his kingdom did.

And the circumstances of this visit, v. 5. 1. The place—it was in Gibeon, that was the great high place, and should have been the only one, because there the tabernacle and the brazen altar were, 2 Chron. 1. 3. There Solomon offered his great sacrifices, and there God owned him more than in any other of the high places; the nearer we come to the rule in our worship, the more reason we have to expect the tokens of God’s presence; where God records his name, there he will meet us, and bless us.

2. The time—it was by night, the night after he had offered that generous sacrifice, v. 4. The more we abound in God’s work, the more comfort we may expect in him; if the day has been busy for him, the night will be easy in him. Silence and retirement befriended our communion with God: his kindest visits are often in the night, Ps. 17. 3. 3. The manner—it was in a dream when he was asleep, his senses locked up, that God’s access to his mind might be the more free and immediate; in this way, God used to speak to the prophets, (Numb. 12. 6.) and to private persons, for their own benefit, Job 33. 15, 16. These divine dreams, no doubt, distinguished themselves from those in which there are divers vanities, Eccl. 317.

II. The gracious offer God made him of the favours he should choose, whatever it was, v. 5. He saw the glory of God shine upon him, and heard a voice, saying, Ask what I shall give thee. Not that God was indebted to him for his sacrifices, but thus he would testify his acceptance of them, and signify to him what great mercy he had in store for him, if he were not wanting to himself. Thus he would try his inclinations, and put an honour upon the prayer of faith. God, in like manner, condescends to put such things in the way, as may be happy, by assuring us that we shall have what we will, for the asking, John 16. 23. 1 John 5. 15. What would we more? Ask, and it shall be given you.

III. The pious request Solomon, hereupon, made to God. He readily laid hold on this offer; why do we neglect the like offer made to us, like Ahaz, who said, I will not ask? Isa. 7. 12. Solomon prayed in his sleep, God’s grace assisting him; yet it was a lively prayer. What we are most in care about, and which makes the greatest impression upon us when we are awake, commonly affects us when we are asleep; and by our dreams, sometimes, we may know what our hearts are upon, and how our pulse beats. Plutarch makes virtuous dreams the evidence of increase in virtue. Yet this must be attributed to some higher source than such intelligence; of such an intelligent choice as this, when he was asleep, and the powers of reason were least active, showed that it came purely from the grace of God, which worked in him these gracious desires. If his reins thus instruct him in the night season, he must bless the Lord who gave him counsel, Ps. 16. 7. Now, in this prayer,

1. He makes it evident that God’s great goodness to his father David, v. 6. He speaks honourably of his father’s piety, that he had walked before God in uprightness of heart, drawing a vail over his faults. It is to be hoped that those who praise their godly parents, will imitate them. But he speaks more honourably of God’s goodness to his father, the mercy he had showed to him while he lived, in giving him to be sincerely religious, and then recom- mending him to God, and keeping them, and kept him for his use, to be bestowed on his family when he was gone, in giving him a son to sit on his throne. Children should give God thanks for his mercies to their parents; for the sure mercies of David. God’s favours are then doubly sweet, when we observe them transmitted to us through the hands of those that have gone before us. The way to get the entire perpetuated, is, to bless God that it has hitherto been preserved.

2. He owns his own insufficiency for the discharge of that great trust to which he was called, v. 7, 8. And here is a double plea to en- courage his petition for wisdom. (1.) That his place required it, as he was successor to David: “Thou hast made me king instead of David, who was a very wise, good man; Lord, give me wisdom, that I may keep up what he wrought, and carry on what he began;” and as he was ruler over Israel, “Lord, give me wisdom to rule well, for they are a numerous people, that will not be managed without much care. They are thy people, which thou hast chosen, and therefore to be ruled for thee; and the more wisely they are ruled, the more glory thou wilt have from them.” (2.) That he wanted it; as one that had an humble sense of his own deficiency, he pleads, Lord, I am but a little child; so he calls himself, a child in understand- ing, though his father called him a wise man. Ps. 14, ch. 2. 9. “I know not how to go out, or come in, as I should, nor to do so much as the common daily business of the government, much less what to do in a critical juncture.” Note, Those who are employed in public stations, ought to be very sensible of the weight and importance of their work, and their own insufficiency for it; and then they are qualified for receiving divine instruction. St. Paul’s question, (Who is sufficient for these things?) 1 Cor. 12. 28. Is like Solomon’s here. Who is able to judge this thy so great a people? v. 9. Absalom, who was a fool, wished himself a judge; Solomon, who was a wise man, trembles at the undertaking, and suspects his own fitness for it. The more knowing and considerate men are, the better acquainted they are with their own weakness, and the more jealous of themselves are, the better they are.
I. KINGS, III.

ed, and thus he pleased; (Ps. 119. 125.) I am thy servant, give me understanding. An understanding heart is God's gift, Prov. 2. 6. We must pray for it, (James 1. 5.) and pray for it with application to our particular calling, and the various occasions we have for it; as Solomon, give me an understanding, not to please my own curiosity with, or puzzle my neighbor, but to judge the things of God. That is the knowledge, which will be serviceable to us in doing our duty; and such that knowledge is, which enables us to discern between good and bad, right and wrong, sin and duty, truth and falsehood, so as not to be imposed upon by false colours, in judging either of others' actions, or of our own.

4. The favourable answer God gave to his request. It was a pleasing prayer; (v. 2.) The speech pleased, Ex. 7. 11. God is well pleased with his own work in his people; the desires of his own kindling, the prayers of his Spirit's inditing. By this choice Solomon made it appear that he desired to be good more than great, and to serve God's honour more than to advance his own. Those are accepted of God, who prefer spiritual blessings to temporal, and are more solicitous to be found in the way of their duty, than in the way to preferment or profit; and, (v. 3.) not only of the prayer, but that an answer to it; and prevailed for more than he asked. (1.) God gave him wisdom, v. 12. He fitted him for all that great work to which he had called him; gave him such a right understanding of the law which he was to judge by, and the cases he was to judge of, that he was unequalled, for a clear head, a solid judgment, and a piercing eye. Such an insight, and such a foresight, never was prince so blessed with. (2.) He gave him riches and honor over and above into the bargain, (v. 13.) and it was promised that he should as much exceed his predecessors, his successors, and all his neighbours, in these, as in wisdom. These also are God's gift, and are promised to all that seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, as far as is good for them, Matt. 6. 33.

Let young people learn to prefer grace to gold, because godliness has the promise of the life that now is, but the life that now is, has not the promise of godliness. How completely blessed was Solomon, that had both wisdom and wealth! He that has wealth and power without wisdom and grace, is in danger of doing hurt with it; he that has wisdom and grace without wealth and power, is not capable of doing so much good with it, as he that has both. Wisdom is good, is so much the better with an imitator. Ex. 7. 11. But he that has both, he might dwell as a king in the midst of the dead. Length of days is a blessing, typical of eternal life; but it is in her left hand that riches and honor are, Prov. 3. 16. Let us see here, [1.] That the way to obtain spiritual blessings, is, to be importunate for them; to wrestle with God in prayer for them, as Solomon did for wisdom, asking that only, as the one thing needful. [2.] That the way to obtain temporal blessings, is, to be indifferent to other things, and to refer ourselves to God concerning them. Solomon has wisdom given him, because he did ask it, and wealth, because he did not.

5. The grateful return Solomon made for the visit God was pleased to make him, v. 15. He awoke, we may suppose, in a transport of joy; awoke, and his spirit was sweet to him, as the prophet speaks; (Jer. 31. 26.) being satisfied of God's favour, he was satisfied with it, and he began to think, what he should render unto the Lord. He had made his prayer at the high place at Gibeon, and there God had graciously met him; but he comes to Jerusalem, to give thanks before the ark of the covenant, blaming himself, as it were, that he had not prayed there, the ark being the token of God's presence, and wondering that God had met him any where else. God's passing by our mistakes, should persuade us to amend them. There he, (1.) Offered a great sacrifice to God. We must give God praise for his gifts in the promise, though not yet fully performed. David used to praise God's word, as well as his works, (Ps. 36. 16. and particularly, 2 Sam. 7. 18.) and Solomon trod in his steps. (2.) He made a feast upon the sacrifice, that those about him might rejoice with him in the grace of God.

16. Then came there two women, that were harlots, unto the king, and stood before him. 17. And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house. 18. And it came to pass, the third day after that I was delivered, that this woman was delivered also: and we were together; there was no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house. 19. And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it. 20. And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. 21. And when I arose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead; but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son which I did bear.

22. And the other woman said, Nay; but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son. And this said, No; but the dead is thy son, and the living is my son. Thus they spake before the king. 23. Then said the king, The one saith, This is my son that liveth, and thy son is the dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son is the dead, and my son is the living. 24. And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. 25. And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. 26. Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, (for her bowels yearned upon her son,) and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. 27. Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she is the mother thereof. 28. And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment.
An instance is here given of Solomon's wisdom, to show that the grant lately made him, had a real effect upon him: the proof is fetched, not from the mysteries of state, and the policies of the council-board, though there, no doubt, he excelled, but from the trial and determination of a cause between parties and party, which princes, though they devolve them upon their judges, must not think it below them to take cognizance of. Observe,

I. The case opened, not by lawyers, but by the parties themselves, though they were women, which made it the easier to such a piercing eye as Solomon had, to discern between right and wrong by their own showing. These two women were hard pressed by their children, whose effect, they were born of fornication, because here is no mention of their husbands. It is probable, the cause had been heard in the inferior courts, before it was brought before Solomon, and had been found special, the judges being unable to determine it, that Solomon's wisdom in deciding it, at last, must be the more taken notice of. These two women lived in a house together, were each of them delivered of a child, and one of them is of the other, v. 17, 18.

They were so poor, that they had no servant or nurse to be with them; so slighted, because harlots, that they had no friend or relation to accompany them. One of them overlaid her child, and, in the night, exchanged it with the other, (v. 19, 20,) who was soon aware of the cheat put upon her, and appealed to public justice to be righted, v. 21. See, 1. What anxiety is caused by little children, who, in their lives, are so dear, and to how many dangers they are continually exposed. The age of infancy is the valley of the shadow of death; and the lamp of life, when first lighted, is easily blown out. It is a wonder of mercy, that so few perish in the perils of nursing. 2. How much better it was, in these times, with children born in fornication, than, commonly, it is now. Harlots then loved their children, nursed them, and were loath to part with them: whereas now, they are often sent to a distance, abandoned, or killed. But thus it is foretold, that in the last days feritius times should come, when people should be without natural affection, 2 Tim. 3. 3.

II. The difficulty of the case. The question was, Who was the mother of this living child, which was brought into court, to be finally adjudged either to this woman or the other? The former accused the other, and swore that the living child was hers, v. 22. See, 1. The charge here made, is a gross testimony of the two witnesses who are sure to be before God, and before the world, of the case, and the object of this judgment. 2. The care the women took of the child, which was by a force of love, which they could not lose, nor play at. Last, the case is a very difficult one. There had been judgment in her favour. Little stress is to be laid on exterior evidence. Judges and juries have need of wisdom, to find out truth, when it thus lies hid.

III. The determination of it. Solomon, having patiently heard what both sides had to say, sums up the evidence, v. 23. And now the whole court is in expectation, what course Solomon's wisdom will take to find out the truth. One knows not what to say; another, perhaps, would determine it by lot; Solomon calls for a sword, and gives orders to divide the living child between the two contending parties. This was a ridiculous decision of the case, and a brutal cutting of the knot which he could not untie. "Is this," think the sages of the law, "the wisdom of Solomon?" They could not conjecture what he aimed at in it. The hearts of kings, such kings, are unsearchable, Prov. 25. 3.

There was a law concerning the dividing of the ox and a dead one, (Exod. 21. 35.) but that did not apply here. But, 2. This showed the utmost care to discover the truth. Some think that Solomon did himself discern it, before he made this experiment, by the countenance of the woman, and their way of speaking: but by this, he gave satisfaction to all the company, and silenced the pretender. To find out the true mother, he could not try which the child loved best, and must therefore try which loved the child best; both pretended to a motherly affection, but the sincerity of it will be tried, when the child is in danger. (1.) She that knew the child was not her own, but, in contending for it, stood upon a point of honour, was well content to have it divided. She that had overlaid her own child, cared not what became of this, so that the true mother might not have it. Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. By this it appeared that she knew her own title to be bad, and feared Solomon would find it so, though she pretended she was betraying herself, but thought Solomon in good earnest. If she had been the true mother, she had forfeited her interest in the child, by agreeing so readily to this bloody decision. But, 2. She that knew the child was her own, rather than the child should be butchered, gives it up to her adversary. How feelingly does she cry out, O, my Lord! give her the living child, v. 25. See, 1. Let me see it her, rather than not see it at all. By this tenderness toward the child, it appeared that she was not the careless mother that had overlaid the dead child, but was the true mother of the living one, that could not endure to see its death, having compassion on the son of her womb. "The case is plain," says Solomon, "what need of witnesses? Give her the living child; for you all see, by this unseasoned compassion, she is the mother." Let me see it her. Let me see it her, then, says she. Let me see it her, rather than not see it at all. Lastly, We are told what a great reputation Solomon got among his people, by this and other instances of his wisdom, which would have a great influence upon the case of his government; they feared the king, (v. 28,) highly reverenced him, durst not, in any thing, oppose him, and were afraid of doing an unjust thing; for they knew, if ever it came before him, he would determine it, and they knew, that wisdom of God was in him, that is, that wisdom which God had promised to endue him with. This made his face to shine, (Eccles. 8. 1.) this strengthened him, (Ecc. 7. 19.) this was better to him than weapons of war, (Ecc. 9. 18.) for this, he was both feared and loved.

CHAP. IV.

An instance of the wisdom of God granted to Solomon, we had in the close of the foregoing chapter. In this, we have an account of his wealth and prosperity, which
was the other branch of the promise there made him. We have here, I. The magnificence of his court; his minis-
tors of state, (v. 1-6.) and the purveyors of his house-
hold, (v. 7. 19.) and their office, v. 27, 28. II. The pro-
vision for his table, v. 22, 23. III. The extent of his do-
mition, v. 21, 24. IV. The numbers, ease, and peace, of his subjects, v. 29, 35. V. His stables, v. 26. VI. His great reputation for wisdom and learning, v. 24, 34.
Thus great was Solomon, but our Lord Jesus was greater than he. (Matt. 12, 42.) though he took upon him the form of a servant. For, Divinity in its lowest humili-
ations, infinitely transcends royalty in its highest eleva-
tions.

1. O king Solomon was king over all Is-
rael. 2. And these were the princes which he had; Azariah the son of Zadok the priest; 3. Elihoreph and Ahiah, the sons of Shisha, scribes; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder. 4. And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the host; and Zadok and Abiathar were the priests; 5. And Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers; and Zabud the son of Na-
than was principal officer, and the king's friend; 6. And Ahishar was over the house-
hold; and Adoniram the son of Abda was over the tribute. 7. And Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, which provided victualls for the king and his house-
hold; each man his mouth in a year made provision. 8. And these are their names: The son of Hur, in mount Ephraim. 9. The son of Dekar, in Makaz, and in Shaal-
bin, and Beth-shemesh, and Elon-beth-
haman. 10. The son of Hesed, in Aruboth; to him pertained Sochoh, and all the land of Heperor. 11. The son of Abinadab, in all the region of Dor; which had Taphath the daughter of Solomon to wife. 12. Baan-
a, the son of Ahilud; to him pertained Taanach and Megiddo, and all Beth-shean, which is by Zartanah beneath Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah, even unto the place that is beyond Jokneam. 13. The son of Geber, in Ramoth-gilead; to him pertained the towns of Jair the son of Ma-
nessah, which are in Gilead: to him also pertained the region of Argob, which is in Bashan, threscos great cities, with walls and brazen bars. 14. Ahinadab the son of Ildo had Mahanaim. 15. Ahimaaz was in Naphtali; he also took Basmuth the daughter of Solomon to wife. 16. Baanah the son of Hushai was in Asher and in Aloth. 17. Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah in Issa-
char. 18. Shimei the son of Elah in Ben-
jamin. 19. Geber the son of Uri was in the country of Gilead, in the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and of Og king of Bashan; and he was the only officer which was in the land.

Here is, 1. Solomon upon his throne: (v. 1.) So king Sol-

omon was king; that is, he was confirmed and estab-
lished king over all Israel, and not, as his succes-
sors, only over two tribes. He was a king, he did the work and duty of a king, with the wisdom God had given him. They preserve the name and honour of their place, th on the mind the business of it, and make record of it. VI. 2. The great officers of his court; in the choice of which, no doubt, his wisdom much appeared. It is observable, 1. That several of them are the same that were in his father's time, Zadok and Abiathar were then priests, (2 Sam. 20. 25.) so they were now; only then, Abiathar had the precedence, now, Zadok; Jehoshaphat was then recorder, or keeper of the great records, and had a higher station in the king's service, than he had in his father's time, was a principal man in military af-
airs, and so he was now. Shisha was his father's scribe, and his sons were his, v. 3. Solomon, though a wise man, would not affect to seem wiser than his father in this matter. When sons come to inherit their father's wealth, honour, and power, it is a piece of respect to their memory, ceteris paribus—where it can properly be done, to employ those whom they employed, and trust those whom they trusted. Many pride themselves in being the re-
verse of their good parents. 2. The rest were priests' sons. His prime minister of state, was, Azariah the son of Zadok the priest. Two others of the first rank were the sons of Nathan the pro-
phet, v. 5. In preferring them, he testified the grateful respect he had for their good father, whom he loved in the name of a prophet.

III. The purveyors for the king's household, whose busi-
ness it was to send in provisions from several parts of the country, for the king's tables and cellars, (v. 7.) and for his stables, v. 27, 28. That thus, 1. His house might always be well furnished, at the best hand. Let great men learn hence good house-keep-
ing, and yet good husbandry in their house-keeping; to be generous in spending according to their ability, be prudent in providing. It is the character of the virtuous woman, that she brings her food from afar, (Prov. 31. 14.) not far-fetched and dear-
bought, but the contrary, every thing bought where it is cheapest. 2. That thus he himself, and those who immediately attended him, might be eased of a great deal of care, and the more closely apply themselves to the business of the state, not troubled about much serving; provisions for that being got and brought to the hand. 3. That the whole kingdom might be equally benefited, by the taking off of the commodities that were the productions of their country, and the circulating of the coin. In-
dustry would hereby be encouraged, and conse-
quent wealth increased, even in those tribes that lay most remote from the court. The providence of God extends itself to all places of his dominions; (Ps. 103. 22.) so should the prudence and care of God to his people. The dividing of the spoils, or the hand of those who were to receive the spoils, was prudent, that no one man might be con-
tinually burthened with the care of it, nor grow exorbitantly rich with the profit of it; but that So-


lomon might have those, in every district, who, hav-
ing a dependence upon the court, would be service-
table to him and his interest, as there was occa-
sion.

These commissioners of the victualling-office, not for the army or navy, (Solomon was engaged in no war,) but for the household, are here named; se-

veral of them only by their surnames, as great men commonly call their servants; Ben-hur, Ben-dekar, &c.: though several of them have also their proper names prefixed. Two of them married Solomon's daughters, Ben-Abinadab, (v. 11.) and Ahimaaz; (v. 13.) and more arrangement to them, to men of business. Better match with the officers of their father's court that were Israelites, than with the sons of princes that were strangers to the cove-
20. Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry.

21. And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river into the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life. And Solomon’s provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, 23. Ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred sheep, besides harts, and roe-bucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl. 24. For he had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphsah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him. 25. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon. 26. And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen. 27. And those officers provided victual for king Solomon, and for all that came unto king Solomon’s table, every man in his month: they lacked nothing. 28. Barley also and straw for the horses and dromedaries brought they unto the place where the officers were, every man according to his charge.

Such a kingdom, and such a court, sure never any prince had, as Solomon’s is here described to be.

I. Such a kingdom. Never did the crown of Israel shine so bright, as it did when Solomon wore it; never in his father’s days, never in the days of any of his successors; nor was that kingdom ever so glorious a type of the kingdom of the Messiah, as it was then. The account here given of it, is such as fully answers the prophecies which we have concerning it, Ps. 72, which is a psalm for Solomon, but with reference to Christ.

The territories of this kingdom were large, and its tributaries many: so it was foretold, that he should have dominion from sea to sea, Ps. 72. 8...

II. Solomon reigned not only over all Israel, who were his subjects by choice, but over all the neighbouring kingdoms, who were his subjects by constraint. All the princes from the river Euphrates north-east, to the border of Egypt south-west, not only added to his honour, by doing him homage, and holding their crowns from him, but added to his wealth, by serving him, and bringing him presents, v. 21. David, by his successful wars, compelled them of their own consent; which Solomon, by his admirable wisdom, made it easy and reasonable to them, that it is fit that the fool should be servant to the wise in heart. If they gave him presents, he gave them instructions, and still taught the people knowledge; not only his own people, but those of other nations; and wisdom is better than gold. He had peace on all sides, v. 24. None of all the nations that were subject to him, were a source of anxiety to him; for he had made them all tributaries to himself, and compelled them to serve and obey him, without any disturbance; but, rather, thought themselves happy in their dependence upon him. Herein, his kingdom typified the Messiah’s; for to him it is promised that he shall have the heathen for his inheritance, and that princes shall worship him, Isa. 49. 6, 7.—35. 12.

2. The subjects of this kingdom, and its inhabitants, were many and cheerful. (3.) They were numerous, and the country exceedingly rich; (v. 20.) Judah and Israel were many, and that good land sufficient to maintain them all. They were as the sand of the sea in multitude. Now was fulfilled the promise made to Abraham, concerning the increase of his seed; (Gen. 22. 17.) as well as that concerning the extent of their dominion, Gen. 15. 18. This was their strength and beauty, the honour of their prince, the terror of their enemies, and an advancement of the wealth of the nation. If they grew so numerous that the place was any where too strait for them, they might remove with advantage into the countries that were subject to them. God’s spiritual Israel are many, at least, they will be so, when they come all together, Rev. 7. 9. (2.) They were easy; they dwelt safely, or, with confidence and assurance; (v. 25.) not jealous of their king, nor of his subjects, nor of any of his people, either to him, or to one another, nor under any apprehension of danger from enemies foreign or domestic. They were happy, and knew it; safe, and willing to think themselves so. They dwelt every man under his vine and fig-tree. Solomon invested no man’s property, took not to himself their vineyards and olive-grounds, as sometimes was the manner of the king; (1 Sam. 8. 19.) but what they had, they could call their own, and he did not interfere with their possession and enjoyment of his property. They had vines and fig-trees, ate the fruit of them themselves; and so great was the peace of the country, that they might, if they pleased, dwell as safely under the shadow of them, as within the walls of a city. Or, because it was usual to have vines by the sides of their houses, (Ps. 128. 3.) they are said to dwell under their vines. (3.) They were cheerful in the use of their pleasant pastures, eating and drinking, and making merry, v. 20. Solomon did not only keep a good table himself, but enabled all his subjects, according to their rank, to do so too, and taught them what God gave them their abundance, that they might use it soberly and pleasantly, not that they might hoard it up. There is nothing better than for a man to eat the labour of his hands, (Eccl. 2. 24.) and that, with a merry heart, Eccl. 9. 7. His father, in the Psalms, had led his people into the comforts of communion with God, and now he led them into the comfortable use of the good things of this life. This pleasant posture of Israel’s affairs, extended, in place, from Dan to Beer-sheba; no part of the country was exposed, or, upon any account, uneasy; and it continued a long time, all the days of Solomon, without any material interruption. Go with my works, he said, you might see near the marks of plenty, peace and satisfaction. The spiritual peace, and joy, and holy security, of all the faithful subjects of the Lord Jesus, were typified by this. The kingdom of God is not, as Solomon’s was, meat and drink, but, what is infinitely better, righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

II. Such a court Solomon kept, as can scarcely be paralleled. We may guess at the vast number of all his attendants, from what is said of them by the provision that was made daily for his table. Of bread so many measures of flour and meal, as it is computed, would richly serve 3000 men; Carel-
lus computes above 48000 men; and the provision of flesh (v. 23.) is rather more, in proportion.

What vast quantities were here of beef, mutton, and venison, and the choicest of all fitted things, as some read that which we translate fitted food! Ahasuerus, once in his reign, made a great feast, to show the riches of his kingdom, Esth. 1. 3, 4. But it was much more the honour of Solomon, that he kept a constant table, and a very noble one; not of dainties, or deceitful meats, (he himself witnessed against them, Prov. 23. 3.) but substantial food, for the entertainment of those who came to hear his wisdom. Thus Christ fed those whom he taught, five thousand at a time, more than ever Solomon's table would entertain at once: all believers have in him a continual feast. Herein, he far outdoes Solomon, that he feeds all his subjects, not with the bread that perishes, but with that which endures to eternal life.

It added much, both to the strength and glory of Solomon's kingdom, that he had such abundance of horses, 40,000 for chariots, and 12,000 for his troops. A thousand horse, perhaps, in every tribe, for the preserving of the public peace, v. 26. God had commanded that their king should not multiply horses, (Deut. 17. 16.) nor, according to the account here given, considering the extent and wealth of Solomon's kingdom, did he multiply horses in proportion to his neighbours; for we find even the Philistines bringing into the field 30,000 chariots, (1 Sam. 13. 6.) and the Syrians, at least, 40,000 horse, 2 Sam. 10. 18. The same officers that provided for his house, provided also for his table, v. 27, 28. Every one knew his place, and work, and time; and so this great court was kept without confusion. Solomon, that had vast incomes, lived at a vast expense; and perhaps wrote that, with application to himself, (Eccl. 5. 11.) When goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes, unless withal they have the satisfaction of doing good with them?

29. And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore. 30. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Hezir, and Chanaan, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. 32. And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. 33. And he spake of trees, from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. 34. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

Solomon's wisdom was more his glory than his wealth; a general account of that we have here.

I. The fountain of his wisdom. God gave it him, v. 29. He owns it himself, (Prov. 2. 6.) The Lord giveth wisdom. He gives the powers of reason, (Job 38. 56.) preserves and improves them. The ordinary advances of them are owing to his providence, and sanctification of them, to his grace; and this extraordinary pitch at which they arrived in Solomon, to a special grant of his favour to him, in answer to his prayer.

II. The fulness of it. He had wisdom and understanding, exceeding much; great knowledge of distant countries, and the histories of former times; a quickness of thought, strength of memory, and clearness of judgment, such as never any man had. He spake three thousand proverbs, for the entertainment of those who came to hear his wisdom. He had a vast compass of knowledge, could take things entire, and had an admirable faculty of laying things together. Some, by his largeness of heart, understand his courage and boldness, and that great assurance with which he delivered his dictates and determinations. Or, it may be meant of his disposition to do good with it. He was very free and communicative of his knowledge; had the gift of uttering his wisdom; was as free of his learning as he was of his meat; and grudged neither to any that were about him. Note, It is very desirable that those who have large gifts of any kind, should have large hearts to use them for the good of others; and this is from the hand of God, Eccl. 3. 24. He shall enlarge the heart, Ps. 119. 32.

The greatness of Solomon's wisdom is illustrated by comparing him with Chaldea and Egypt. They were nations famous for learning; thence the Greeks borrowed their's; but the greatest scholars of these nations, came short of Solomon, v. 30. If nature excels art, much more does grace. The knowledge which God gives by special favour, goes beyond that which man gets by his own labour. Some wise men there were in Solomon's time, who were in great repute; particularly, Heman, and others who were wont to sing the Swarthy; and the Septuagint has Solomon's songs, 1 Chron. 29. 5. Chalcol and Darda were own brothers, and they also were noted for learning and wisdom, but Solomon excelled them all; (v. 30.) he out-did them, and confounded them; his counsel was much more valuable.

III. The fame of it. It was talked of in all nations round about. His great wealth and glory made him famous in all the world, and his name is come to the utmost part of the world's end, monuments of his wisdom; and are, as other parts of scripture, of use to make us wise unto salvation. But beside those, it appears by what he spake, or dictated to be written from him, (1.) That he was a moralist, and a man of great prudence, for he spake three thousand proverbs, wise sayings, aphorisms, of admirable use for the conduct of human life. The world is much governed by proverbs, and was never better furnished with useful ones, than by Solomon. Whether these proverbs of Solomon that we have, were any part of the 3000, is uncertain. (2.) That he was a poet, and a man of great wit. His songs were a thousand and five, of which only one is extant, because that only was divinely inspired, which is therefore called his Song of songs. His wise instructions were communicated by proverbs, that they might be familiar to them he designed to teach, and ready on all occasions; by songs, that they might be pleasant, and move the affections. (3.) That he was a natural philosopher, and a man of great learning, and insight into the mysteries of nature: from his own and others' observations and experience, he wrote
of plants and animals, (v. 33) descriptions of their nature and qualities, and (some think) of the medicinal use of them.

2. In his conversation. There came persons from all parts, who were more inquisitive after knowledge than their predecessors, to hear the wisdom of Solomon, v. 34. Kings that had heard of it, sent their ambassadors to hear it, and to bring them instructions from it. Solomon's court was the staple of learning, and the rendezvous of philosophers, that is, the lovers of wisdom, who all came to light their candle at his lamp, and to borrow from him. Let those who magnify the modern learning above that of the ancients, produce such a treasure of knowledge, any where in these latter ages, as that was, which Solomon was master of; yet this puts an honour upon human learning, that Solomon was praised for it, and recommends it to the great men of the earth, as well worthy their diligent search. But, lastly, Solomon was, herein, a type of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and hid for use, for he is made of God to us, wisdom.

CHAP. V.

The great work which Solomon was raised up to do, was, the building of the temple; his wealth and wisdom were given him to qualify him for that. In this especial work, he was to be a type of Christ, for He shall build the temple of the Lord, Zech. 6. 12. In this chapter, we have an account of the preparations he made for that and his other buildings. Gold and silver his good father had prepared in abundance, but timber and stones must get ready; and about these we have him treating with Hiram king of Tyre. 1. Hiram congratulated him on his accession to the throne, v. 1. II. Solomon signified to him his design to build the temple, and desired him to furnish him with workmen, v. 2-6. III. Hiram agrees to do it, v. 7-9. IV. Solomon's work is, accordingly, well done, and Hiram's workmen well paid, v. 10-13.

1. AND Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon: (for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father;) for Hiram was ever a lover of David. 2. And Solomon sent to Hiram, saying, 3. Thou knowest how that David my father could not build a house unto the name of the Lord his God, for the wars which were about him on every side, until the Lord put them under the soles of his feet. 4. But now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurring. 5. And, behold, I purpose to build a house unto the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build a house unto my name. 6. Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar-trees out of Lebanon: and my servants shall be with thy servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants, according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians. 7. And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed be the Lord this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people. 8. And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for: and I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir. 9. My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea; and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be discharged there, and thou shalt receive them: and thou shalt accomplish my desire in giving food for my household.

We have here an account of the amicable correspondence between Solomon and Hiram. Tyre was a famous trading city, that lay close upon the sea, in the border of Israel; its inhabitants, (as should seem,) none of the devoted nations, nor ever at enmity with Israel; and therefore David never offered to destroy them, but lived in friendship with them. It is said here of Hiram of their king, that he was ever a lover of David; and we have reason to think he was a worshipper of the true God, and had him self renounced, though he could not reform the idol aty of his city. David's character will win the affection of those that are without. Here is,

I. Hiram's embassy of compliment to Solomon, v. 1. He sent, as is usual among princes, to con
dole with him on the death of David, and to renew his alliances with him upon his succession to the government. It is good keeping up friendship and communion with the families in which religion is uppermost.

II. Solomon's embassy of business to Hiram, sent, it is likely, by messengers of his own. In wealth, honour and power, Hiram was very much inferior to Solomon, yet Solomon has occasion to be behol
den to him, and begs his favour. Let us never look with disdain on those below us, because we know not how soon we may need them. Solomon, in his letter to Hiram, acquaints him,

1. With his design to build a temple to the honour of God. Some think that temples among the heathen took their first rise and copy from the tabernacle which Moses erected in the wilderness, and that there were none before that; however, there were many houses built in honour of the false gods, before this was built in honour of the God of Israel; so little is external splendour a mark of the true church. Solomon tells Hiram, (who was himself no stranger to the affair,) (1.) That David's wars were an obstruction to him, that he could not build this temple, though he designed it, v. 3. They took up much of his time, and thoughts, and cares; were a constant expense to him, and a constant em
clement of his subjects; and he thought the building of so well as it must be done, and therefore, it not being essential to religion, he must leave it to be done by his successor. See what need we have to pray, that God will give peace in our time, because, in time of war, the building of the gospel-temple commonly goes slowly on. (2.) That peace gave him an opportunity to build it, and therefore he resolved to set about it immediately. God has given the rest both at home and abroad, and we shall receive it, (v. 4.) no Satan, so the word is; no instrument of Satan to oppose it, or to divert us from it. Satan does all he can, to hinder temple-work, (1 Thess. 2. 18. Zech. 3. 1.) but when he is bound, (Rev. 20. 2.) we should be busy. When there is no evil oc
current, then let us be vigorous and zealous in that which is good, and get it forward. When the churches have rest, let them be edificed, Acts 9. 31.
Days of peace and prosperity present us with a fair gale, which we must account for, if we improve not. As God's providence excited Solomon to think of building the temple, by giving him wealth and leisure, so his promise encouraged him. God had told David, that his son should build him a house; (v. 4.) which he would make sure to be thus employed, and will not lose the honour designed him by that promise. It may stir us up much to good undertakings, to be assured of good success in them. Let God's promise quicken our endeavours.

2. With his desire that Hiram would assist him therein. Lebanon was the place whence timber must be had, a noble forest in the north of Canaan, particularly expressed in the grant, of that land to Israel, after their return from Egypt. (Deut. 1. 5.) So that Solomon was the proprietor of all its productions; the cedars of Lebanon are spoken of as, in a special manner, the planting of the Lord, (Ps. 104. 16.) being designed for Israel's use, and particularly for temple-service. But Solomon owns that though the trees were his, the Israelites could not skill to hew timber like the Sidonians, who were Hiram's subjects. Canaan was a land of wheat and barley, (Deut. 8. 8.) which employed Israel in the affairs of husbandry, so that they were not all versed in manufactures: in them, the Sidonians excelled. Israel, in the things of God, are a wise and understanding people; and yet, in curious arts, inferior to their neighbours: true piety is a much more valuable gift of heaven than the highest degree of ingenuity. Better be an Israelite skilful in the law, than a Sidonian skilful to hew timber. But, the case being thus, Solomon courts Hiram to send him workmen, and promises, (v. 6.) both to assist them, My servants shall work under them; and to pay them, Unto thee will I give hire for thy servants; for the labourer, even in church-work, though he be indeed its own wages, is worthy of his hire. The evangelical prophet, foretelling the glory of the church in the days of the Messiah, seems to allude to this story, Isa. 60. where he prophesies, (I. 1.) That the sons of strangers (such were the Tyrians and Sidonians) shall build up the wall of the gospel-temple, v. 10. Ministers were raised up among the Gentiles, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (2.) That the glory of Lebanon should be brought to it to beautify it, v. 13. All external endowments and advantages should be made serviceable to the interests of Christ's kingdom.

3. Hiram's reception of, and return to, this message.

(1.) He received it with great satisfaction to himself. He rejoiced greatly, (v. 7.) that Solomon trod in his father's steps, and carried on his designs, and was likely to be so great a blessing to his kingdom. Hiram's generous spirit rejoiced in this, and not only in the prospect he had of making an advantage to himself by Solomon's employing him. What he had the pleasure of, he gave God the praise of; Blessed be the Lord, which has given to David (who was himself a wise man) a wise son, to rule over his people, (Ps. 106. 30.) See here, [1.] What a fresh proof Hiram speaks of Solomon's wisdom, and the extent of his dominion; let us learn not to envy others either those secular advantages, or those endowments of the mind, wherein they excel us. [2.] What a great comfort it is to those who wish well to the Israel of God, to see religion and wisdom kept up in families from one generation to another, especially in great families, and that those who have the greatest influence on others, especially young people. See here, [1.] What a proof God must have of the grace of it. If to godly parents be given a godly seed, (Mal. 2. 15.) it is a token for good, and a happy indication, that the entail of the blessing shall not be cut off. [2.] He returned it with great satisfaction to Solomon, granting him what he desired, and showing himself very forward to assist him in this great and good work to which he was laying his hand. We have here his articles of agreement with Solomon concerning this affair, in which we may observe Hiram's prudence. [1.] He deliberated upon the proposal, before he returned an answer; (v. 8.) I have considered the things. It is common for those that make bargains rashly, afterward to wish them undone again. The virtuous woman considers a field, and then buys it, Prov. 31. 16. Those do not lose time, who take time to consider. [2.] He descended to particulars in the articles, that there might be no misunderstanding, and to avoid a quarrel. Solomon had spoken of hewing the trees, (v. 6.) and Hiram agrees to what he desired concerning that; (v. 8.) but nothing had been said concerning carriage; that matter therefore must be settled. Land-carriage would be very troublesome and chargeable, he therefore undertakes to bring all the timber down from Lebanon by sea; a coating voyage. Conveyance by water is a great convenience to trade, for which, God is to have praise, who taught Solomon that disagreeable practice. Observe what a punctual bargain Hiram made; Solomon must appoint the place where the timber shall be delivered, and thither Hiram will undertake to bring it, and he responsible for its safety. As the Sidonians excelled the Israelites in timber-work, so they did in sailing, for Tyre and Sidon were situate at the entry of the sea; (Ezek. 27. 3.) they therefore were fittest to take care of the water-carriage: Tractant fabrilia nave—Every artist has his trade assigned. And, lastly, If Hiram undertake for the work, and do all Solomon's desire concerning the timber, (v. 8.) he justly expects that Solomon shall undertake for the wages: Thou shalt accomplish my desire in giving food for my household, (v. 9.) not only for the workmen, but for my own family. If Tyre supplies Israel with craftsmen, Israel will supply Tyre with corn, Ezek. 27. 17. Thus, by the wise disposal of Providence, one country has need of another, and is benefited by another, that there may be mutual correspondence and dependence, to the glory of God, our common Parent.

10. So Hiram gave Solomon cedar-trees, and fir-trees, according to all his desire. 11. And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year. 12. And the Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a league together. 13. And king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men. 14. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses; a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home: and Adoniram was over the levy. 15. And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains: 16. Besides the chief of Solomon's officers which were over the work, three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that wrought in the work. 17. And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the
house. 18. And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did Hew them, and the stone-squarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.

Here is,

I. The performance of the agreement between Solomon and Hiram: each of the parties made good its engagement. 1. Hiram delivered Solomon the timber, according to his bargain, v. 10. The trees were Solomon's; but, perhaps, Materiae succubati quae—The workmanship was of more value than the article. Hiram is therefore said to deliver the trees. 2. Solomon conveyed to Hiram the corn which he had promised him, v. 11. Thus let justice be followed, (as the expression is, Deut. 16. 20.) justice on both sides, in every bargain.

II. The confirmation of the friendship that was between them hereby. God gave Solomon wisdom; (v. 12.) that was more and better than any thing Hiram did or could give him; but this made Hiram love him, and enabled Solomon to improve his kindness, so that they were both willing to ripen their mutual love into a mutual league, that it might be lasting. It is wisdom to strengthen our friendship with those we find to be honest and fair, lest new friends prove not so firm and so kind as old ones.

III. The labourers whom Solomon employed in preparing materials for the temple. 1. Some were Israelites, who were employed in the more easy and honourable part of the work, felling trees, and helping to square them, in conjunction with Hiram's servants; for this he appointed 30,000, but employed only 10,000 at a time, so that, for one month's work, they had two months' vacation, both for rest, and for the despatch of their own affairs at home, v. 13, 14. It was temple-service, yet Solomon takes care that they shall not be over-worked; great men ought to consider that their servants must rest as well as they. 2. Others were captives of other nations, who were to bear burdens, and to hew stone; (v. 15.) and we read not that these had their resting times as the other had, for they were doomed to servitude. 3. There were some employed as directors and overseers, (v. 16.) 3,300 that ruled over the people, and they were as necessary and useful in their place as the labourers in their's. Here, we see many hands and many eyes employed, for preparation was now to be made, not only for the temple, but for all the rest of Solomon's buildings, both at Jerusalem and here in the forest of Lebanon, and in other places of his dominion, of which see, ch. 9. 17-19. He speaks of the vastness of his undertakings, (Ecc. 2. 4.) I made me great works, which required this vast number of workmen.

IV. The laying of the foundation of the temple: for that, he thought, was the beginning, and, therefore he begins with that, v. 17, 18. It should seem, Solomon was himself present, and president, at the founding of the temple, and that the first stone (as has been usual in famous buildings) was laid with some solemnity. Solomon commanded, and they brought costly stones for the foundation; he would do every thing like himself, generously, and therefore would have some of the costliest stones laid in the foundation, though being out of sight, worse might have served. Christ, who is laid for a Foundation, is an elect and precious Stone; (Isa. 28. 16.) and the foundations of the church are said to be laid with sapphires, Isa. 54. 11. Compare Rev. 21. 19. That sincerity which is our gospel-perfection, obliges us to lay our foundation firm, and to bestow most pains on that part of our religion which lies out of the sight of men.
1. because it was, 1. Directed and modelled by him. Infinite Wisdom was the architect, and gave David the plan or pattern by the Spirit, not by word of mouth only, but, for the greater certainty and exactness, by visions (1 Chron. 28. 11, 12, 19) as he had given to Moses in the manner of a draught of the tabernacle. 2. Dedicated and devoted to him and to his honour, to be employed in his service; so his, as never any other house was, for he manifested his glory in it, (so as never in any other,) in a way agreeable to that dispensation; for when there were carnal ordinances, there was a worldly sanctuary, Heb. 9. 1, 10. This gave it its beauty of holiness, that it was the house of the Lord, which far transcended all its other beauties.

II. The time when it began to be built, is exactly set down. 1. It was just 480 years after the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt; allowing 40 years to Moses, 17 to Jeshua, 299 to the Judges, 40 to Eli, 40 to Samuel and Saul, 40 to David, and 4 to Solomon, before he began the work, we have just the sum of 480. So long it was, after that holy state was founded, before that holy house was built, which, in less than 430 years, was burnt by Nebuchadnezzar; it was thus deferred, because Israel had, by their sins, rendered themselves unworthy of this honour, and because God would show how little he values external pomp and splendor in his service; he was in no haste for a temple. David's tent, which was clean and convenient, though it was neither stately nor rich, nor, for what is of more regard, even consecrated, is called the house of the Lord, (2 Sam. 12. 20,) and served as well as Solomon's temple; yet, when God gave Solomon great wealth, he put it into his heart thus to employ it, and graciously accepted him, chiefly, because it was to be a shadow of good things to come, Heb. 9. 9. 2. It was in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, the three first years being taken up in settling the affairs of his kingdom, that he might not find an embarrassment from the delay in this work. It is not time lost, which is spent in commissioning ourselves for the work of God, and discontinuing ourselves from every thing which might distract or divert us; during this time, he was adding to the preparations which his father had made, (1 Chron. 22. 14,) hewing the stone, squaring the timber, and getting every thing ready, so that he is not to be blamed for slackness in deferring it so long; for it is God's work, when we are preparing for his service, and furnishing ourselves for it.

III. The materials are brought in, ready for their place; (v. 7,) so ready, that there was neither hammer nor axe heard in the house, while it was building. In all this building, Solomon prescribes it as a rule of prudence, to prepare the work in the field, and hire laborers to build, Prov. 24. 27. But here, it seems, the preparations were somewhat more solemn, full and exact, to that degree, that, when the several parts came to be put together, there was nothing defective to be added, nothing amiss to be amended; it was to be the temple of the God of peace, and therefore no iron tool must be heard in it. Quietness and silence both, become and befriended religious exercises. God's work should be done aloud and surely, and little noise as may be. The temple was thrown down with axes and hammers; and they that did it, roared in the midst of the congregation; (Ps. 74. 4, 6,) but it was built up in silence. Clamour and violence, often hinder, but never further, the work of God.

IV. The dimensions are laid down, (v. 2, 3,) according to the rules of proportion. Some observe that the length and breadth were just double to that of the tabernacle. Now that Israel was grown more numerous, the place of their meeting needed to be enlarged; (Isa. 54. 1, 2,) and now that they were grown richer, they were the better able to enlarge it. Where God sows plentifully, he expects to reap so.

V. An account of the windows, (v. 4,) they were broad within, and narrow without, margin. Such should the eyes of our mind be, reflecting nearer on ourselves than on other people, looking much within, to judge ourselves, but little without, to censure our brethren. The narrowness of the lights intimated the darkness of that dispensation, in common with the gospel-day. The chambers are described, (v. 5, 6,) in which the utensils of the tabernacle were carefully laid up, the priests dressed and undressed themselves, and left the clothes in which they ministered; probably, in some of these chambers they feasted upon the holy things, they served as vestries. Solomon was not so intent upon the magnificence of the house, as to neglect the conveniences that were requisite for the offices thereof, that every thing might be done decently and in order; care was taken that the beams should not be fastened in the walls to weaken them, v. 6. Let not the church's strength be impaired, under pretence of adding to its beauty or convenience.

11. And the word of the Lord came to Solomon, saying, 12. Concerning this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father: 13. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel. 14. So Solomon built the house, and finished it.

Here is, 1. The word God sent to Solomon, when he was engaged in building the temple; God let him know that he took notice of what he was doing, the house he was now building, v. 12. None employ themselves for God, without having his eye upon them; I know thy works, thy good works. He assured him that if he would proceed and persevercure in obedience to the divine law, and keep in the way of duty and truth, and truly and very worshipfully, the kindling-light should be drawn out both to himself, I will perform my word with thee, and to his kingdom, "Israel shall be ever owned as my people; I will dwell among them, and not forsake them." This word God sent him, probably, by a prophet; (1.) That, by the promise, he might be encouraged and comforted in his work: perhaps, sometimes the great care, expense, and fatigue of it, made him so ready to wish, that he might be thought to do no good, but this would help him through the difficulties of it, that the promised establishment of his family and kingdom would abundantly recompense all his pains. An eye to the promise will carry us cheerfully through our work; and these who wish well to the public, will think nothing too much that they can do, to secure and perpetuate to it the tokens of God's presence. Though by the condition annexed, he might be weakened to consider that though he built the temple ever so strong, the glory of it would soon depart, unless he and his people continued to walk in God's statutes. God plainly lets him know that all this charge which he and his people were at, in erecting this temple, would neither excuse them from obedience to the law of God, nor shelter them from his judgments, in case of disobedience: keeping God's command
ments is better, and more pleasing to him, than building churches.

2. The work Solomon did for God. So he built the house; (v. 14.) so animated by the message God had sent him, so admonished not to expect that God should own his building, unless he were obedient to his laws; "Lord, I proceed upon these terms, being firmly resolved to walk in thy statutes." The strictness of God's government will never drive a good man from his service, but quicken him in it. Solomon built and finished, he went on with it, and God went along with him till it was completed; it is spoken, both to God's praise and his: he grew not weary of the work, met not with any obstructions, (as Ezra 4. 24.) did not outbuild his property, nor do it by halves, but, having begun to build, was both able and willing to finish, for he was a wise builder.

15. And he built the walls of the house within with boards of cedar, both the floor of the house and the walls of the ceiling: and he covered them on the inside with wood, and covered the floor of the house with planks of fir. 16. And he built twenty cubits on the sides of the house, both the floor and the walls, with boards of cedar: he even built them for it within, even for the oracle, even for the most holy place. 17. And the house, that is, the temple before it, was forty cubits long. 18. And the cedar of the house, within was carved with knops and open flowers: all was cedar; there was no stone seen. 19. And the oracle he prepared in the house within, to set there the ark of the covenant of the Lord. 20. And the oracle in the forepart was twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in the height thereof: and he overlaid it with pure gold; and so covered the altar which was of cedar. 21. So Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold: and he made a partition by the chains of gold before the oracle; and he overlaid it with gold. 22. And the whole house he overlaid with gold, until he had finished all the house: also the whole altar that was by the oracle he overlaid with gold. 23. And within the oracle he made two cherubims of olive-tree, each ten cubits high. 24. And five cubits was the one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the other wing of the cherub: from the uttermost part of the one wing unto the uttermost part of the other were ten cubits. 25. And the other cherub was ten cubits: both the cherubims were of one measure and one size. 26. The height of the one cherub was ten cubits, and so was it of the other cherub. 27. And he set the cherubins within the inner house: and they stretched forth the wings of the cherubins, so that the wing of the one touched the one wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; and their wings touched one another in the midst of the house. 28. And he overlaid the cherubims with gold. 29. And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubins and palm-trees and open flowers, within and without. 30. And the floor of the house he overlaid with gold, within and without. 31. And for the entering of the oracle he made doors of olive-tree: the lintel and side-posts were a fifth part of the wall. 32. The two doors also were of olive-tree; and he carved upon them carvings of cherubins and palm-trees and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold, and spread gold upon the cherubins and upon the palm-trees. 33. So also made he for the door of the temple, posts of olive-tree, a fourth part of the wall. 34. And the two doors were of fir-tree: the two leaves of the one door were folding, and the two leaves of the other door were folding. 35. And he carved thereon cherubins and palm-trees and open flowers; and covered them with gold fitted upon the carved work. 36. And he built the inner court with three rows of hewed stone, and a row of cedar-beams. 37. In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of the Lord laid, in the month Zif: 38. And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul, (which is the eighth month,) was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years in building it.

Here is,

The wainscot of the temple described; it was of cedar; (v. 15.) which was strong and durable, and of a very sweet smell; the wainscot was curiously carved with knops (like eggs or apples) and flowers, no doubt, as the fashion then was, v. 18.

II. The gilding; it was not like ours, washed over, but the whole house, all the inside of the temple, (v. 23.) even the floor, (v. 30.) he overlaid with gold, and the most holy place with pure gold, v. 21. Solomon would refuse no expense necessary to make it every way sumptuous; gold was under foot there, as it should be in all the living temples, the abundance of it lessened its worth.

III. The oracle, or speaking place, (for so the word signifies,) the holy of holies, so called, because from thence God spake to Moses, and perhaps to the High Priest, when he consulted with the breast-plate of judgment; in this place, the ark of the covenant was to be set, v. 19. Solomon made every thing new, and more magnificent than it had been, except the ark, which was still the same that Moses made, with its mercy-seat and cherubins; that was the token of God's presence, which is always the same with his people, whether they meet in tent or temple, and changes not with their condition.

IV. The cherubims. Beside those at the ends of the mercy seat, which covered the ark, I. Solomon set up two more, very large ones, images of young men, (as some think,) with wings made of olive-wood, and all overlaid with gold, v. 23, &c. This most holy place was much larger than that in the tabernacle, and therefore the ark would seem lest
in it, and the dead wall would have been unsightly, if it had not been thus adorned. 2. He carved cherubims upon all the walls of the house, v. 29. The heathen set up images of their Gods, and worshipped them; these were designed to represent the servants and attendants of the God of Israel, the holy angels, not to be themselves worshipped, (See thou do it not,) but to show how great He is, whom we are to worship.

V. The doors. The following doors that led into the oracle, were but a fifth part of the wall; (v. 31.) those into the temple were a fourth part; (v. 33.) but both were beautified with cherubims engraven on them, v. 32, 35.

VI. The inner court, in which the brazen altar was, and at which the priests ministered; this was separated from the court, where the people were, by a low wall, three rows of hewn stone topped with larger ones of cedar, (v. 36.) and over it the people might see what was done, and hear what the priests said to them, for, when under that dispensation, they were not kept wholly either in the dark, or at a distance.

Lastly, The time spent in this building; it was but seven years and a half from the founding to the finishing of it, v. 38. Considering the vastness and elegance of the building, and the many appurtenances to it, it was necessary to set it up in haste; it was soon done; Solomon was in earnest in it, had money enough, had nothing to divert him from it, and many hands made quick work; he finished it (as the margin reads it) with all the appurtenances thereof, and with all the ordinances thereof; not only built the place, but set forward the work which it was built for.

Let us now see what was typified by this temple.

1. Christ is the true Temple, He himself spake of the temple of his body, John 2. 21. God himself prepared him his body, Heb. 10. 5. In him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead, as the Shechinah in the temple; in him meet all God's spiritual Israel; through him we have access with confidence to God; all the angels of God, those blessed cherubims, have a charge to worship him.

2. Every believer is a living temple, in whom the Spirit of God dwells, 1 Cor. 3. 16. Even the body is such by virtue of its union with the soul, 1 Cor. 6. 19. We are not only wonderfully made, by the divine providence, but more wonderfully made anew, by the divine graces; this living temple is built upon Christ as its Foundation, and will be perfect in due time.

3. The gospel-church is the mystical temple, it grows to a holy temple in the Lord, (Eph. 2. 21.) enriched with all the graces the Spirit, as Solomon's temple with gold and precious stones; only Jews built the tabernacle, but Gentiles join with them in building the temple; even strangers and foreigners are built up, a habitation of God, Eph. 2. 19. 22. The temple was divided into the holy place, and the most holy, the courts of it into the outer and inner; so, there is the visible and the invisible church; the door into the temple was more than into the oracle; many enter into possession, that come short of salvation. This temple is built firm, upon a Rock, not to be taken down, as the tabernacle of the Old Testament was. The temple was long in preparing, but was built at last; the top-stone of the gospel-church will, at length, be brought forth with shoutings, and it is a pity that there should be the clashing of axes and hammers in the building of it. Angels are ministering spirits, attending the church on all sides, and all the members of it.

4. Heaven is the everlasting temple; there the church will be fixed, and no longer moveable; the streets of the new Jerusalem, in allusion to the flooring of the temple, are said to be of pure gold,

Rev. 21. 21. The cherubims there, always attend the throne of glory. The temple was uniform, and in heaven there is the perfection of beauty and harmony. In Solomon's temple, there was no noise of axes and hammers, every thing is quiet and serene in heaven; all that shall be stones in that building, must, in the present state of probation and preparation, be fitted and made ready for it, must be hewn and squared by divine grace, and so made meet for a place there.

CHAP. VII.

As, in the story of David, the chapter of wars and victories follows another, so, in the story of Solomon, one chapter of this building follows another. In this chapter, we have, 1. His fitting up several buildings for himself and his own use, v. 1. 12. 11. His furnishing the temple which he had built for God, 1. With two pillars, v. 13. 22. 2. With a molten sea, v. 23. 26. 3. With ten basins of brass, (v. 27. 37.) and ten lavers upon them, v. 38. 39. 4. With all the other utensils of the temple, v. 40. 5. With the things that his father had dedicated, v. 51. The particular description of these things was not needless when it was written, nor is it now useless.

1. BUT Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house. 2. He built also the house of the forest of Lebanon; the length thereof was a hundred cubits, and the breadth thereof fifty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits, upon four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams upon the pillars. 3. And it was covered with cedar above upon the beams, that lay upon forty-five pillars, fifteen in a row. 4. And there were windows in three rows, and light was against light in three ranks. 5. And all the doors and posts were square, with the windows: and light was against light in three ranks. 6. And he made a porch of pillars; the length thereof was fifty cubits, and the breadth thereof thirty cubits: and the porch was before them; and the other pillars and the thick beam were before them. 7. Then he made a porch for the throne, where he might judge, even the porch of judgment: and it was covered with cedar from one side of the floor to the other. 8. And his house where he dwelt had another court within the porch, which was of the like work. Solomon made also a house for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken to wife, like unto this porch. 9. All these were of costly stones, (according to the measures of hewed stones, sawed with saws,) within and without, even from the foundation unto the coping, and so on the outside toward the great court. 10. And the foundation was of costly stones, even great stones; stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits. 11. And above were costly stones, (after the measures of hewed stones,) and cedars. 12. And the great court round about was with three rows of hewed stones, and a row of cedar beams, both for the inner court of the house of the Lord, and for the porch of the house.
I. KINGS, VII.

Never had any man so much of the spirit of building as Solomon had, never man built to better purpose; he began with the temple, built for God first, and then all his other buildings were comfortable. The surest foundations of a lasting prosperity are those which are laid in an early piety.

Math. 6. 38. 1. He built a house for himself, (v. 1.) where he dwelt, v. 8. His father had built a good house; but it was no reflection upon his father for him to build a better, in proportion to the estate wherewith God had blessed him; much of the comfort of this life is connected with an agreeable house. He was thirteen years building this house, whereas he built the temple in little more than seven years; not that he was more exact, but less eager and intent, in building this great house of his own, than he had been in building the temple, which was in no haste for his own palace, but impatient till the temple was finished, and fit for use; thus we ought to prefer God’s honour before our own ease and satisfaction.

2. He built the house of the forest at Lebanon, (v. 2.) supposed to be a country-seat near Jerusalem, so called from the pleasantness of its situation, and the trees that encompassed it. I rather incline to think that it was a house built in the forest of Lebanon itself, whither (though far distant from Jerusalem) Solomon (having so many chariots and horses, and those dispersed into chariot-cities, which, probably, were his stages) might frequently retire with ease; it does not appear that his throne, mentioned v. 7, was at the house of the forest of Lebanon, and it was not at all improper to put his shields there as in a magazine. Express notice is taken of his buildings, not only in Jerusalem, but in Lebanon; (ch. 9. 19.) and we read of the tower of Lebanon, which looks toward Damascus, (Cant. 7. 4.) which, probably, was part of this house. A particular account is given of this house: That, being built in Lebanon, a place famed for cedars, the pillars, and beams, and roof, were all cedar, (v. 2. 3.) and, being designed for pleasant prospects, there were three story windows on each side, light against light, (v. 4. 5.) or, as it may be read, prospect against prospect. Those whose lot is cast in the country, may be well reconciled to a country-life by this, that some of the greatest princes have thought those the most pleasant of their days, which they have spent in their country retirements.

3. He built piazzas before one of his houses, either that at Jerusalem, or that in Lebanon, which were called side-houses, and not for use, but for an exchange, or a guard-house, or for those to walk in, that attended him about business, till they could have audience, or for state and magnificence. He himself speaks of Wisdom’s building her house, and hewing out her seven pillars, (Prov. 9. 1.) for the shelter of them that, three verses before, (ch. 8. 34.) are said to watch daily at her gates, and wait by the post of her doors.

4. At his house, where he dwelt in Jerusalem, he built a great hall, or porch of judgment, where was set the throne, or king’s bench, for the trial of causes, in which he himself was appealed to, (Placita coram insu rege tenenda—Causes were to be adjusted in the king’s presence,) and this was richly wainscoted with cedar, from the floor to the roof, v. 7. He had there also another court within the porch, nearer his house, of smaller work, for his attendants to walk in, v. 8.

5. He built a house for his wife, where she kept her court, v. 8. It is said to be like the porch, because built of cedar like it, though not in the same form; this, no doubt, was nearer adjoining to his own palace, yet perhaps if it had been as near as it ought to have been, Solomon would not have multiplied wives as he did.

The wonderful magnificence of all these buildings is taken notice of, v. 9, &c. All the materials were the best of their kind; the foundation stones were costly for their size, four or five yards square, or, at least, so many yards long, (v. 10.) and the stones of the building, costly for the workmanship, hewn and sawn, and, in all respects, finely wrought, v. 9, 11. The court of his own house was like that of the temple; (v. 12. compare ch. 6. 36.) so well did he like the model of God’s courts, that he made his own by it.

13. And king Solomon sent, and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. 14. He was a widow’s son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work. 15. For he cast two pillars of brass, of eighteen cubits high apiece; and a line of twelve cubits did compass either of them about. 16. And he made two chapters of molten brass, to set upon the tops of the pillars: the height of the one chapter was five cubits, and the height of the other chapter was five cubits: 17. And nets of chequer-work, and wreaths of chain-work, for the chapters which were upon the top of the pillars; seven for the one chapter, and seven for the other chapter. 18. And he made the pillars, and two rows round about upon the one net-work, to cover the chapters that were upon the top, with pomegranates: and so did he for the other chapter. 19. And the chapters that were upon the top of the pillars were of lily-work in the porch, four cubits. 20. And the chapters upon the two pillars had pomegranates also above, over against the belly which was by the net-work: and the pomegranates were two hundred, in rows round about upon the other chapter. 21. And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin; and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz. 22. And upon the top of the pillars was lily-work: so was the work of the pillars finished. 23. And he made a molten sea, ten cubits from the one brim to the other: it was round about, and his height was five cubits; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about. 24. And under the brim of it round about there were knops compassing it, ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about: the knops were cast in two rows, when it was cast. 25. It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east: and the sea was set above upon
upon them, and all their hinder parts were inward. 26. And it was a hand-breadth thick, and the brim thereof was wrought like the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies: it contained two thousand baths. 27. And he made ten bases of brass: four cubits was the length of one base, and four cubits the breadth thereof, and three cubits the height of it. 28. And the work of the bases was on this manner: they had borders, and the borders were between the ledges: 29. And on the borders that were between the ledges were lions, oxen, and cherubims: and upon the ledges there was a base above: and beneath the lions and oxen were certain additions made of thin work. 30. And every base had four brazen wheels, and plates of brass; and the four corners thereof had undersetters: under the laver were undersetters molten, at the side of every addition. 31. And the mouth of it, within the chaper and above, was a cubit: but the mouth thereof was round, after the work of the base, a cubit and a half; and also upon the mouth of it were gravings with their borders, foursquare, not round. 32. And under the borders were four wheels; and the axle-trees of the wheels were joined to the base, and the height of a wheel was a cubit and half a cubit. 33. And the work of the wheels was like the work of a chariot-wheel; their axle-trees, and their waves, and their felloes, and their spokes, were all molten. 34. And there were four undersetters to the four corners of one base: and the undersetters were of the very base itself. 35. And in the top of the base was there a round compass of half a cubit high: and on the top of the base, the ledges thereof, and the borders thereof, were of the same. 36. For on the plates of the ledges thereof, and on the borders thereof, he graved cherubims, lions, and palm-trees, according to the proportion of every one, and additions round about. 37. After this manner he made the ten bases: all of them had one casting, one measure, and one size. 38. Then made he ten layers of brass: one layer contained forty baths: and every layer was four cubits: and upon every one of the ten bases one layer. 39. And he put five bases on the right side of the house, and five on the left side of the house; and he set the sea on the right side of the house eastward, over against the south. 40. And Hiram made the lavers, and the shovels, and the basins. So Hiram made an end of doing all the work that he made king Solomon for the house of the LORD; 41. The two pillars, and the two bowls of the chaperits which were upon the top of the pillars; 42. And four hundred pomegranates for the two net-works, even two rows of pomegranates for one net-work, to cover the two bowls of the chaperits that were upon the pillars; 43. And the ten bases, and ten lavers on the bases, 44. And one sea, and twelve oxen under the sea; 45. And the pots, and the shovels, and the basins: and all these vessels, which Hiram made to king Solomon for the house of the LORD, were of bright brass. 46. In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarthan. 47. And Solomon left all the vessels unweighed, because they were exceeding many: neither was the weight of the brass found out.

We have here an account of the brass-work about the temple; there was no iron about the temple, but we find David preparing for the temple iron for things of iron, 1 Chron. 29. 2. What those things were, we have been told, but some of the things of brass are here described, and the rest mentioned.

I. The brasier whom Solomon employed to preside in this part of the work, was, Hiram, or Huram, (2 Chron. 4. 11.) who was, by his mother's side, an Israelite, of the tribe of Naphtali, by his father's side, a man of Tyre, v. 14. If he had the ingenuity of a Tyrian, and the affection of an Israelite to the house of God, (the head of a Tyrian, and the heart of an Israelite,) it was happy that the blood of the two nations mixed in him, whereby he was qualified for the work to which he was designed. As the tabernacle was built with the wealth of Egypt, so the temple with the wit of Tyre. God will serve himself by the common gifts of the children of men.

II. The brass he made use of, was, the best he could get; all the brazen vessels were of bright brass, (v. 45.) good brass, so the Chaldee, that which was strongest, and looked finest; God, who is the best, must be served and honoured with the best.

III. The place where all the brazen vessels were cast, was, the plain of Jordan, because the ground there was stiff and clayey, fit to make mould of, for the casting of the brass; (v. 46.) and Solomon would not have this meaner work done in or near Jerusalem.

IV. The quantity was not accounted for, the vessels were unnumbered, (so it may be read, v. 47.) as well as unweighed, because they were exceeding many, and it would have been an endless thing to keep the account of them; neither was the weight of the brass, when it was delivered to the workmen, searched or inquired into; so honest were the workmen, and such great plenty of brass they had, that there was no danger of wanting: we must ascribe it to Solomon's care, that he provided so much, not to his carelessness, that he kept no account of it.

V. Some particulars of the brass-work are described.

1. Two brazen pillars, which were set up in the porch of the temple; (v. 21.) whether under the cover of the porch, or in the open air, is not certain; it was between the temple and the court of the priests. These pillars were neither to hang vessels upon nor to rest any building upon, but purely for ornament and significance. (I.) What an ornament they were, we may gather from the account here
given of the curious work that was about them, chequed-work, chain-work, net-work, lily-work; and pomegranates in rows, and all of bright brass; and fruited, no doubt, according to the best rules of proportion, to please the eye. (2.) Their significance is intimated in the names given them; (v. 21.) Jachin—He will establish; and Boaz—In him is strength. Some think they were intended for memorials of the pillar and cloud of fire, which led Israel! Others think they were designed for memoranda to the priests and others that came to worship at God’s door, [1.] To depend upon God only, and not upon any sufficiency of their own, for strength and establishment in all their religious exercises. When we come to wait upon God, and find our hearts wandering and un-fixed, then, by faith, let us fetch in help from heaven; Jachin—God will fix this roving mind; It is a godly thing to depend upon grace. We find ourselves weak and unable for holy duties, but this is our encouragement, Boaz—In him is our strength, who works in us both to will and to do. I will go in the strength of the Lord God. Spiritual strength and stability are to be had at the door of God’s temple, where we must wait for the gifts of grace, in the use of the means of grace and memoranda to the same. [2.] Strength and establishment of the temple of God among them. Let them keep close to God and duty, and they should never lose their dignities and privileges, but the grant should be confirmed and perpetuated to them. The gospel-church is what God will establish, and what he will strengthen, and what the gates of hell cannot prevail against. But with respect to this temple, when it was destroyed, particular notice is taken of the destroying of these pillars, (2 Kings 25. 13, 17,) which had been the tokens of its establishment, and would have been so, if they had not forsaken God.

2. A brazen sea; a very large vessel, above five yards diameter, and which contained above 300 barrels of water for the priests’ use, in washing themselves, conducting the sacrifices, and keeping the courts of the temple clean, v. 23, 25. It stood raised upon the figures of twelve oxen in brass, so high, that either they must have stairs to climb up to it, or cocks at the bottom to draw water from it. The Gibeonites, or Nethinim, who were to draw water for the house of God, had the care of filling it. Some think Solomon made the images of oxen to support this great cistern, in contempt of the golden calf, which Israel had worshipped, that (as Bishop Patrick, expresses it,) the people might there was nothing worthy of adoration in those figures: they were fitter to make posts of, than to make gods of. Yet this prevailed not to prevent Jeroboam’s setting up the calves for deities. In the court of the tabernacle, there was only a laver of brass provided to wash in, but in the court of the temple, a sea of brass; intimating that by the gospel of Christ, much fuller preparation is made for our cleansing, than was by the law of Moses. And as there had been a laver, this a sea; a fountain opened, Zech. 13. 1.

3. Ten bases, or stands, or stools, of brass, on which were put ten lavers, to be filled with water for the service of the temple, because there would not be room at the molten sea for all that had occasion to wash there. The bases on which the lavers were fixed, are very largely described here, v. 27, 28. They were ten in number, and stood on wheels, that the lavers might be removed as there was occasion; but, ordinarily, they stood in two rows, five on one side of the court, and five on the other, v. 39. Each laver contained forty baths, that is, about ten barrels, v. 38. They must be very clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Spiritual priests and spiritual sacrifices must be washed in the laver of Christ’s blood, and of regeneration. We must wash often, for we daily contract pollution; cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts. Plentiful provision is made for our cleansing; so that if we have our lot for ever among the unclean, it will be our own fault.

4. Beside these, there was a vast number of brass pots made to boil the flesh of the peace-offerings in, which the priests and offerers were to feast upon before the Lord; (see 1 Sam. 2. 14,) also show-bread, and wine, and the tongs, of gold; 50. And the bowls, and the snuffers, and the basins, and the spoons, and the censors, of pure gold; and the hinges of gold, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the house, to wit, of the temple. 51. So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the Lord. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the Lord.

Here is,

1. The making of the gold-work of the temple, which, it seems, was done last, for with it the work of the house of God ended. All within doors was gold, and all made new, except the ark, with its mercy-seat and cherubims, the old ones being either melted down, or laid by—the golden altar, table, and candlestick, with all their appurtenances. The altar of incense was still one, for Christ and his intercession are so: but he made ten golden tables, 2 Chron. 4. 8. (though here mention is made of that one only, on which the shew-bread was, v. 48. which we may suppose larger than the rest, and to which the rest were as sideboards,) and ten golden candlesticks, (v. 49.) intimating the much greater plenty both of spiritual food and heavenly light, which the gospel blesses us with, than the law of Moses did, or could afford.

Even the hinges of the doors were of gold, (v. 50,) that every thing might be alike magnificent, and bespeak Solomon’s generosity. Some suspect that every thing was made thus splendid in God’s temple, to keep the people from idolatry, for none of the idol-temples were so rich and fine as this: but how little the expedient availed, the event showed.

2. The bringing in of the dedicated things, which his father had devoted to the honour of God, v. 51. What was not expended in the building and furni-
ture, was laid up in the treasury, for repairs, expiencies, and the constant charge of the temple-service. What the parents have dedicated to God, the children ought by no means to alienate or recall; they should cheerfully confirm what was intended for pious and charitable uses, that they may, with their estates, inherit the blessing.


CHAP. VIII.

The building and furniture of the temple were very glorious, but the dedication of it exceeds in glory, as much as prayer and praise, the work of saints, exceed the casting of metal, and the graving of stones, the work of the craftsman. The temple was designed for the keeping up of the correspondence between God and his people; and here we have an account of the solemnity of their first meeting there. 1. The representatives of all Israel were called together, (v. 12.) to keep a feast to the honour of the Lord, for fourteen days, v. 8. II. The priests brought the ark into the most holy place, and fixed it there, v. 3-9. III. God took possession of it by a cloud, v. 10, 11. IV. Solomon, with thankful acknowledgment to God, informed the people touching the occasion of their meeting, v. 12. 21. V. In a long prayer, he recommended to God's gracious acceptance all the prayers that should be made in or toward this place, v. 22. 53. VI. He desired a divine presence by a blessing, and an exhortation, v. 54-61. VII. He offered abundance of sacrifices, on which he and his people feasted, and so parted, with great satisfaction, v. 62-66. These were Israel's golden days; days of the Son of man in type.

1. Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion. 2. And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon at the feast, in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month. 3. And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. 4. And they brought up the ark of the Lord, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, even those did the priests and the Levites bring up. 5. And king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled unto him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude. 6. And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims. 7. For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark, and the staves thereof, above. 8. And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy place before the oracle, and they were not seen without: and there they are unto this day. 9. There was nothing in the ark, save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. 10. And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, 11. So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.

The temple, though richly beautified, while without the ark, was like a body without a soul, or a candlestick without a candle, or (to speak more properly) a house without an inhabitant. All the cost and pains bestowed on this stately structure were lost, if God do not accept them and exclaim he is pleased to own it, as the place where he will record his name, it is, after all, but a ruinous heap; when therefore all the work is ended, (ch. 7. 51.) the one thing needful is yet behind, and that is, the bringing in of the ark. This therefore is the end and crown the work, and which here we have an account of the doing of with great solemnity.

I. Solomon presides in this service, as David did in the bringing up of the ark to Jerusalem; and neither of them thought it below him to follow the ark, or to lead the people in their attendance on it. Solomon glories in the title of the preacher, (Eccl. 1. 1.) and the master of assemblies, Eccl. 12. 11. This great assembly he summons, (v. 1.) and he is the centre of it, for to him they all assemble, (v. 2.) at the feast of the seventh month, namely, to offer the seven sacrifices, which the Levites performed in the fifteenth day of that month, Lev. 23. 34. David, like a very good man, brings the ark to a convenient place, near him; Solomon, like a very great man, brings it to a magnificent place. As every man has received the gift, so let him minister; and let children proceed in God's service there where their parents left off.

II. All Israel attend the service; their judges, and the chief of their tribes and families; all their officers, civil and military; and (as they speak in the north) the heads of their clans. A convention of these might well be called an assembly of all Israel; these came together, on this occasion, 1. To do honour to Solomon, and to return him the thanks of the nation for all the good offices he had done, in kindness to them. 2. To do honour to the ark, to pay respect to it, and testify their universal joy and satisfaction in its settlement. The adornment of the ark in external splendor, though it has often proved too strong a temptation to its hypocritical followers, yet, because it may prove an advantage to its true interests, is to be rejoiced in (with trembling) by all that wish well to it. Public mercies call for public acknowledgments. They that appeared before the Lord, did not appear empty, for they all sacrificed an innumerable supply. The people, in Solomon's time, were very rich, very easy, and very cheerful, and therefore it was fit that, on this occasion, they should consecrate not only their cheerfulness, but a part of their wealth, to God and his honour.

III. The priests do part of the service. In the wilderness, the Levites were to carry the ark, because then there were not priests enough to do it; but here, (for the last time that the ark was to be carried,) the priests themselves did it, as they were ordered to do, when it surrounded Jericho. We are here told, 1. What was in the ark; nothing but the two tables of stone, (v. 9.) a treasure far exceeding all the dedicated things both of David and Solomon. The pot of manna, and Aaron's rod, were by the ark, but not in it. 2. What was brought up with the ark, (v. 4.) the tabernacle of the congregation. It is probable that that which Moses set up in the wilderness, which was in Gibeon, and that which David pitched in Zion,
were both brought to the temple, to which they led, as it were, surrender all their holiness, merging in it of that temple; which must, henceforward be the place where God must be sought unto. Thus holy the earth that is so much its joy and glory, be swallowed up in the perfection of holiness above. 3. Where it was fixed in its place, the place appointed for its rest after all its wanderings, (v. 6.) in the oracle of the house, whence they expected God to speak to them, even in the most holy place, which was made so by the presence of the ark, under the wings of the cherubim, which in the cloud, (ch. 6. 27.) signifying the special protection of angels, which God's ordinances and the assemblies of his people are taken under. The staves of the ark were drawn out, so as to be seen from under the wings of the cherubim, to direct the High Priest to the mercy-seat, over the ark, when he went in, once a year, to sprinkle the blood there; so that still they continued of some use, though there was no longer occasion for them to carry it by them.

IV. God graciously owns what is done, and testifies his acceptance of it, v. 10. 11. The priests might come into the most holy place, till God manifested his glory there; but, thenceforward, none might, but at their peril, approach the ark, except the High Priest, on the day of atonement. Therefore it was not till the priests were come out of the oracle, that the Shechinah took possession of it, in a cloud, which filled not only the most holy place, but the temple, so that the priests who burnt incense at the golden altar, could not bear it. By this visible emanation of the divine glory, 1. God put an honour upon the ark, and owned it as a token of his presence. The glory of it had been long diminished and eclipsed by its frequent removes, the sight of it, and its loss, had rendered it less common, and too much to common view; but God will now show that it is as dear to him as ever, and he will have it looked upon with as much veneration as it was when Moses first brought it into his tabernacle. 2. He testifies his acceptance of the building and furnishing of the temple, as good service done to his name and his kingdom among men. 3. He struck an awe upon all those who assembled; and, by what they saw, confirmed the belief of what was revealed in the other books of Moses, concerning the glory of God's appearances to their fathers, that hereby they might be kept close to the service of the God of Israel, and fortified against temptations to idolatry. 4. He showed himself ready to hear the prayer Solomon was now about to make; and not only so, but took up his residence in this house, that all his praying people might there be encouraged to make their applications to him. But the glory of God appeared in a cloud, a dark cloud, to signify, (1.) The darkness of that dispensation, in comparison with the light of the gospel, by which, with open face, we behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord. (2.) The darkness of our present state, in comparison with the vision of God, which will be the happiness of heaven, when the Divine Glory is unveiled. Now we can only say what he is not, but then we shall see him as he is.

12. Then spake Solomon, The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. 13. I have surely built thee a house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever. 14. And the king turned his face about, and blessed all the congregation of Israel: (and all the congregation of Israel stood;) 15. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it, saying, 16. Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house, that my name might be therein; but I chose David to be over my people Israel. 17. And it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel, 18. And the Lord said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build a house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart: 19. Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son, that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name. 20. And the Lord hath performed his word that he spake; and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. 21. And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the Lord, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

Here,

I. Solomon encourages the priests, who came out of the temple from their ministration, much astonished at the dark cloud that overshadowed them. The disciples of Christ feared, when they entered into the cloud, though it was a bright cloud; (Luke 9. 34.) so did the priests, when they found themselves wrapped in a thick cloud. To silence their fears, 1. He reminds them of that which they could not but know, that this was a token of God's presence; (v. 12.) The Lord said, he would dwell in the thick darkness. It is so far from being a token of his displeasure, that it is an indication of his favour; for he had said, he would dwell in a cloud. Lev. 16. 2. Note, Nothing is more effectual to reconcile us to dark dispensations, than to consider what God hath said, and to compare his word and works together; (as Lev. 10.) This is that which the Lord hath said. God is light, (1 John 1. 5.) and he dwells in light; (1 Tim. 6. 16.) but he dwells with men in the thick darkness, makes that his pavilion, because they could not bear the dazzling brightness of his glory. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself. Thus our holy faith is exercised, and our holy fear increased; where God dwells in light, faith is swallowed up in vision, and fear in love. 2. He himself bids it welcome, as worthy of all acceptance; and since God, by this cloud, came down to take possession, he does, in his pavilion, so canently give him possession; (v. 13.) Surely I come, says God, "Amen," says Solomon, "Even so, come, Lord. The house is thine own, entirely thine own, I have surely built it for thee, and furnished it for thee; it is for ever thine own, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever; it shall never be alienated or converted to any other use; the ark shall never be removed from it, never unsettled again." It is Solomon's joy, that God has taken possession; and it is his devout prayer, that they may keep possession. Let not the priests therefore dread that in which Solomon so much triumphs.

II. He instructs the people, and gives them a
plain account concerning this house, which they now saw God take possession of. He spoke briefly to the priests, to satisfy them; (a word to the wise:) but turned his face about (v. 14.) from them to the congregation that stood in the outer court, and addressed himself to themlargely.

1. He blessed them. When they saw the dark clouddarkness, they were astonished at it, and afraid lest the thick darkness should be utter darkness to them; the amazing sight, such as they had never seen in their days, we may suppose, drove every man to his prayers, and the vainesmallest minds were made serious by it. Solomon therefore set in with their prayers, and blessed them all; as one having authority, (for the less is blessed of the better,) in God's name, he spake peace to them, and a blessemade like that with which the anointed blessed Gideon, when he was in a fright, upon a like occasion; (Judg. 6. 22, 23.) Peace be unto thee; fear not, thou shalt not die. Solomon blessed them, that is, he pacified them, and freed them from the consternation they were in. To receive this blessing, they all stood up, in token of reverence, and readiness to hear and accept it. It is a proper posture to be in, when the blessing is pronounced.

2. He informed them concerning this house which he had built, and was now dedicating. He begins his account with a thankful acknowledgment of the good hand of his God upon him hitherto: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, v. 15. What we have the pleasure of, God must have the praise of. He thus engaged the congregation to lift up their hearts in thanksgiving to God, which would help to still the tumult of spirit which, probably, they were in. "Come," says he, "let God's awful appearances not drive us from him, but draw us to him; Let us bless the Lord God of Israel." Thus Job, under a dark scene, blessed the name of the Lord. Solomon here blessed God, (1.) For his promise which he spake with his mouth to David, (2.) For the performance, that he had now fulfilled it with his hand. We have then the best sense of God's mercies, and most grateful both to ourselves and to our God, when we run up those streams to the fountain of the covenant, and compare what God does with what he has said.

Solomon is now making a solemn surrender or dedication of this house unto God, delivering it to God by his own act and deed. Grants and conveyances commonly begin with recitals of what has been before; but not a project of his own, nor an execution. Accordingly, here is a recital of the special causes and considerations moving Solomon to build this house.

[1.] He recites the want of such a place. It was necessary that this should be premised; for, according to the dispensation they were under, there must be one place, in which they must expect God to record his name. If, therefore, there were any other place, it would be corruption. But he shows, from what God himself hath said, the cause of the house was no other, (v. 16.) I chose no city to build a house in for my name; therefore there is occasion for the building of this.

[2.] He recites David's purpose to build such a place. God chose the person first that should rule his people, (I chose David, v. 16.) and then put it into his heart to build a house for God's name, v. 17. It was not the effect of his own, for the magnifying of himself; but his good father, of blessed memory, laid the first design of it, though he lived not to lay the first stone.

[3.] He recites God's promise concerning himself: God approved his father's purpose; (v. 18.) Thou didst well that it was in thine heart. Note, Sincere intentions to do good shall be graciously approved and accepted of God, though Providence prevent our putting of them in execution. The desire of a man is his kindness. See 2 Cor. 8. 12. God accepted David's good will, yet would not permit him to do the good work, but reserved the honour of it for his son, (v. 19.) He shall build the house to my name; so that what he had done, was not of his own head, nor for his own glory; but the work itself was according to his father's design, and his doing of it was according to God's designation.

[4.] He recites what he himself had done, and with what intention; I have built a house, not for my own name, but for the name of the Lord God of Israel, (v. 20.) and set there a place for the ark, v. 21. Thus all the right, title, interest, claim, and demand, whatsoever, which he or his had, or might have, in or to this house, or any part of its appurtenances, he resigns, surrenders, and gives up, to God for ever. It is for his name, and his ark. In this, says he, the Lord hath performed his word that he spake. Note, Whatever good we do, we must look upon it as the performance of God's promise to us, rather than the performance of our promises to him. The more we do for God, the more we are indebted to him; for our sufficiency is of him, and not of ourselves.

22. And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven: 23. And he said, Lord God of Israel, there is no god like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart; 24. Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day. 25. Therefore now, Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me, as thou hast walked before me. 26. And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father. 27. But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built! 28. Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee to-day: 29. That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there; that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place.

30. And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place;
and when thou hearest, forgive. 31. If any man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house: 32. Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his rightousness. 33. When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house: 34. Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers. 35. When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them: 36. Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance. 37. If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities, whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness, there be; 38. What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: 39. Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) 40. That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers. 41. Moreover, concerning a stranger that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; 42. (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched-out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house: 43. Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name. 44. If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the Lord toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name: 45. Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. 46. If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captive unto the land of the enemy, far or near; 47. Yet if they shall Bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness. 48. And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: 49. Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause, 50. And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them: 51. For they be thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron: 52. That thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant, and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto thee; 53. For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God.

Solomon having made a general surrender of this house to God, which God had signified his acceptance of by taking possession, next follows Solomon's prayer; in which he makes a more particular declaration of the uses of that surrender, with all humility and reverence, desiring that God would agree thereto. In short, it is his request that this temple might be deemed and taken, not only for a house of sacrifice, (no mention is made of that in all this prayer, that was taken for granted,) but a house of prayer for all peoples: and herein it was a type of the gospel-church: see Isa. 56. 7. compared with Matth. 21. 13. Therefore Solomon opened this house, not only with an extraordinary sacrifice, but with an extraordinary prayer. 54. The person that prayed this prayer, was great. Solomon did not appoint one of the priests to do it, or one of the prophets, but did it himself, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, v. 22. 1. It was well that he was able to do it; a sign that
he had made a good improvement of the pious education which his parents gave him. With all his learning, it seems, he learnt to pray well, and knew how to express himself to God in a suitable manner, *pro ratio et finem;* or in other words, *with the prescribed form.* In the crowd of his philosophical transactions, his proverbs, and songs, he did not forget his devotions. He was a gainer by prayer, (ch. 3. 11, &c.) and, we may suppose, gave himself much to it, so that he excelled, as we find here, in praying gifts. 2. It was well that he was willing to do it, and not shy of performing divine service before so great a congregation: he was far from deeming it any disparagement to him, to be his own chaplain, and the mouth of the assembly to God; and shall any think themselves too great to do this office for their own families? Solomon, in all his other glory, even on his ivory throne, looked not so great as he did now. Great men should thus support the reputation of religious exercises, and so honour God with their greatness. Solomon was herein a type of Christ, the great Intercessor for all over whom he rules.

II. The posture in which he prayed, was very reverent, and expressive of humility, seriousness, and fervency in prayer. He stood before the altar of the Lord; intimating that he expected the success of his prayer in the virtue of that sacrifice which should be offered up in the fulness of time, typified by the sacrifices offered at that altar. But when he addressed himself to prayer, 1. He knelt down, as appears, v. 24., where it is said to rise from his knees; compare 2 Chron. 6. 13. Kneeling is the most proper posture for prayer, Eph. 3. 14. The greatest of men must not think it below them, to kneel before the Lord their Maker. Mr. Herbert says, "Kneeling never spoiled silk stockings." 2. He spread forth his hands toward heaven; and, as it should seem by v. 34., continued so, to the end of the prayer, hereby expressing his desire toward and expectation of God, his Father in heaven. He spread forth his hands, as it were to offer up the prayer from an open enlarged heart, and to urge it into heaven; and also to receive the mercy thence, with both arms, which he prayed for. Such outward expressions of the fixedness and fervour of devotion, ought not to be despised or ridiculed.

III. The prayer itself was very long, and yet prolongs longer than is here recorded. At the throne of grace, we have liberty of speech, and should use our liberty. It is not making long prayers, but making them for a pretence, that Christ condemns.

In this excellent prayer, Solomon does, as we should in every prayer: 1. He gives glory to God. This he begins with, as the most proper act of adoration. He addresses him as the Lord God of Israel, a God in covenant with them. And, (1.) He gives him the praise of what he is, in general; the best of beings in himself; "There is no God like thee, none of the powers in heaven or earth to be compared with thee," and the best of masters to his people, "who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants; not only as good as thy word, in keeping covenant, but better than it is a figure; neither are they, for mercy, doing thus for the sake of them which thou hast not given them an express promise of, provided they walk before thee with all their heart, are zealous for thee, with an eye to thee." (2.) He gives him thanks for what he had done, in particular, for his family; (v. 24.) Thou hast kept with thy servant David, as with thy other servants, that which thou promisedst him. The promise was a great favour to him, his support and joy, and now, performance is the crown of it: Thou hast fulfilled it, as it is this day. Fresh ex-

periences of the truth of God's promises, call for enlarged praises. 2. He seeks for grace and favour from God. (1.) The Lord would conform to him and his the mercy which he had promised, v. 25, 26. Observe how this comes in: he thankfully acknowledges the performance of the promise, in part; hitherto, God had been faithful to his word, *"Thou hast kept with thy servant David that which thou promisedst him;"* so far, that his son fills his throne, and has built the intended temple; therefore now keep with thy servant David that which thou hast further promised, and which yet remains to be fulfilled in its season." Note, The experiences we have of God's performing his promises, should encourage us to depend upon them, and plead them with God: and those who expect further mercies, must be thankful for former mercies. Hitherto, God has helped, 2 Cor. 1. 10. Solomon repeats the promise, (v. 25.) There shall not fail thee a man to sit on the throne, not omitting the condition, so that thy children take heed to their way; for we cannot expect God's performance of the promise, but upon our performance of the condition: and then he humbly begs this entail, (v. 26.) Now, O God of Israel, let thy words be verified. God's promises (as we have often observed) must be both the guide of our desires, and the ground of our hopes and expectations, in prayer. David had prayed, (2 Sam. 7. 22.) Lord, do as thou hast said. Here, Solomon pleads his godly parents how to pray, and plead, in prayer.

(2.) That God would have respect to this temple which he had now taken possession of, and that his eyes might be continually open towards it, v. 29. That he would graciously own it, and so put an honour upon it. To this purpose, he premises, [1.] An humble admiration of God's gracious condescension; (v. 27.) *"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!"* If the temple were high, and holy, and happy, should stoop so low, as to let it be said of him, that he dwelleth upon the earth, and blesses the worms of the earth with his presence? The earth, that is corrupt, and over-spread with sin! Cursed, and reserved to fire! Lord, how is it? [2.] An humble acknowledgment of the incapacity of the house he had built, through very capacious, to contain God. The heaven of heavens doth not contain thee, who include him, who is present in all places; even this house is too little, too mean to be the residence of Him that is infinite in being and glory. Note, When we have done the most we can for God, we must acknowledge the infinite distance and disproportion between us and him, between our services and his perfections.

This prayer, he prays, in general, First, That God would graciously hear and answer the prayer he was now praying, v. 28. It was an humble prayer, the prayer of thy servant; an earnest prayer, such a prayer as is a cry; a prayer made in faith, "before thee, as the Lord, and my God; Lord, hearken to it; have respect to it, not as the prayer of Israel's king," (no man's dignity in the world, or titles of honour, will recommend him to God,) "but as the prayer of thy servant." Secondly, That God would, in like manner, hear and answer all the prayers that should, at any time hereafter, be made in or toward this house which he had now built, and of which God had said, My name shall be there; (v. 29.) his own prayers, Hearken to the prayers which thy servant shall make; and the prayers of all Israel, and of every particular Israelite, v. 30. Hear it in heaven, that is indeed thy dwelling-place, of which this is but a figure; and when thou hast forgiven the sin that separates between them and God, even the iniquity of their holy things. 1. He
supposes that God's people would ever be praying people; he resolves to adhere to that duty himself. 2. He desires them to have an eye, in their prayers, to that place where God was pleased to manifest his glory, so as he did not any where else on earth. None but priests might come into that place; but when they worshipped in the courts of the temple, it must be with an eye toward it; not as the object of their worship, (that were idolatry,) but as an instituted medium of their worship. helping the weakness of their faith, and upholding the mediation of Jesus Christ, who is the true Temple, to whom we must have an eye in every thing wherein we have to do with God. That they were at a distance, looked toward Jerusalem, for the sake of the temple, even when it was in ruins, Dan. 6. 10. 3. He begs that God would hear the prayers, and forgive the sins, of all that look this way in their prayers: not as if he thought all the devout prayers offered up to God by those who had no knowledge of a house, or regard to it, were therefore rejected; but he desired that the sensible tokens of the divine presence with which this house was blessed, might always give sensible encouragement and comfort to believing petitioners.

More particularly, he here puts divers cases in which he supposed application would be made to God by prayer, in or toward this house of prayer. The complaints are suppos'd to be made for the determining of any controverted right between man, and man, and the oath were taken before this altar, he prayed that God would, some way or other, discover the truth, and judge between the contending parties, v. 31, 32. He prays that, in difficult matters, this throne of grace might be a throne of judgment, from which God would right the injured that believably appealed to it, and punish the injurious. This is a petition suited to the state of the times, when the king was induced to swear by the temple and altar, Matt. 23. 16, 18. Which corruption perhaps took its rise from this supposition of an oath taken, not by the temple or altar, but at or near them, for the greater solemnity.

(2.) If the people of Israel were groaning under any national calamity, or any particular Israelite under any personal calamity, he desires that the prayers they should make in or toward this house, might be heard according to the circumstances.

1. In case of public judgments; war, (v. 33.) want of rain, (v. 35.) famine or pestilence; (v. 37.) and he ends, with any plague or sickness; for no calamity befals other people, which may not befall God's Israel. Now he supposes, First, That the cause of the judgment would be sin, and nothing else: if they be smitten before the enemy, if there be no rain, it is because they have sinned against thee; that is it that makes all the mischief. Secondly, That the consequence of the judgment would be, that they would cry to God, and make supplication to him, in or toward that house. Those that slighted him before, would solicit him then; Lord, in trouble have they visited thee: In their affliction they will seek me early, and earnestly. Thirdly, That the condition of the removal of the judgment was something more than bare praying for it. He could not, he would not, ask that their prayer might be answered unless they did also turn from their sin, (v. 35.) and turn again to God; (v. 33.) that is, unless they did truly repent and reform. On no other terms may we look for salvation, in this world or the other. But, if they did thus qualify themselves for mercy, he prays, 1. That God would hear from heaven, his holy temple above, to which they must look, through this temple, 2. That he would forgive them, and be merciful to them, and not turn away his mercies, when sin is pardoned. 3. That he would teach them the good way wherein they should walk, by his Spirit, with his word and prophets; and thus they might be both profited by their trouble, (for blessed is the man whom God chastens and teaches,) and prepared for the enjoyment of his mercy, and the presence of his love, when it finds us brought back to the good way of God and duty. 4. That he would then remove the judgment, and redress the grievance, whatever it is; not only accept the prayer, but give in the mercy prayed for.

[2.] In case of personal afflictions, v. 38. 40. "If any man of Israel has an errand to thee, here let him find at thee; for I have found favour with thee." He does not mention particular occasions on which such complaints, as various, are the grievances of the children of men: First, He supposes that the complainants themselves would very sensibly feel from their own burthen, and would open that case to God, which otherwise they kept to themselves, and did not make any man acquainted with. They shall know every man the plague of his own heart, what it is that pains him; and shall spread their hands, that is, spread the case, as Hezekiah spread the letter, in prayer, toward this house; whether the trouble be of body or mind, they shall represent it before God. Inward burthens seem especially meant; sin is the plague of our own heart, our indwelling corruptions are our spiritual diseases: every Israelite indeed endeavours to know these, that he may mortify them, and watch against the risings of them. These the complainants used is the burthen he groans under; O wretched man that I am! These drive him to his knees, drive him to the sanctuary; lamenting these, he spreads forth his hands in prayer. Secondly, He refers all cases of this kind, that should be brought hither, to God. 1. To his omniscience: "Thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men, not only the plagues of their hearts, their several wants and burthens," (these he knows, but he will know them better than we discover them,) let the complaint be made of the mercy of God to us in hearing our prayers, and forgiving our sins, we should thereby be engaged to fear him while we live: Fear the Lord and his goodness; there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared.

[3.] The case of the stranger that is not an Israelite, is next mentioned; a proselyte that comes to the temple to pray to the God of Israel, being convinced of the folly and wickedness of worshipping the gods of his country. First, He supposes that there would be many such; (v. 41, 42.) that the fame of God's great works which he had wrought for Israel, by which he proved himself to be above all gods, nay, to be God alone, would reach to distant countries; they that live remote, shall hear of thy strong hand, and thy stretched-out arm; and this will bring all thinking considerate people to pray toward this house, that they may obtain the favour of a God that is able to do them a real kindness. Secondly, He begs that God would accept and answer the proselyte's prayer; (v. 43.) Do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for. Thus early, thus ancient, were the indications of favour toward the sinners of the Gentiles; as there was then one law for the naivite and for the stranger, (Exod. 12. 49.) so there was one gospel for both. Further, He supposes that God would be the promoter and the propagating of the knowledge of him. "O let the stranger, in a special manner, speed well in his address, that he may carry away with him to his
own country a good report of the God of Israel: that all people may know thee and fear thee, (and, if they know thee aright, they will fear thee,) as do thy people to this day. So far is this from making the knowledge and service of God, and wishing to have them confined to Israel only, (which was the envious desire of the Jews in the days of Christ and his apostles,) that he prays that all people might fear God as Israel did. Would to God, that all the children of men might receive the adoption, and be made God's children. Father, thus glorify thy name.

54. And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. 55. And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying, 56. Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. 57. The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us; 58. That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers. 59. And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the Lord, be nigh unto the Lord our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require; 60. That all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else. 61. Let your heart, therefore, be perfect with the Lord your God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.

Solomon, after his sermon in Ecclesiastes, gives us the conclusion of the whole matter; so he does here, after this long prayer; it is called his blessing of the people, v. 55. He pronounced it standing, that he might be more heard, and because he blessed not one having authority; never were words more fully spoken, or more pertinently; never was congregation dismissed with that which was more likely to affect them and abide with them.

I. He gives God the glory of the great and kind things he had done for Israel, v. 56. He stood up to bless the congregation, (v. 55.) but begins with blessing God, for we must, in every thing, give thanks. Do we expect God should do well for us and our's? Let us take all occasions to speak well of him and his. He blesses God who has given, he does not say wealth, and honour, and power, and victory, to Israel; but rest, as if that were a blessing more valuable than any of those: let not those who have rest, undervalue that blessing them, though they want some other. He compares the blessings God had bestowed upon them, with the promises he had given them, that God might have the honour of his faithfulness, and the truth of that word of his, which he has magnified above all his name. 1. He refers to the promises given by the hand of Moses, as he did (v. 15, 24.) to those which were made to David; there were promises given by Moses, as well as precepts: it was long ere God gave Israel the promised rest, but they had it at last, after many trials: this day will come, when God's spiritual Israel will rest from all their labours. 2. He does, as it were, write a receipt in full in the back of these bonds, There has not failed one word of all his good prayers made in or toward it, as the temple then did; that was a shadow, the substance is Christ; whatever we ask in his name, it shall be given us. 54. And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. 55. And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying, 56. Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. 57. The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us; 58. That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers. 59. And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the Lord, be nigh unto the Lord our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require; 60. That all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else. 61. Let your heart, therefore, be perfect with the Lord your God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.

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promises; this discharge he gives in the name of all Israel, to the everlasting honour of the divine faithfulness, and the everlasting encouragement of all those that build upon the divine promises.

II. He blesses himself and the congregation, expressing his earnest desire and hope of these four things. 1. The presence of God with them, that is all in all to the happiness of a church and nation, and of every particular person. This great congregation was now shortly to scatter, and it was not likely that they would ever be all together again in this world; Solomon therefore dismisses them with this blessing, The Lord be present with us, and that will be comfort enough, when we are absent from each other; the Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers; (v. 57.) let him not leave us, let him be to us to-day, and to our’s for ever, what he was to those that went before us. 2. The power of his grace upon them; "Let him be with us, and comfort us, not that he may enlarge our coast, and increase our wealth, but that he may incline our hearts to himself, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments," v. 58. Spiritual blessings are the best blessings, which we should covet earnestly, to be blessed with: our hearts are naturally averse to our duty, and apt to decline from God; it is his grace that inclines them, grace that must be obtained by prayer. 3. An answer to the prayer he had made; "Let the words be nigh unto the Lord our God day and night," v. 59. Let a gracious return be made to every prayer that shall be made here, and that will be a continual answer to this prayer." What Solomon here asks for his prayer, is still granted in the intercession of Christ, which his supplication was a type of; that powerful prevailing intercession is before the Lord our God day and night, for our great Advocate attends continually to this very thing, and we may depend upon him to maintain our cause, (against the adversary that accuses us day and night, Rev. 12. 10.) and the common cause of his people Israel, at all times, upon all occasions, as the matter shall require, so as to speak for us the word of the day in its day, as the original here reads it, from which we shall receive grace sufficient, suitable, and seasonable, in every time of need. 4. The glorifying of God in the enlargement of his kingdom among them, that he may be thus blessed, thus favoured; not that all people may become tributaries to us, (Solomon sees his kingdom as great as he desires,) but that all people may know that the Lord is God, and he only, and may come and worship him, v. 60. With this Solomon’s prayers, like the prayers of his father, David the son of Jesse, are ended; (Ps. 72. 19, 20.) Let the whole earth be filled with his glory: we cannot close our psalms with a better summary than this, Father, glorify thy name.

III. He solemnly charges his people to continue and persevere in their duty to God; having spoken to God for them, he here speaks from God to them, and those only would fare the better for his prayers that were made better by his preaching; his admonition, at parting, is, Let your heart be perfect with the Lord our God; (v. 61.) let your obedience be universal without dividing, upright without dissembling, and constant without declining; this is evangelical perfection.

62. And the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the Lord. 63. And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace-offerings, which he offered unto the Lord, two and twenty thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord. 64. The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court that was before the house of the Lord: for there he offered burnt-offerings, and meat-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings; because the brazen altar that was before the Lord was too little to receive the burnt-offerings and meat-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings. 65. And at that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the Lord our God, seven days and seven days, even fourteen days. 66. On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart, for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people.

We read before, that Judah and Israel were eating and drinking, and very cheerful, under their own vines and fig-trees; here we have them so in God’s courts; now they found Solomon’s words true concerning Wisdom’s ways, that they are ways of pleasantness.

1. They had abundant joy and satisfaction, while they attended at God’s house, for there, (1.) Solomon offered a great sacrifice, 22,000 oxen, and 120,000 sheep, enough to have drained the country of cattle, if it had not been a very fruitful land. The heathen thought themselves very generous when they offered sacrifices by hundreds, (hundreds they called them,) but Solomon outdid them, he offered them by thousands. When Moses dedicated his altar, the peace-offerings were twenty-four bullocks; rams, goats, and lambs, 180; (Numb. 7. 88.) then the people were poor, but now that they were increased in wealth, more was expected from them; where God sows plentifully, he must reap accordingly. All these sacrifices could not be offered in one day, but in the several days of the feast; thirty oxen a day served Solomon’s table, but thousands and thousands of God’s altar are thus minded, to spend more on their souls than on their bodies. The flesh of the peace-offerings which belonged to the offerer, it is likely, Solomon treated the people with; Christ fed these who attended him. The brazen altar was not large enough to receive all these sacrifices, so that, to serve the present occasion, they were forced to offer many of them in the midst of the court, v. 64. Some think, on altars, altars of earth or stone, erected for the purpose, and taken down when the solemnity was over; others think, on the bare ground: they that will be generous in serving God, need not stint themselves for want of room and occasion to be so. (2.) He kept a feast, the feast of tabernacles, as it should seem, after the feast of dedication, and both together lasted fourteen days; (v. 65.) yet they said not, Behold, what a unnecessary feast; 2. They carried this joy and satisfaction with them to their own houses. When they were dismissed, they blessed the king, (v. 66.) applauded him, admired him, and returned him the thanks of the congregation, and then went to their tents, joyful and glad of heart, all easy and pleased; God’s goodness was the matter of their joy, so it should be of our’s at all times; they rejoiced in God’s blessing, both on the royal family and on the kingdom; thus should we go home, rejoicing, from holy ordinances, and go on our way, repeating for God’s goodness to our Lord
Jesus, (of whom David his servant was a type,) in the advancement and establishment of his throne, pursuant to the covenant of redemption, and to all believers, his spiritual Israel, in their sanctification and consolation, pursuant to the covenant of grace; if we rejoice not herein always, it is our own fault.

CHAP. IX.

In this chapter, we have, I. The answer which God, in a vision, gave to Solomon's prayer, and the terms he settled with him, v. 1. 2. The interioring of grateful kindnesses between Solomon and Hiram, v. 10. 14. III. His workmen and buildings, v. 13. 24. IV. His devotion, v. 25. V. His trading navy, v. 26-28.

1. And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do, 2. That the Lord appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon. 3. And the Lord said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. 4. And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments; 5. Then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. 6. But if you shall at all turn from following me, you or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them; 7. Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them: and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a by-word among all people: 8. And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and to this house? 9. And they shall answer, Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the Lord brought upon them all this evil.

God had given a real answer to Solomon's prayer, and tokens of his acceptance of it immediately, by the fire from heaven which consumed the sacrifices; (as we find, 2 Chron. 7. 1.) but here we have a more express and distinct answer to it. Observe, 1. In what way God gave him this answer; he appeared to him, as he had done at Gibeon, in the beginning of his reign, in a dream or vision, v. 2. The comparing of it with that, intimates that it was the very night after he had finished the solemnities of his festival, for so that was, 2 Chron. 1. 6. 7. And then v. 1. speaking of Solomon's finishing all his buildings, which was not till many years after the dedication of this temple, must be read thus, Solomon finished; (as it is 2 Chron. 7. 11.) and v. 2. must be read, and the Lord had appeared.

II. The purport of this prayer.

1. He assures him of his special presence in the temple he had built, to answer to the prayer he had made; (v. 3.) I have hallowed this house. Solomon had dedicated it, but it was God's prerogative to hallow it, to sanctify or consecrate it; men cannot make a place holy, yet what we, in sincerity, devote to God, we may hope he will graciously accept of, as his; and his eyes and his heart shall be upon it. Apply it to persons, the living temples; those whom God hallows or sanctifies, whom he sets apart for himself, have his eye, his heart, his love and care, and this, perpetually. 2. He shows him that he and his people were, for the future, upon their good behaviour; let them not be secure now, as if they might live as they please, 

(1.) That the establishment of his kingdom depended upon the constancy of his obedience; (v. 4.) "If thou wilt walk before me as David did, who left thee a good example, and encouragement enough to follow it, (an advantage thou wilt be accountable for, if thou do not improve it,) if thou wilt walk as he did, in integrity of heart and uprightness," (for that is the main matter, no religion but sincerity,) "then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom, and not otherwise," for on that condition the promise was made, Ps. 132. 12. If we perform our part of the covenant, God will not fail to perform his; if we improve the grace God has given us, he will confirm us to the end. Let not the children of godly parents expect the entail of the blessing, unless they tread in the steps of those that are gone before them to heaven, and keep up the virtue and piety of their ancestors.

(2.) That the ruin of his kingdom would be the certain consequence of his or his children's apostasy from God. "But know thou, and let thy family and kingdom know it, and be admonished by it, that if you shall altogether turn from following me," (so it is thought it should be read,) "if you forsake my service, desert mine altar, and go and serve other gods," (for that was the covenant-breaking sin,) "if you or your children break off from me, this house will not save you." But, [1.] Israel, though a holy nation, will be cut off, (v. 7.) by one judgment. (v. 6.) But know another, to the nation and a by-word, and the most despicable people under the sun, though now the most honourable: this supposes the destruction of the royal family, though it is not particularly threatened; the king is, of course, undone, if the kingdom be. [2.] The temple, though a holy house, which God himself had hallowed for his name, should be abandoned and left desolate, v. 8. 9. This house which is high; they prided not themselves in the stateliness and magnificence of the structure, but let them know that it is not so high as to be out of the reach of God's judgments, if they viliify it so as to exchange it for groves and idol-temples, and yet, at the same time, magnify it so as to think it secures the favour of God to them, though they ever so much corrupt themselves. This house which is high; they that now pass by it.
are astonished at the bulk and beauty of it; the richness, contrivance, and workmanship, are admired by all spectators; and it is called a stupendous fabric; but if you forsake God, its height will make its fall, and God that passes by will be as much astonished at its ruins, while the guilty, self-convicted, self-condemned, Israelites, will be forced to acknowledge, with shame, that they themselves were the ruin of it; for when it shall be asked, Why hath the Lord done thus to this house? they cannot but answer, It was because they forsook the Lord their God. See Deut. 29. 24, 25. Their sin will be read in their punishment, they desired the temple, and therefore God desolated it; they profaned it with their sins, and laid it common, and therefore God profaned it with his judgments, and laid it waste: God gave Solomon fair warning of this, now that he had newly built and dedicated it, that he and his people might not be high-minded, but fear.

10. And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the Lord, and the king's house, 11. (Now Hiram the king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar-trees, and fir-trees, and with gold, according to all his desire,) that then Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. 12. And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they pleased him not. 13. And he said, What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul unto this day. 14. And Hiram sent to the king sixscore talents of gold.

What agreement was made between Solomon and Hiram, when the building-work was to be begun, we read before, ch. 5. Here we have an account of their fair and friendly parting, when the work was done.

1. Hiram made good his bargain to the utmost; he had furnished Solomon with materials for his building, upon his desiring them, and with gold, v. 14. So far was he from envying Solomon's growing greatness and reputation, and being jealous of him, that he helped to magnify him; Solomon's power, with Solomon's wisdom, needs not to be dreaded by any of his neighbours; God honours him, therefore Hiram will.

2. Solomon, no doubt, made good his bargain, and gave Hiram food for his household, as was agreed, ch. 5. 9. But here we are told that, over and above that, he gave him twenty cities, (small ones we may suppose, like those mentioned here, v. 19.) in the land of Gabal, v. 11. It should seem, these were not allotted to any of the tribes of Israel, (for the border of Asher came up to them, Josh. 19. 27. which intimates that it did not include them,) but continued in the hands of the natives, till the tribe of Asher possessed them, and then made a present of them to Hiram; it becomes those that are great and good, to be generous. Hiram came to see these cities, and did not like them; (v. 12.) They pleased him not. He called the country the land of Cabul, a Phenician word, (says Josephus,) which signifies delicious; v. 13. He therefore returned them back to Solomon, (as we find, 2 Chron. 8. 2.) who repaired them, and caused the children of Israel to inhabit them; which intimates that, before, they did not; but when Solomon received back what he had given, no doubt, he honourably gave Hiram an equivalent in something else. But what shall we think of this? Did Solomon act meanly, in giving Hiram what was not worth his acceptance? Or, was Hiram humoured, and hard to please? I am willing to believe otherwise: the country was truly valuable, and the cities in it, but not agreeable to Hiram's genius; the Tyrians were merchants, trading men, that lived in fine houses, and became rich by navigation, but knew not how to value a country that was fit for corn and pasture, that was business that lay out of their way; and therefore Hiram desired Solomon to take them again, he knew not what to do with them, and if he would please to gratify him, let it be in his own element, by becoming his partner in trade, as we find he did, v. 27. Hiram, that was used to the clean streets of Tyre, could by no means agree with the miry lanes in the land of Cabul, whereas the best lands have commonly the worst roads through them: see how the providence of God suits both the accommodation of this earth to the various dispositions of men, and the dispositions of men to the various accommodations of the earth, and all for the good of mankind in general; some take delight in husbandry, and wonder what pleasure sailors can take on a rough sea; others take as much delight in navigation, and wonder what pleasure husbandmen can take in a dirty country, like the land of Cabul; it is so in many other instances, in which we may observe the wisdom of Him whose all souls are, and all lands.

15. And this is the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised, For to build the house of the Lord, and his own house and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer. 16. For Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and taken Gezer, and burnt it with fire, and slain the Canaanites that dwelt in the city, and given it for a present unto his daughter, Solomon's wife. 17. And Solomon built Gezer, and Beth-horon the nether, 18. And Baalath, and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land, 19. And all the cities of store that Solomon had, and cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen, and that which Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion. 20. And all the people that were left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, which were not of the children of Israel, 21. Their children that were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel also were not able utterly to destroy, upon these did Solomon levy a tribute of bond-service unto this day. 22. But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no bondmen: but they were men of war, and his servants, and his princes, and his captains, and rulers of his chariots, and his horsemen. 23. These were the chief of the officers that were over Solomon's work, five hundred and fifty, which bare rule over the people that wrought in the work. 24. But Pharaoh's daughter came up out of the city of David unto her house which Solomon had built for her: then did
he build Millo. 25. And three times in a year did Solomon offer burnt-offerings and peace-offerings upon the altar which he built unto the Lord, and he burnt incense upon the altar that was before the Lord. So he finished the house. 26. And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. 27. And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, ship-men that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. 28. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon.

We have here a further account of Solomon's greatness:

I. His buildings. He raised a great levy both of men and money, because he projected a great deal of building, which would both employ many hands, and put to a vast expense; v. 15. And he was a great builder in building, and continued to build, and cost, and would not begin to build, till he found himself able to finish. Perhaps there was some complaint of the heaviness of the taxes, which the historian excuses from the greatness of his undertakings; he raised it not for war, (as other princes,) which would spend the blood of his subjects, but for building, which would require only their labour and purses. Perhaps David observed Solomon's genius to lie toward building, and foresaw he would have his head and hands full of it, when he penned that song of degrees for Solomon, which begins, Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; (Ps. 127. 1.) directing him to acknowledge God in all his ways, and, by prayer, and faith in his providence, to take him along with him in all his designs of this kind. And Solomon verily began his work at the right end, for he built God's house first, and finished that before he began the things of the sons of the staves. And when God blessed him, and he prospered in all his other buildings: if we begin with God, he will go on with us; let the first-fruits be his, and the after-fruits will the more comfortably be our's, Math. 6. 33. Solomon built a church first, and then he was enabled to build houses, and cities, and walls. Those consult not their own interest, that defer to the last what they design for pious uses.

The further order in Solomon's buildings is observable: God's house first, for religion; then his own, for his own convenience; then a house for his wife, to which she removed, as soon as it was ready for her; (v. 24.) then Millo, the Town-house, or Guildhall; then the wall of Jerusalem, the royal city; then some cities of note and strength in the country, which were decayed and unfortified, Hazor, Megiddo, &c. As he rebuilt these at his own charge, the inhabitants would be not only his subjects, but his tenants, which would increase the revenues of the crown for the benefit of his successors; among the rest, he built Gezer, which Pharaoh took out of the hands of the Canaanites, and made a present of to his daughter, Solomon's wife, v. 16. See how God maketh the earth to help the woman; Solomon was not himself a waster of expense, but the king of Egypt that was, took cities for him to build; then he built cities for convenience, for store, for his chariots, and for his horsemen, v. 19. And, lastly, he built for pleasure in Lebanon, for his hunting perhaps, or other diversions there; let piety begin, and profit proceed, and leave pleasure to the last.

II. His workmen and servants. In doing such great works, he must needs employ abundance of workmen. The honour of great men is borrowed from their inferiors, do that which they have the credit of.

1. Solomon employed those which remained of the conquered and devoted nations, in all the slave-work, v. 20, 21. We may suppose that they renounced their idolatry, and submitted to Solomon's government, so that they were industrious, and could not be idle, and lazily destroy them, and they were so poor, that he could not buy money on them, therefore he served himself of their labour. Herein he observed God's law, (Lev. 25. 44.) Thy bondmen shall be of the heathen; and fulfilled Noah's curse upon Canaan, A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren, Gen. 9. 25.

2. He employed Israelites in the more creditable services, (v. 25.) Of them he made no bondmen, for they were God's freemen; but he made them soldiers and courtiers, and gave them offices, as he saw them qualified, among his chariots and horsemen, appointing some to support the service of the inferior labourers. Thus he preserved the dignity and liberty of Israel, and honoured their relation to God as a kingdom of priests.

III. His piety and devotion; (v. 25.) Three times in a year, we are informed, he offered burnt-offerings extraordinary: namely, at the three yearly feasts, the passover, pentecost, and feast of tabernacles, in honour of the divine institution; beside what he offered at other times, both stated, and upon special occasions. With his sacrifices he burnt incense, not himself, (that was king Uzziah's crime,) but the priest for him, at his charge, and for his particular use. It is said, He offered on the altar which he himself built. He took care to build and them. He himself made use of it. Many will assist the devotions of others, that neglect their own. Solomon did not think his building an altar would excuse him from sacrificing, but rather engage him the more to it. 2. He himself had the benefit and comfort of it. Whatever pains we take, for the support of religion, to the glory of God, and the edification of others, we ourselves are likely to have the advantage of it.

V. His merchandise. He built a fleet of trading ships, at Ezion-geber, (v. 26.) a port on the coast of the Red-sea, the furtthest stage of the Israelites, when they wandered in the wilderness, Numb. 33. 35. That wilderness, probably, now began to be peopled by the Edomites, which it was not then. To them this port had belonged, but David having subdued the Edomites, it now pertained to the crown of Judah. The fleet traded to Ophir in the East Indies; supposed to be that which is now called Ceylon. Gold was the commodity traded for: substantial wealth. It should seem, Solomon had, before, been Hiram's partner, or put a venture into his ships, which made him a rich return of 120 talents, (v. 14.) that encouraged him to build a fleet of his own. The success of others, in any employment, should quicken our industry; for in all labour there is profit. To use our several gifts of time, wealth, energy, capacity, in useful purposes, is a sacred endowment, and a public duty.

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much more by his conquests; what was Solomon’s four hundred and twenty talents, to David’s hundred thousand talents of gold? 1 Chron. 22. 14.—29. 4. Solomon got much by his merchandise, and yet has directed us to a better trade, within reach of the poorest, having assured us, from his own experience of both, that the merchandise of Wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold, Prov. 3. 14.

CHAP. X.

Still Solomon looks great, and every thing in this chapter adds to his magnificence. We read nothing indeed of his charity, or hospitals he built, or alm-houses; but he built his kingdom so rich, that it did not need them; yet, no question, many poor were relieved from the abundance of his table. A church he had built, never to be equalled; schools or colleges he need not build any, his own palace is an academy, and his court a rendezvous of wise and learned men, as well as the centre of all the circulating riches of that part of the world. 1. What abundance of wisdom there was there, appears from the application the queen of Sheba made to him, and the great satisfaction she had in her entertainment there, (v. 1...13.) and others likewise, v. 24. II. What abundance of wealth there was there, appears here by the gold lent; and all the things, yearly, (v. 14, 15.) and in a triennial return, v. 22. Gold presented, (v. 25.) and gold used in targets and shields, (v. 16, 17.) and vessels, v. 21. A stately throne made, v. 18.—20. His chariots and horsemen, v. 36. His trade with Egypt, (v. 26, 28.) and the great and plenty of silver and cedars among his people, v. 27. So that, putting all together, it must be owned, as it is here said, (v. 23.) that king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches, and for wisdom. Yet what was he to the King of kings? Where Christ is, by his word and Spirit, behold, a greater than Solomon is there.

1. AND when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions. 2. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she commended him of all that was in her heart. 3. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not. 4. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon’s wisdom, and the house that he had built, 5. And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her. 6. And she said to the king: It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. 7. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. 8. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. 9. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice. 10. And she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. 11. And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug-trees, and precious stones. 12. And the king made of the almug-trees pillars for the house of the Lord, and for the king’s house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug-trees, nor were seen unto this day. 13. And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty; so she turned, and went to her own country, she and her servants.

We have here an account of the visit which the queen of Sheba made to Solomon, no doubt, when he was in the height of his piety and prosperity. Our Saviour calls her the queen of the South, for Sheba lay south from Canaan. The common opinion is, that it was in Africa; and the christians in Ethiopia, to this day, are confident that she came from their country, and that Candace was her successor, who is mentioned Acts 8. 27. But it is more probable that she came from Sheba; and the Queen of Sheba the Happy. It should seem, she was a queen-regent, sovereign of her country. Many a kingdom had been prevented of its greatest blessings, if a Salique law had been admitted into its constitution. Observe,

1. On what errand the queen of Sheba came; not to treat of trade or commerce, to adjust the limits of their dominions, to court his alliance for their mutual strength, or his assistance against some common enemy, which are the common occasions of the congress of crowned heads, and their interviews: but she came, 1. To satisfy her curiosity; for she had heard of his fame, especially for wisdom, and she came to prove him, whether he was so great a man as he was reported to be, v. 1. Solomon’s fleet sailed near the coast of her country, and probably, might put in there for fresh water; perhaps it was thus that she heard of the fame of Solomon, that he excelled in wisdom all the children of the east, and nothing would serve her, but she would go herself, and know the truth of it. 2. To receive instruction from him; she came to hear his wisdom, and thereby to improve her own, (Matth. 12. 42.) that she might be the better able to govern her own kingdom by his maxims of policy. Those whom God has called to any public employment, particularly in the magistracy and ministry, should, by all means possible, be still improving themselves in that knowledge which will more and more qualify them for it, and enable them to discharge their trust well. But, it should seem, that which she chiefly aimed at, was, to be instructed in the things of God; she was religiously inclined, and had heard not only of the fame of Solomon, but concerning the name of the Lord, (v. 1.) the great name of that God whom Solomon worshipped, and from whom he received his wisdom, and with this God she desired to be better acquainted. Therefore does our Saviour mention her inquiries after God, by Solo-
mon, as an aggravation of the stupidity of those who inquire not after God, by our Lord Jesus Christ, though He, having in his bosom, was much better able to instruct them.

What a change she came; with a very great retinue, agreeable to her rank, intending to try Solomon's wealth and generosity, as well as his wisdom, what entertainment he could, and would, give to a royal visitant, v. 2. Yet she came not as one begging, but brought enough to bear her charges, and abundantly to recompense Solomon for his attention to her; nothing mean or common, but gold, and precious stones, and spices, because she came to trade for wisdom, which she would purchase at any rate.

III. What entertainment Solomon gave her; he despised not the weakness of her sex, blamed her not for leaving her own business at home, to come so long a journey, and put herself and him to so much trouble and expense, merely to satisfy her curiosity; but bid her welcome, and all her train; gave her liberty to put all her questions, though some perhaps were frivolous, some capricious, and some over-curious; he allowed her to commune with him of all that was in her heart, v. (v. 2) and gave her a satisfactory answer to all her questions, v. (v. 3.) whether natural, moral, political, or divine. Were they designed to try him? He gave them such turns as abundantly satisfied her of his uncommon knowledge. Were they designed for her own instruction? (as some suppose them they were,) She received answers according to her instruction from him. They were made by him surprizingly easy, which she apprehended insuperably difficult, and satisfied her that there was a divine sentence in the lips of this king. But he informed her, no doubt, with particular care, concerning God, and his law and instituted worship. He had taken it for granted, (ch. 8. 42.) that strangers would hear of his great name, and would come to inquire after him; and now that so great a stranger came, we may be sure he was not wanting to assist and encourage her inquiries, and give her a description of the temple, and the officers and services of it; that she might be persuaded to serve the Lord whom she now sought.

IV. How she was affected with what she saw and heard in Solomon's court. Divers things are here mentioned which she admired; the buildings and furniture of his palace, the provision that was made every day for his table. When she saw that, perhaps she wondered where were mouths for all that meat; but when she saw the multitude of his attendants and guests, she was as ready to wonder where the meat was for all those mouths. The orderly sitting of his servants, every one in his place, and the ready attendance of his ministers, without any confusion, their rich livers, and the propriety with which thePhysicians waited at table, these things she admired, as adding much to his magnificence. But above all these, the first thing mentioned, is, his wisdom, (v. 4.) of the transcendency of which she had now incontestable proof; and the last thing mentioned, which crowned all, is, his piety, the ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord, with what gravity and seriousness this was actuated in his countenance, when he appeared, when he went to that temple, to worship God; with as much humility then, as majesty at other times. Many of the ancient versions read it, The burnt-offerings which he offered in the house of the Lord; she observed with what a generous bounty he brought his sacrifices, and with what a pious fervour he attended the offering of them; never did she see so much goodness with so much greatness. Every thing was so surprising, that there was no more spirit in her, but she stood amazed; she had never seen the like.

V. How she expressed herself upon this occasion. 1. She owned her expectation far outdone, though it was highly raised by the report she had heard, v. 6. 7. She is far from repenting her journey, or calling herself a fool, for undertaking it, but acknowledges it was well worth her while to come so far, for the sight of that which she could not believe the report of. Usually, things are represented to us, both by common fame and by our own imagina-
tion much greater than we find them when we come to examine them; but here the truth exceeded both fame and fancy. Those who, through grace, are brought to experience the delights of communion with God, will say that the one half was not told them of the treasures of God: the advantages of her gates. Glorified saints, much more, will say that it was a true report which they hear of the happiness of heaven, but that the thousandth part was not told them, 1 Cor. 2. 9.

2. She pronounced them happy, that constantly attended him, and waited on him at table; "Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants; (v. 8.) they may improve their own wisdom by hearing thine." She was remitted, and sent back with herself one of them. Note, It is a great advantage to be in good families, and to have opportunity of frequent converse with those that are wise, and good, and communicative. Many have this happiness, who know not how to value it. With much more reason may we say this of Christ's servants, Blessed are they that dwell in his house, they will be still finding.

3. She blessed God, the Giver of Solomon's wisdom and wealth, and the Author of his advancement, who had made him king, (1.) In kindness to him, that he might have the larger opportunity of doing good with his wisdom. He delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel, v. 9. Solomon's preference began in the prophet's calling him Jedidiah, because the Lord loved him, 2 Sam. 12. 25. In more than doubles our comforts, if we have reason to hope they come from God's delight in us. It was his pleasure concerning thee, (so it may be read,) to set thee on the throne; not for thy merit's sake, but because so it seemed good unto him. (2.) In kindness to the people, because the Lord loved Israel for ever, designing them a lasting bliss, long to survive him that laid the foundations of it. "He has made thee king, not that thou mayst live in pomp and pleasure, but to do what is right and just, to assign and justice." This she kindly reminded Solomon of, and, no doubt, he took it kindly. Both magistrates and ministers must be more solicitous to do the duty of their places, than to secure the honours and profits of them. To this she attributes his prosperity, not to his wisdom, for bread is not always to the wise, (Eccl. 9. 11.) but whoso doth judgment and justice, it shall be well with him, 1 John. 2.12. It is the giving of thanks must be made for kings, for good kings, for such kings; they are what God makes them to be.

VI. How they parted. 1. She made a noble present to Solomon, of gold and spices, v. 10. David had foretold concerning Solomon, that to him should be given of the gold of Sheba, Ps. 72. 15. The present of gold and spices which the wise men of the East did likewise bring him, and account it as a reasonable thing for him, was more than Solomon received, Eccl. 2. 11. Thus she paid for the wisdom she had learned, and did not think she bought it dear. Let those that are taught of God, give him their hearts, and the present will be more acceptable than this gold and spices. Mention is made of the great abundance Solomon had of his own, notwithstanding she presented, and he accepted, this gold. What we present to Christ, he needs not, but will have us so to express our gratitude. The almug-trees are here spoken of, (v. 11,12.) as extraordinary, because, per
haps, much admired by the queen of Sheba. 2. Solomon was not behindhand with her. He gave her whatsoever she asked, patterns, we may suppose, of those things that were curious, by which she might make the like; or, perhaps, he gave her his precepts of wisdom and piety in writing, beside that which he gave her of his royal bounty, v. 13. Thus they who apply themselves to our Lord Jesus, will find him not only greater than Solomon, and wiser, but more kind; whatsoever we ask, it shall be done for us; nay, he will, out of his divine bounty, which infinitely exceeds royal bounty, even Solomon's, do for us more than we are able to ask or think.

14 Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold, 15. Besides that he had of the merchant-men, and of the traffic of the spice-merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country. 16. And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold: six hundred shekels of gold went to one target. 17. And he made three hundred shields of beaten gold; three pound of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon. 18. Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold. 19. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. 20. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom. 21. And all king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon. 22. For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. 23. So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. 24. And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. 25. And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armour, and spicery, horses, and mules, a rate year by year. 26. And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots, and with the king at Jerusalem. 27. And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the sycamore-trees that are in the vale, for abundance. 28. And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. 29. And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring them out by their means.

We have here a further account of Solomon's prosperity:

I. How he increased his wealth. Though he had much, he still coveted to have more, being willing to try the utmost of the things of this world could do, to make men happy. 1. Beside the gold that came from Ophir, (ch. 9. 28.) he brought so much into his country from other places, that the whole amounted, every year, to six hundred and sixty-six talents, (v. 14.) an ominous number; compare Rev. 18. 18, and Ezra 2. 13. 2. He received a great deal, in custom from the merchants, and in land-taxes, from the countries his father had conquered, and made tributaries to Israel, v. 15. 3. He was Hiram's partner in a Tharshish fleet, of and for Tyre, which imported, once in three years, not only gold, and silver, and ivory, substantial goods, and serviceable, but apes to play with, and peacocks to please the eye with their feathers, v. 22. I wish we may not be so incurious as Solomon was to his people, being overcharged with prosperity, by this time, grew childish and wanton. 4. He had presents made him every year, from the neighbouring princes and great men, to engage the continuance of his friendship, not so much because they feared him, or were jealous of him, as because they loved him, and admired his wisdom, had often occasion to consult him as an oracle, and sent him presents by way of compliment for his wisdom, and (whether it became his grandeur and generosity or no, we will not inquire) he took all that came, even garments and spicery, horses and mules, v. 24, 25. 5. He traded to Egypt for horses, and linen-yarn, (or, as some read it, linen-cloth,) the staple commodities of that country, and had his own merchants or factors whom he employed in this traffic, and who were accountable to him, v. 28, 29. The custom to be paid to the king of Egypt for export of chariots and horses out of Egypt, was very high, but, (as Bishop Patrick understands it) Solomon, having married his daughter, got him to compound for the customs, so that he could bring them up cheaper than his neighbours, which obliged them to buy them of him, which he was wise enough, no doubt, to make his advantage of. This puts an honour upon the trading part of a nation, and sets a tradesman not of himself, but to get sa and much good as he can, and to place him, that Solomon, one of the greatest men that ever was, thought it no disparagement to him to deal in trade. In all labour there is profit.

II. What use he made of his wealth. He did not hoard it up in his coffers, that he might have it to look upon, and leave behind him. He has, in his Ecclesiastes, so much exposed the folly of hoarding, that we cannot suppose he should himself be guilty of it. No; God that had given him riches, and wealth, and honour, gave him also power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, Eccl. 5. 19.

1. He laid out his gold in fine things for himself, which he might the better be allowed to do, when he had, before, laid out so much in fine things for the house of God. (1.) He made 200 targets, and 300 shields of beaten gold, (v. 16, 17.) not for service, but for show; and when he appeared in pomp with us, magistrates have swords and maces carried before them, as the Romans their rods and axes, in token of their power.
to correct and punish the bad, to whom they are to be a terror; but Solomon had shields and targets carried before him, to signify that he took more pleasure in using this power for the defence and protection of the good, to whom he would be a praise. Magistrates are shields of the earth. (2) He made a stately throne on which he sat to give laws to his subjects, audience to ambassadors, and judgment upon appeals, v. 18...20. It was made of ivory, or elephants' teeth, which was very rich; and yet, as if he had so much gold that he knew not what to do with it, he overlaid that with gold, the best gold. Yet, some think, he did not cover the ivory all over, but here and there. He rolled it, flowered it, or inlaid it, with gold. The stays or arms of this stately chair, were supported by the images of lions in gold, so were the steps and paces by which he went up to it, to be a memorandum to him of that courage and resolution wherewith he ought to execute judgment, not fearing the face of man. The righteous, in that post, is bold as a lion. (3) He made all his drinking-vessels, and all the furniture of his table, even at his country-seat, of pure gold, v. 21. He did not grudge himself what he had, but took the credit and comfort of it, such as it was. That is good, that does us good.

2. He made it circulate among his subjects, so that the kingdom was as rich as the king; for he had no separate interests of his own to consult, but sought the welfare of his people. Those princes are not governed by Solomon's maxims, who think it policy to keep their subjects poor. Solomon was, herein, a type of Christ, who is not only rich himself, but enriches all that are his. Solomon was instrumental to bring so much gold into the country, and disperse it, that silver was nothing accounted of, v. 21. There was such plenty of it in Jerusalem, that it was as the stones; and cedars, that used to be great rarities, were as common as sycamore trees, v. 27. Such is the nature of worldly wealth, plenty of it makes it the less valuable, much more should the enjoyment of spiritual riches lessen our esteem of all earthly possessions. If gold in abundance would make silver to seem so despicable, shall not wisdom, and grace, and the foretastes of heaven, which are far better than gold, make it seem much more so?

Well, thus rich, thus great, was Solomon, and thus did he exceed all the kings of the earth, v. 23. Now let us remember, (1.) That this was he, who, when he had all the world would not have for the wealth and honour of it, but asked for a wise and understanding heart. The more moderate our desires are toward earthly things, the better qualified we are for the enjoyment of them, and the more likely to have them. See, in Solomon's greatness, the performance of God's promise, (ch. 3. 13.) and let it encourage us to seek first the righteousness of God's kingdom. (2.) That this was he, who, having tasted all these enjoyments, wrote a whole book, to show the vanity of all worldly things, and the vexation of spirit that attends them, their insufficiency to make us happy, and the folly of setting our hearts upon them; and to recommend to us the practice of serious godliness, as that which is the whole of man, and will do infinitely more toward making us easy and happy, than all the wealth and power that he was master of; and which, through the grace of God, is within our reach, when the thousandth part of Solomon's greatness is a thousand times more than we can ever be so vain as to promise ourselves in this world.

This chapter begins with as melancholy a butt as almost any we find in all the Bible. Hitherto, we have read nothing of Solomon, but what was great and good; but the last chapter, both of his goodness, and of his greatness, is here pulled and, as it were, and his sun sets at a cloud. It. The glory of his piety is stained by his departure from God, and his duty, in his latter days, by marrying strange wives, and worshipping strange gods, v. 1...8. His. The glory of his prosperity is stained by God's displeasure against him, and the fruits of that displeasure. He sent him an angry message, v. 9...13. He stirred up enemies, who gave him disturbance; Hadad, v. 14...22. Rezon, v. 23...25. He gave away ten tribes of his wealth, to enrich his sons after him, to Jerusalem, where he therefore sought in vain to stay, (v. 26...40.) and this is all that remains here to be told concerning Solomon, except his death and burial; (v. 41...43.) for there is nothing perfect under the sun, but all is so above the sun.

1. BUT king Solomon loved many strange women, (together with the daughter of Pharaoh,) women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites: of Solomon, but what was great and good; but the lust which both of his goodness, and of his greatness, is here pulled and, as it were, and his sun sets at a cloud. It. The glory of his piety is stained by his departure from God, and his duty, in his latter days, by marrying strange wives, and worshipping strange gods, v. 1...8. His. The glory of his prosperity is stained by God's displeasure against him, and the fruits of that displeasure. He sent him an angry message, v. 9...13. He stirred up enemies, who gave him disturbance; Hadad, v. 14...22. Rezon, v. 23...25. He gave away ten tribes of his wealth, to enrich his sons after him, to Jerusalem, where he therefore sought in vain to stay, (v. 26...40.) and this is all that remains here to be told concerning Solomon, except his death and burial; (v. 41...43.) for there is nothing perfect under the sun, but all is so above the sun.
like David. We cannot suppose that he quite cast off the worship of God, much less that he restrained or hindered it; (the temple-service went on as usual;) but he grew less frequent and less serious. In his ascent to the house of the Lord, and his attendance of the attendants of the Lord, and his zeal for God, and did not persevere to the end as he had begun; therefore it is said, he was not perfect, because he was not constant; and he followed not God fully, because he turned from following him, and did not continue to the end. His father David had many faults, but he never neglected the worship of God, nor grew remiss in that, as Solomon did, his wives using all their arts to divert him from it, and thus began his apostasy.

(2.) He tolerated and maintained his wives in their idolatry, and made no scruple of joining with them in it. Pharaoh's daughter was proselyted (as is supposed) to the Jews' religion, but when he began to grow careless in the worship of God himself, he used no means to convert his other wives to it; in compliance to them, he built chapels for their gods, (v. 7, 8,) maintained their priests, and occasionally did himself attend their altars; making a jest of it, as if there were no harm in it, but all religions were alike; which (says Bishop Patrick) has been the disease of some great wits; when he humoured one thus, the rest would take it ill, if he did not, in like manner, gratify them, so that he did it for all his wives, (v. 8,) and, at last, came to that degree of impiety, that he set up a high place for Chemosh in the hill that is before Jerusalem, the haunt of Olives, as if to confront the temple with which he himself had built; these high places continued here, not utterly demolished, till Josiah did it, 2 Kings 23. 13. This is the account here given of Solomon's apostasy.

II. Let us now pause a while, and lament Solomon's fall; and we may justly stand and wonder at it. How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed! Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, as the prophet exclameth in a like case, Jer. 2. 12. Strange! 1. That Solomon, in his old age, should be insmared with fleshly lusts, youthful lusts; as we must never presume upon the strength of our resolutions, so neither upon the weakness of our corruptions, so as to be secure and off our guard. 2. That so wise a man as Solomon was, so famed for a quick understanding and sound judgment, should suffer himself to be made so a fool, so a jest; so that he indulged the desires which he had so often and so plainly warned others of the danger of the love of women, should himself be so wretchedly bewitched with it; it is easier to see a mischief, and to show it others, than to shun it ourselves. 4. That so good a man, so zealous for the worship of God, who had been conversant with divine things, and who prayed that excellent prayer at the dedication of the temple, should do these sinful things—Arise! and as his fear and devotion come to this, at last! Never was gallant ship so wrecked; never was crown so profaned.

What shall we say to this? (1.) Why God permitted it, it is not for us to inquire; his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters; he knew how to bring glory to himself out of it. God foresaw it, when he said concerning him that should build the temple, If he commit iniquity, 2 Sam. 7. 14. (2.) But if it be true that God loves the world, and will make it so, [1.] Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall; we see how weak we are of ourselves, without the grace of God; let us therefore live in a constant dependence on that grace. [2.] See the danger of a prosperous condition, and how hard it is to overcome the temptations of it; Solomon, like Jeshurun, waxed fat, and then kicked; the food convenient, which Agur prayed for, is safer
and better than the food abundant, which Solomon was even surfeited with. [3.] See what need those have to stand upon their guard, who have made a great profession of religion, and showed themselves forward and zealous in devotion, because the Devil will set upon them most violently, and if they miscathe, the reproach is of us, and the suffering that commends the day; let us therefore lest, having run well, we see n to come short.

9. And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice. And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded. Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding, in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, which I have chosen.

Here is,

I. God's anger against Solomon for his sin; the thing he did, discontented the Lord: time was, when the Lord loved Solomon, (2 Sam. 12. 24.) and delighted in him; (ch. 10. 9.) but now the Lord was angry with Solomon, (v. 9.) for there was in his sin, 1. The most base ingratitude that could be; he turned from the Lord which had appeared unto him twice, once, before he began to build the temple, (ch. 3. 5.) and once, after he had dedicated it, ch. 9. 2. God keeps account of the gracious visits he makes us, or whether we do or not know them; often he has appeared to us, and for us, and will remember it against us, if we turn from him. God's appearing to Solomon, was such a sensible confirmation of his faith, as should have for ever prevented his worshipping of any other God; it was also such a distinguishing favour, and put such an honour upon him, as he ought never to have forgotten, especially considering what God said to him in both these appearances. 2. The most wilful disobedience: this was the very thing concerning which God had commanded him—that he should not go after other gods, yet he was not kept right by such an express admonition, v. 10. Those who have dominion over men, are apt to forget God's dominion over them; and while they demand obedience from their inferiors, to deny it to him who is the Supreme.

II. The message he sent him hereupon; (v. 11.) The Lord said unto Solomon, (it is likely by a prophet,) that he must expect to smart for his apostasy. And here, 1. The sentence is just, that since he had revolted from God, part of his kingdom should revolt from his family; he had given God's glory to the creature, and therefore God would give his crown to his servant, "I will rend the kingdom from thee, in thy posterity, and will give it to thy servant, who shall bear rule over much of that for which thou hast laboured." This was a great mortification to Solomon, who pleased himself, no doubt, with the prospect of the entail of his rich kingdom upon his heirs for ever; sin brings ruin upon families, cuts off entails, alienates estates, and lays men's honour in the dust. 2. Ye were no nations of us, are very kind, for David's sake; (v. 12, 13.) that is, for the sake of the promise made to David; thus, all the favours God shows to man, is for Christ's sake, and for the sake of the covenant made with him; the kingdom shall be rent from Solomon's house, but, (1.) Not immediately; Solomon shall not live to see it done, but it shall be rent out of the hand of his son, a son that was born to him by one of his strange wives, for his mother, and not his father; and for another reason, he probably, had been a promoter of idolatry. What comfort can a man take in leaving children and an estate behind him, if he do not leave a blessing behind him? Yet if judgments be coming, it is a favour to us, if they come not in our days, as 2 Kings 20. 19. (2.) Not wholly; one tribe, that of Judah, the strongest and most numerous, shall remain to the house of David, (v. 15.) for Jerusalem's sake, which David built, and founded; and there, which Solomon built, these shall not go into other hands; Solomon did not quickly nor wholly turn away from God, therefore God did not quickly nor wholly take the kingdom from him.

Upon this message which God graciously sent to Solomon, to awaken his conscience and bring him to repentance, we have reason to hope that he repented himself before God, confessed his sin, begged pardon, and returned to his duty; that he then published his repentance in the book of Ecclesiastes, where he bitterly laments his own folly and madness, (ch. 7. 25, 26.) and warns others to take heed of the like evil courses, and to fear God and keep his commandments, in consideration of the judgment to come, which, it is likely, had made him tremble, as it did Felix. That penitential sermon was as true an indication of a heart broken for sin, and turned from it, as David's penitential psalms, though of another nature. God's grace in his people works variously. Thus, though Solomon fell, he was not utterly cast down; what God had said to David concerning him, was fulfilled, I will chasten him with the rod of men, but my mercy shall not depart from him, 2 Sam. 7. 4, 15. Though God may suffer those whom he loves to fail into sin, yet that will not be his will all in it. Solomon's defection, though it was much his reproof, and a great blemish to his personal character, yet did not so far break in upon the character of his reign, but that it was afterward made the pattern of a good reign, 2Chron. 11. 17. where they are said to do well, while they walked in the way of David and Solomon. But though we have all this reason to hope he repented, and found mercy, yet the Holy Ghost did not think fit expressly to record it, but left it doubtful, for warning to others, not to sin upon presumption of repenting, for it is but a peradventure whether God will give them repentance, or if he do, whether he will give the evidence of it to themselves or others; great sinners may recover themselves, and have the benefit of their repentance, and yet be denied both the comfort and credit of it; their guilt may be taken away, and yet not the reproach.

14. And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom. 15. For it came to pass, when David was in Edom and Joab, the captain of the host
was gone up to bury the slain, after he had smitten every male in Edom. 16. (For six months did Joab remain there with all Israel, until he had cut off every male in Edom.) 17. That Hadad fled, he, and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, to go into Egypt; Hadad being yet a little child. 18. And they arose out of Midian, and came to Paran: and they took men with them out of Paran, and they came to Egypt, unto Pharaoh king of Egypt; which gave him a house, and appointed him victuals, and gave him land. 19. And Hadad found great favour in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him to wife the sister of Taphenes the queen. 20. And the sister of Taphenes bare him Genubath his son, whom Taphenes weaned in Pharaoh's house: and Genubath was in Pharaoh's household, among the sons of Pharaoh. 21. And when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab, the captain of the host, was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to mine own country. 22. Then Pharaoh said unto him, But what hast thou lacked with me, that, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country? And he answered, Nothing: howbeit let me go in any wise. 23. And God stirred him up another adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah, which fled from his lord Hadadezer, king of Zobah. 24. And he gathered men unto him, and became captain over a band, when David slew them of Zobah: and they went to Damascus, and dwelt therein, and reigned in Damascus. 25. And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, besides the mischief that Hadad did: and he abhoreth Israel, and reigned over Syria.

While Solomon kept close to God and to his duty, there was no adversary nor evil occurrence, (ch. 5. 4.) nothing to create him any disturbance or uneasiness in the least, but here we have an account of two adversaries that appeared against him, inconsiderable, and that could not have done any thing worth taking notice of, if Solomon had not first made God his Enemy. What hurt could Hadad or Rezon have done to such a great and powerful a king as Solomon was, if he had not, by sin, made himself mean and weak? And then, those little people menace and insult him. If God be on our side, we need not fear the greatest adversary; but if he be against us, he can make us fear the least, and the very grashopper shall be a burthen.

Both these adversaries God stirred up, v. 14, 23. Though they themselves were moved by principles of ambition or revenge, God made use of them to serve his design of correcting Solomon. The principal judgment threatened, was deferred, namely, the rending of the kingdom from him, but he himself was made to feel the smart of the rod, for his greater humiliation. Note, Whoever are, any way, adversaries to us, we must take notice of the hand of God stirring them up to be so, as he bade his servant, "for I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions: and also upon the handmaids shall come the word of the Lord." (Joel 2:28.) God must be consulted in the means we use through the instruments of our trouble to the Author of it, and hear the Lord's controversy in it.

Both these adversaries had the original of their enmity to Solomon and Israel laid in David's time, and in his conquests of their respective countries, v. 15, 24. Solomon had the benefit and advantage of his father's successes, both in the enlargement of his dominion and the increase of his treasure, and would never have known what benefit of them, if he had kept close to God; but now he finds evils to balance the advantages, and that David had made himself enemies, which were thorns in his sides; they that are too free in giving provocation, ought to consider that perhaps it may be remembered in time to come, and returned with interest to their's after them; having so few friends in this world, it is not to make ourselves more enemies than we need must.

1. Hadad, an Edomite, was an adversary to Solomon; we are not told what he did against him, nor which way he gave him disturbance; only, in general, that he was an adversary to him: but we are told, (1.) What induced him to bear Solomon a grudge. David had conquered Edom; (2 Sam. 8. 14.) Joab put all the males to the sword; (v. 15,) a terror was befallen the remaining part of Edom their old enmity to Israel, yet perhaps with too great a severity. While Joab was burying the slain, (for he left not any alive of their own people to bury them, and buried they must be, or they would be an annoyance to the country, Ezek. 39. 13.) Hadad, a branch of the royal family, then a little child, was taken and preserved by some of the king's servants and brought to Egypt, v. 17. They halted by the way, in Midian first, and then in Paran, where they furnished themselves with men, not to fight for them, or force their passage, but to attend them, that their young master might come into Egypt with an equipage agreeable to his quality; there he was kindly sheltered and entertained by Pharaoh, as a distressed prince, was well provided for, and so recommended himself, that, in process of time, he married through a queen to Egypt, v. 18. and, by her, had a child, which the queen had conceived such a kindness for, that she brought him up in Pharaoh's house, among the king's children.

(2.) What enabled him to do Solomon a mischief. He returned to his own country again, upon the death of David and Joab, in which, it should seem, he settled, and remained quiet, while Solomon continued wise and watchful for the public good, but from which he had opportunity of making inroads upon Israel, when Solomon, having sinned away his wisdom, as Samson did his strength, (and in the same way,) grew careless of public affairs, was off his guard himself, and had forfeited the divine protection. What vexation he gave to Solomon, we are not here told, but only how Joash Pharaoh was to part with him, and how earnestly he solicited his stay; (v. 22.) What have thou lacked with me? "Nothing," says Hadad; "but, however, let me go to my own country, my native air, my native soil." Peter Martyr has a pious reflection upon this; "That heaven is our home, and we ought to keep up a holy affection to that, and desire toward it, even then when the world, the place of our banishment, smiles most upon us." Does it ask, What have you lacked, that you are so willing to be gone? We may answer, "Nothing that the world can do for us; but however, let us go thither, where our hope, and honour, and treasure, are."
rapine, till Solomon grew careless, and then he got possession of Damascus, reigned there, (v. 24.) and over the country about; (v. 25.) and he created troubles to Israel, probably in conjunction with Hadad, all the days of Solomon, namely, after his apostasy; or he was an enemy to Israel, during all Solomon's reign, and upon all occasions vented his then impotent malice against them; but till Solomon's revolt, when his defence was departed from him, he could not do them any mischief; it is said of him, that he abhorred Israel; other princes loved and admired Israel and Solomon, and courted their friendship, but here was one that abhorred them. The greatest and best of princes and people, that are ever so much respected by the most, yet perhaps will be hated and abhored by some. 26. And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, (whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow woman,) even he lifted up his hand against the king. 27. And this was the cause that he lifted up his hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breaches of the city of David his father. 28. And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph. 29. And it came to pass at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment: and they two were alone in the field: 30. And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces. 31. And he said to Jeroboam, Take the ten pieces; for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: 32. But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel: 33. Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon; and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father. 34. Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life, for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes; 35. But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes. 36. And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light always before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen to put my name there. 37. And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel. 38. And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee. 39. And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever. 40. Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam: and Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. 41. And it came to pass, when he had so spoken, that Ahijah died; and the young man rode on a mule, and escaped. 42. And king Solomon reigned in all Israel, thirty and three years; and his reign was mighty, and prosperous. 43. And at his death he was buried in his kingdom; and Ahaviah his son reigned in his stead.
him to aim high, and, in some instances, to oppose the king, and give him vexation.

1. The prophet, by whom this message was sent, was, probably, a son of Samuel; we shall read of him again, ch. 14. 2. It seems, Shiloh was not so perfectly forsaken and forgotten of God, but that, in remembrance of the former days, it was blessed with a prophet; he delivered himself to Jeroboam in the way, his servants being, probably, ordered to retire, as in a like case, (1 Sam. 9. 27.) when Samuel delivered his message to Saul; God's word was not the less sacred and sure, for being delivered to him thus obscurely, it may be

2. The sign by which it was represented to him, was, the rending of a garment into twelve pieces, and giving him ten, v. 30. It is not certain whether the garment was Jeroboam's, as is commonly taken for granted, or Ahijah's, which is more probable; he (that is, the prophet) clad himself with a new garment, on purpose that he might with it give him a sign. The rending of the kingdom from Saul was signified by the rending of Samuel's mantle, not Saul's, 1 Sam. 15. 27, 28. And it was more significant, to give him pieces of that which was not his own before, than of that which was; the prophets, both true and false, used such signs, even in the New Testament, as Agabus, Acts 21. 11.

3. The message itself, which is very particular.

(1.) He assures him that he should be king over ten tribes of Israel, v. 31. The meanness of his extraction and employment should be no hinderance to his advancement, when the God of Israel says, (by whom kings reign,) I will give ten tribes unto thee.

(2.) He tells them the reason; not for his good character or deserts, but for the chastising of Solomon's apostasy, because he, and his family, and many of his people with him, have forsaken me, and Ahijah of Shiloh; we shall read of Ahijah's prophecy, v. 33. It was because they had done ill, not because he was likely to do much better; thus Israel must know, that it is not for their righteousness that they are made masters of Canaan, but for the wickedness of the Canaanites, Deut. 9. 4.

Jeroboam did not deserve so good a post, but Israel deserved so bad a prince. In telling him that the reason why he rent the kingdom from the house of Solomon, was, because they had forsook me, and Ahijah of Shiloh, (or Ahijah of Dan,) he makes sinning away his preferment, in like manner.

(3.) He limits his expectations to the ten tribes only, and to them, in revision, after the death of Solomon; lest he should aim at the whole, and give immediate disturbance to Solomon's government. He is here told, [1.] That two tribes (called here one tribe, because little Benjamin was, in a manner, lost in the thousands of Judah,) should remain sure to the house of David, and he must never make any attempt upon them; He shall have one tribe, (v. 32. and again, v. 36.) that David may have a lamp, that is, a shining name and memory, (Ps. 132. 17.) and his family, as a royal family, may not be extinct. He must not think that David was rejected, as Saul was; no, God would not take his loving-kindness from him, as he did from Saul. The house of David must be supported and kept in reputation for all this, because out of it the Messiah must arise. Destroy it not, for that Blessing is in it. [2.] That Solomon must keep possession during his life, v. 34. 35. Jeroboam therefore must not offer to dethrone him, but wait with patience till his day shall come to fall. Solomon shall be prince, all the days of his life, not for his own sake, (he had forfeited his crown to the justice of God,) but for David my servant's sake, because he kept my commandments. Children that do not tread in their parents' steps, yet often fare the better in this world for their good parents' piety.

(4.) He is given to understand that he will be upon his good behaviour. The grant of the crown must run quam du pl us bene generis—during good behaviour. If thou wilt do what is right in my sight, I will build thee a sure house, and not otherwise; (v. 38.) intimating, that if he forsook God, even his advancement to the throne would, in time, lay his family in the dust; whereas the seed of David, though afflicted, should not be afflicted for ever, (v. 39.) but should flourish again, as it did in many of the illustrious kings of Judah, who reigned in glory, when Jeroboam had extirpated.

IV. Jeroboam's flight into Egypt hereupon, v. 40. Some way or other, Solomon came to know of all this; probably, from Jeroboam's own talk of it; he could not conceal it, as Saul did, nor keep his own counsel; if he had, he might have staid in his own country, and been preparing there for his future advancement; but, letting it be known, 1. Solomon foolishly sought to kill his successor. Had not he taught others, that whatever devices are in men's hearts, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand? And yet does he himself think to defeat that counsel? 2. Jeroboam prudentely withdrew into Egypt; though God's promise would have secured him any where, yet he would use means for his own preservation, and was content to live in exile and obscurity for a while, being sure of a kingdom at last. And shall not we be so, who have a better kingdom in reserve?

41. And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? 42. And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem, over all Israel, was forty years. 43. And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

We have here the conclusion of Solomon's story, and in it, 1. Reference is had to another history then extant, but (not being divinely inspired) since lost, the book of the acts of Solomon, v. 41. Probably, this book was written by the hand of one of the scribes, or secretaries, or secretaries, by whom he employed to write his annals, out of which the sacred writer extracted what God saw fit to transmit to the church. 2. A summary of the years of his reign; (v. 42.) He reigned in Jerusalem, (not as his father, part of his time in Hebron, and part in Jerusalem,) over all Israel, (not as his son, and his father in the beginning of his time, over Judah only,) forty years. His reign was as long as his father's, but not his life. Sin shortened his days. 3. His death and burial, and successor, v. 43. (1.) He followed his fathers to the grave; slept with them, and was buried in David's burying-place, with honour, no doubt. (2.) His son followed him in the throne. Thus the graves are filling with the generations that go off, and houses are filling with those that are growing up. As the grave cries, "Give, give," so land is never lost for want of an heir.

CHAP. XII.

The glory of the kingdom of Israel was in its height and perfection, in Solomon; it was long in coming to it, but it soon declined, and began to sink and wither in the very next reign, as we find in this chapter, when we see the kingdom divided, and thereby weakened, and made little, in comparison with what it had been. Here is, I. Rehoboam's accession to the throne, and Jeroboam's return out of Egypt, v. 1. 2. II. The people's petition to Rehoboam for the redress of grievances, and the rough answer he gave, by the advice of his young counsellors, to
1. AND Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king. 2. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt,) 3. That they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, 4. Thy father made our yoke grievous: now, therefore, make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee. 5. And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed. 6. And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do you advise, that I may answer this people? 7. And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. 8. But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him; 9. And he said unto them, What counsel give ye, that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? 10. And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. 11. And now, whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. 12. So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day. 13. And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; 14. And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. 15. Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

Solomon had 1000 wives and concubines, yet we read but of one son he had to bear up his name, and he a fool. It is said, (Hos. 4. 16.) They shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase. Sin is a bad way of building up a family. Rehoboam was the son of the wisest of men, yet did not inherit his father's wisdom, and then it stood him in little stead to inherit his father's throne. Neither wisdom nor grace runs in the blood. Solomon was wise, yet he was then a wise man: Rehoboam at forty years old, when men will be wise, if ever they will, yet he was then foolish. Wisdom does not go by age, nor is it the multitude of years, or the advantage of education, that teaches it. Solomon's court was a mart of wisdom, and the rendezvous of learned men, and Rehoboam the darling of the court; and yet all was not sufficient to make him a wise man. The yoke is not given to the strong, but to the strong. No dispute is made of Rehoboam's succession; upon the death of his father, he was immediately proclaimed. But,

I. The people desire a treaty with him at Shechem, and he condescends to meet them there. 1. Their pretense was, to make him king, but the design was, to unmake him. They would give him a public inauguration, in another place than the city of David, that he might not seem to be king of Judah only. They have ten parts in him, and will have him among themselves, for once, that they might recognize his title. 2. The place was ominous; at Shechem, where Abimelech set up himself, Judg. 9. Yet it had been famous for the convention of the states there, Josh. 24. 1. Rehoboam, we may suppose, knew of the threatening, that the kingdom should be rent from him, and hoped, by going to Shechem, and treating there with the ten tribes, to prevent it; yet it proves the most impolitic thing he could do, and hastens the rupture.

II. The representatives of the tribes address him, praying to be eased of the taxes they were burdened with. The meeting being appointed, they sent for Jeroboam out of Egypt to come and be their speaker: which they needed not to have done, he knew what God had designed him for, and would have come, though he had not been sent for: now was his time to expect the possession of the promised crown. In their address, 1. They complained of the last reign; Thy father made our yoke grievous, v. 4. They complain not of his father's idolatry, and revolt from God; that which was the greatest grievance of all, was none to them; so careless and indifferent were they in the matters of religion, as when God or Moses was gone, they went at ease, and pay no taxes. Yet the complaint was groundless and unjust. Never did people live more at ease than they did, or in greater plenty. Did they pay taxes? It was to advance the strength and magnificence of their kingdom. If Solomon's buildings cost them money, they cost them no blood, as war would do. Were many serviceable hands employed about them? They were not distributed by the Israelites. Were the services not long, how then? How could that be, when Solomon imported bullion in such plenty, that silver was, in a manner, as common as the stones? So that they did but render to Solomon the things that were Solomon's. Nay, suppose there was some hardship put upon them, were they not told before that this would be the manner of the king, and yet they would have
one. The best government cannot secure itself from reproach and censure, no not Solomon's. Factious spirits will never want something to complain of. I know nothing in Solomon's administration, that could make the people's yoke grievous, unless, perhaps, the women, whom in his latter days he doted on, were connived at in oppressing them. 2. They demand relief from him, and, on that condition, were contented to live in the yoke of David. They asked not to be wholly free from paying taxes, but to have the burden made lighter; that was all their care, to save their money, whether their religion was supported, and the government protected, or no. All seek their own.

III. Rehoboam consulted with those about him, concerning the answer he should give to this address. In their councils, whether the house was especially having a weak head of his own; yet, upon this occasion, it was impolitic to take time himself to consider, for thereby he gave time to the disaffected people to ripen things for a revolt; and his deliberating in so plain a case would be improved as an indication of the little concern he had for the people's case. They saw what they must expect, and prepared accordingly. Now, I have said, the three principal men of his council advised him, by all means, to give the petitioners a kind answer, to promise them fair, and, this day, this critical day, to serve them; that is, to tell them that he was their servant, and that he would redress all their grievances, and make it his business to please them, and make them easy. "Deny thyself" (say they) "so far as to do this, for this once, and they will be thy servants for ever." When the present heat is allayed with a soft answer, and the assembly dismissed, their cooler thoughts will reconcile and fix them to Solomon's family still." Note, The way to rule, is to serve; to do good, and to stoop to do it; to become all things to all men, and so win their hearts. Those in power, really sit highest, and easiest, and safest, that do so.

2. The young men of his council were hot and haughty, and they advised him to return a severe and threatening answer to the people's demands. It was an instance of Rehoboam's weakness, (1.) That he did not prefer aged counsellors, but had a better opinion of the young men that had grown up with him, and with whom he was familiar, v. 8. Days should speak. It was a folly for him to think that because they had been his agreeable companions in the sports and pleasures of his youth, they were therefore fit to have the management of the affairs of his kingdom. Great wits have not especially wisdom; nor are those to be relied on as our best friends, that know how to make us merry, for that will not make us happy. It is of great consequence to young people that are settling out in the world, to have suitable persons to associate with, accommodate themselves to, and depend upon for advice. If they reckoned those that feed their pride, gratify their vanity, and further them in their pleasure, they are fit for office, and are to be trusted. (2.) That he did not affect moderate counsels, but was pleased with those that put him upon harsh and rigorous methods, and advised him to double the taxes, whether there was occasion for it or no, and to tell them, in plain terms, that he would do so, v. 10, 11. They thought the old men expressed themselves but dully, v. 7. They affect to have vanity in their advice, and value themselves on that. The old men did not undertake to convert them into Rehoboam's mouth, only counselled him to speak good words: but the young men will furnish him with very pointed and pert similitudes; My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins, &c. That is not always the best sense that is best worded.

IV. He answered the people according to the counsel of the young men, v. 14, 15. He affected to be haughty and imperious, and fancied he could carry all before him with a high hand, and there fore would rather run the risk of losing them, than deny himself so far as to give them good words. Note, Many ruin themselves by consulting their honour more than their interest.

See, 1. How Rehoboam was inflatuated in his counsels. He could not have acted more foolishly and impolitically. (1.) He owned their reflections upon his father's government to be true, My father made your yoke heavy; and therein was unjust to his father's memory which he might easily have vindicated from the imputation. (2.) He fancied himself better able to manage them, and impose upon them, than his father was, considering that he was vastly inferior to him in capacity. Could he think to support the blemishes of his father's reign, who could never pretend to come near the glories of it? (3.) He threatened not only to squeeze them by taxes, but to chastise them by cruel laws, and severe executions of them; which should not be as whips only, but as scorpions, whips with rows of thorns, that will fetch blood at every lash. In short, he would use them as brute beasts, kindly and beat them, at his pleasure; not caring whether they loved him or no, he would make them fear him. (4.) He gave this provocation to a people that by long ease and prosperity were made wealthy, and strong, and proud, and would not be trampled upon, as a poor cowed dispirited people may; that were now disposed to revolt, and had one ready to head them. Never, surely, was man so blinded by pride, and affection of arbitrary power, than which nothing is more fatal.

2. How God's counsels were hereby fulfilled. It was from the Lord, v. 15. He left Rehoboam to his own folly, and hid from his eyes the things which belonged to his peace, that the kingdom might be rent from him. Note, God serves his own wise and righteous purposes by the imprudences and iniquities of men, and snares sinners in the work of their own hands. They that lose the kingdom of heaven, throw it away, as Rehoboam did his, by their own wilfulness and folly.

16. So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: Now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents. 17. But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. 18. Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died: therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. 19. So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day. 20. And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only. 21. And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benja
min, a hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. 22. But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 23. Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, 24. Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the Lord, and returned to depart, according to the word of the Lord.

We have here the rending of the kingdom of the ten tribes from the house of David; to effect which,

I. The people were bold and resolute in their revolt. They highly resented the provocation that Rehoboam had given them, were incensed at his manner, and well knew that this would, in the progress of it, be intolerably grievous, which, in the beginning of it, was so very haughty; and therefore immediately came to this resolve, one and all, What portion have we in David? v. 16. They speak here very unbecomingly of David, that great benefactor of their nation, calling him the son of Jesse, no greater a man than his neighbours. How soon are good men, and their good services to the public forgotten. The rashness of their resolution was also much to be blamed; in time, and with prudent management, they might have settled the original contract with Rehoboam, to mutual satisfaction. Had they inquired who gave Rehoboam this advice, and taken a course to remove those evil counsellors, from about him, the rupture might have been prevented: otherwise, their jealousy for their liberty and property well became that free people.

Israel is not a servant, is not a home-born slave; why should he be spoiled? Jer. 2. 14. They are willing to be ruled, but not to be ridden; protection draws allegiance, but destruction cannot. No marvel that Israel falls away from the house of David, (v. 19.) if the house of David fall away from the great ends of their advancement, which was to be ministers of God to them for good. But thus to rebel against the seat of David, whom God had advanced to the kingdom, (entailing it on his seed,) and to set up another king in opposition to that family, was a great sin; see 2 Chron. 13. 5-8. To this God refers, Hos. 8. 4. They have set up kings, but not by me. And it is here mentioned, to the praise of the tribe of Judah, that they followed the house of David, (v. 17, 20.) and, for aught that appears, they found Rehoboam better than his word, nor did he rule with the same insolence as at first, when he had been so denominated. II. Rehoboam was imprudent in the further management of this affair, and more and more infatuated. Having foolishly thrown himself into a quicksand, he sunk the further in, with plunging to get out. 1. He was very unadvised, in sending Adoram, who was over the tribute, to treat with them, v. 18. The tribute was the thing, and, for the sake of that, Adoram was the person, they most complained of; the very sight of him, whose name was odious among them, exasperated them, and made them outrageous. He was one whom they could not so much as give a patient hearing to, but stoned him to death in a popular tumult. Rehoboam was now as unhappy in the choice of his ambassador, as before of his counsellors. 2. Some think he was also unadvised, in quitting his ground, and making so much haste to Jerusalem, for thereby he deserted his army, and brought them to the advantage of his enemies, who had gone to their tents indeed, (v. 16.) in disquiet, but did not offer to make Jeroboam king, till Rehoboam was gone, v. 20. See how soon this foolish prince went from one extreme to the other. He hectored and talked big, when he thought all was his own, but sunk, and looked very mean, when he saw himself in danger. It is common for those that are most haughty in their prosperity, to be most abject in adversity.

III. God forbade his attempt to recover what he had lost by the sword. What was done, was of God, who would not suffer, 1. That it should be undone again, as it would be, if Rehoboam got the better, and reduced the ten tribes. Nor, 2. That more should be done to the prejudice of the house of David, as would be, if Jeroboam should get the better, and so much as to a man thing must rest as it is, and therefore God forbids the battle.

(1.) It was brave in Rehoboam, to design the reducing of the revolters by force. His courage came to him, when he was come to Jerusalem, v. 21. There he thought himself among his fast friends, who generously adhered to him, and appeared for him. But, when he was put to the test of his courage, he was discerned as a prince of 180,000 men, for the recovery of their king's right to the ten tribes, and were resolved to stand by him (as we say) with their lives and fortunes; having either not such cause, or rather not such a disposition, to complain as the rest had.

(2.) It was more brave in Rehoboam, to desist, when God, by a prophet, ordered him to lay down arms. He would not lose a kingdom tamely, for then he would have unwarrantably reduced a prince; and yet he would not contend for it, in opposition to God, for then he had been unworthy the title of an Israelite. To proceed in this war, would be not only to fight against their brethren, (v. 24.) whom they ought to love, but to fight against their God, whom they ought to submit to; This thing is from me. These two considerations should reconcile us to the lesser of two great troubles, that God is the Author of them, and our brethren are the instruments of them, let us not therefore meditate revenge. Rehoboam, and his people, hearken to the word of the Lord, disbanded the army, and acquiesced. Though, in human probability, they had a fair prospect of success; for their army was numerous and resolute, Jeroboam's party weak and unsettled: though it would turn to their reproach among their neighbours, to be so much of weaker strength, and never have one push for it, to make a flourish, and do nothing; yet, [1.] They regarded the command of God, though sent by a poor prophet. When we know God's mind, we must submit to it, how much soever it crosses our own mind. [2.] They consulted their own interest; concluding that though they had all the advantages, even that of right, on their side, yet, they could not preserve, if they fell in disobedience to God: it was better to sit still, till the rise up and fall. In the next reign, God allowed them to fight, and gave them victory, (2 Chron. 13.) but not now.

25. Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. 26. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: 27. If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusa-
lem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam, king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. 28. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 29. And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan. 30. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship, before the one, *even* unto Dan. 31. And he made a house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. 32. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar, (so did he in Beth-el,) sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made. 33. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Beth-el, the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *even* in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

We have here the beginning of the reign of Jeroboam. He built Shechem first, and then Penuel—beautified and fortified them, and probably, had a palace in each of them for himself; (v. 25.) the former in Ephraim, the latter in Gad, on the other side Jordan. This might be proper; but he formed another project for the establishing of his kingdom, which was fatal to the interests of religion in it.

I. That which he designed, was, by some effectual means to secure those to himself, who had now chosen him their king, and to prevent their return to the house of David, v. 26, 27. It seems, 1. He was jealous of the people, afraid that, some time or other, they would kill him, and go again to Rehoboam. Many that have been advanced in one tumult, have been hurled down in another. Jeroboam could not put any confidence in the affections of his people, though now they seemed extremely fond of him: for what is got by wrong and usurpation, cannot be enjoyed or kept with any security or satisfaction. 2. He was distrustful of the promise of God; could not take his word, that if he would keep close to his duty, God would build him a sure house, (ch. 11. 38.) but he would contrive ways and means, and sink the name of God in his own safety. A practical disbelief of God's all-sufficiency, is at the bottom of all our treacherous departures from him.

II. The way hetook to do this, was, by keeping the people from going up to Jerusalem to worship. That was the place God had chosen to put his name there; Solomon's temple was there, which God had, in the sight of all Israel, and in the memory of many now living, taken solemn possession of, in a cloud of glory. At the altar there, the priests of the Lord attended, there all Israel were to keep the feasts, and thither they were to bring their sacrifices.

Now, 1. Jeroboam apprehended that if the people continued to do this, they would, in time, return to the house of David, allured by the magnificence both of the court and of the temple. If they cleave to their old religion, they will again be old king. We may suppose, if he had treated with Rehoboam for the safe conduct of himself and his people to and from Jerusalem, at the times appointed for their solemn feasts, it would not have been denied him; therefore he fears not their being driven back by force, but their going back to Rehoboam.

2. He therefore dissuaded them from going up to Jerusalem, by promising them to fulfil their promise; It is too much for you to go so far from your God. (v. 28.) it is a heavy yoke, and it is time to shake it off; you have gone long enough to Jerusalem. So some read it: "The temple, now that you are used to it, does not appear so glorious and sacred as it did at first:" (sensible glories wither, by degrees, in men's estimation:) "you have freed yourselves from other burdens, free yourselves from this; why should you now be tied to one place any more than in Samuel's time?"

3. He provided for the assistance of their devotion at home. Upon consultation had with some of his politicians, he came to this resolve, To set up two golden calves, as tokens or signs of the divine presence; and persuaded the people they might as well stay at home, and offer sacrifice to those, as go to Jerusalem, and offering sacrifice before the ark; and some are so charitable as to think they might be made to represent the mercy-seat, and the cherubims over the ark. But, more probably, he learnt it of the Egyptians, in whose land he had sojourned for some time, and who worshipped their godApis, under the similitude of a bull or calf. (1.) He would not be at the charge of building a golden temple, as Solomon had done; two golden calves are the most that he can offer, (v. 29.) he intended, not willingly, by these to represent, or rather make present, any false god, as Moloch or Chemosh, but the true God only, the God of Israel, the God that brought them up out of the land of Egypt, as he declares, v. 28. So that it was no violation of the first commandment, but the second. And he chose thus to engage the people's devotion, because he knew there were many among them, so in love with images, that, for the sake of them, they would rob God's temple, where all images were forbidden. (3.) He set up two, by degrees to break people off from the belief of the unity of the godhead, which would pave the way to the polytheism of the Pagans. He set up these two at Dan, and Beth-el, one the utmost border of his country northward, the other southward, as if they were the guardians and protectors of the kingdom. Beth-el was close to Judah: he set up one there, to tempt those of Rehoboam's subjects over to him, who were inclined to image-worship, in lieu of those of his subjects, that would continue to go to Jerusalem. He set up the other at Dan, for the convenience of those that lay most remote, and because Micah's images had been set up there, and great veneration paid to them for many ages, Judges 18. 30. Beth-el signifies the house of God, which gave some colour to the superstition; but the prophet called it Be

aven, the house of vanity, or iniquity.*

4. The people complied with him herein, and were fond enough of the novelty; they went to worship before the one, *even unto Dan,* (v. 30.) to that of Dan first, because it was first set up; or even to that at Dan, though it lay such a great way off. They that thought it much to go to Jerusalem, to worship God according to his institution, made no difficulty of going twice as far, to Dan, to worship him according to their own inventions. Or, they are said to go to one of the calves at Dan, because Abijah, king of Judah, within twenty years, recovered Beth-el, (2 Chron. 13. 19.) and, it is likely, Vol. 11 - 3 T
removed the golden calf, or forbade the use of it, and then they had only that at Dan to go to. This became a sin; and a great sin it was, against the express letter of the second commandment. God had sometimes dispensed with the law concerning worshipping in one place, but never allowed the worship of him by images. Hereby they justified their fathers in leaving the golden calf at Horeb, though God had so fully shown his displeasure against them for it, and threatened to visit for it in the day of visitation, Exod. 32. 34. So that it was as great a contempt of God's wrath as it was of his law; and thus they added sin to sin. Bishop Patrick quotes a saying of the Jews, That till Jeroboam's time the Israelites lacked but one calf, but from that time they lacked two.

Having set up the gods, he fitted up accommodations for them: wherein he varied from the divine appointment, we are here told; which intimates that, in other things, he imitated what was done in Judah, (v. 32.) as well as he could. See how one error multiplied into many.

(1.) He made a house of high places, or altars; one temple at Dan, we may suppose, and another at Beth-el, (v. 31.) and in each many altars, probably of making of it as an inconvenience, that in the temple of Jerusalem there was but one. The multiplying of altars passed with some for a piece of devotion, but God, by the prophet, puts another construction upon it; (Hos. 8. 11.) Ephraim has made many altars to sin.

(2.) He made priests of the lowest of the people; and the lowest of the people were good enough to be priests to his calves, and too good. He made priests from the lowest part of the people, that is, some out of every corner of the country, whom he ordered to reside among their neighbours, to instruct them in his appointments, and reconcile them to them. Thus were they dispersed as the Levites, but were not of the sons of Levi. But the priests of the high places, or altars, he ordered to reside in Beth-el, as the priests at Jerusalem, (v. 32.) to attend the public service.

(3.) The feast of tabernacles, which God had appointed on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, he adjourned to the fifteenth of the eighth month, (v. 32.) the month which he devised of his own heart, to show his power in ecclesiastical matters, v. 33. The passover and pentecost he observed in their proper season, or did not observe them at all, or with little solemnity in comparison with this.

(4.) He himself assuming a power to make priests, no marvel, he undertook to do the priest's work with his own hands: He offered upon the altar twice; it is mentioned, v. 32, 33. as also that he burnt incense. This was connived at in him, because it was of a piece with the rest of his irregularities; but in king Uzziah it was immediately punished with the plague of leprosy. He did it himself, to make him look great among the people, and get the reputation of a devout man; also to grace the solemnity of his new festival, with which it is likely, at this time, he joined the feast of the dedication of his altar.

And thus, [1.] Jeroboam sinned himself; yet perhaps excused himself to the world and his own conscience, with this, that he did not do so ill as Solomon did, who worshipped other gods. [2.] He made Israel to sin, drew them off from the worship of God, and engaged idolatry upon their seed. And hereby they were punished for desiring the thrones of the house of David.

The learned Mr. Whiston, in his chronology for the adjusting of the annals of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, supposes that Jeroboam changed the calculation of the year, and made it to contain but eleven months, and that by these years the reigns of the kings of Israel are measured, till Jehu's revolution, and no longer; in which interval, eleven years of the annals of Judah answer to twelve in those of Israel.

CHAP. XIII.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we left Jeroboam attending his altar at Beth-el, and there we find him the beginning of this, when he received a testimony from God against his idolatry and apostasy. This was cast by a prophet, a man of God that lived in Judah, who is the principal subject of the story of this chapter, wherein we are told, I. What passed between him and the new king, Jeroboam; the prophet threatened Jeroboam's altars, (v. 1, 2.) and gave him a sign, (v. 3.) which immediately came to pass, v. 5. 2. The king threatened the prophet, and was himself made another sign, by the withering of his hand, (v. 4.) and the restoration of it, upon his submission, and the prophet's intercession, v. 6. 3. The prophet refused the kindness offered him thereupon, v. 7-10. II. What passed between him and the old prophet. 1. The old prophet fetched him back by a lie, and gave him entertainment, v. 11., 19. He, for accepting it, in disobedience to the divine command, is threatened with death, v. 20., 22. And, 3. The threatening is executed, for he is slain by a lion, (v. 23, 24.) and buried at Beth-el, v. 25., 32. 4. Jeroboam is hardened in his idolatry, v. 33, 34. Thy judgments, Lord, are a great deep.

1. AND behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord unto Beth-el: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. 2. And he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar! thus saith the Lord, Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee. 3. And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the Lord hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out. 4. And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Beth-el, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. 5. The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord. 6. And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Entreat now the face of the Lord thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought the Lord, and the king's hand was restored again, and became as it was before. 7. And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward. 8. And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: 9. For so was it
charged me by the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. 10. So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel.

Here is,  
I. A messenger sent to Jeroboam, to signify to him God's displeasure against his idolatry, v. 1. The army of Judah that aimed to ruin him, was countermanded, and might not draw a sword against him; (ch. 12. 24.) but a prophet of Judah is, instead thereof, sent to reclaim him from his evil way, and is sent in time, while he is but dedicating his altar, before his heart is hardened by the deceitfulness of his sin, for God delights not in the death of sinners, but that the sinner may turn from his way of sin. Bold was the messenger, that durst attack the king in his pride, and interrupt the solemnity he was proud of! They that go on God's errand, must not fear the face of man; they know who will hear them out. How kind was He that sent him to warn Jeroboam of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against his ungodliness and unrighteousness!  
II. The message delivered in God's name, not worded in agreeable terms with, nor treating both the prophet's courage, that he was neither afraid nor ashamed to own it, and his earnestness, that he desired to be heard and heeded by all that were present, who were not a few, on this great occasion. It is directed, not to Jeroboam, or to the people, but to the altar, the stones of which will sooner hear and yield, than they who were mad upon their idols, and deaf to divine calls. Yet, in threatening the altar, he threatens the founder and worships, to whom it is as dear as their own souls, and who might conclude, "If God's wrath fasten upon the lifeless guiltless altar, how shall we escape?" That which is foretold concerning the altar, (v. 2.) is, that, in process of time, a prince of the house of David, Josiah by name, should pollute this altar by sacrificing the idolatrous priests themselves upon it, and burning the bones of dead men. Let Jeroboam know, and be sure, 1. That the altar he now consecrated, should be desecrated. Idolatrous worship will not continue, but the word of the Lord will endure for ever. 2. That the priests of the high places he now made, should themselves be made sacrifices to the justice of God, and the first and only sacrifices up this altar that would be pleasing to him. If the offering be such as is an abomination to God, it would follow, of course, that the offerers themselves fall under his wrath, which will abide upon them, since it is not otherwise remitted. 3. That this should be done by a Bruch of the house of David. That family which he and his kingdom had despised, and treacherously deserted, should recover so much power as to demolish that altar which he thought to establish; so that right and truth should, at length, prevail both in civil and sacred matters, notwithstanding the present triumphs of those that were given to change the fear both of God and the king. It was about 336 years, ere this prediction was fulfilled, yet it was spoken of as sure and nigh at hand, for a thousand years with God are but as one day. Nothing more contingent and arbitrary than the giving of names to persons, yet Josiah is here named above 300 years before he was born. Nothing future is hidden from God. There are names in the book of the divine presence, (Phil. 4. 3.) names written in heaven.

III. A sign is given for the confirming of the truth of this prediction, that the altar should be shaken to pieces by an invisible power, and the ashes of the sacrifice scattered, (v. 3.) which came to pass immediately. v. 5. This was, 1. A proof that the prophet was sent of God, who confirmed the word with this sign following, Mark 16. 20. 2. A present indication of God's displeasure against these idolatrous sacrifices. How could the gift be acceptable, when the altar that should sanctify it, was an abomination? 3. It was a reproach to the people, who were not only under the weight of these stones, but were rent not under the weight of the Lord. It was a specimen of what should be done to it in the accomplishment of this prophecy by Joshua; it was now rent, in token of its being then ruined.

IV. Jeroboam's hand withered, which he stretched out to seize or smite the man of God, v. 4. Instead of trembling at the message, as he might well have done, he assaulted him that brought it, in defiance of God's threatenings, as all the wicked, condemned, and reserved to judgment, are wont to do. Deprived of all incense to his calves, it was not withered; but when it was stretched out against a prophet, he shall have no use of it, till he humble himself. Of all the wickedness of the wicked, there is none more provoking to God than their malicious attempts against his prophets, of whom he has said, Touch them not, do them no harm. As this was a punishment of Jeroboam, and answering to the sin, so it was the deliverance of the prophet, God has many ways of disabling the enemies of his church to execute their mischievous purposes. Jeroboam's inability to pull in his hand, made him a spectacle to all about him, that they might see and fear. If God, in justice, harden the hearts of sinners, so that the hand they have stretched out in sin, they cannot pull in again by repentance, that is a spiritual judgment, represented by this, and much more dreadful.

V. The sudden healing of the hand that was suddenly dried, upon his submission, v. 6. That word of God which should have touched his conscience, humbled him not, but this which touched his bone and his flesh, brings down his proud spirit. He looks for help now, 1. Not from his calves, but from God only, from his power and his favour. He wounded, and no hand but his can make whole. 2. Not by his own sacrifice or incense, but by the prayer and intercession of the prophet, who was just now threatened, and aimed to destroy. The time may come, when those that hate the preaching, would be glad of the prayers, of faithful ministers. "Pray to the Lord thy God," says Jeroboam; "thou hast an interest in him, improve it for me." But observe, He does not desire him to pray that his sin might be pardoned, and his heart changed, only that his hand might be restored; thus Pharaoh would have Moses to pray that God would take away this death only, (Exod. 10. 17.) not this sin. The prophet, as became a man of God, renders good for evil, upbraids not Jeroboam with his impotent malice, nor triumphs in his submission, but immediately addresses himself to God for him. Those only are entitled to the blessing Christ pronounced on the persecuted, that learn of him to pray for their persecutors, Matt. 5. 44. When they pray for their enemies, they do it as if they were for themselves of a forgiving spirit, God put this further honour upon him, that, at his word, he recalled the judgment, and by another miracle healed the withered hand; that by the goodness of God Jeroboam might be led to repentance, and if he were not
broken by the judgment, yet might be mitigated by the mercy. With both he seemed affected for the present, but the impressions were off.

VI. The prophet’s refusal of Jeroboam’s kind invitation: in which observe, 1. That God forbade his message to eat or drink in Beth-el, to show his detestation of their execrable idolatry, and apostasy from God, and to teach us not to have fellowship with the works of darkness, lest we have infection from them, or give encouragement to them. He must not turn back the same way, but deliver his message, as it were, in transitu—as he passes along. He shall not seem to be sent on purpose, (they were unworthy such a favour,) but if the place be good, his designing thus, as Paul’s at Athens, as he passed, and saw their devotions. God would, by this command, try his prophet, as he did Ezekiel, whether he would not be rebellious, like that rebellious house, Ezek. 2. 8.

2. That Jeroboam was so affected with the cure of his hand, that though we read not of his thanksgiving to God for the mercy, or of his sending an offering to the altar at Jerusalem, in acknowledgment of it, yet he was willing to express his gratitude to the prophet, and pay him for his prayers. v. 7. Favours to the body will make even graceless men seem grateful to good ministers. 3. That the prophet, though hungry and weary, and, perhaps, poor, in obedience to the divine command, refused both the entertainment, and the reward, proffered him. He might have supposed his acceptance of it would give him an opportunity of discountenancing, further with the king, in order to his effectual reformation, now that he was convinced; yet he will not think himself, wiser than God, but, like a faithful careful messenger, haste’s home when he has done his errand. They have little learned the lesson of self-denial, that cannot forbear one forbidden meal.

11. Now there dwelt an old prophet in Beth-el; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Beth-el: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father. 12. And their father said unto them, What way went he? For his sons had seen what the way of the man of God went which came from Judah. 13. And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass, and he rode thereon, 14. And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I am. 15. Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread. 16. And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee; neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place: 17. For it was said to me by the word of the Lord, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest. 18. He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him. 19. So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water. 20. And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back: 21. And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, 22. But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.

The man of God had honestly and bravely refused the king’s invitation, though he promised him a reward; yet was over-persuaded by an old prophet, to come back with him, and dine in Beth-el, contrary to the command given him. Here we find how dear his dinner cost him. Observe with wonder,

I. The old prophet’s wickedness. I cannot but call him a false prophet, and a bad man; it being much easier to believe that from one of such a bad character, should be extorted a confirmation of what the man of God said, (as we find, v. 32,) than that a true prophet, and a good man, should tell such a deliberate lie as he did, and father it upon God. A good tree could never bring forth such corrupt fruit. Perhaps, he was trained up, among the sons of the prophets, in one of Samuel’s colleges not far off, whence he retained the name of a prophet, but, growing worldly and profane, the spirit of prophecy was departed from him. If he had been a good prophet, he would have re-proved Jeroboam’s idolatry, and not have suffered his sons to attend his altars, as, it should seem, they did.

Now, 1. Whether he had any good design in fetching back the man of God, is not certain. One may hope that he did it, in compassion to him, concluding he wanted refreshment, and out of a desire to be better acquainted with him, and more fully to understand his errand than he could from the report of his sons; yet, his sons having told him all that passed, and particularly that the prophet was forbidden to eat or drink there, which he had openly told Jeroboam, it is supposed to have been done with a bad design, to draw him into a snare, and so to expose him; for false prophets have ever been the worst enemies to the true prophets, usually aiming to destroy them, but sometimes, as here, to debauch them, and draw them from their duty. Thus they gave the Nazarites wine to drink, (Ames 2. 12, 21.) this they might gainsay the Lord. But, 2. It is certain that he took a very bad method to bring him back. When the man of God had told him, “I may not, and therefore I will not, return to eat bread with thee;” (his resolutions concurring with the divine command, v. 16, 17,) he wickedly pretended that he had an order from heaven to fetch him back; he imposed upon him his former character as a prophet, and swore, “I am a prophet also as thou art;” he pretended he had a vision of an angel that sent him on this errand; but it was all a lie, it was a banter upon prophecy, and profane in the highest degree. When this old prophet is spoken of, (2 Kings 23, 18,) he is called the prophet that came out of Samaria, whereas there was no such place as Samaria, till long after; (ch. 16, 24)
therefore I take it he is so called there, though he was at Beth-el, because he was like those who were afterward the prophets of Samaria, who caused God's highness Israel to err, Jer. 23. 13.

II. The good prophet's weakness, in suffering himself to be thus imposed upon; He went back with him, v. 19. He that had resolution enough to refuse the invitation of the king, who promised him a reward, could not resist the insinuations of one that pretended to be a prophet; good people are sometimes drawn from their duty by the plausible pretences of divinity and sanctity than by external inducements; we have therefore need to beware of false prophets, and not believe every spirit.

III. The proceedings of divine justice, hereupon; and here we may well wonder that the wicked prophet, who told the lie, and did the mischief, went unpunished, while the holy man of God, that was drawn by him into sin, was suddenly and severely punished for it. What shall we make of this? The judgments of God are unfathomable; the deceived and the deceiver are his, and he giveth not account of any of his matters: certainly there must be a judgment to come, when these things will be called over again, and when those that sinned most, and suffered least, in this world, will receive according to their works. 1. The message delivered to the man of God was strange; his crime is rectified; (v. 21, 22,) it was, in one word, disobedience to an express command; judgment is given upon it. Thy carcase shall not come to the sepulchre of thy fathers; that is, "Thou shalt never reach thy own house, but shalt be a carcase quickly, nor shall thy dead body be brought to the place of thy fathers' sepulchres, to be interred." 2. Yet it was more strange that the old prophet himself should be the messenger; who can go to no account, but that God would have it so, as he spake to Balaam by his ass, and read Saul his doom by the Devil in Samuel's likeness; we may think God designed hereby, (1.) To startle the lying prophet, and make him sensible of his sin; the message could not but affect him the more, when he himself had the delivering of it, and had so strong an impression made upon his spirit by it, that he cried out, as one in agony, and would have been turned to another mouth for his disobedience in a small matter, who sinned by surprise, of how much sorer punishment he should be thought worthy, who had belied an angel of God, and cheated a man of God, by a deliberate forgery. If this were done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry? Perhaps, it had a good effect upon him; those who preach God's wrath to others, have hard hearts indeed, if they fear it not themselves. (2.) To put the greater mortification upon the prophet that was deceived, and to show what they must expect, who hearken to the great deceiver, they that yield to him as a tempter, will be terrified by him as a tormentor; whom he now fawns upon, he will afterward fly upon, and whom he draws into sin, he will do what he can to drive to despair.

23. And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, to wilt, for the prophet whom he had brought back. 24. And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him; and his carcase was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcase. 25. And, behold, men passed by, and saw the carcase cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcase: and they came and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt. 26. And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard thereof, he said, It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord; therefore the Lord hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake unto him. 27. And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled him. 28. And he went, and found his carcase cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcase: the lion had not eaten the carcase, nor torn the ass. 29. And the prophet took up the carcase of the man of God, and laid it upon the ass, and brought it back: and the old prophet came to the city, to mourn and to bury him. 30. And he laid his carcase in his own grave; and they mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother! 31. And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones: 32. For the saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Beth-el, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass. 33. After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whatsoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places: 34. And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth.

Here is,

1. The death of the deceived disobedient prophet. The old prophet that had deluded him, as if he would make him some amends for the wrong he had done him, or help to prevent the threatened him, furnished him with an ass to ride home on; but, by the way, a lion set upon him, and killed him, v. 23, 24. He did but turn back to refresh himself when he was hungry, and behold, he must die for it; see 1 Sam. 14. 43. But we must consider, 1. That his offence was great, and it would, by no means, justify him, that he was drawn into it by a lie; he could not be so certain of the command sent by another, as he was of the command given to himself; nor had he any ground to think that the command would be recalled, when the reason of it remained in force, which was, that he might testify his detestation of the wickedness of that place. He had great reason to suspect the honesty of this old prophet, who did not himself bear his testimony, nor did God think fit to make use of him, as a witness against the idolatry of the city he lived in: however, he should have taken time to beg direction from God, and not have complied so soon. Did he think this old prophet's house safer to eat in than other houses at Beth-el, when God had forbidden him to eat in any? That was to refine upon the
command, and make himself wiser than God. Did he think to excuse himself, that he was hungry? Had he never read, that man lives not by bread alone? 2. That his death was for the glory of God; for by this it appeared, (1.) That nothing is more provoking to him than disobedience to an express command, though in a small matter, which makes his proceedings against our first parents, for eating the fruit of the tree, to be rendered to be accounted for. (2.) That God is displeased at the sins of his own people, and no man shall be protected in disobedience by the sincerity of his profession, the dignity of his office, his nearness to God, or any good services he has done for him. Perhaps, God, by this, intended, in a way of righteous judgment, to harden Jeroboam's heart, since he was not reformed by the warning of the prophet, and fully intended to make a bad use of it, and to say that the prophet was well enough served for meddling with his altar, he had better have staid at home; nay, he would say that Providence had punished him for his insolence, and the lion had done that which his withered hand might not do; however, by this he intended to warn all those whom he employs, strictly to observe their orders, at their peril.

II. Lay down the preservation of his dead body, which was a token of God's mercy remembered in the midst of wrath; the lion that gently strangled him, or tore him, did not devour his dead body, nor so much as tear the ass, v. 24, 25, 28. Nay, what was more, he did not set upon the travellers that passed by, and saw it, nor upon the old prophet, (who had reason enough to fear it,) when he came to take up the corpse; his commission was, to kill the prophet, hither to he should go, but no further; thus God showed that though he was angry with him, his anger was turned away, and the punishment went no further than death.

III. The care which the old prophet took of his burial; when he heard of the unusual accident, he concluded it was the man of God, who was disobedient to his Master, (and whose fault was that?) therefore the Lord had delivered him to the lion, v. 26. It had well become him to have asked why the lion was not sent against him and his house, rather than against the good man whom he had cheated. He took up the carcass, v. 29. If there were any truth in the vulgar opinion, surely the corpse bled afresh, when he touched it, for he was, in effect, the murderer, and it was but a poor repARATION for the injury, to inter the dead body; perhaps, when he charged him, he would be apt to make a loud at him; yet now his conscience so far relent, that he weeps over him, and, like Joab at Abner's funeral, is compelled to be a mourner for him whom he had been the death of; they said, Alas, my brother! v. 30. The case was indeed very lamentable, that so good a man, a prophet so faithful, and so bold in God's cause, should, for one offence, die as a criminal, while an old lying prophet lived from generation to generation to ruin the kingdom and power. Thy way, O God, is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters. We cannot judge of men by their sufferings, nor of sins by their present punishments; with some, the flesh is destroyed, that the spirit may be saved, while with others, the flesh is pampered, that the soul may ripen for hell.

IV. The charge which the old prophet gave his son charging him to bury his father in Bethel, and not in Beth-er, as the name of the place signifies. As they should, that they may be sure to bury him in the same grave where the man of God was buried; (v. 31.) Lay my bones beside his bones, close by them as near as may be, so that my dust may mingle with his; though he was a lying prophet, yet he desired to die the death of a true prophet; Gather not my soul with the sinners of Beth-el, but with this man of God. The reason he gives, is, because he cried against the altar of Bethel, that men's bones should be burnt upon it, shall surely come to pass, v. 32. Thus, 1. He ratifies the prediction, that out of the mouth of two witnesses, (and one of them such as St. Paul quotes, Titus 1, 12, one of themselves, even a prophet of their own,) the word might be established, if possible, to convince and reclaim Jeroboam. 2. He shows him the miseries of the deceased prophet, and what his words would not fall to the ground, though he did; ministers die, die prematurely it may be; but the word of the Lord endures for ever, and does not die with them. 3. He consults his own interest; it was foretold that men's bones should be burnt upon Jeroboam's altar; "Lay mine (says he) close to his, and then they will not be disturbed;" and it was, accordingly, their security, as we find, 2 Kings 23. 22. Sleeping in the grave, living in the city, was as safe being in good company. No mention is here made of the inscription on the prophet's tomb; but it is spoken of 2 Kings 23. 17. where Josiah asks, What title is that? And is told, It is the sepulchre of the man of God, that came from Judah, who proclaimed these things which thou hast done: so that the epistle upon the prophet's grave preserved the remembrance of his prophecy, and was a standing testimony among his people, that the words would not have been so remarkably, if he had died, and been buried elsewhere. The cities of Israel are here called cities of Samaria, though that name was not yet known; for, however the old prophet spake, the inspired historian wrote in the language of his own time.

V. The obstinacy of Jeroboam in his idolatry; (v. 33.) He returned not from his evil way; some hand was found, that durst repair the altar God had rent, and then Jeroboam offered sacrifice on it again, and the more boldly, because the prophet who disturbed him before, was in his grave, (Rev. 11. 10.) and because the prophecy was for a great while to come. Various methods had been used to reclaim him, but neither threats nor signs, neither judgments nor mercies, wrought upon him, so strangely was he wedded to his calves; he did not reform, not on his priesthood, but whoever would, he filled his hand, and made him priest, though ever so illicitate or immoral, and of what tribe soever; and this became sin, that is, a snare first, and then a ruin, to Jeroboam's house, to cut it off, v. 34. Note, The diminution, disquiet, and desolation, of families, are the fruit of sin; he promised himself that the calves would secure the crown to his family, but it proved the ruination of it, and sunk his family. Those betray themselves, that think by any sin to support themselves.

CHAP. XIV.

The kingdom being divided into that of Judah and that of Israel, we must, henceforward, in these books of Kings, expect and attend their separate history, the succession of their kings, and the affairs of their kingdoms, accounted for distinctly. In this chapter, there are, 1. The prophecies of the destruction of Jeroboam's house, v. 7. - 16. The sickness of his child was the occasion of it, (v. 1. - 6.) and the death of his child the earnest of it; (v. 17. 18.) together with the conclusion of his reign, v. 29. - 31. 2. The history of the declension and diminution of Rehoboam's house and his kingdom, (v. 21, 22.) and the conclusion of his reign, v. 29. - 31. In both which, we may remark, the various changes of kingdoms, and the calamities it brings on kingdoms and families.

1. At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick. 2. And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh; behold, there is Abijah the prophet,
which told me that I should be king over this people. 3. And take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him: he shall tell thee what shall become of the child. 4. And Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose, and went to Shiloh; and came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were set by reason of his age. 5. And the Lord said unto Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son, for he is sick: thus and thus shalt thou say unto her; for it shall be, when she cometh in, that she shall feign herself to be another woman. 6. And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.

How Jeroboam persisted in his contempt of God and religion, we read in the close of the foregoing chapter: here we are told how God proceeded in his controversy with him; for when God judges, he will overcome, and sinners shall either bend, or break, before him.

I. His child fell sick, v. 1. It is probable that he was his eldest son, and heir-apparent to the crown; for, at his death, all the kingdom went into mourning for him, v. 13. Neither his dignity as a prince, nor his age as a young prince, nor his interest in heaven as a priest, could exempt him from sickness, dangerous sickness; let none be secure of the continuance of their health, but improve it, while it continues, for the best purposes; Lord, behold he, whom thou lovest, thy favourite, he whom Israel loves, their darling, is sick. At that time, when Jeroboam prostituted and profaned the priesthood, (ch. 13. 33.) his child sickened; when sickness comes into our families, we should inquire whether there be not some particular sin harboured in our houses, which the affliction is sent to convince us of, and reclaim us from.

II. He sent his wife in disguise to inquire of Ahijah the prophet, what should become of the child, v. 2. 3. The sickle of his child touched him in a tender part; the withering of this branch of the family, would, perhaps, be soore an affliction to him as the withering of that branch of his body, ch. 13. 4. such is the force of natural affection; our children are ourselves but once removed.

Now, 1. Jeroboam's great desire, under this affliction, is, to know what shall become of the child, whether he will live or die. (1.) It had been so very precedent, if he had desired to know what means they should use for the recovery of the child, what they should give him, and what they should do to him; but, by this instance, and that of Ahaziah, 2 Kings 1. 2. and Ben-hadad, 2 Kings 8. 8. it seemeth, they had then such a foolish notion of fatality, as took them off from all use of means; for if they were sure the patient would live, they thought means not needful; if they could not die, they thought them useless; not considering that duty is our's, events are God's, and that he that ordained the end, ordained the means. Why should a prophet be desired to show that which a little time will show? (2.) It had been more pious, if he had desired to know whether God contended with him, had begged the prophet's prayers, and cast away his idols from him; then the child might have been restored to him, as his hand was; but most people would rather be told their fortune, than their faults or their duty.

2. That he might know the child's doom, he sent to Ahijah the prophet, who lived obscure and neglected in Shiloh, blind through age, yet still blessed with the in dispensials of the Lord, he had not bodily eyes, but are rather favoured by the want of them, the eyes of the mind being then most intent, and least diverted. Jeroboam sent not to him for advice about the setting up of his calves, or the consecrating of his priests, but has recourse to him in his distress, when the gods he served, could give him no relief; Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, before she blasphemed the Lord in his sickness, of their forgotten ministers and praying friends: he sends to Ahijah, because he had told him he should be king, v. 2. He was once the messenger of good tidings, surely he will be so again; those that by sin disqualify themselves for comfort, and yet expect their ministers, because they are good men, should speak peace and comfort to them, greatly wrong both themselves and their ministers.

3. He sent his wife to inquire of the prophet, because she could best put the question without naming names, or making any other description than this, "Sir, I have a son ill; will he recover, or not?" The heart of her husband safely trusted in her, that she would be faithful both in delivering the message, and bringing him the answer; and it seems there were none of all his counsellors, in whom he could confide; these were of his family or acquaintance, the sick child could very ill have spared her, for mothers are the best nurses, and it had been much fitter for her to have staid at home to tend him, than to go to Shiloh to inquire what would become of him. If she go, she must go incognito—must disguise herself, change her dress, cover her face, and go by another name; not only to conceal herself from her own court, and the country through which she pass, (as it were,) but to make her way to go, like a woman, and what she had reason to be ashamed of, as Nicodemus that came to Jesus by night, whereas it is no disarraygment to the greatest to attend God's prophets, but also to conceal herself from the prophet himself, that he might only answer her question concerning her son, and not enter upon the unpleasing subject of her husband's defection; thus some people learn to prescribe to others what things, and what they should do, without proper authority. If she had any reason, and what she had reason to be ashamed of, as Nicodemus, that came to Jesus by night, whereas it is no disarraygment to the greatest to attend God's prophets, but also to conceal herself from the prophet himself, that he might only answer her question concerning her son, and not enter upon the unpleasing subject of her husband's defection; thus some people learn to prescribe to others what things, and what they should do, without proper authority. If she had any reason to be ashamed of, as Nicodemus that came to Jesus by night, whereas it is no disarraygment to the greatest to attend God's prophets, but also to conceal herself from the prophet himself, that he might only answer her question concerning her son, and not enter upon the unpleasing subject of her husband's defection; thus some people learn to prescribe to others what things, and what they should do, without proper authority.

Did he think the God of Israel like his calves, just what he pleased? Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

III. God gave Ahijah notice of the approach of Jeroboam's wife, and that she came in disguise, and full instructions what to say to her, (v. 5.) which enabled him, as she came in at the door, to call her by her name, to her great surprise, and so disguise her to all about him who she was; (v. 6.) Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? He had no regard either, 1. To her rank; she was a queen, but what was that to him, who had a message to deliver her immediately from God, before whom all the children of men stand upon the same level? Nor, 2. To her present; it was usual for those who consulted prophets, to bring them the tokens of respect, which they accepted, and yet were no hirelings; she brought him a handsome country present, (v. 3.) but he did not think
himself obliged by that to give her any finer language than the nature of her message required.

Nor. 3. To her industrious conceitment of herself; it is a piece of civility not to take notice of those who desire not to be taken notice of; but the prophet was no courtier nor gave flattering titles; plain dealing is best, and she shall know at the first word, what she has to trust to; I am sent to thee with heavy tidings. Note, Those who think by these disguises to hide themselves from God, will be wretchedly confounded, when they find themselves disappointed in the day of discovery: sinners now appear in the garb of saints, and are taken to be such; but how will they blush and tremble, when they find themselves stripped of their false colours, and are called by their own name; "Go out, thou treacherous false-hearted hypocrite, I never knew thee, why feignest thou thyself to be another?"

Tidings of a portion with hypocrites will be heavy tidings; God will judge men according to what they are, not according to what they seem.

7. Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel, 8. And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee; and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes; 9. But hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back; 10. Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up, and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man that taketh away dung, till it be all gone. 11. Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat: for the Lord hath spoken it. 12. Arise thou, therefore, get thee to thine own house; and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die. 13. And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam. 14. Moreover, the Lord shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day: but what? even now. 15. For the Lord shall smite Israel as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the Lord to anger. 16. And he shall give Israel up, because of the sins of Jeroboam who did sin, and who made Israel to sin. 17. And Jeroboam's wife arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah: and when she came to the threshold of the door, the child died. 18. And they buried him; and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by the hand of his servant Ahijah the prophet.

19. And the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred, and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel. 20. And the days which Jeroboam reigned were two and twenty years: and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his stead.

When those that set up idols, and keep them up, go to inquire of the Lord, he doth not answer them, not according to the pretensions of their inquiry, but according to the multitude of their idols; (Ezek. 14. 4) so Jeroboam is answered here. He prevented her inquiry concerning the child, and foretells the ruin of Jeroboam's house for the wickedness of it; no one else durst have carried such a message, a servant would have smothered it, but his own wife cannot be suspected of ill-will to him that had cast himself out of God of Israel; though Israel had forsaken God, God had not cast them off, nor given them a bill of divorce for their whoredoms; he is Israel's God, and therefore will take vengeance on him who did them the greatest mischief he could do them, and drew them away from him.

II. He upbraids Jeroboam with the great favour he had bestowed upon him, in making him king, exciting him from among the people, the common people, to be prince over God's chosen Israel, and taking the kingdom from the house of David, to bestow it upon him. Whether we keep an account of God's mercies to us or no, he does, and will set even them in order before us, if we be ungrateful, to our greater confusion; otherwise, he gives, and upbraids not.

III. He charges him with his impiety and apostasy, and his idolatry particularly; Thou hast done evil above all that were before thee, v. 9. Saul, that was rejected, never worshipped idols; Solomon did it but occasionally, in his dotage, and never made Israel to sin; Jeroboam's calves, though pretended to be set up in honour of the God of Israel, that brought them up out of Egypt, yet are here called other gods, or strange gods, because in them he worshipped God, as the heathen worshipped their strange gods; because by them he changed the truth of God into a lie, and represented him as altogether different from what he is; and because many of the ignorant worshippers terminated their devotion in the image, and did not at all regard the God of Israel. Though they were calves of gold, the richness of the metal was so far from making them acceptable to God, that they provoked him to anger; desecrated the name, and abused it.

In doing this, 1. He had not set David before him; (v. 8.) Thou hast not been as my servant David; who, though he had his faults, and some bad ones, yet he never forsook the worship of God, nor grew loose or cold to that; his faithful adherence to that gained him this honourable character, that he followed God with all his heart, and herein he was proposed for an example to all his successors; those did not do well, that did not do like David. 2. He had not set God before him; but, (v. 9.) "Thou hast cast me behind thy back, my law, my fear; neglected me, forgotten me, and preferred thy policies before my precepts."
IV. He foretells the utter ruin of Jeroboam's house, v. 10, 11. He thought, by his idolatry, to establish his government, and by that, he not only lost it, but brought destruction upon his family; the universal destruction of all the males, whether shut up or left, married or unmarried. 1. Shameful destruction; they shall be taken away as dung, which is cast upon the dung hill, and which, while it is at hand, are glad to be rid of. He worshipped dunghill-deities, and God removed his family as a great dunghill; noble royal families, if wicked, are no better, in God's account.

2. Unusual destruction; their very dead bodies should be meat for the dogs in the street, or the birds of prey in the field, v. 11. Thus evil pursues sinners. See this fulfilled, ch. 15. 29.

V. He foretells the immediate death of the child that was born of his likeness, and laid to him, ch. 13. 1. Mercy to him; lest, if he live, he be infected with the sin, and so involved in the ruin, of his father's house. Observe the character given of him, In him was found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam. He only had an affection for the true worship of God, and disliked the worship of the calves. Note, (1.) Those are good, in whom are good things toward the Lord God of Israel; good inclinations, good intentions, good desires, toward him. (2.) Where there is but some good thing of that kind, it will be found: God that seeks it, sees it, be it ever so little, and is pleased with it.

(3.) A little grace goes a great way with great people. It is so rare to find princes well affected to religion, that, when they are so, they are worthy of double honour. (4.) Pious dispositions are, in a peculiar manner, amiable and acceptable, when they are found in those that are young. The divine image, in miniature, has a peculiar beauty and lustre in it. (5.) Those that are good in bad times and places, shine very bright in the eyes of God.

A good child in the house of Jeroboam, is a miracle of divine grace: to be there untainted, is like being in the fiery furnace unburnt, unsinged. Observe the care taken of him: he only, of all Jeroboam's family, shall die in his name, and will men inspire, when they are found in those that are young. The divine image, in miniature, has a peculiar beauty and lustre in it. (5.) Those that are good in good times and places, shine very bright in the eyes of God.

This hopeful child dies first of all the family, for God often takes them soonest, whom he loves best; heaven is the fairest place for them, this earth is not worthy of them. 2. In wrath to the family; it was a sign the family would be ruined, when he was taken, by what is called a sudden destruction. Jeroboam's reign is removed from the evil to come in this world, to the good to come in a better world. It is a bad omen to a family, when the best in it are buried out of it; when what was valuable, is picked out, the rest is for the fire. It is likewise a present affliction to the family and kingdom, by which both ought to have been bettered. It aggravated it to the poor mourner to say, it should not reach home; and enough to see her sons live, When thy feet enter into the city, just then the child shall die. This was to be a sign to her of the accomplishment of the rest of the threatenings, as 1 Sam. 2. 34.

VI. He foretells the setting up of another family to rule over Israel, v. 14. This was fulfilled in Baasha of Issachar, who conspired against Nadab the son of Jeroboam, in the second year of his reign, with his son Nadab, and this family, and this house, to be cut off. Even now. Why do I speak of it as a thing at a distance? It is at the door; it shall be done, even now. Sometimes God makes quick work with sinners, he did so with the house of Jeroboam. It was not twenty-four years from his first elevation to the final extirpation of his family.

VII. He foretells the judgments which should come upon the people of Israel, for conforming to the worship which Jeroboam had established. If the blind lead the blind, both the blind leaders and the blind followers shall fall into the ditch. It is here foretold, (v. 15.) 1. That they should never be easy, nor rightly settled in their land, but continually shaken like a reed in the water. After they left the house of David, the government never continued long in one family, but was undermined and destroyed another, which must needs occasion great disorders and disturbances among the people. 2. That they should, ere long, be totally expelled out of their land, that good land, and given up to ruin, v. 16. This was fulfilled in the captivity of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria. Families and kingdoms are ruined by sin, ruined by the wickedness of the heads of them. Jeroboam did sin, and made Israel to sin. If great men do wickedly, they involve many others both in the guilt and in the snare; multitudes follow their pernicious ways. They go to hell with a long train, and their condemnation will be more intolerable, who must answer not only for their own sins, but for the sins which others have been drawn into, and kept in, by their influence.

Jeroboam's wife has nothing to say against the word of the Lord, but she goes home with a heavy heart to their house in Tirzah, a sweet delightful place, so the name signifies, famed for its beauty, Cant. 6. 4. But death cannot be shut out from it, which will stain its beauty, and imbitter all its delights. Either she came, and here we leave her attending the funeral of her son, and expecting the fate of her family.

(1.) The child died; (v. 17.) and justly did all Israel mourn, not only for the loss of so hopeful a prince, whom they were not worthy of, but because his death plucked up the flood-gates, and made a breach, at which an inundation of judgments broke in.

(2.) Jeroboam himself died soon after, v. 20. It is said, (2 Chron. 18. 29.) The Lord struck him with some sore disease, so that he died miserably, when he had reigned twenty-two years; and left his crown to a son, who lost it, and his life too, and all the lives of his family, within two years after. For a further account of him, the reader is referred to the annals of his reign; drawn up by his own secretaries, or the public records, like those in the Tower, called here, The book, or register, of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel, to which recourse might be had; but, not being divinely inspired, they are long since lost.

21. And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty and one year old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the Lord did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess. 22. And Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. 23. For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree. 24. And there were also Sodomites in the land; and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel. 25. And it came to pass, in the fifth year of
king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem: 26. And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made. 27. And king Rehoboam made in their stead brazen shields, and committed them unto the hands of the chief of the guard, which kept the door of the king's house. 28. And it was so, when the king went into the house of the LORD, that the guard bare them, and brought them back into the guard-chamber. 29. Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? 30. And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days. 31. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And his mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess. And Abijam his son reigned in his stead.

Judah's story and Israel's are intermixed in this book. Jeroboam outlived Rehoboam four or five years, yet his history is despatched first, that the account of Rehoboam's reign may be laid together; and a sad account it is.

1. Here is no good said of the king. All the account we have of him here, is, 1. That he was 41 years old, when he began to reign, by which reckoning, he was born in the last year of David, and had his education, and the forming of his mind, in the best days of Solomon; yet he lived not up to it. Solomon's defection, at last, did more to corrupt him, than his wisdom and devotion had done to give him good principles. 2. That he reigned 17 years in Jerusalem, the city where God put his name, where he had opportunity enough to know his duty, if he had had but a heart to do it. 3. That his mother was Naamah, an Ammonitess; this is twice mentioned, v. 21, 31. It was strange that David would marry his son Solomon to an Ammonitess, (for it was done while he lived,) but, it is probable, Solomon was in love with her, because she was Naamah, a beauty, so it signifies, and his father was loath to censure him, but it proved to have a very bad influence upon posterity. Probably, she was daughter to Shibhi the Ammonite, who was kind to David, (2 Sam. 17, 27,) and David was too willing to require him by matching his son into his family. None can imagine how lasting and how fatal the consequences may be, of being unequally yoked with unbelievers. 4. That he had continual war with Jeroboam, (v. 30,) which could not but be a perpetual uneasiness to him. 5. That when he had reigned but 17 years, he died, and left his throne to his son. His father, and grandfather, and grandson, that reigned well, reigned long, 40 years apiece; but sin often shortens men's lives and comforts.

II. Here is much said to the disadvantage of the subjects, both as to their character and their condition.

1. See here how wicked and profane they were. It is a most sad account that is here given of their apostasy from God, v. 22, 24. Judah, the only professing people God had in the world, did evil in his sight, in contempt and defiance of him, and the tokens of his special presence with them; they provoked him to jealousy, as the adulterous wife provokes her husband, by breaking the marriage-covenant. Their fathers had been bad enough, especially in the times of the judges, but they did abominable things, above all that their fathers had done. The magnificence of their temple, the pomp of their priesthood, and all the secular advantages with which their religion was attended, could not prevail to keep them close to it; nothing less than the power of the Spirit from on high, could keep God's Israel in their allegiance to him. The account here given of the wickedness of the Jews, agrees with that which the apostle gives of the wickedness of the Gentile world; (Rom. 1, 21, 24,) so that both Jews and Gentiles are all alike under sin, Rom. 3, 9. (1.) They became vain in their imaginations concerning God, and changed his glory into an image, for they built them high places, images, &c. (v. 23,) affixing to it their images, and God's ordinances, by serving their idols with them. They foolishly fancied that they exalted God, when they worshipped him on high hills, and pleaded him, when they worshipped him under the pleasant shadow of green trees. (2.) They were given up to vile affections, (as those idolaters, Rom. 1, 26, 27,) for there were Sodomites in the land; (v. 24,) men with men working iniquity, and uncleanly, and the abominations of the Gentiles, which are less mentioned, without abhorrence and indignation. They dishonoured God by one sin, and then God left them to discharge themselves by another. They profaned the privileges of a holy nation, therefore God gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, to imitate the abominations of the accursed Canaanites; and herein the Lord was righteous. And when they did like them that were cast out, how could they expect any other than to be cast out like them? 2. See here how weak and poor they were; and this was the consequence of the former. Sin exposes, impoverishes, and weakens, any people. Shishak, king of Egypt, came against them, and so far, either by force or surrender, made himself master of Jerusalem itself, that he took away the treasures both of the temple, and of the king's house, of the house of the Lord, and of the king's house, which David and Solomon had amassed, v. 25, 26. These, it is likely, tempted him to make this descent; and, to save the rest, Rehoboam perhaps tamely surrendered them, as Ahab, ch. 20, 4. He also took away the golden shields, that were made but in his father's time; (v. 26,) these the king of Egypt carried off as trophies of his victory; and, as David and Solomon Rehoboam made brazen shields, which the life-guard carried before him, when he went to church in state, v. 27, 28. This was an emblem of the diminution of his glory. Sin makes the gold become dim, changes the most fine gold, and turns it into brass. We commend Rehoboam for going to the house of the Lord, perhaps the oftener for the rebuke he had been under, and do not condemn him for going in pomp. Great men should honour God with their honour, and then they are themselves most honoured by it.

CHAP. XV.

In this chapter, we have an abstract of the history. I. Of two of the kings of Judah, Abijam, the days of whose reign were few and evil, (v. 1, 8,) and Asa, who reigned well and long, v. 9, 24. II. Of two of the kings of Israel, Nadab the son of Jeroboam, and Baasha the destroyer of Jeroboam's house, v. 25, 30.

1. NOW in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat, reigned Abijam over Judah. 2. Three years reign
ed he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. 3. And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father.

4. Nevertheless, for David's sake, did the Lord his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem: 5. Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. 6. And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life. 7. Now the rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? And there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam.

8. And Abijam slept with his fathers; and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead.

We have here a short account of the short reign of Abijam the son of Rehoboam king of Judah. He makes a better figure, 2 Chron. 13. where we have an account of his war with Jeroboam, the speech he made before the armies engaged, and the wonderful victory he obtained by the help of God. There he is called Abijah, My father is the Lord, because no wickedness is there laid to his charge. But here, where we are told of his faults, Jah, the name of God, is, in disgrace to him, taken away from his name, and he is called Abijam, Jer. 22. 24.

Few particulars are related concerning him. 1. He began his reign in the beginning of Jeroboam's 15th year; for Rehoboam reigned but 17, ch. 14. 21. Jeroboam indeed survived Rehoboam, but Rehoboam's Abijah lived to succeed him, and to be a terror to Jeroboam, while Jeroboam's Abijah (whom we read of ch. 14. 1.) died before him. 2. He reigned scarcely three years, for he died before the end of Jeroboam's 20th year, v. 9. Being made proud and secure by his great victory over Jeroboam, (2 Chron. 13. 21.) God cut him off, to make way for his son Asa, who would be a better man.

3. His mother's name was Maachah the daughter of Abishalom, namely, Absalom, David's son, as I am the rather inclined to think, because two other of Rehoboam's wives were his near relations, (2 Chron. 11. 18.) his daughter of Abihail was also the daughter of Abishalom, David's son; and another the daughter of Eliah, David's brother. He took warning by his father, not to marry strangers; yet thought it below him to marry his subjects, except they were of the royal family. 4. He carried on his father's wars with Jeroboam. As there was continual war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam, not set battles, (they were set battles, ch. 12. 24.) but frequent encounters, especially upon the borders; one making incursions and reprisals on the other: so there was, between Abijam and Jeroboam, (v. 7.) till Jeroboam, with a great army, invaded him, and then Abijam, not being forbidden to act in his own defence, routed him, and weakened him, that he compelled him to be quiet the rest of his reign, 2 Chron. 13. 20.

But, in general, we are told, (1.) That he was not like David, had no hearty affection for the ordinances of God; though, to serve his purpose against Jeroboam, he pleaded his possession of the temple and priesthood, as that which he valued himself upon, 2 Chron. 13. 10. 12. Many boast of their profession of godliness, who are strangers to the power of it; and plead the truth of their profession, who have not the grace of it. His heart was not perfect with the Lord his God; he seemed to have zeal, but he wanted sincerity; he began well, but he fell off, and walked in all the sins of his father, followed his bad example, though he had seen the bad consequences of it. He that was all his days in war, ought to have been so wise as to make and keep his peace with God, and not to make him his Enemy, especially having found him so good a Friend in his war with Jeroboam, 2 Chron. 13. 18. Let favour show the wicked, yet still he not learn righteousness, Isa. 26. 10. (2.) That yet it was for David's sake that he was advanced to, and continued upon, the throne; it was for his sake, (v. 4, 5.) that God thus set up his son after him; not for his own sake, or for the sake of his Father, whose steps he trod in, but for the sake of David, whose example he would not follow. Note, It aggravates the sin of a regenerate seed, that they fare the better for the piety of their ancestors, and owe their blessings to it, and yet will not imitate it. They stand upon that ground, and yet despise it, and trample upon it, and unreasonably ridicule and oppose that which they enjoy the benefit of. The kingdom of Judah was supported,

[1.] That David might have a lamp, pursuant to the divine ordinance of a lamp for his anointed, Ps. 132. 17. [2.] That Jerusalem might be established; not only that the honours put upon it, in David's and Solomon's time, might be preserved to it, but that it might be reserved to the honours designed for it in after-times. The character here given of David, is very great, that he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, but the exception very remarkable, save only in the matter of Uriah, including both his murder, and the debauching of his wife. That was a bad matter; it was a remaining blot upon his name, a bar in his escutcheon, and the reproach of it was not wiped away, though the guilt was. David was guilty of other faults, but they were nothing in comparison of that; yet even that, being repented of, though it be mentioned for warning to others, did not prevail to throw him out of the covenant, nor to cut off the entail of the promise upon his seed.

9. And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah. 10. And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. 11. And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father. 12. And he took away the Sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. 13. And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burnt it by the brook Kidron. 14. But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days. 15. And he brought in the things which his father had dedicated, and the things which himself had dedicated, into
the house of the Lord, silver, and gold, and vessels. 16. And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. 17. And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. 18. Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants: and king Asa sent them to Ben-hadad, the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, 19. There is a league between me and thee, and between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent unto thee a present of silver and gold; come and break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me. 20. So Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of the host which he had against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-beth-maacah, and all Cinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. 21. And it came to pass, when Baasha heard thereof, that he left off building of Ramah, and dwelt in Tirzah. 22. Then king Asa made a proclamation throughout all Judah; none was exempted; and they took away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, whereewith Baasha had builded: and king Asa built with them Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah. 23. The rest of all the acts of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? Nevertheless, in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet. 24. And Asa slept with his fathers, and was buried with his father: in the city of David his father: and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead.

We have here a short account of the reign of Asa; we shall find a more copious history of it, 2 Chron. 14, 15, and 16.

Here is,

I. The length of it; He reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem, v. 10. In the account we have of the kings of Judah, we find the number of the good kings and the bad ones, nearly equal; but then we may observe, to our comfort, that the reign of the good kings was generally long, but that of the bad kings short, the consideration of which will make the state of God's church not altogether so bad, within that period, as it appears, at first sight. Length of days is in Wisdom's right hand. Honour thy father, much more thy heavenly Father, that thy days may be long.

II. The general good character of it; (v. 11.) Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. That is right indeed, which is, so in God's eyes. Those are approved, whom he commends. He did as did David his father, kept close to God, and to his instituted worship, was hearty and zealous for that, which gave him this honourable character, that he was like David, though he was not a prophet, or psalmist, as David was. If we come to the measures of those that are come before us, it will be our praise with God, though we come short of their gifts. Asa was like David, though he was neither such a conqueror, nor such an author; for his heart was perfect with the Lord all his days, (v. 14.) that is, he was both cordial and constant in his religion. What he did for God, he was sincere in, steady and uniform, and did it from a good principle, with a single eye to the glory of God.

III. This particular instance of Asa's piety. His times were times of reformation. For, 1. He removed that which was evil. There reformation begins; and a great deal of work of that kind his hand found to do. For though it was but 20 years after the death of Solomon, that he began to reign, yet very gross corruption had spread far, and taken deep root. Immorality he first struck at; he took away the Soconites out of the land, suppressed the brothels; for how can either prince or people prosper, while those cages of unclean and filthy birds, more dangerous than pest-houses, are suffered to remain? Then he proceeded against idolatry; he removed all the idols, even those that his father had made, v. 12. His father having made them, he was the more concerned to remove them, that he might cut off the entail of the curse, and prevent the visits of God's iniquity upon him and his sons (which rebounds much on his honour, and shows his heart was perfect with God,) when he found idolatry in the court, he rooted it out thence, v. 13. When it appeared that Maacah his mother, or rather his grandmother, (but called his mother, because she had the education of him in his childhood,) had an idol in a grove, though she was his mother, his grandmother, though it is likely, she had part in the pollution of it, he strewed with filth his (which rebounded much on his honour,) and kept it for her own use only, yet he would by no means connive at it. Reformation must begin at home. Bad practices will never be suppressed in the country, while they are supported in the court. Asa, in every thing else, will honour and respect his mother; he loves her well, but he loves God better, and, like the Levite, (Deut. 32. 7.) bravely break with her in the relation where it is a question of petition with his duty. If she be an idolater, (1.) Her idol shall be destroyed, publicly exposed to contempt, defaced, and burnt to ashes, by the brook Kidron, on which, it is probable, he strewed the ashes, in imitation of Moses, (Exod. 32. 20.) and in token of his detestation of idolatry, and his indignation at it, wherever he found it. Let no remains of a court-idol appear. (2.) She shall be deposed: he removed her from being queen (which was the queen; that is, from conversing with his wife; he banished her the court, and confined her to an obscure and private life. They that have power, are happy, when thus they have hearts to use it well. 2. He re-established that which was good, v. 15. He brought into the house of God the dedicated things which he himself had vowed out of the spoils of the Ethiopians he had conquered; and the other dedications which were brought in, pursuant to his vow. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well; not only cast away the idols of our iniquity, but dedicate ourselves and our all to God's honour and glory: When those who, in their infancy, were, by baptism, devoted to God, make it their own act and deed to join themselves to him, and vigorously employ themselves in his service, that is bringing in the dedicated things which were, and their fathers have dedicated: it is necessary justice, rendering to God the things that are his.
IV His political conduct. He built cities himself, to encourage the increase of his people, (v. 23.) and to invite others to him by the conveniences of habituation. And he was very zealous to hinder Baasha from building Ramah, because he designed it for the cutting off of communication between his people and Jerusalem, and to hinder those who, in obedience to God, would come to worship there. And he sought to be exalted by no means he suffered to fortified a frontier town.

V. The faults of his reign. In both the things for which he was praised, he was found defective; the fairest characters are not without some but or other in them. 1. Did he take away the idols? That was well: but the high places were not removed; (v. 14.) therein his reformation fell short. He removed all images which were rivals with the true God, or false representations of him; but the altars which were set up in high places, and to which those sacrifices were brought, which should have been offered on the altar in the temple, those he suffered to stand, thinking there was no great harm in them, they having been used by good men before the temple was built, and being lasting to disoblige the people who had a kindness to them, and were used to them both by custom and necessity; whereas in Judah and Benjamin, the only tribes under Asa's government, which lay so near Jerusalem and the altars there, there was less pretence for them than in those tribes which lay more remote. They were against the law, which obliged them to worship at one place, Deut. 12. 11. They lessened men's esteem of the temple and the altars there, and were an open gap for idolatry to enter in at, while the people went so much addicted to them. It was not well that Asa, when his hand was in, did not remove these; nevertheless his heart was perfect with the Lord. This affords us a comfortable note, that those may be found honest and upright with God, and be accepted of him, who yet, in some instances, come short of doing the good they might and should do. The perfection which is made the indispensable condition of the new covenant, is not to be understood of sinlessness, (then we were all undone,) but sincerity. 2. Did he bring in the dedicated things? That was well: but he afterward alienated the dedicated things, when he took the gold and silver out of the house of God, and sent them as a tribute to Ben-hadad, to hire him to break his league with Baasha, and, by making an inroad upon his country, to give him a diversion from the building of Ramah, v. 19, 18. 3. Even in the destruction of Baasha, he was not entirely free from sin. (1.) In tempting Ben-hadad to break his league, and so to violate the public faith. If he did wrong in doing it, as certainly he did, Asa did wrong in persuading him to do it. (2.) In that he could not trust God, who had done so much for him, to free him out of this strait, without his using such indirect means to help himself. (3.) In taking the gold out of the treasury of the temple, which was not to be made ordinary, but holier than holy, was the trust and project succeeded; Ben-hadad made a descent upon the land of Israel, which obliged Baasha to retire with his whole force from Ramah, (v. 20, 21,) which gave Asa a fair opportunity to demolish his works there, and the timber and stones served him for the building of some cities of his own, v. 22. 

But though the design prospered, we find it was displeasing to God; and though Asa valued himself upon it, though Baasha was made ashamed of it, and would effectually secure his peace, he is told by a prophet, that he had done foolishly, and that from thenceforth he should have wars; see 2 Chron. 16. 7. 9.

VI. The troubles of his reign. For the most part, he prospered: but, 1. Baasha king of Israel was a very troublesome neighbour to him. He reigned 24 years, and all his days, had war, more or less, with Asa, v. 16. This was the effect of the division of the kingdoms, that they were continually vexing one another, which made them both an easier prey to the common enemy. 2. In his old age, he was himself afflicted with the gout; he was diseased in his feet, which made him less fit for business, and peevish toward those about him.

VII. The conclusion of his reign. The acts of it were more largely recorded in the common history (to which reference is here had, v. 23.) than in this sacred one. He reigned long, but finished, at last, with honour, and left his throne to a successor no way inferior to himself.

25. And Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned over Israel two years. 26. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin. 27. And Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him: and Baasha smote him at Gibbethon, which belongeth to the Philistines; (for Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbethon;) 28. Even in the third year of Asa king of Judah did Baasha slay him, and reigned in his stead. 29. And it came to pass, when he reigned, that he smote all the house of Jeroboam; he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according unto the saying of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite: 30. Because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin, by his provocation wherewith he provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger. 31. Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? 32. And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. 33. In the third year of Asa king of Judah began Baasha the son of Ahijah to reign over all Israel in Tirzah, twenty and four years. 34. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.

We are now to take a view of the miserable state of Israel, while the kingdom of Judah was happy under Asa's good government. It was threatened that they should be as a reed shaken in the water, (ch. 14. 15.) and so they were, when, during the single reign of Asa, the government of the kingdom was in six or seven different hands, as we find in this and the following chapter. Jeroboam was upon the throne, in the beginning of his reign, and Asa at the end of it; between whom were Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, and Omri, underminding and destroying one another. This they got by deserting the house both of God and of David.

Here is, 1. The ruin and extirpation of the family of Jeroboam, according to the word of the Lord by Ahijah. His son Nadab succeeded him. If the death of his brother Ahijah had had a due influence
upon him, to make him religious, and the honour done him at his death. had engaged him to follow his good example, his reign might have been long and glorious; but he walked in the way of his father. (v. 26.) kept up the worship of his calves, and forsook his subjects to go up to Jerusalem to worship; sinned, and made Israel to sin; and therefore God brought ruin upon him quickly, in the second year of his reign. He was besieging Gibbethon, a city which the Philistines had taken from the Danites, and was endeavouring to retake it; and there, in the midst of his army, did Baasha, with others, conspire against him, and kill him; (v. 27.) and so little interest had he in the affections of his people, that his army did not only avenge his death, but chose his murderer for his successor. Whether Baasha did it upon a personal pique against Nadab, or to be avenged on the house of Jeroboam, for some affront received from them, or whether, under pretence of freeing his country from the tyranny of a bad prince; or whether, merely from a principle of ambition, or to make way for himself to the throne, does not appear; but he slew him, and reigned in his stead. v. 28. And the first thing he did, when he came to the crown, was, to cut off all the house of Jeroboam, that he might the better secure himself, and his own usurped government. He thought to reproach the house of David in the eyes of the kingdom, but he destroyed them; left not only no males, (as was foretold, ch. 14. 10.) but none that breathed. Herein, he was barbarous, but God was righteous. Jeroboam's sin was punished, (v. 30.) for they that provoke God, do it to their own confusion; see Jer. 7. 19. Ahijah's prophecy was accomplished, (v. 29.) for no word of God shall fall to the ground. Divine threatenings are not designed merely to terrify. 2. The elevation of Baasha. He shall be tried a while, as Jeroboam was; 24 years he reigned, (v. 33.) but showed that it was not from any dislike to Jeroboam's sins, that he destroyed his family, but from malice and ambition; for when he had rooted out the sinner, he himself clave to the sin, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, (v. 34.) though he had seen the end of that way; so strangely was his heart hardened with the deceitfulness of sin.

CHAP. XVI.

This chapter relates wholly to the kingdom of Israel, and the revolutions of that kingdom—many in a little time. The utter ruin of Jeroboam's family, after it had been 21 years a royal family, we read of in the chapter before. In this chapter, we have, 1. The ruin of Baasha's family, after it had been but 22 years a royal family, foretold by a prophet, (v. 1.-7.) and executed by Zimri, one of his captains, v. 8. 14. II. The seven days' reign of Zimri, and his sudden fall, v. 15. 20. The struggle between Omri and Tibbi, and Omri's prevalency, and his reign, v. 21. 25. IV. The beginning of the reign of Ahab, whom we shall afterward read much of, v. 29. 33. V. The rebuilding of Jericho, v. 34. All this while, in Judah things went well.

1. THEN the word of the Lord came to Jehu the son of Hanani, against Baasha, saying, 2. Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel, and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins; 3. Behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house, and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. 4. Him that dieth of Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth of his in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat. 5. Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? 6. So Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah: and Elah his son reigned in his stead. 7. And also by the hand of the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, came the word of the Lord against Baasha, and against his house, even for all the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord, in provoking him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam; and because he killed him. 8. In the twenty and sixth year of Asa king of Judah began Elah the son of Baasha to reign over Israel in Tirzah, two years. 9. And his servant Zimri, captain of half his chariots, conspired against him as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, steward of his house in Tirzah. 10. And Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him, in the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead. 11. And it came to pass, when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne, that he slew all the house of Baasha: he left him not one that pisseth against a wall, neither of his kinsfolks, nor of his friends. 12. Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake against Baasha by Jehu the prophet; 13. For all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, by which they sinned, and by which they made Israel to sin, in provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities. 14. Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? Here is,

1. The ruin of the family of Baasha foretold: he was a man likely enough to have raised and established his family, active, politic, and daring; but he was an idolater, and that brought destruction upon his family. God sent him warning of it before, 1. That if he were thereby wrought upon to repent and reform, the ruin might be prevented; 2. That God threatens, that he may not strike, as one that desires not the death of sinners. 2. That, if not, it might appear that the destruction, when it did come, whoever might be instruments of it, was the act of God's justice, and the punishment of sin. The warning was sent by Jehu, the son of Hanani. The father was a seer, or prophet, at the same time, 2 Chron. 16. 7. He was sent to Asa king of Judah; but the son, who was young, and more active, was sent on this longer and more dangerous expedition to Baasha king of Israel. Juniores ad labores—toil and adventure are for the young. This Jehu was a prophet, and worthy of a prophet. Prophecy, thus happily entailed, was worthy of so much more the honour. This Jehu continued long
in his usefulness, for we find him reproving Je-hoshaphat (2 Chron. 19. 2.) above 40 years after, and writing the annals of that prince. 

2 Cor. 20. 34. The message which this prophet brought to Baasha, is much the same with that which Ahijah sent to Jeroboam by his wife. (1.) He reminds him of the great things God had done for him; (v. 2.) He calls him to the knowledge of a great instance of the divine sovereignty and power, 1 Sam. 2. 8. Baasha seemed to have raised himself by his own treachery and cruelty, yet there was the hand of Providence in it, to bring about God's counsel, concerning Jeroboam's house; and God's owning his advancement as his act and deed, does by no means amount to the patronising of his ambition and treachery. It is God's hand, that brings the bad men's hands, which he makes to serve his good purposes, notwithstanding the bad use they make of it. I made thee prince over my people. God calls Israel his people still, though wretchedly corrupted, because they retained the covenant of circumcision, and there were many good people among them; it was not till long after, that they were called Loammi, not a people, Hos. 1. 9. (2.) He charges him with his high-handed acts, the array of his army, and the murder he had made in Israel, to sin, had seduced God's subjects from their allegiance, and had brought them to pay the homage due to him only, to dunghill-deities, and herein, he had walked in the way of Jeroboam, (v. 2.) and been like his house, v. 7. (2.) That he had himself provoked God to anger with the work of his hands, that is, by worshipping images, the work of men's hands; though others made them, perhaps he served them, and thereby as much as the making of them, and they are therefore called the work of his hands. (3.) That he had destroyed the house of Jeroboam, (v. 7.) because he killed him, namely, Jeroboam's son, and all his; if he had done that, with an eye to God, and to his will and glory, and from a holy indignation against the sins of Jero-boa and his house, he had been accepted and applauded as a minister of God's justice; but as he did it, he was not only the tool of God's justice, but a servant to his own lusts, and is justly punished for the malice and ambition which governed him in all he did. They who are, any way, employed in denouncing or executing the justice of God, (magistrates or ministers,) are concerned to do it from a good principle, and in a holy manner, lest it turn into sin to them, and they make themselves obnoxious by it. (2.) He draws upon his family, which he himself had been employed to bring upon the family of Jeroboam, v. 3, 4. They who resemble others in their sins, may expect to resemble them in their plagues, especially those who seem zealous against such sins in others, as they allow themselves in; the house of Jehu was reckoned with for the blood of the house of Ahab, Hos. 1. 4. 

II. A reprieve granted for some time, so long, the Baasha that he should not put the house of Jeroboam in honour in his own royal city; (v. 6.) so far is he from being a prey either to the dogs or to the fowls, which yet was threatened to his house, v. 4. He lives not either to see or feel the punishment threatened, yet he was himself the greatest delinquent; certainly, there must be a future state, in which inimical sinners will suffer in their own persons, and be eschewed, as often as they do in this world. Baasha dying, the stroke of the judgment seems, for aught that appears, but God laid up his iniquity for his children; (as Job speaks, ch. 21. 19.) thus he often visits sins. Observe, Baasha is punished by the destruction of his children after his death, and his children are punished by the abuse of their bodies after their death; that is the only thing which the threatening specifyes, (v. 4.) that the dogs and the fowls of the air should eat them, as if herein were designed a tacit intimation, That there are punishments after death, when death has done its worst, which will be the sorest punishments, and are most to be dreaded; these judgments on the body and posterity, signified judgments on the soul when separated from the body, by Him who, after he has killed, has power to raise again; v. 5. 

III. Execution done at last. Baasha's son Elah, like Jeroboam's son Nadab, reigned two years, and then was slain by Zimri, one of his own soldiers, as he was by Baasha: so like was his house made to that of Jeroboam, as was threatened, v. 3. Because his idolatry was like his, and one of the sins for which God contended with him, being the destruction of Jeroboam's family, the more like the destruction of his own was to be feared; the master did the punishment resemble the sin, as face answers to face in the glass.

1. As then, so now, the king himself was first slain, but Elah fell more ingloriously than Nadab; Nadab was slain in the field of action and honour, he and his army then besieging Gibbethon; (ch. 15. 27.) but the siege being then raised, upon that disturbance, and the city still remaining in the Philistines hands, the army of Israel was now renewing the attempt, (v. 15.) and Elah should have been with them to command in chief, but he loved his own ease and safety better than his honour or duty, or the public good, and therefore stood behind to take his pleasure; and when he was drinking himself drunk in his servant's house, Zimri killed him, v. 9, 10. Let it be a warning to drunkards, especially those who designedly drink themselves drunk, that they know not but that they may surprise them into that condition. (1.) Death comes easily upon men, when they are drunk; beside the chronic diseases which men frequently bring themselves into by hard drinking, and which cut them off in the midst of their days, men, in that condition, are more easily overcome by an enemy, as Amnon by Absalom, and are liable to more bad accidents, being unable to help themselves. (2.) Death comes terribly upon men in that condition, finding them in the act of sin, and incapacitated for any act of devotion; that day comes upon them at unsavours, (Luke 21. 34.) like a thief. 2. As then, so now, the whole family was cut off, and rooted out; the traitor was the successor, to whom the unhunting people tamely submitted, as if it were all one to them what king they had, so that of his reign the first thing was, that Zimri did, was to stay all the house of Baasha; thus he held by cruelly what he got by treason; his cruelty seems to have extended further than Baasha's did against the house of Jeroboam, for he left to Elah none of his kinsfolk or friends; (v. 11.) none of his avengers, so the word is, none that were likely to avenge his death; yet divine justice soon avenged it so remarkably, that it was used as a proverb long after, Had Zimri his head, it was cursed in his house. (v. 11.) v. 31. In this, (1.) The word of God was fulfilled, v. 12. (2.) The sins of Baasha and Elah were reckoned for, with which they provoked God with their vanities, v. 13. Their idols are called their vanities, for they cannot profit nor help; miserable are those whose deities are vanities. 15. In the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah. And the people were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines. 16. And the people that were encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also slain the king; wherefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host.
king over Israel that day in the camp. 17. And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah.

18. And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died, 19. For his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the Lord, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin. 20. Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he wrought, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? 21. Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; and half followed Omri. 22. But the people that followed Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath: so Tibni died, and Omri reigned. 23. In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel, twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah. 24. And he bought the hill Samaria of Shemar for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemar, owner of the hill, Samaria. 25. But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him. 26. For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities. 27. Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he showed, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? 28. So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria: and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.

Solomon observes, (Prov. 28. 2.) that for the transgression of a land, many were the princes thereof, (so it was here in Israel,) but by a man of understanding the state thereof shall be prolonged. So it was with Judah at the same time, under Asa; when men forsake God, they are out of the way of rest and establishment; Zimri, and Tibni, and Omri, are here striving for the crown. Proud aspiring men ruin one another, and involve others in the ruin; these confusions end in the settlement of Omri; we must therefore take him along with us, through this part of the story.

I. How he was chosen; as the Roman emperors often were, by the army in the field, now encamped before Gibbethon: notice was soon brought thither, that Zimri had slain their king, (v. 18.) and set up himself in Tirzah, the royal city, whereupon they chose Omri king in the camp, that they might, without delay, avenge the death of Elijah upon Zimri; though he was idle and intemperate, yet he was their king, and they would not tamely submit to his murderer, nor let the treason go unpunished; they did not attempt to avenge the death of Nadab upon Baasha, perhaps, because the house of Baasha had ruled with more gentleness than the house of Jeroboam; but Zimri shall feel the resentments of the provoked army; the siege of Gibbethon is quitted, (Philistines are sure to gain when Israelites quarrel,) and Zimri is prosecuted.

II. How he conquered Zimri: he is said to have reigned 7 days, (v. 15.) so long before Omri was proclaimed king; and himself proclaimed king; but we may suppose it a longer time before he died, for he continued long enough to show his inclination to the way of Jeroboam, and to make himself obnoxious to the justice of God, by supporting his idolatry, v. 19. Tirzah was a beautiful city, but not fortified, so that Omri soon made himself master of it, (v. 17.) forced Zimri into the palace, which, being unable to defend himself, fell to surrender the burn, and himself in it, v. 18. Unwilling that his rival should ever enjoy that sumptuous palace, he burnt it; and fearing that if he fell into the hands of the army, either alive or dead, he should be ignominiously treated, he burnt himself in it. See what desperate practices men's wickedness sometimes brings them to, and how it hurries them into their own ruin; see the disposition of incendiaries, who set palaces and kingdoms on fire, though they are themselves in danger of perishing in the flame.

III. How he struggled with Tibni, and, at length, got clear of him; half of the people followed this Tiben, (v. 21.) probably, those who were in Zimri's interest, with whom others joined, who would not have a king chosen in the camp, (lest he should rule by the sword, and a standing army,) but in a convention of the heads of the tribes; the contest between these two, lasted some years, and, it is likely, cost a great deal of blood on both sides, for it was in the 27th year of Asa, that Omri was first elected, (v. 15.) and thence the 12 years of his reign are to be dated; but it was not till the 31st year of Asa, that he began to reign without a rival; then Tibni died, it is likely, in battle, and Omri reigned, v. 22. Sir Walter Raleigh, in his History of the World, (I. 2. c. 19. 8.) inquired here, why it was, that in all these confusions and revolutions of the kingdom of Israel, they never thought of returning to the house of David, and uniting themselves again to Judah, for then it was better for them than now; and he thinks the reason was, because the kings of Judah assumed a more absolute, arbitrary, and despotic power, than the kings of Israel; it was the heaviness of the yoke that they complained of, when they first revolted from the house of David, and the dread of that made them, ever after, averse to it, and attached to kings of their own, who ruled more by law, and the rules of a limited monarchy.

IV. How he reigned, when he was, at length, settled on the throne. 1. He made himself famous by building Samaria, (which, ever after, was the royal city of the kings of Israel,) (the palace of Tirzah being burnt,) and, in process of time, grew so considerable, that it gave name to the middle part of Canaan, which lay between Galilee on the north, and Judaea on the south,) and to the inhabitants of that country, who were called Samaritans. He bought the ground for two talents of silver, somewhat more than 700 pounds of our money, for a talent was 353l. 11s. 1d. 2d. Perhaps, Shemer, who sold him the ground, let him have it consideredly the cheaper, upon condition that the city should be called after his name, which, otherwise, would have borne the name of the purchaser; it was called Samaria, or Shemeren, as it is in the Hebrew, from Shemer, the former owner, v. 24. The kings of Israel changed their royal seats; Shechem first, then Tirzah, now Samaria; but the kings of
Judah were constant to Jerusalem, the city of God: they that cleave to the Lord, fix; they that leave him, ever wander. 2. He made himself infamous by his wickedness, for he did worse than all that were before him, v. 25. Though he was brought to the throne with much difficulty, and Providence had remarkably favoured him in his advancement, yet he was more profane, or more superstitious, and a greater persecutor, than either of the houses of Jeroboam or Baasha; he went further than they had done, in establishing iniquity by a law, and forcing his subjects to comply with him in it; for we read of the statutes of Omri, the keeping of which made Israel a desolation, Mic. 6. 16. Jeroboam made Israel a idolatrous, licentious, and allure; but Omri did it by compulsion. V. How he ended his reign, v. 27, 28. He was in some repu for the whi which he showed; many a bad man has been a stout man. He died in his bed, as Jeroboam and Baasha did themselves; but, like them, left it to his posterity to fill up the measure, and then pay off the scores, of his ini- quy.

29. And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah, began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel, in Samaria, twenty and two years. 30. And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. 31. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. 32. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. 33. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him. 34. In his days did Hiel the Beth-el build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.

We have the beginning of the reign of Ahab, of whom we have more particulars recorded, than of any of the kings of Israel; we have here only the general idea given us of him, as the worst of all the kings, that we may expect what the particulars will be; he reigned 22 years, long enough to do a deal of mischief.

I. He exceeded all his predecessors in wicked- ness, did evil above all that were before him; (v. 36.) and, as if it were done with a particular enmity both to God and Israel, to afford him, in what he is said, He did more, purposely to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger, and, consequently, to send judgments on his land, than all the kings of Israel that went before him, v. 33. It was bad with the people, when their kings were each worse than the other; what would they come to at last? He had seen the ruin of other wicked kings and their fami- lies, yet, instead of taking warning, his heart was hardened, and enraged against God by it. He thought it a light thing to walk in the sins of Jer-

boan, v. 31. It was nothing to break the second commandment by image-worship, he would set aside the first also by introducing other gods; his little auger should fall heavier upon him. He renounced Jeroboam's grove and altar, or taking light of lesser sins makes way for greater; and they that endeavour to extenuate other people's sins will but aggravate their own.

II. He married a wicked woman, who, he knew, would bring in the worship of Baal, and seemed to marry her with that design. As if it had been a light thing to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, he took to wife Jezebel, (v. 31.) a zealous idolater, ex- tremely imperious and malicious in her natural temper, addicted to witchcrafts and whoredoms, (2 Kings 9. 22.) and every way vicious. The false prophetess spoken of, Rev. 2. 20. is there called Jezebel; for a wicked woman could not be called by a worse name than her's: what michiefs she did, and what mischief, at last, befell her, (2 Kings 9. 33.) we shall find in the following story; this one strange wife debauched Israel more than all Solomon.

III. He set up the worship of Baal, forsook the God of Israel, and served the god of the Zidonians, Jupiter instead of Jehovah; the sun, so some think; a deified hero of the Phenicians, so others: he was weary of the golden calves, and thought they had worshipped them long enough; such vanities were they, that those who had been fondest of them, at length grew disgusted with them, and, like others, must have variety. In honour of this mock deity, whom they called Baal, lord, and for the convenience of his worship, 1. Ahab built a temple in Samaria, the royal city, because the temple of God was in Jerusalem, the royal city of the other kingdom; he would have Baal's temple near him, that he might the better frequent it, protect it, and put honour upon it. 2. He reared an altar in that temple, on which he offered sacrifices to Baal, by which they acknowledged their dependence upon him, and sought his favour. O the stupidity of idolaters, who are at a great expense to make one their friend, whom they might have chosen whether they would have made a god of or no! 3. He made a grove about his temple; either a natural one, by planting shady trees there, or, if those would be too long in growing, an artificial one in imitation of it; for it is not said, He planted, but something that answered the intention, which was to conceal, and so, countenance, the abominable impurities that were committed in the filthy worship of Baal. He that doeth evil, hateth the light.

IV. One of his subjects, in imitation of his pre- sumption, ventured to build Jericho, in defiance of the curse Joshua had long since pronounced on him that should attempt it, v. 34. It comes in as an instance of the height of impety men were then ar- rogant at, especially at Beth-el, where one of the calves was, for of that city this daring sinner was, Observe, 1. How ill he did; like Achan, he med- dled with the accursed thing; turned that to his own use, which was devoted to God's honour: he began to build, in defiance of the curse well known in Is- rael, jesting with it, perhaps, as a bugbear, or fanc- ing it was worn out by length of time. He built 500 cubits of length, and the same of Breadth, Josh. 6. 19. He had already begun, v. 26. He went on to build, in defiance of the execution of the curse in part; for though his eldest son died, when he began, yet he would proceed in con- tempt of God, and his wrath revealed from heaven against his ungodliness. 2. How ill he sped; he built for his children, but God wrote him childless; his eldest son died, when he began, the youngest, when he finished, and all the rest, (it is supposed,) between. Note, Those whom God curses, are cursed indeed; none ever hardened his heart against
God, and prospered. God keep us back from presumptuous sins, those great transgressions!

CHAP. XVII.

I. And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. 2. And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, 3. Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 4. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. 5. So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 6. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. 7. And it came to pass, after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

The history of Elijah begins somewhat abruptly: usually, when a prophet enters, we have some account of his parentage, are told whose son he was, and of what tribe; but Elijah drops (so to speak) out of the clouds, as if Melchisedek, he were without father, without mother, and without descent, which made some of the Jews fancy that he was an angel sent from heaven; but the apostle has assured us that he was a man subject to like passions as we are. (James 5. 17.) which perhaps intimates, not only that he was liable to the common infirmities of human nature, but that, by his natural temper, he was a man of strong passions, more hot and eager than most other men, and therefore the more fit to deal with the daring sinners of the age he lived in. So wonderfully does God suit men to the work he designs them for, rough spirits are called to rough services; the reformation needed such a man as Luther, to break the ice.

Observe, 1. His name; Elijah, "My God Jehovah is he;" (so it signifies,) it is he who sends me, and will own me, and bear me out, is he to whom I would bring Israel back, and who alone can effect that great work." 2. His country; he was of the inhabitants of Gilead, on the other side Jordan, either of the tribe of Gad, or that half of Manasseh, for Gilead was divided between them: but whether a native of either of those tribes, is uncertain; the obscurity of his parentage was no prejudice to his eminency afterward; we need not inquire whence men are, but what they are; if it be a good thing, no matter though it come out of Nazareth. Israel was sore wounded when God sent them this balm from Gilead, and this physician thence. He is called a Tishbite, from Tisbi, a town in that country.

Two things we have an account of here in the beginning of his story.

I. How he foretold a famine, a long and grievous famine, with which Israel should be punished for their sins; that fruitful land, for want of rain, should be turned into barrenness, and the honour of Moses, the great prophet, to attend our Saviour in his transfiguration: other prophets prophesied and wrote, he prophesied and acted, but wrote nothing: but his actions cast more lustre on his name than their writings on theirs. In this chapter, we have, I. His prediction of a famine in Israel, through the want of rain, v. 1, 2. The provision made for him in that famine, 1. By the ravens at the brook Cherith, v. 2-7. 2. When that failed, he was fed by a widow at Zarephath, which accorded him the name of a prophet, and had a prophet's reward; for, (1.) He multiplied her meal and her oil, v. 8-16. (2.) He raised her dead son to life, v. 17-24. Thus his story begins with such judgments and miracles, designed to awaken that stupid generation that had so deeply corrupted themselves.

2. And that he could cause rain and sunshine, which the Lord would withdraw; he prophesied the drought for some years, but according to my word; that is, "Expect none, till you hear from me again." The apostle teaches us to understand this, not only of the word of prophecy, but the word of prayer, which turned the key of the clouds, James 5. 17, 18. He prayed earnestly, (in a holy indignation at Israel's apostasy, and a holy zeal for the glory of God, whose judgments were defied,) that it might rain; and being forewarned of the accordance of his prayer, the ravens became brass, till he prayed again that it might rain. In allusion to this story, it is said of God's witnesses, (Rev. 11. 6.) These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy.

Elijah lets Ahab know, 1. That the Lord Jehovah is the God of Israel, whom he had forsaken. 2. That he is a living God, whose anger was kindling against his people, and his wrath did sit like a fire. 3. That he was his servant in office, and a messenger from him; "It is he before whom I stand, to minister to him," or "whom I now represent, in whose stead I stand, and in whose name I speak, in defiance of the prophets of Baal and the groves." 4. That notwithstanding the present peace and prosperity of their kingdom, God was displeased with them for their idolatry, and would cause to rain no more; and when he withheld it, it was not in the power of the gods they served, to bestow; for "are there any of the vanities of the heaven, that can give rain?" (Jer. 14. 22.) which would effectually prove their impotency, and the folly of those who left the living God, to make their court to such as could do neither good nor evil; and this he confirms with a solemn oath, As the Lord God of Israel liveth; that Ahab might stand the more in awe of the threatening, the divine life being engaged for the accomplishment of it. 5. He lets him know what interest he had in heaven; It shall be according to my word. With what dignity does he speak, when he speaks in God's name, as one who well understood that commission of a prophet, (Jer. 1. 10.) I have set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms. See the power of prayer, and the truth of God's word; for he performeth the counsel of his messengers.

II. How he was himself taken care of in that famine.

1. How he was hidden; God bade him go and
This was intended, not so much for his preservation, for it does not appear that Ahab immediately sought his life, but as a judgment to the people, to whom, if he had publicly appeared, he might have been a blessing, both by his instructions and his intercession, and so have shortened the days of their calamity; but God had determined it should last three years, to show his power, and to exclude Elijah from absconding, that he might not be solicited to revoke the sentence, the execution whereof he had said should be according to his word. When God speaks concerning a nation to pluck up and destroy, he finds some way or other to remove those that would stand in the gap, to turn away his wrath; it beds ill to a people, when good men and good ministers are ordered to hide themselves; when God intends to build many up there, that he may build Elijah go show himself to Ahab, ch. 18. 1. For the present, in obedience to the divine command, he went, and dwelt all alone in some obscure unfrequented place, where he was not discovered; probably, among the reeds of the brook. If Providence calls us to solitude and retirement, it becomes us to acquiesce; when we cannot be useful, we must be patient, and when we cannot work for God, we must rest quietly for his work.

2. How he was fed: though he could not work there, having nothing to do but to meditate and pray, (which would help to prepare him for his usefulness afterward,) yet he shall eat, for he is in the way of his duty, and verily he shall be fed, in the day of famine he shall be satisfied. When the woman, the church, is driven into the wilderness, care is taken that she be fed and nourished there, time and time, and half a time, that is, three years and a half, which was just the time of Elijah's concealment. See Rev. 12. 6, 14. Elijah must drink of the brook, and the ravens were appointed to bring him meat, (v. 4.) and did so, v. 6. Here,

The provision was plentiful, and good, and constant; bread and flesh twice a day, daily bread, and food convenient. We may suppose that he fared not so sumptuously as the prophets of the groves, who did eat at Jezebel's table, (ch. 18. 19.) and yet better than the rest of the Lord's prophets, whom Obadiah fed with bread and water, ch. 18. 4. It ill becomes God's servants, especially his servants the prophets, to be nice and curious about their food, and to affect dainties and varieties; if nature be sustained, no matter though the palate be not pleased; instead of envying those who have dainties fare, we should be thankful for what we have, who live comfortably upon carser fare, and would be glad of our leavings. Elijah had but one meal brought him at a time, every morning and every evening, to teach him not to take thought for the morrow; let these who have but from hand to mouth, learn to live upon Providence, and trust it for the bread of the day in the day; thank God for bread this day, and let to-morrow bring bread with it.

The caters were very unlikely; the ravens brought it him. Obadiah and others in Israel, that had not bowed the knee to Baal, would gladly have entertained Elijah; but he was a man by himself, and shall be fed in an extraordinary way, he was a figure of John the Baptist, whose meat was locusts and wild honey. God could have sent angels to minister unto him, as God did after this, (v. 14.) and as he did to our Saviour; (Matt. 4. 11.) but he chose to send by winged messengers of another nature, to show that when he pleases, he can serve his own purposes by the meanest creatures as effectually as by the mightiest. If it be asked, whence the ravens had this provision, how and where it was cooked, and whether they came honestly by it, we must answer as Jacob did, (Gen. 27. 20.) The Lord our God brought it to them, whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, the world, said they that dwell therein. But why ravens? [1.] They are birds of prey, greedy devouring creatures, more likely to have taken his meat from him, or to have picked out his eyes, (Prov. 50. 17.) but thus Samson's riddle is again unriddled, Out of the eater comes forth meat. [2.] They are unclean creatures; every raven after his kind was, by the law, forbidden to be eaten; (Lev. 11. 15.) yet Elijah did not think the meat they brought them over the worse for that, but ate and gave thanks, asking no question for conscience sake. Noah's dove was to him a more faithful messenger than his raven; yet here the ravens are faithful and constant to Elijah. [3.] Ravens feed on insects and carrion themselves, yet they brought the prophet man's meat, and wholesome food; it is a pity that those who bring the bread of life to others, should themselves take up with that which is not bread. [4.] Ravens could bring but a little, and broken meat, yet Elijah was content with such things as he had, and thankful that he was fed, though not feasted. [5.] Ravens neglect their own young ones, and do not feed them; yet, when God pleases, he may feed his prophet; young lions and young ravens may lack, and hunger, but not they that fear the Lord, Ps. 34. 10. [6.] Ravens are themselves fed by special providence, (Job. 38. 41. Ps. 147. 9.) and now they feed the prophet. Have we experienced God's special goodness to us and ours? Let us reckon ourselves obilied, thereby, to be kind to those that are his, for his sake. Let us learn from hence, First, To acknowledge the sovereignty and power of God over all the creatures; he can make what use he pleases of them, either for judgment or mercy. Secondly, To encourage ourselves in God in the greatest straits, and never to distrust him; he that could furnish a table in the wilderness, and make ravens purveyors, cooks, and servitors, to his prophet, is able to supply all our needs according to his riches in glory.

3. And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, 9. Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. 10. So he arose, and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks; and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. 11. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thin hand. 12. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil...
in a crust: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. 13. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go, and do as thou hast said: but make me a little cake first thereof, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son: 14. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. 15. And she went, and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. 16. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.

We have here an account of the further protection Elijah was taken under, and the further provision made, both for the poor Gentiles, in the fulness of time, Luke 4. 25, 26. Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, and some, it is likely, that would have hidden him welcome to their houses; yet he is sent to honour and bless with his presence a city of Sidon, a Gentile city, and so becomes (says Dr. Lightfoot) the first prophet of the Gentiles. Israel had corrupted themselves with the idolatries of the nations, and were become worse than they; justly therefore is the casting off of them the riches of the world. Elijah was hated and driven out by his countrymen, therefore, Lo, he turns to the Gentiles, as the apostles were afterward ordered to do, Acts 18. 6. But why to a city of Sidon? Perhaps, because the worship of Baal, which was now the crying sin of Israel, came lately from thence with Jezebel, who was a Sidonian; (ch. 16. 31.) therefore thither he shall go, that thence he may be fetched the destroyer of that idolatry; “Even out of Sidon have I called my prophet, my reformer.” Jezebel was Elijah’s greatest enemy; yet to show her the impotency of her malice, God will find a hiding-place for him even in her country; Christ never went among the Gentiles, except once into the coast of Sidon, Matt. 13. 21.

11. The person that is appointed to entertain him; may be of the rich merchant, or great men, of Sidon, not of the family of Ahab, the head of Ahab’s house, and fed the prophets, but a poor widow woman, destitute and desolate, is commanded (that is, made both able and willing) to sustain him. It is God’s way, and it is his glory, to make use of, and put honour upon, the weak and foolish things of the world. He is, in a special manner, the widow’s God, and feeds them, and therefore must study what they shall render to him.

III. The provision made for him there; Providence brought the widow woman to meet him very opportunely at the gate of the city, (v. 10.) and by what is here related of what passed between Elijah and her, we find, 1. Her character; and it appears, (1.) That she was very poor and necessitous; she had nothing to live upon, but a handful of meal, and a little oil, nee’d at the best, and now, by the general scarcity, reduced to the last extremity; when she has eaten the little she has, for aught she yet sees, she must die for want, she and her son, v. 12. She had no fuel but the sticks she gathered in the streets, and, having no servant, she must gather them herself; (v. 10.) more likely to receive alms than give entertainment; to her Elijah is sent, that he might still live upon Providence, as much as he did when the ravens fed him; and it was in commission to the low estate of his handmaiden, that God sent the prophet to her, not to beg of her, but to board with her, and he would pay well for his table.

(2.) That she was very humble and industrious; she had her gathering sticks, and preparing to bake her own bread, v. 10. 11. And was brought to her condition, and she complains not of the hardship she was brought to, nor quarrels with the Divine Providence for withholding rain, but accommodates herself to it as well as she can; such as are of this temper, in a day of trouble, are best prepared for honour and relief from God.

(3.) That she was very charitable and generous; when this stranger desired her to go fetch him some water to drink, she offered him all she had, v. 11. She objected not the present scarcity of it, nor asked him what he would give her for a draught of water, for now it was worth money, nor hinted that he was a stranger, an Israelite, with whom, perhaps, the Sidonians cared not for having any dealings, any more than the Samaritans, John 4. 9. She did not excuse herself on account of her weakness through famine, or the urgency of her own affairs; did not tell him she had something else to do than to go on his errands, but left her gathering of the sticks for herself, to fetch water for him, which perhaps she did the more willingly, being moved with the gravity of his aspect. We should be ready to do any office of kindness, even to strangers; if we have not wherewith to give to the distressed, we must be the more ready to work for them; a cup of cold water, though it cost us no more than the labour of fetching, shall, in no wise, lose its reward.

(4.) That she had a great confidence in the word of God; it was a great trial of her faith and obedience, when, having told the prophet how low her stock of meal and oil was, and that she had but just enough for herself and her son, he bade her make a cake for him, and make his first, and after, prepare for herself and her son; if we come and ask, “Shall I take my meal and my oil, and give it to one that I know not whence he is?” Elijah, it is, “they of Israel, whom thou seest not,” and he of which was sent to thee, but what was that to aSidonian? Or, if she had a veneration for the name Jehovah, and valued the God of Israel as the true God, yet “that assurance had she that this stranger was his prophet, or had any warrant to speak in his name?” It was easy for
a hungry vagrant to impose upon her; but she gets over all these objections, and obeys the precept, in dependence upon the promise; she went and did according to the saying of Elijah, viz., she took her son,Great was thy faith; one has not found the like, no not in Israel; all things considered, it exceeded that of the widow, who, when she had but two mites, cast them into the treasury; she took the prophet's word, that she should not lose by it, but it should be repaid with interest. Those that can venture upon the promise of God, will make no difficulty of exposing and emptying themselves in his hands. God's word was to her a day of sorrow and a time of weakness, and giving him his part first. They that deal with God, must deal upon trust; seek first his kingdom, and then other things shall be added: by the law, the first-fruits were God's, the tithe was taken out first, and the heave-offering of their dross was first offered, Numb. 15. 20, 21. But surely the increase of this widow's faith, to such a degree as to enable her thus to deny herself, and to depend upon the divine promise, was as great a miracle in the kingdom of grace, as the increase of her oil was, in the kingdom of providence. Happy are they, who can thus, against hope, believe, and obey in hope.

2. The care God took of her and her guest; the barrel of meal wasted not, nor did the crust of oil fail, but still as they took from them, more was added to them by the divine power, v. 16. Never did they lack of the oil when it was in the growing (says Bishop Hall) as these did in the earring; but the multiplying of the seed sown, (2 Cor. 9. 10.) in the common course of Providence, is an instance of the power and goodness of God, not to be overlooked because common. The meal and the oil multiplied, not in the hoarding but in the spending; for there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth, when God blesses a little, it will go a great way, even beyond expectation; as, on the contrary, though there be abundance, if it blow upon it, it comes to little, Hag. 1. 9—2. 16.

(1.) This was a maintenance for the prophet; still miracles shall be his daily bread; hitherto, he was fed with bread and flesh, now, with bread and oil, which they used as we do butter; manna was both, for the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil, Numb. 11. 8. This Elijah was thankful for, though he had been used to it twice a day; now, none at all; none that can live without flesh, once a day, at least, because they have been used to it, could not have borecd contentedly with Elijah, nor to live upon a miracle.

(2.) It was a maintenance for the poor widow and her son, and a recompense to her for entertaining the prophet; there is nothing lost by being kind to God's people and ministers; she that received a prophet, had a prophet's reward; she gave him his house-room, and he repaid her with food for the household. Christ has promised to those who open their doors to him, that he will come into them, and sup with them, and they with him, Rev. 3. 20. Like Elijah here, he brings to those who bid him welcome, not only his own entertainment, but their's too. See how the reward answered the service; she generously made one cake for the prophet, and he took his, the meal was added to, and the son fed. When Abraharn offers his only son to God, he is told he shall be the father of multitudes; what is laid out in piety, or charity, is let out to the best interest, upon the best securities. One poor meal's meat this poor widow gave the prophet, and in recompense of it, she and her son did eat many days, (v. 15.) above two years, in a time of general scarcity; and to have their food from God's special favour, and to eat it in such good company as Elijah's, made it more than doubly sweet. It is promised to them that trust in God, that they shall not be ashamed in the evil time, but in the days of mine they shall be satisfied, Ps. 37. 19.

17. And it came to pass, after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. 18. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? 19. And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. 20. And he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? 21. And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. 22. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. 23. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth! 24. And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.

We have here a further recompense made to the widow for her kindness to the prophet: as if it were a small thing to be kept alive, her son, when dead, is restored to life, and so restored to her. Observe, I. The sickness and death of the child; for ought that appears, he was her only son, the comfort of her widowed estate. He was fed miraculously, and yet that did not secure him from sickness and death; Four fathers did eat manna, and are dead, but there is bread, of which a man may eat, and not die, which was given for the life of the world, John 6. 49, 50. This affection was to this widow as a thorn in the flesh, lest she should be lifted up above measure with the favours that were done her, and the honours that were put upon her. 1. She was nurse to a great prophet; was employed to sustain him, and had strong reason to think the Lord would do her good; yet now, she loses her child. Note, We must not think it strange, if we meet with very sharp afflictions, even then when we are in the way of duty, and of eminent service to God. 2. She was herself nursed by miracle, and kept a good house without charge or care, by a distinguishing blessing from heaven; and in the midst of all this satisfaction she is thus afflicted. Note, When we have the clearest manifestations of God's favour and good will toward us, even then we must prepare for the rebukes of Providence; our mountain never stands so strong, but it may be moved, and therefore, in this world, we must rejoice with trembling.

II. Her pathetic complaint to the prophet, of this affliction; it should seem the child died suddenly, else she would have applied to Elijah, while he was sick, for the cure of him; but being dead, dead in her bosom, she expostulates with the prophet upon it, rather to give vent to her sorrow, than in any hope of relief, v. 18.
1. She expresses herself passionately: What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? How calmly had she spoken of her own, and her child's death, when she expected to die for want; (v. 12.) That we may eat, and die! Yet now that her child dies, and not so miserably as by famine, she is extremely disturbed at it: we may speak lightly of an affliction at a distance, but when it toucheth us, we are troubled, Job 4. 5. Thus she speaks deliverance, and yet in haste; the death of the child was not a surprise to her, and it is hard to keep our spirits composed, when troubles come upon us suddenly and unexpectedly, and in the midst of our peace and prosperity. She calls him a man of God, and yet quarrels with him, as if he had occasioned the death of her child, and is ready to wish she had never seen him, forgetting past mercies and miracles; "What hast thou done against me?" She contends with her children, Job 5. 21. Would have I offended thee, or been wanting in my duty? Show me wherefore thou contendest with me?"

2. Yet she expresses herself penitently: "Art thou come to call my sin to thy remembrance, as the cause of the affliction, and so to call it to my remembrance, as the effect of the affliction?" Perhaps she knew of Elijah's intercession against Israel, and, being conscious to herself of sin, perhaps her former worshiping of Baal, the god of the Sidonians, she apprehends he had made intercession against her. Note, (1.) When God removes our comforts from us, he remembers our sins against us, perhaps the iniquities of our youth, though long since past, Job 13. 26. Our sins are the death of our children. (2.) When God thus remembers our sins against us, he designs, thereby, to make us remember them against ourselves, as well as others.

III. The prophet's address to God, upon this occasion; he gave no answer to her expostulation, but brought it to God, and laid the case before him, not knowing what to say to it himself: he took the dead child from his mother's bosom to his own bed, v. 19. Probably, he had taken a particular kindness to the child, and found the affliction his own, more than by sympathy; he retired to his chamber, and, 1. He humbled himself with God, concerning the death of the child, v. 20. He sees death striking by commission from God; Thou hast brought this evil; for is there any evil of this kind in the city, in the family, and the Lord has not done it? He pleads the greatness of the affliction to the poor mother; "It is evil upon the widow thy art the widows' God, and dost not usually bring evil upon widows; it is affliction added to the afflicted." He pleads his own regard: It is the widow with whom I sojourn; wilt thou, that art my God, bring evil upon one of the best of my benefactors? I shall be reflected upon, and others will be afraid of entertaining me, if I bring death into the house where I come.

2. He earnestly begs of God to restore the child to life again, v. 21. We do not read, before this, of any that were raised to life; yet Elijah, by a divine impulse, prays for the restoration of this child, which yet will not warrant us to do the like: David expected not, by fasting and prayer, to bring his child back to life, (2 Sam. 12. 23.) but Elijah had a power to work miracles, which David had not; he stretched himself upon the child, to affect himself with the case; and to show how much he was affected with it, and how deserving he was of the restoration of the child, he would, if he could, put life into him by his own breath and warmth; also to give a sign of what God would do by his power, and what he does by his grace, in raising of dead souls to a spiritual life; the Holy Ghost comes upon them, overshadoweth them, and puts life into them; he is very particular in his prayer, I pray thee let this child's soul come into him again; which plainly supposes the existence of the soul in a state of separation from the body, and, consequently, its immortality; which, Grotesus thinks, God designed by this miracle to give intimation and evidence of, for the encouragement of his suffering people.

IV. The resurrection of the child, and the great satisfaction it gave to the mother; the child revived, v. 22. See the power of prayer, and the power of Him who maketh His servants to be strong. Elijah brought him to his mother, who, we may suppose, could scarcely believe her own eyes, and therefore Elijah assures her it is her own; "It is thy son that liveth, see it is thy own, and not another," v. 23. The good woman hereupon cries out, Now I know that thou art a man of God; though she knew it before, by the increase of her meal, yet the death of her child she took so unluckily, that she began to question it; (a good man surely would not serve her so;) but now she was abundantly satisfied that he had both the power and goodness of a man of God, and will never doubt of it again, but give herself to the direction of his word, and the worshipping of the God of Israel. Thus the death of the child, like that of Lazarus, (John 11. 4.) was for the glory of God, and the honour of his prophet.

CHAP. XVIII.

We left the prophet Elijah w rapt up in obscurity; it does not appear that either the increase of the provision, or the rainings upon the earth, had any effect upon the child, who, full eleven years old, was cut off. Now Jezebel had cast her eyes upon Zarephath, for then Ahab would have discovered him; he would rather do good than be known to do it: but in this chapter his appearance was as public, as, before, his retirement was so close; the attendant of his servant, Obadiah, sends notice to Ahab of his coming, v. 2. 16. II. His interview with Ahab himself, v. 17. 19. His interview with all Israel upon mount Carmel, in order to a public trial of titles, between the Lord and Baal; a most distinguished solemnity it was, in which, 1. Baal and his prophets were confounded. 2. God and Elijah were honoured, v. 21. 39. IV. The execution he did upon the prophets of Baal, v. 46. The return of the mercy of rain, at the word of Elijah, v. 41. 46. It is a chapter in which are many things very observable.

1. And it came to pass, after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. 2. And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria. 3. And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly: 4. For it was so, when Zebedee cut off the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took a hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.) 5. And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts. 6. So they divided the land between them, to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

7. And as Obadiah was in the way, behold,
Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah? 8. And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. 9. And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? 10. As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there, he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. 11. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. 12. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth. 13. Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid a hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? 14. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me. 15. And Elijah said, As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him to-day. 16. So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

In these verses we find, I. The sad state of Israel at this time, upon two accounts: 1. Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, v. 4. slew them, v. 13. Being an idolater, she was a persecutor, and made Ahab one. Even in those bad times, when the calves were worshipped, and the temple at Jerusalem deserted, yet there were some good people that feared God and served him, and some good prophets that instructed them in the knowledge of him, and assisted them in their devotions. The priests and the Levites were all gone to Judah and Jerusalem; (2 Chron. 11. 13, 14.) but instead of them, God raised up these prophets, who read and expounded the law in private meetings, or in the families that retained their integrity, for we read not of any synagogues at this time; they had not the spirit of prophecy as Elijah, nor did they offer sacrifice, or burn incense, but taught people to live well, and keep close to the God of Israel. These Jezebel aimed to extirpate, and put many of them to death; which was as much a public calamity as a public iniquity, and threatened the utter ruin of religion's poor remains in Israel. Those few that escaped the sword, were forced to abscond, and hide themselves in caves, where they were buried alive, and cut off, though not from life, yet from usefulness, which is the end and comfort of life; and when the prophets were persecuted and driven into corners, no doubt, their friends, those few good people that were in the land, were treated in like manner.

Yet, bad as things were, (1. There was one very good man, who was a great man at court, Obadiah, who answers his name, a servant of the Lord, one who feared God, and was faithful to him, and yet was a steward of the household to Ahab. Ob-serve his character; he feared the Lord greatly; (v. 3.) was not only a good man, but zealously and eminently good; his great place put a lustre upon his goodness, and gave him great opportunities of doing good; and he feared the Lord from his youth; (v. 12.) he began betimes to be religious, and had continued long. Note, Early piety, it is to be hoped, will be eminent piety; those that are good betimes, are likely to be very good; he that feared God from his youth, came to fear him greatly. He that will thrive must mind his time, for it is strange to find such an eminent good man, governor of Ahab's house, an office of great honour, power, and trust. [1.] It was strange that so wick-
ed a man as Ahab, would prefer him to it, and continue him in it; certainly it was because he was a man of celebrated honesty, industry, and ingenuity, and one whom he could repute a confidence in, whose eye was ever on the public welfare. [2.] It is strange that the Lord should so weigh the merits of the Lord's servants, and have so great a share in and interest in their estates.

II. God's Providence to him. 2. Elijah was sent for, and made a public service to him. Obadiah said, Elijah was at some distance, and asked him to go and get him. Obadiah, it seems, had been 100 years since the persecution was hot, and fed them with bread and water, v. 4. He did not think it enough to fear God himself, but, having wealth and power wherewithal to do it, he thought himself obliged to assist and countenance others that feared God; nor did he think his being kind to them would excuse him from being good himself, but he did both, he feared God greatly himself, and preferred those that feared him likewise. He knew, wonder-

fully God raises up friends for his ministers and people, for their shelter in difficult times, there where one should least expect them; bread and water were now scarce commodities, yet Obadiah will find a competency of both for God's prophets, to keep them alive for service hereafter, though now they were laid aside.

When Jezebel cut off God's prophets, God cut off their necessary provisions by the extremity of the drought. Perhaps Jezebel persecuted God's prophets, under pretense that they were the cause of the judgment, because Elijah had foretold it; Christians ad teores—Anno vivant christiani in tois. But God made them know the contrary, for
I. KINGS, XVIII.

the famine continued till Baal's prophets were sacrificed, and so great a scarcity of water there was, that the king himself and Obadiah went in person throughout the land, to seek the cattle, v. 5, 6. Providence ordered it so, that Ahab might, with his own eyes, see how bad the consequences of this judgment were, that he might be the better inclined to hearken to Elijah, who would direct him into the only way to put an end to it. Ahab's care was not to lose all the beasts, many being already lost; but he took no care about his soul, not to lose that; took a day's profit, or looked for grass, but none to seek the favour of God; fencing against the effect, but not inquiring how to remove the cause. The land of Judah lay close to the land of Israel, yet we find no complaint there of the want of rain; for Judah yet ruled with God, and was faithful with the saints and prophets; (Hos. 11. 12.) by which distinction Israel might plainly have seen the ground of God's controversy, when God caused it to rain upon one city, and not upon another; (Amos 4. 7, 8.) but they blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, and would not see.

II. The steps taken toward redressing the grievance, by Elijah's appearing again upon the stage, to act as a Tishbite, a converter or reformer of Israel, for so (some think) that title of his signifies. Turn them again to the Lord God of hosts, from whom they have revolted, and all will be well quickly; this must be Elijah's doing. See Luke 1. 16, 17. 1. Ahab had made diligent search for him; (v. 10.) had offered rewards to any one that would discover him; sent spies into every tribe and lordship of his own dominions, as some understand it, or, as others, into all the neighbouring nations and kingdoms that were in alliance with him; and when they denied that they knew him, he would not believe them, unless they spoke it, and, as should seem, promise likewise, upon oath, that if ever they found him among them, they would discover him, and deliver him up. It should seem, he made this diligent search for him, not so much that he might punish him for what he had done in denouncing the judgment, as that he might oblige him to repent, and recall his doom, not because he had said it should be according to his word; having such an opinion of him as men foolishly conceive of witches, that if they can but compel them to bless that which they have bewitched, it will be well again, or such as the king of Moab had of Balaam: I incline to this, because we find, when they came together, Elijah knowing what Ahab wanted him for, appointed him to meet him on mount Carmel, and Ahab complied with the appointment, though Elijah took such a way to revoke the sentence, and bless the land, as perhaps he little thought of. 2. God, at length, ordered Elijah to present himself to Ahab, because the time was now come, when he would send rain upon the earth, (v. 1.) or, rather, upon the land: above two years, he had lain hid with the prophet Zerubbabel; and thus he had been concealed one year by the brook Cherith; so that the third year of his sojourn there, here spoken of, (v. 1.) was the fourth of the famine, which lasted, in all, three years and the six months, as we find, Luke 4. 25. James 5. 17. Such was Elijah's zeal, no doubt, against the idolatry of Baal, and such his compassion to his people, that he thought it long enough thus to confine a people; let he appear not, till God bade him, "Go shew thyself to Ahab, for now thine hour is come, even the time to favour Israel." Note, It bodes well to any people, when God calls his ministers out of their corners, and bids them show themselves; a sign that he will give rain on the earth; however, we may the better dispense with the bread of affliction, while our eyes are open, Isa. 30. 20, 21.

3. Elijah first surrendered, or, rather, delivered himself, to Obadiah. He knew, by the Spirit, where to meet him, and we are here told what passed between them.

(1.) Obadiah saluted him with great respect, fell on his face, and humbly asked, Art thou that my lord Elijah? v. 7. As he had showed the tenderness of a father to the sons of the prophets, so he showed the reverence he put upon them for their sufferings. The prophets were his sons, and he was for them a father without the ties of the flesh; and by this made it appear that he did indeed fear God greatly, that he did honour to one that was his extraordinary ambassador, and had a great interest in heaven.

(2.) Elijah, in answer to him, [1.] Transfers the title of honour he gave him, to Ahab; "Call him thy lord, not me," that is a fitter title for a prince than for a prophet, who seeks not honour from men. Prophets should be called seers, and shepherds, and watchmen, and ministers, rather than lords; as those that mind duty more than dominion. [2.] He bids Obadiah go tell the king that he was there to speak with him. Tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is forth-coming, v. 8. He would have the king know before, that it might not be a surprise to him, and that he might be sure it was the prophet's own act, to present himself to him. [3.] Obadiah's excuse is to be excused from carrying this message to Ahab, for it might prove as much as his life was worth. [1.] He tells Elijah what great search Ahab had made for him, and how much his heart was upon it to find him out, v. 10. [2.] He takes it for granted, that Elijah would again withdraw, v. 12. The Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee (as it is likely he had done sometimes, when Ahab would not have been sure of meeting him, v. 11.); wherefore, know not. See 2 Kings 2. 16. He thought Elijah was not in good earnest, when he bade him tell Ahab where he was, but intended only to expose the impotency of his malice; for he knew Ahab was not worthy to receive any kindness from the prophet, and it was not fit that the prophet should receive any mischief from him. [3.] He is sure Ahab would be so enraged at the disappoint-ment, that the prophet's appearance would make him a fool of him, or for not laying hands on Elijah himself, when he had him in his reach, v. 12. Tyrants and persecuters, in their passion, are often unreasonably outrageous, even toward their friends and confidants. [4.] He pleads that he did not deserve to be thus exposed, and put in peril of his life; What have I sinned? v. 9. Nay, (v. 13.) Was it not told my lord, how I hid the prophets? He mentions this, not in pride or ostentation, but to convince Elijah that though he was Ahab's servant, he was not in his interest, and therefore deserved not to be bantered as one of the tools of his persecution. He that had protected so many prophets, he hoped, should not have his own life hazardized by so great a prophet.

(4.) Elijah satisfies him that he might, with safety, deliver this message to Ahab, by assuring him, with an oath, that he would, this very day, present himself to Ahab, v. 15. Let but Obadiah know that he spake seriously, and really intended it, and he will make no scruple to carry the message to Ahab. Elijah swears by the Lord of hosts, who has all power in his hands, and was therefore able to protect his servant against all the powers of hell and earth.
Elijah, whom he had so long sought, and not found, was now found without seeking. He went in quest of grass, and finds him, from whose word, at God’s mouth, he must expect rain. Yet his guilty conscience gives him little reason to hope for it, but rather, to fear some other more dreadful judgment. Had he, by his spies, surprised Elijah, he would have triumphed over him, but now that he was thus surprised by him, we may suppose he even trembled to look him in the face; hated him, and yet feared him, as Herod did John.

17. And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? 18. And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. 19. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel’s table. 20. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

We have here the meeting between Ahab and Elijah; as bad a king as ever the world was plagued with, and as good a prophet as ever the church was blessed with.

1. Ahab, like himself, basely accuses Elijah; he dares not strike him, remembering that Jeroboam’s hand was withered when it was stretched out against a prophet, but gives him bad language, which was no less an affront to him that sent him. It is a very coarse compliment with which he accosts him, at the first word, Art thou he that troubleth Israel, v. 17. How unlike was this to that with which his servant Obadiah saluted him; (v. 7.) Art thou that my lord Elijah? Obadiah feared God greatly, Ahab had sold himself to work wickedness; and both discovered their character by the manner of their address to the prophet. One may guess how people stand affected to God, by observing how they stand affected to his people and ministers. Elijah now came to bring blessings to Israel, tidings of the return of the rains; yet he is thus affronted. Had it been true that he was the trouble of Israel, Ahab, as king, had been obliged to animadvert upon him. There are those who trouble Israel by their wickedness, whom the conservators of the public peace are concerned to inquire after. But it was utterly false concerning Elijah; so far was he from being an enemy to Israel’s welfare, that he was the star of it, the chariot of horses and housemen of Israel. Note, It has been the lot of the best and most useful men, to be called and counted the troubleurs of the land, and to be run down as public grievances. Even Christ and his apostles were thus misrepresented, Acts 17. 6.

2. Elijah, like himself, boldly returned the charge upon the king, and proved it upon him, that he was the trouble of Israel, v. 18. Elijah is not the Achab: “I have not troubled Israel, but you have neither done them any wrong, nor designed them any hurt.” They that procure God’s judgments, do the mischief, not he that foretells them only, and gives warning of them, that the nation may repent, and prevent them. I would have healed Israel, but they would not be healed. Ahab is the Achab, the troubler, who follows Baalim, those accursed things. Nothing creates more trouble to a land than the impiety and profaneness of princes and their families.

3. As one having authority immediately from the King of kings, he orders a convention of the states to be forthwith summoned to meet at mount Carmel, where there had been an altar built to God, v. 30. Probably, on that mountain they had had an eminent high place, where, formerly, the pure worship of God had been kept up as well as it could be any where but at Jerusalem. Thither all Israel must come, to give Elijah the meeting, and the prophets of Baal who were dispersed all the country over, with those of the groves who were Jezebel’s domestic chaplains, must there make their personal appearance.

4. Ahab issues out writs accordingly, for the convening of this great assembly, (v. 20.) either because he feared Elijah, and durst not oppose him; (Saul stood in awe of Samuel more than of God;) or because he hoped Elijah would bless the land, and speak the word that they might have rain, and, upon those terms, they would be all at his beck. Those that slighted and hated his counsels, would gladly be beholden to him for his prayers. Now God made those who said they were Jews and were not, but were of the synagogue of Satan, to come, and, in effect, to worship at his feet, and to know that God had loved him, Rev. 3. 9.

21. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. 22. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men. 23. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: 24. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. 25. And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many: and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under: 26. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal, from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us! But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. 27. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.” 28. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves, after their manner, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. 29. And it came to pass, when mid-day was past, and they
prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. 30. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. 31. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: 32. And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. 33. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt-sacrifice, and on the wood. 34. And he said, Do it the second time: and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time: and they did it the third time. 35. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. 36. And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. 37. Hear me, O Lord, hear me; that this people may know that thou art the Lord God; and that thou hast turned their heart back again. 38. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God. 40. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. 

Ahab and the people expected that Elijah should, in this solemn assembly, bless the land, and pray for rain; but he has other work to do first. The people must be brought to repent and reform, and then they may look for the removal of the judgment, but not till then. This is the right method; God will first prepare our heart, and then cause his ear to hear; will first turn us to him, and then turn to us, Ps. 10. 17.—70. 3. Deserters must not look for God's favour, till they return to their allegiance. Elijah might have looked for rain seventy times seven times, and not have seen it, if he had not thus begun his work at the right end. 

Three years and a half's famine would not bring them back to God; Elijah will endeavour to convince their judgments, and, no doubt, by special warrant and direction from heaven, he put the controversy between God and Baal upon a public trial. It was great condescension in God, that he would suffer so plain a case to be disputed, and would permit Baal to be a competitor with him; but thus God would have every mouth to be stopped, and all flesh to become silent before him. God's cause is so incontestably just, that it needs not fear to have the evidence of its equity searched into, and weighed. I. Elijah, or rather the people, were now to try the worship of God, and the worship of Baal, together. Not only some Israelites worshipped God, and others Baal, but the same Israelites sometimes worshipped one, and sometimes the other. This he calls, (v. 21.) Halting between two opinions or thoughts. They worshipped God, to please the prophets, but worshipped Baal, to please Jezebel, and curry favour with her. They thought to trim the matter, and play on both sides, as the Samaritans, 2 Kings 17. 33. 'Now Elijah shows them the absurdity of this; he does not insist upon their relation to Jebo- vah. "Is he not yours, and the God of your fathers, while Baal is the God of the Sidonians? And will a native change their God?" Jer. 2. 11. No, he waves the prescription, and enters upon the merits of the cause. "There can be but one God, but one infinite and eternal Father; he is the Omnipotent, and as such is one omnipotent, one all-sufficient; what occasion of ad- dition to that which is perfect? Now, if, upon trial, it appears that Baal is that one infinite omnipotent Being, that one supreme Lord and all-sufficient Be- nefactor, you ought to renounce Jehovah, and cleave to Baal only; but if Jehovah be that one God, Baal is a cheat, and you must have more to do with him. Note, 1. It is very wrong to halt between God and Baal. In a recent address to the Church of God in Great Britain (say some Bishop Hall) nothing more safe than indifference both of practice and opinion; in cases of so necessary hostility, as betwixt God and Baal, he that is not with God, is against him." Compare Mark 9. 38, with Matt. 12. 36. The service of God, and the service of sin, the dominion of Christ, and the dominion of our lusts, these are the two thoughts which it is dangerous halting between. These do so, that ourselves are perplexed and unformed (say our Bishops); that is, when we are not entirely given to God or the world, we are not entirely given to Christ or Satan, and so in the midst of both. Such a spirit is necessary in the affairs of life, but not in the affairs of faith, which must be either for God or the world. 2. We are fairly put to our choice, where- we will serve, Josh. 24. 15. If we can find one that has more right to us, or will be a better master and provider than God, we may take him at our peril. God demands no more from us than he can make out a title to. This fair proposal of the case which Elijah here makes, the people knew not what to say, to, they answered him not a word. They could say nothing to justify themselves, and they would say nothing to condemn themselves, but, as people confounded, let him take what he would. 

II. He proposes to bring the matter to a fair trial; and it was so much the fairer, because Baal had all the external advantages on his side. The king and court were all for Baal; so was the body of the people. The managers of Baal's cause were 450 men, fat, and well-fed, (v. 22.) beside 400 more, their supporters or seconds, v. 19. The manager of God's cause was but one man, lately a poor exile, hardly kept from starving, so that God's cause has nothing to support it but its own right. However, it is put to this experiment; "Let each side prepare a sacri- fice, and pray to it, and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God"; if neither do, let them turn Atheists; if both, let them continue to halt be- tween two." Elijah, doubtless, had a special com-
mission from God to put it to this test, else he had tempted God and affronted religion; but the case was extraordinary, and the judgment upon it would be of use, not only then, but in all ages. It is an instance of the courage of Elijah, that he durst alone in the cause of God against such powers and numbers; and the issue encourages all God's witnesses and advocates never to fear the face of man. Elijah does not say, "The God that answers by waters," (though that was the thing the country needed;) but "that answers by fire, let him be God," because the atonement was to be made by sacrifice, before the judgment could be averted. The God therefore that has power to pardon sin, and to signify it by consuming the sin-offering, must needs be the God that can relieve us against the calamity. He that can give fire, can give rain; see Matt. 9. 2, 6.

III. The people join issue with him: It is well spoken, v. 24. They allow the proposal to be fair and unexceptionable. "God had often answered by fire; if Baal cannot do so, let him be cast off for a usurper." They were very desirous to see the experiment tried, and seemed resolved to abide by the issue, whatever it should be. They that were firm for God, doubted not but it would end to his honour: they that were indifferent, were willing to be determined. Ahab and the prophets of Baal durst not oppose, for fear of the people, and hoped that either they could obtain fire from heaven, (though they might expect as good a show of fire from Elijah,) or that they would think, they worshipped the sun in Baal; or, that Elijah could not, because not at the temple, where God was wont thus to manifest his glory. If, in this trial, they could but bring it to a drawn battle, their other advantages would give them the victory. Let it go on therefore to a trial.

IV. The prophets of Baal try first, but in vain, with the sacrifice, v. 26. They did what the Canaanites had done before them, and what the Israelites afterwards did, when they returned from captivity and the temple was not again built. (1.) They called the people together; (2.) They drew water out of the stream; (3.) They offered the sacrifice; (4.) They leaped upon the altar; as if they would themselves become sacrifices with their bullock; or, thus they expressed their great earnestness of mind. They leaped up and down, or danced about the altar: they hoped, by their dancing, to please their deity, as Herodias did Herod, and so obtain their request. (2.) Like madmen, they cut themselves with knives, and blood trickled down their garments. It seems, this was the manner of the worshippers of Baal: God expressly forbade his worshippers to cut themselves, Deut. 14. 1. He insists upon it, that we mortify our lusts and corruptions; but corporeal penances and severities, such as the Papists use, which have no tendency to that, are no pleasure to him: Who has required these things at your hands? 2. How sharp Elijah was upon them, v. 27. He stood by them, and patiently heard them for many hours, praying to an idol, yet with secret indignation and disdain; and, at noon, when the sun was at the hottest, and they too expected fire, then, if ever, he upbraided them with their folly; and notwithstanding the gravity of his office, and the seriousness of the work he had before him, banters Baal, v. 28. "You would, for being gored; a god that cannot be made to hear without all this clamour. Surely you think he is talking, or meditating," as the word is, "or he is pursuing some deep thoughts, thinking of somewhat else, and not minding his own matter, when not your credit only, but all his honour, lies at stake, and his interest in Israel. His new conquest will be lost, if he do not look about him quickly." Note. The worship of idols is a most ridiculous thing, and it is but justice to represent it so, and expose it to scorn. This will, by no means, justify those who ridicule the worshippers of God in Christ, because the worship is not performed just in their way. Baal's prophets were so far from being convinced and put to shame by the just reproach Elijah cast upon them, that it made them the more violent, and act more ridiculously. A deceived heart is very hard; nailed their feet, they could not deliver their souls by saying, Is there not a lie in our right hand?

3. How def Baal was to them. Elijah did not interrupt them, but let them go on, till they were tired, and quite despaired of success, which was not till the time of the evening sacrifice, v. 29. During all that time, some of them prayed, while others of them prophesied, sang hymns, perhaps, to the devil; and they encouraged each other, by making the offering proceed, telling them, Baal would answer them at last; but there was no answer, nor any that regarded. Idols could do neither good nor evil. The prince of the power of the air, if God had permitted him, could have caused fire to come down from heaven on this occasion, and gladly would have done it for the support of his Baal. We find that the beast which deceives the world, Rev. 13. 14. "May fire come down from heaven in the sight of men, and so deceive them;" v. 14. But God would not suffer the Devil to do it now, because the trial of his title was put on that issue by consent of parties.

V. Elijah soon obtains from his God an answer by fire. The Baalites are forced to give up their cause, and now it is Elijah's turn to produce his. Let us see if he speed better.

1. He first prayed. He would not make use of their's, which had been polluted with their prayers to Baal, but, finding the ruins of an altar there, which had formerly been used in the service of the Lord, he chose to repair that, (v. 30.) to intiate to them that he was not about to introduce any new religion, but to revive the faith and worship of their fathers' God, and reduce them to their first love. He could not bring the altar to Jerusalem, unless he could have united the two kingdoms again, (which, for correction to both, God designed should not now be done,) therefore by his prophetic authority, he builds an altar on mount Carmel, and so owns that which had formerly been built there. When we cannot carry a reformation so far as we would, we must do what we can, and rather comply with some corruptions than not do our utmost towards the extirpation of Baal. He repaired this altar with twelve stones, according to the number of the twelve tribes, v. 31. Though ten of the tribes were revolted to Baal, he
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will look upon them as belonging to God still, by virtue of the ancient covenant with their fathers; and though those ten were unhappily divided from the other two in civil interest, yet in the worship of the God of Israel they had communion with each other, and they twelve were one. Mention is made of God's calling their father Jacob by the name of Israel, a prince with God, (v. 51.) to shew his favor to him, and to give him a separate character, which, as they saw, could not hear nor answer them, and to encourage the prophet, who was now to wrestle with God as Jacob did; he also shall be a prince with God, Ps. 24. 6, Thy face, O Jacob. Hos. 12. 4, There he shake with us.

2. Having built his altar in the name of the Lord, (v. 32.) by direction from him, and with an eye to his own concern, he brought his own hallowed wood and sacrifice, v. 33. Behold the bullock and the wood: but where is the fire? (Gen. 22. 7, 8.) God will provide himself fire. If we, in sincerity, offer our hearts to God, he will, by his grace, kindle a holy fire in them. Elijah was no priest, nor his attendants Levites; Carmel had neither tabernacle nor temple, it was a great way distant from the ark of the testimony, and the place God had chosen; this was sufficient all that sanctified the gift; yet never was any sacrifice more acceptable to God than this.

The particular Levitical institutions were so often dispensed with, (as in the time of the Judges, Samuel's time, and now,) that one would be tempted to think they were more designed for types to be fulfilled in the evangelical anti-types, than for laws to be fulfilled in the strict observance of them. Their perishing thus in the using, as the apostle speaks of them, (Col. 2. 23.) was to intimate the utter abolishing of them, after a while, Heb. 8. 13.

3. He ordered abundance of water to be poured upon his altar, which he had prepared a trench for the reception of, (v. 32.) and, some think, made the altar hollow. Twelve barrels of water, (probably sea-water, for the sea was near, and so much fresh water, in the time of drought, was too precious for him to be so prodigal of it,) thrice four, he poured upon his sacrifice, to prevent the suspicion of any fire under; for if there had been any, this would have put it out; and to make the expected miracle the more illustrious.

4. He then solemnly addressed himself to God by prayer, before his altar, humbly beseeching him to turn to ashes his burnt-offering, (as the phrase is, Ps. 20. 3.) and to testify his acceptance of it. His prayer is not long, for he used no vain repetitions, nor thought he should be heard for his much speaking: but it is very grave and composed, and shows his mind to be calm and sedate, and far from the heats and disorders that Baal's prophets were in, v. 36, 37. Though he was not at the place appointed, he chose the appointed time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, thereby to testify his communion with the altar at Jerusalem. Though he expected an answer by fire, yet he came not to the altar with briers and thorns, and feared not that fire. He added all hims:lf to God, as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, acting faith on God's ancient covenant, and reminding the people too (for prayer may prevail) of their relation both to God and to the patriarchs.

Two things he pleads here; (1.) The glory of God; "Lord, hear me, and answer me, that it may be known (for it is now by the most delayed or forgotten) to God, that thou hast set me among thy people to be a watchman over them.

(2.) The edification of the people: "That they may know that thou art the Lord, and may experience thy grace, turning their hearts, by this miracle, as a means, back again to thee, in order to thy return in a way of mercy to them." 3. God immediately answered by fire, v. 38. Elijah did not neither talking nor pursuing, needed not to be excus'd or excused, for while he was yet speaking, the fire of the Lord fell, and not only, as at other times, (Lev. 9. 24. 1 Chron. 21. 26. 2 Chron. 7. 1.) consumed the sacrifice and the wood, in token of God's acceptance of the offering, but licked up all the water in the trench, exalting that, and drawing it up as a vapour, in order to the intended rain, which was to be the fruit of this sacrifice and prayer, and the means of natural causes. Compare Ps. 135. 7. He causes snares to ascend, and maketh lightnings for the rain; for this rain he did both. Those who fall as victims to the fire of God's wrath, no water can shelter from it, any more than briers or thorns, Isa. 27. 4, 5. But this was not all; to complete the miracle, the fire consumed the stones of the altar, and the very dust, to show that it was no ordinary fire, and perhaps designed to dispel all that contended that high God accepted this sacramental sacrifice from this altar, yet, for the future, they ought to demolish all the altars on their high places, and, for their constant sacrifices, make use of that at Jerusalem only. Moses's altar and Solomon's were consecrated by the fire from heaven; but this was destroyed, because no more to be used. We may well imagine what a terror the fire struck on guilty Ahab, and all the worshippers of Baal, and how they fled from it as far and as fast as they could, Lest it consume us also, alluding to Numb. 16. 34.

Lastly, What was the result of this fair trial. The prophets of Baal had failed in their proof, and could give no evidence at all, to make out their pretensions on the behalf of their God, but were perfectly nonsuited; Elijah had, by the most convincing and undeniable evidence, proved his claims on behalf of the God of Israel.

And now, 1. The people, as the jury, give in their verdict upon the trial, and they are all agreed in it; the case is so plain, they need not go from the bar to consider of their verdict, or consult about it, they fell on their faces, and all, as one man, said, "Jehovah, he is the God, and not Baal; we are convinced and satisfied of it, Jehovah, he is the God," v. 39. Whereupon they shouted, "If he be the God, he shall be our God, and we will serve him only," as Josh. 24. 24. Some, we hope, had their hearts thus turned back, but the generality of them were convinced only, not converted; yielded to the truth of God, that he is the God, but consented not to his covenant, that he should be their's. Blessed are they that have not seen what they saw, and yet have believed, and been made new creatures by it; more, let those that have been enlightened, let it for ever be looked upon as a point adjudged against all pretenders, (for it was carried, upon a full hearing, against one of the most daring and threatening competitors that ever the God of Israel was affronted by,) that Jehovah, he is God, God alone.

2. The prophets of Baal, as criminals, are seized, condemned, and executed, according to law, v. 40. If Jehovah be the true God, Baal is a false God, to whom these Israelites had revolted, and seduced others to the worship of him; and therefore, by the express law of God, they were to be put to death, Deut. 13. 1-11. There needed no proof of the fact, all Israel were witnesses of it, and therefore Elijah (acting still by an extraordinary commission, which is not to be drawn into a precedent) orders
them all to be slain immediately, as the troubles of the land; and Ahab himself is so terrified, for the present, with the fire from heaven, that he dares not oppose it. These were the 450 prophets of Baal; the 400 prophets of the groves, (who, some think, were Sidonians,) though summoned (-v. 19-) yet, as it should seem, did not attend, and so escap-ed this execution, which fair escape perhaps Ahab and Jezebel thought themselves happy in; but it proved they were reserved to be the instruments of Ahab’s destruction, some time after, by encouraging him to go up to Ramoth-Gilead, ch. 22. 6.

41. And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. 42. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, 43. And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. 44. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. 45. And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. 46. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah: and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Israel being thus far reformed, that they had acknowledged the Lord to be God, and had consented to the execution of Baal’s prophets, that they might not seduce them any more, though it was far short of a thorough reformation, yet was so far accepted, that God, therewith, opened the bottles of heaven, and poured out blessings upon his land, that very evening (as it should seem) on which they did this good work, which should have confirmed them in their reformation; see Hag. 2. 18, 19.

1. Elijah sends Ahab to eat and drink, for joy that God had now accepted his works, and that rain was coming; see Execl. 9. 7. Ahab had continued fasting all day, either religiously, it being a day of prayer, or for want of leisure. It being a day of great expectation; but now let him eat and drink, for though others perceive no sign of it, Elijah, by faith, hears the sound of abundance of rain, v. 41. God reveals his secrets to his servants the prophets; and yet, without a revelation, we may foresee that when man’s judgments run down like a river, God’s mercy will. Rain is the river of God, Ps. 65. 9.

2. Elijah himself returns to pray, (though God has promised rain, he must wait upon him,) Zech. 10. 1. and to give thanks to God’s answer by fire, now hoping for an answer by water. What he said, we are not told: but, (1.) He withdrew himself to the top of Carmel, which was very high and very private. Hence we read of those that hide themselves in the top of Carmel, Amos 9. 3. There he would be alone. Those who are called to appear, and act in public, for God, must yet find time to be private with him, and keep up their converse with him in solitude: Then he set himself, as it were, upon his watch tower, like the prophet, Hab. 2. 1. (2.) He cast himself down on his knees upon the earth, in token of humility, reverence, and importunity; and put his face between his knees, that is, bowed his head so far that it touched his knees, thus abasing himself in the sense of his own meanness, now that God had thus honoured him.

3. He orders his servant to bring him notice, as soon as he discerned a cloud arising out of the sea, the Mediterranean sea, which he had a great prospect of from the top of Carmel. The sailors at this day call it Cape Carmel. Six times his servant goes to the point of the hill, and sees nothing, brings no good news to his master; yet Elijah continues praying; will not be diverted far as to cast away his own eyes, but still sends his servant to see if he could discover any hopeful cloud, while he keeps his mind close and intent in prayer, and abides by it, as one that had taken up his father Jacob’s resolution, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. Note, Though the answer of our fervent and believing supplications does not come quickly, yet we must continue instant in prayer, and not faint or give over: for, at the end, it shall speak, and not lie.

4. A little cloud, at length, appears, no bigger than a man’s hand, which presently overspreads the heavens, and waters the earth, v. 44, 45. Great blessings often arise from small beginnings, and showers of plenty from a cloud a span long. Let us therefore never despise the day of small things, but hope and watch for great things from it. This was not as a morning-cloud, which passes away, (though Israel’s goodness was so,) but one that produced a plentiful rain, (Ps. 68. 9.) and an earnest of more.

5. Elijah, hereupon, hastens Ahab home, and at tends him himself. Ahab rode in his chariot, at ease and in state, v. 45. Elijah ran on foot before him. If Ahab had paid the respect to Elijah that his deserved, he had not taken him into his chariot, as the eunuch did Philip, that might have hindered him before the elders of Israel, and confer with him further about the reformation of the kingdom: but his corruptions got the better of his convictions, and he was glad to get clear of him, as Felix of Paul, when he dismissed him, and adjourned his conference with him to a more convenient season. But since Ahab invites him not to ride with him, we may imagine he would get the better of his faculty, that he might not seem to be lifted up with the great honour God had put upon him, or to abate in his civil respect to this prince, though he reproved him faithfully. God’s ministers should make it appear that how great soever they look when they deliver God’s messages, yet they are far from affecting worldly grandeur; let them leave that to the kings of the earth.

CHAP. XIX.

We left Elijah at the entrance of Jezreel, still appearing publicly, and all the people’s eyes upon him. In this chapter, we have him again absenting, and driven into obscurity, at a time when he could ill have been spared, but we are to look upon it as a punishment to Israel for the insincerity and inconstancy of their reformation. When people will not learn, it is just with God to remove their teachers into corners. Now observe, 1. How he was driven into banishment by Jezebel, his sworn enemy, v. 1-3. II. How he was met, in his banishment, by the favour of God, his covenant Friend. 1. How he fed him, v. 4-8. 2. How he conversed with him, and manifested himself to him, (v. 9, 11, 12,) heard his complaint, (v. 10, 14,) directed him what to do, (v. 15., 17,) and encouraged him, v. 18, 19. III. How his hands were strengthened, at his return out of banishment, by the joining of Elisha with him, v. 19, 21.

1. And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and withal how he had
slain all the prophets with the sword. 2. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time. 3. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. 4. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. 5. And as he lay and slept under a juniper-tree, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. 6. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb the mount of God.

One would have expected, after such a public and sensible manifestation of the glory of God, and such a clear decision of the controversy depending between him and Baal, to the honour of Elijah, the confusion of Baal's prophets, and the universal satisfaction of the people; after they had seen both fire and water come from heaven, at the prayer of Elijah, and both, in mercy to them; the one, as it signified the acceptance of their offering, the other, as it refreshed their inheritance, which was weary; that now they should all, as one man, have returned to the worship of the God of Israel, and taken Elijah for their guide and oracle, that he should from henceforward have been prime minister of state, and his directions laws both to king and kingdom. But it is quite otherwise; he is neglected, whom God honoured; no respect is paid him, no care taken of him; nor any use made of him, but, on the contrary, in the land of Israel, to which he had been, and might have been, so great a blessing, he finds it impossible to dwell. 1. Ahab incensed Jezebel against him. That queen-consort, it seems, was, in effect, queen-regent, as she was afterward, when she was queen-dowager; an imperious woman that managed king and kingdom, and did what she would. Ahab's conscience would not let him persecute Elijah, (some remains he had in him of the blood and spirit of an Israelite, which tied his hands,) but he told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, (v. 1.) not to convince her of his guilt, but to bid her what God had done, but what Elijah had done; as if he, by some spell or charm, had brought fire from heaven, and the hand of the Lord had not been in it. Especially, he represented to her, as that which would make her outrageous against him, that he had shewn the prophets; the prophets of Baal he calls the proficients, as if none but they were worthy of the name. They were the gods his heart was upon, and he aggravates the slaying of them as Elijah's crime, without taking notice that it was a just retribution upon her for killing God's prophets, ch. 18. 4. Those who, when they cannot, for shame or fear, do mischief themselves, yet stir up others to do it, will have it laid to their charge, as if they had themselves done it.

II. Jezebel sent him a threatening message, (v. 2.) that she had vowed and sworn to be the death of him within 24 hours. Something prevented her from doing it just now, but she resolves it shall not be long undone. Note, Carnal hearts are hardened and enraged against God by that, which should convince and conquer them, and bring them into submission to him. She swears by her gods, and raging, like one distracted, curses and murders him, without any proviso of a divine permission. Cruelty and confidence often meet in persecutors: I will pursue, I will overtake, Exod. 15. 9. But how came she to send him word of her design, and so, to give him an opportunity of making his escape? Did she think him so daring, that he would not flee; or did she think herself able to prevent it? Or was there a special providence in it, that she should be thus infatuated by her own device? I must own, that though she desired nothing more than his blood, yet, at this time, she durst not meddle with him, for fear of the people, all counting him a prophet, a great prophet, and therefore sent this message to him, merely to frighten him, and get him out of the way, for the present, that he might not carry on what he had begun. The backing of her threats with an oath and imprecation, does not at all prove that she really intended it, but only intended to make him believe it. The gods she swore by, could do her no harm.

III. Elijah, hereupon, in a great fright, fled for his life, it is likely by night, and came to Beer-sheba, v. 3. Shall we praise him for this? We praise him not. Where was the courage with which he had lately confronted Ahab, and all the prophets of Baal? Nay, which kept him by his side, when the fire of God fell upon it? He that stood undaunted in the midst of the terrors both of heaven and earth, trembles at the impotent menaces of a proud passionate woman. Lord, what is man! Great faith is not always alike strong. He could not but know that he might be very serviceable to Israel at this juncture, and had all the reason in the world to depend upon God's protection, while he was doing God's work; yet he feared. In his former danger, God had hidden him hide himself, (ch. 17. 3.) therefore he supposed he might do it now.

IV. From Beer-sheba he went forward into the wilderness, that vast howling wilderness in which the Israelites wandered. Beer-sheba was so far distant from Jezreel, and within the dominion of so good a king as Jehoshaphat, that he could not but be safe there; yet, as if his fears haunted him, even there, he could not rest in peace, but give up all thoughts of returning to the land of Israel, and went a day's journey into the desert. Yet perhaps he retired thither, not so much for his safety, as that he might be wholly retired from the world, in order to a more free and intimate communion with God. He left his servant at Beer-sheba, that he might be private in the wilderness, as Abraham left his servants at the bottom of the hill when he went up to the mount to worship God. In this, he leaves us to infer, that he was determined to be drawn from his disciples: or perhaps it was because he would not expose his servant, who was young and tender, to the hardships of the wilderness; that being a putting new wine into old bottles. We ought thus to consider the frame of those who are under our charge, for God considers ours.
is in the margin,) that he might die; for death is life to a good man; the death of the body is the life of the soul. Yet that was not the reason why he wished to die; it was not the deliberate desire of grace, as Paul does to depart and be with Christ, but a passion of his corruption, as Job's. Those that are, in this manner, forward to die, are not in the fittest frame for it. Jezebel has sworn his death, and therefore he, in a fret, prays for it, runs from death to death, yet with this difference, he wishes to die by the hand of the Lord, whose tender mercies are great, and not to fall into the hands of man, whose tender mercies are cruel. He would rather die as Baal's prophets died, according to Jezebel's threatening, (v. 2) lest the worshippers of Baal triumph, and blaspheme the God of Israel, whom they will think themselves too hard for, if they can run down his advocate. He pleads, "It is enough; I have done enough, and suffered enough; I am weary of living." Those that have secured such a happiness in the other world, will soon have enough of this world. He pleads, "I am not better than my fathers, nor better able to bear those fatigues; and therefore why should I be longer burdened with them than they were? But is this that my Lord Elijah? Can that great and gallant spirit shrink thus? God thus left him to himself, to show that when he was bold and strong, it was in the Lord, and the power of his might, but of himself he was no better than his fathers, or brethren. And yet God sent his angel to refresh him in his bench, into the wants and perils of which he had wilfully thrown himself, and in which, if God had not graciously succoured him, he had perished. How much better does God deal with his forrowd children than they deserve! Elijah, in a fit of despondency, wished to die; God needed him not, yet designed further to honour him, and therefore sent an angel to keep him alive. Our case would be bad sometimes, if God should take away his word, and not give answers to our foolish passionate requests. Having prayed that he might die, he laid down and slept, (v. 5.) wishing it might be to die in his sleep, and not to wake again; but he is awakened out of his sleep, and finds himself not only well provided for with bread and water, (v. 6.) but, which was more, attended by an angel, who guided him when he slept, and twice called him by his name, and it was not in vain; Gen. 13, 5, 7. He needed not complain of the unkindness of men, when it was thus made up by the ministration of angels. Thus provided for, he had reason to think he fared better than the prophets of the groves, that did eat at Jezebel's table. Wherever God's children are, as they are still upon their Father's ground, so they are still under their Father's eye and care. They may lose themselves in a wilderness, but God has not left them; there they may look at him that lives, and sees them, as Haggar, Gen. 16, 13.

Lastly, He is carried, in the strength of this meat, to Horeb, the mount of God, v. 8. Thither the Spirit of the Lord led him, probably, beyond his own intention, that he might have communion with God in the same place where Moses had, the law that was given by Moses, being revived by him. This angel took him to the second time, because of the greatness of the journey that was before him, v. 7. Note, God knows what he designs us for, though we do not, what services, what trials, and will take care for us, when we, for want of foresight, cannot for ourselves, that we be furnished for them with grace sufficient. He that appoints what the voyage shall be, will victual the ship accordingly. See how many different ways God took to keep Elisha, he had fed him by an angel—then by an angel—and now, to show that man lives not by bread alone, he kept him alive 40 days without meat, not resting and sleeping, which might make him the less to crave sustenance, but continually traversing the mazes of the desert, a day for a year of Israel's wanderings; yet he neither needs food, nor desires it. The place, no doubt, demands him of the manna, and encourages him to hope that God would sustain him here, and, in due time, bring him hence, as he did Israel, though, like him, fretful and distrustful.

9. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? 10. And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 11. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks, before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake: but the Lord was not in the earthquake: 12. And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. 13. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? 14. And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 15. And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. 16. And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat, of Abel-meholah, shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy house. 17. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. 18. Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him. Here is, I. Elijah housed in a cave at mount Horeb, which is called the mount of God, because on it God had formerly manifested his glory. And, perhaps, this was the same cave, or cleft of a rock, in which Moses was hidden, when the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed his name, Exod. 34. 6. What Elijah proposed to himself, in coming to lodge here, I cannot conceive, unless it were either to induce his melancholy, or to satisfy his curiosity, and assist his faith and devotion, with the sight of that famous
I. The visit God made him there, and the inquiry he made concerning him: The word of God came to Elijah. He knew, whether, to be cut of the reach of God's eye, his arm, and his word.

What can I do for thy Spirit? Ps. 139. 7, &c. God will take care of his outcasts; and those who, for his sake, are driven cut from among men, he will find, and own, and gather with everlasting loving-kindnesses. St. John saw the visions of the Almighty, when he was in banishment in the isle of Patmos, Rev. x. 1. This puts to him, is, What dost thou here, Elijah? v. 9, and again, v. 13. This is a reproof, 1. For his fleeing thither. "What brings thee so far from home? Dost thou flee from Jezebel? Couldst thou not depend upon Almighty power for thy protection? Lay the emphasis upon [thou]. What thou! So great a man, so great a prophet, so famed for resolution—dost thou run thy country, run thy cause thus? This cowardice had been more excusable in another, and not so bad an example. Should such a man as I am flee? Neh. 6. 11. Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be thus shaken. 2. For his fixing here. "What dost thou here in this cave? Is this a place for a prophet of the Lord to lodge in? Is this a time for such men to retreat, when the public has such need of them?" In the retirement to which God sent Elijah, ch. 17. he was a blessing to a poor widow at Sarepta, but here he had no opportunity of doing good. Note, It concerns us often to inquire, whether we be in our place, and in the way of our duty. "Am I where I should be; whither God calls me, where my business lies, and where I may be useful?"

III. The account he gives of himself, in answer to the question put to him, (v. 10.) and repeated, in answer to the same question, v. 14. In which, 1. He describes his manner of life, and the manner in which it may not be imputed to his want of zeal for reformation, but to his despair of success. For God knew, and his own conscience witnessed for him, that as long as there was any hope of doing good, he had been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; but now that he had laboured in vain, and all his endeavours were to no purpose, he thought it was time to give up the cause, and to own the reason that he could not mend. Abi in cellaret et die, Minervae mea! says a poem of Horace, and cry, Have compassion on me." He complains of the people, their obstinacy in sin, and the height of impiety they were got to; "The children of Is- rael have forsaken thy covenant, and that is the reason I have forsaken them; who can stay among them, to see every thing that is sacred, ruined, and run down?" This the apostle calls his making intercession against himself. 2. 3. He had often been, of choice, their advocate, but now is necessitated to be their accuser, before God. Thus, (John 5. 45.) There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. Those are truly miserable, that have the testimony and prayers of God's prophets against them. 3. He charges them with having forsaken God's covenant; though they retained circumcision, the sign and seal of it, yet they had quitted his wor-

ship and service, which was the intention of it. Those who neglect God's ordinances, and let fall their communion with him, do really forsake his covenant, and break their league with him. He charges them with having thrown down his altars; they not only deserted them, and suffered them to go to decay, but in their zeal for the worship of Baal, had cruelly destroyed or defiled them. He charges them with private altars which the prophets of the Lord had, and which good people attended, who could not go up to Jerusalem, and would not worship the calves nor Baal; these separate altars, though breaking in upon the unity of the church, yet, being erected and attended by those that sincerely aimed at the glory of God, and served him faithfully, were excused from the law of Moses. The Lord owned them for his altars, as well as that at Jerusalem. (Isa. 29. 19.) Whom of them down is charged upon Israel as a crying sin. But this was not all; They have slain thy prophets with the sword, who, it is probable, ministered at those altars. Jezebel, a foreigner, did it, (ch. 18. 4.) but it is charged upon the body of the people, because the generality of them were consenting to their death, and pleased with it. 4. He gives the reason why he is now fled into this desert, and took up his residence in this cave. He could not appear to any purpose; "I only am left, and have none to second or support me in any good design. They all said, The Lord he is God, but none of them would stand by me, or offer to shelter me. That point then gained, was presently lost again, and Jezebel can do more to debauch them, than I can to reform them. What can one do against thousands?" Despair of success hinders many a good enterprise. None are willing to venture alone, for getting that those are not alone, who have God with them. (2.) It was because he could not appear with any safety; "They seek my life to take it away; and I had better spend my life in a useless solitude, than lose my life in a fruitless endeavour to reform those that hate to be reformed."
face, but the still voice did. Gracious souls are more affected by the tender mercies of the Lord, than by his terrors. (2.) He stood at the entrance of the cave, ready to hear what God had to say to him. This method of God's manifesting himself here at mount Horeb, seems to refer to the discoveries God formerly made of himself at this place to Moses. [1.] That there was a voice, which he heard quaking, which was not, (Heb. xiv.) but when God would show Moses his glory, he proclaimed his goodness; and so here, He was the word, was in the still small voice. [2.] Then the law was thus given to Israel, with the appearances of terror first, and then with a voice of words; and Elijah, being now called to revive that law, especially the two first commandments of it, is here taught how to manage it; he must not only speak, and tell men the signs and the miracles, but also if he went out with a voice, like the earthquake and fire, but he must endeavour, with a still small voice, to convince and persuade them, and not forsake them, when he should do that. Faith comes by hearing the word of God: miracles do but make way for it. [3.] Then God spake to his people with terror; but in the gospel of Christ, which was to be introduced by the spirit and power of Elias, he would speak with a still small voice, not of which should not make us afraid; see Heb. xii. 18. 8c.

V. The orders God gives him to execute. He repeated the question he had put to him before, "What dost thou here? This is not a place for thee now." Elijah gives the same answer, (v. 14.) complains of Israel's apostasy from God, and the ruin of religion among them. To this, God gives him a reply. When he wished he might die, (v. 4.) God answered him not according to his folly, but was so far from letting him die, that he not only kept him alive then, but provided that he should never die, but be translated. But when he complained of his discouragement, (and whether should God's prophets go with their complaints of that kind, but to their Master?) God gave him an answer. He sends him back with directions to appoint Hazael king of Syria, (v. 15.) Jehu king of Israel, and Elisha his successor in the eminency of the prophetic office; (v. 16.) which is intended as a prediction, that by these God would chastise the degenerate Israelites, plead his own cause among them, and revenge the quarrel of his covenant, v. 17. Elijah complained that the wickedness of Israel was unpunished; the judgment of famine was too gentle, and had not reclaimed them; it was reprobated, before they were reformed. He therefore says, I have been jealous, says he, "for God's name's sake, but he himself has not appeared jealous for it." "Well," says God, "be content, it is all in good time, judgments are prepared for those scorner, though they are not yet inflicted; the persons are pitched upon, and shall now be nominated, for they are now in being, who shall do the business." 1. "When Hazael comes to be king of Syria, he shall make bloody war upon King Rezin, and shall destroy and correct them for their idolatry." 2. "When Jehu comes to be king of Israel, he shall make bloody war with the royal family, and shall utterly destroy the house of Ahab, that set up and maintained idolatry." 3. "Elisha, while thou art on earth, shall strengthen thy hands; and when thou art gone, shall carry on thy work, and be a remaining witness against the apostasy of Israel, and even he shall sit upon the throne of David in the city." Note. The wicked are reserved to judgment. Evil pursues sinners, and there is no escaping it; to attempt an escape, is but to run from one sword's point upon another. See Jer. 48. 44, He that flees from the fear, shall fall into the pit; and he that gets up out of the pit, shall be taken in the snare. Elisha, with the sword of the Spirit, shall terrify and wound the consciences of those who escape Hazael's sword of war, and Jehu's sword of justice; With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked, Isa. 11. 4. 2 Thess. 3. 8. Hos. 6. 5. It is a great comfort to good men, and good ministers, to think that God will never want instruments to do his work, in his time, but when they are gone, others shall be raised up to carry it on.

VI. The comfortable information God gives him of the number of Israelites who retained their integrity, though he thought he was left alone; (v. 18.) I have left me seven thousand in Israel, (beside Judah,) which have not bowed the knee to Baal. Note. 1. In times of the greatest degeneracy and apostasy, God has always had, and will have, a remnant faithful to him, some that keep their integrity, and do not go down the stream. The apostle mentions this answer of God to Elijah, (Rom. 11. 4.) and applies it to his own time, when the Jews generally rejected the gospel; Yet, says he, at this time also there is a remnant, v. 5. 2. It is God's work to preserve that remnant, and distinguish them from the rest, for without his grace they could not have distinguished themselves: I have left me; it is therefore said to be a remnant, according to the election of grace. 3. It is but a little remnant, in comparison with the degenerate race; what is 7,000 to the thousands of Israel? Yet when those of every age come together, they will be found many more, 12,000 sealed out of each tribe, Rev. 7. 4. 4. God's faithful ones are often his hidden ones, (Ps. 83. 3.) and the visible church scarcely visible; the wheat lost in the chaff, and the gold in the dross, till the sifting, refining, separating, day comes. 5. The Lord knows those that are his, though we do not; he sees them in secret. 6. There are more good people in the world, than some wise and holy men think there are. Their jealousy of themselves, and for God, makes them think the corruption is universal; but God sees not as they do. When we come to heaven, as we shall miss a great many whom we thought to have met there, so shall we meet a great many whom we little thought to have met there. God's love often proves larger than man's charity, and more extensive.

Elisha was named last in the orders God gave to Elijah; but here he stands first, for by him the other two were to be called. He must succeed Elijah's room: yet Elijah is forward to raise him, and is far from being jealous of his successor, but rejoices to think that he shall leave the work of God in such good hands.

Concerning the call of Elisha, observe, 1. That it was a surprising call: Elijah feign'd him
by divine direction, or, perhaps, he was before acquainted with him, and knew where to find him. He found him, not in the schools of the prophets, but in the fields; not reading, or praying, or sacrificing, but ploughing, v. 19. Though a great man, (as appears by his feast, v. 21.) master of the ground, and oxen, and servants, yet he did not think it any disparagement to him, to follow his business, and serve himself as his servants, but himself to lay his hand to the plough. Idleness is no man's honour, nor is husbandry any man's disgrace. An honest calling in the world, does not at all put us out of the way of our heavenly calling; any more than it did Elisha, who was taken from following the plough, to feed Israel, and to sow the seed of the word; as the apostles from fishing, to catch men. Elisha inquired not after Elijah, but was anointed with this oil. We love God, and choose him, because he chose us, and loved us, first.

2. That it was a powerful call: Elijah did but cast his mantle upon him, (v. 19.) in token of friendship, that he would take him under his care and tuition, as he did under his mantle, and to be one with him in the same clothes, or, in token of his being clothed with the spirit of Elijah; now he put some of himself upon him. Moses on Jordan (Num. 27. 20.) but when Elijah went to heaven, he had the mantle entire, 2 Kings 2. 13. And immediately he left the oxen to go as they would, and ran after Elijah, and assured him that he would follow him presently, v. 20. An invisible hand touched his heart, and unaccountably inclined him by a secret power, without any external persuasions, to quit his husbandry, and give himself to the ministry. It is in a day of power, that Christ's objects are made willing, (Ps. 110. 3.) nor would any come to Christ, unless they were thus drawn. Elisha came to a resolution presently, but begged a little time, not to ask leave, but only to take leave, of his parents. This was not an excuse for delay, like his (Luke 9. 61.) that desired he might bid them farewell that were at home; but only a reservation of the respect and duty he owed to his father and mother. Elijah bade him go back, and do it, he would n't hinder him: nay, if he would, he might go back, and not return, for any thing he had done to him. He will not force him, nor take him against his will; let him sit down and count the cost, and make it his own act. The efficacy of God's grace preserves the native liberty of man's will, so that they who are good, are good of choice, and not by constraint; not pressed men, but volunteers. 3. That it was a pleasing and acceptable call to him, which appears by the farewell feast he made for his family, v. 21. Yet he not only quitted all the comforts of his father's house, but exposed himself to the malignity of Jezebel, and her party; it was a discouraging time for prophets to set out in. A man that had consulted with flesh and blood, would not be fond of Elijah's mantle, nor willing to wear his coat; it would not be a greasy garment of satisfaction, leaves all, to accompany him. Thus Matthew made a great feast, when he left the receipt of custom to follow Christ.

4. That it was an effectual call: Elijah did not stay for him, lest he should seem to compel him, but left him to his own choice, and he soon arose, went after him, and not only associated with him, but took upon him, as his servant, and favoured one, on his hands, 2 Kings 3. 11. It is of great advantage to young ministers, to spend some time under the direction of those that are aged and experienced, whose years teach wisdom; and not to think much, if occasion be, to minister to them. Those that would be fit to teach, must have time to learn: and those that hope, hereafter, to rise and rule, must be willing, at first, to stoop and serve.

1. AND Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it. 2. And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Ben-hadad, 3. Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine. 4. And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have. 5. And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Ben-hadad, saying, Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children; 6. Yet I will send my servants unto thee to-morrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put it in their hand, and take it away. 7. Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold, and I denied him not. 8. And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken not unto him, nor consent. 9. Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Ben-hadad, Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first I will do: but this thing I may not do. And the messengers departed, and brought him word again. 10. And Ben-hadad sent unto him,
and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me. 11. And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself, as he that putteth it off.

Here is,

I. Ben-hadad's threat to make a descent upon Ahab's kingdom, and the siege he laid to Samaria, his royal city, v. 1. What the ground of the quarrel was, we are not told; covetousness and ambition were the principle, which would never want some pretence or other. David, in his time, had quiet subdued the Syrians, and made them tributaries to Israel, but Israel's apostasy from God makes them formidable again. Asa had tempted the Syrians to invade Israel once, (ch. 15. 18. 20.) and now they did it of their own accord: it is dangerous bringing in a foreign force into a country, posterity may pay dear for it. Ben-hadad had with him 32 kings, who were either tributaries to him, and bound in duty to attend him, or confederates with him, he was bound in interest to assist him; how little did the title of king look, when all these poor petty governors pretended to it!

II. The treaty between these two kings; surely Israel's Defence was departed from them, or else the Syrians could not have marched so readily, and with so little opposition, to Samaria, the head and heart of the country, a city lately built, and therefore, it may suppose, not well fortified, but like to fall quickly into the hands of the invaders; both sides are aware of this, and therefore,

1. Ben-hadad's proud spirit sends Ahab a very insolent demand, v. 2, 3. A parley is sounded, and a trumpeter (we may suppose) is sent into the city, to let Ahab know that upon these terms he will raise the siege—that Ahab become his vassal, nay, his villain, and not only pay him a tribute out of what he has, but make over his title to Ben-hadad, and hold all at his will, even his wives and children, the goodliest of them: the manner of expression is designed to gull them; "All shall be mine, without exception."

2. Ahab's poor spirit sends Ben-hadad a very disgraceful submission; it is general indeed, he cannot mention particulars in his surrender, with so much Ben-hadad hid in his demand, but it is effectual, I am thine, and all that I have, v. 4. See the effect of sin: (1.) If he had not, by sin, provoked God to depart from him, Ben-hadad could not have made such a demand; sin brings men into such straits, by putting them out of divine protection; if God do not rule us, our enemies shall; a rebel to God, is a slave to all besides. Ahab had paid gold then, and gold now (Heb. 8.) justly therefore it is taken from him; such an alienation amounts to a forfeiture. (2.) If he had not, by sin, wronged his own conscience, and set against him, he could not have made such a mean surrender; guilt dispirits men, and makes them cowards; he knew Baal could not help, and had no reason to think that God would, and therefore it cannot take upon any terms; skin for skin, and all that is dear to him, for what he gives it; he will rather live a beggar, than not die a prince.

3. Ben-hadad's proud spirit rises, upon his submission, and becomes yet more insolent and imperious, v. 5, 6. Ahab had laid his all at his feet, at his mercy, expecting that one king would use another generously, that this acknowledgment of Ben-hadad's sovereignty would have contented him, the honour was sufficient for the present, and he might, hereafter, make use of it if he saw cause; Satis est prostrasse leonti—it suffices the lion to have laid his antagonist prostrate; but this will not serve: (1.) Ben-hadad is as covetous as he is proud, and cannot go away, unless he have the possession as well as the dominion; he thinks it not enough to call it his, unless he have it in his hands; he will not so much as lend Ahab the use of his own goods above his pay. (2.) He is as arrogant; had he come himself to select what he had a mind for, it had been some respect to a crowned head, but he will send his servants to insult the prince, and hector over him, to rifle the palace, and strip it of all its ornaments; nay, to give Ahab the more vexation, they shall be ordered, not only to take what they please, but, if they can learn which are the most precious, or things that Ahab is, in particular manner, fond of, to take those; Whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall take that away. We are often crossed in that which we most doat upon; and that proves least safe, which is most dear. (3.) He is as unreasonable as he is unjust, and will construe the surrender Ahab made for himself, as made for all his subjects too, and will have them also to lie at his mercy. The word searcheth, not only thy house, but the houses of thy servants too, and plunder them at discretion. Blessed be God for peace and prosperity, and that which we have, we can call our own.

4. Ahab's poor spirit begins to rise too, upon his growing insolence; and if it becomes not yet, it becomes desperate, and he will rather hazard his life than give up all thus. (1.) Now he takes advice of his privy-council, who encourage him to stand it out. He speaks but poorly, (v. 7.) appeals to them whether Ben-hadad were not an unreasonable enemy, and did not seek mischief. What other could he expect from one who, without any provocation given him, had invaded his country, and besieged his capital city? He owns to them how he had truckled to him before, and would have them advise him what he should do in this strait; they speak bravely, (v. 8.) Their advice, (v. 7.) is plain; "Tell me not to him, nor consult; promising, no doubt, to stand by him in the refusal. (2.) Yet he expresses himself very moderately in his denial; (v. 9.) He owns Ben-hadad's dominion over him; "Tell my lord the king, I have no design to affront him, nor to recede from the surrender I have already made; what I offered at first, I will stand to, but this thing I may not do; I must not give what is none of my own." It was a verification of Ben-hadad, that even such an abject spirit as Ahab's was, dares deny him; yet it should seem by his manner of expressing himself, that he durst not have done it, if his people had not animated him.

5. Ben-hadad proudly swears the ruin of Samaria: the threatening waves of his wrath, meeting with this check, rage and foam, and make a noisy noise; what is his fury, the waters threaten the destruction of his gods. If the dust of Samaria serve for handfuls for his army, (v. 10.) so numerous, so resolute, an army will he bring into the field against Samaria; and so confident is he of their success, it will be done as easily as the taking up of a handful of dust; all shall be carried away, even the ground on which the city stands. Thus confident is his pride, thus cruel is his malicious spirit, this prepares him to be ruined, though such a prince and such a people are unworthy of the satisfaction of seeing him ruined.

6. Ahab sends him a decent rebuke to his assurance; dares not defy his menaces, only reminds him of the uncertain turns of war; (v. 11.) "Let not him that begins a war, and his girding on his sword,
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As a armour, his harness, boast of victory, or think himself sure of it, as if he had put it off; and were come home a conqueror. "This was one of the wise words that ever Ahab spoke, and is a good item or memento to us all: it is folly to boast before, of any day, since we know not what it may bring forth;" (Prov. 27. 1.) but especially to boast of a day of battle, which may prove as much against us, as we promise ourselves it will be for us. It is improper to despise an enemy, and to be too sure of victory is the way to be beaten. "Apply it to our spiritual conflicts; Peter fell by his confidence: while we are here, we are but girding on the harness, and therefore must never boast as though we had put it off. Haply is the man that saeareth always, and is never off his watch.

12. And it came to pass, when Ben-hadad heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, "Set yourselves in array: and they set themselves in array against the city. 13. And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." 14. And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Even by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, Thou. 15. Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two: and after them he numbered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand. 16. And they went out at noon: but Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him. 17. And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben-hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria. 18. And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive. 19. So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them. 20. And they slew every one his man: and the Syrians fled; and Israel pursued them: and Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with the horsemen. 21. And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.

The treaty between the besiegers and the besieged being broken off abruptly, we have here an account of the battle that ensued immediately.

1. The Syrians, the besiegers, had their directions from a drunken king, who gave orders over his cups, as he was drinking, (v. 12.) drinking himself drunk (v. 16.) with the kings in the pavilions, and this, at noon. Drunkenness is a sin, which armies and their officers have, of old, been addicted to. Say not thou then the former days were, in this respect, better than these, though these are bad enough; for though his heart were so secure, and in an very secure, he would not have come to drink; and had he not been intoxicated, he would not have been so very secure: security and sensuality went together in the old world, and Sodom, Luke 17. 26, 28. Ben-hadad's drunkenness was the forerunner of his fall, as Belshazzar's was, Dan. 5. How could he prosper, that preferred his pleasure before his business, and kept his kings to drink with him, when they should have been at their respective posts to fight for him? In his drink, 1. He orders the tent to be inverted, the engines fixed, and every thing got ready for the making of a general attack, (v. 12.) but stirs not from his drunken club to see it done; Woe unto thee, O land, when thy king is such a child. 2. When the besieged made a sally, (and, by that time, he was far gone,) he gave orders to take them alive, (v. 18.) not to kill them, which might have been done more easily and safely, but to seize them, which gave them an opportunity of killing the aggressors; so imprudent was he in the orders he gave, as well as unjust, in ordering them to be taken prisoners, though they came for peace, and to renew the treaty; thus, as is usual, he drinks, and forgets the law, both the policies and the justice of war.

16. The Israelites, the besieged, had their directions from an inspired prophet, one of the prophets of God. From Ahab's very dreams, and the visions of the prophets. And, behold, a prophet, even one, drew near to the king of Israel; so it may be read, v. 13. Behold, and wonder, that God should send a prophet with a kind and gracious message to so wicked a prince as Ahab was; but he did it. 1. For his people Israel's sake, who, though wickedly degenerated, were the seed of Abraham his friend, and Jacob his chosen, the children of the covenant, and not cast off. That he might show mercy in doing good to one so evil and unthankful; might either bring him to repentance, or leave him the more inexcusable. 3. That he might mortify the pride of Ben-hadad, and check his insolence: Ahab's idolatry shall be punished hereafter, but Ben-hadad's haughtiness shall be chastised now; for God resists the proud, and is pleased to say that he fears the wrath of the enemy, Deut. 32. 26, 27. Therefore he was permitted to come propitious in Samaria, and he drew near with this message, inviting that he had been forced to keep at a distance; Ahab, in his prosperity, would not have borne the sight of him, but now he bids him welcome, when none of the prophets of the groves could give him any assistance: he inquired not for a prophet of the Lord, but God sent one to him, unasked, for he waits to be gracious.

13. This prophet appoints him with an assurance of victory, which was more than all the elders of Israel could give him, (v. 8.) though they promised to stand by him. This prophet, who is not named, (for he spake in God's name,) tells him, from God, that this very day the siege should be raised, and the army of the Syrians routed, v. 3. When the prophet said, Thus saith the Lord, we may suppose Ahab began at first to think that there was a deception; but he is revived, when it proves a gracious one. He is reminded of the use he must make of this blessed turn of affairs; "Thou shalt know that I am Jehovah, the sovereign Lord of all!" God's foretelling a thing that was so very unlikely, proved that it was his own doing. (2.) He instructs him what to do for the gaining of this victory. (1.) He must not stay till the enemy had attacked him, but must sail out upon them, and surprise them in their trenches. (2.) The persons employed must be the young men of the princes of
the provinces, the pages, the footmen, who were few in number, but 232, utterly unacquainted with war, and the likeliest men that could be thought of, for such a bold attempt; yet these must do it, those weak and foolish things must be the instruments of confounding the wise and strong, that while Ben-hadad's boastful is punished, Ahab's might be prevented and precluded, and the excellency of the power of God. [3.] Ahab must himself so far testify his confidence in the word of God, as to command in person, though, in the eye of reason, he exposed himself to the utmost danger by it; but it is fit that those who have the benefit of God's promises, should venture upon them. Yet, [4.] He is allowed to make use of what forces he had at hand, to follow the blow, when these young men had broken the ice. All he had in Samaria, or within call, were but 7000 men, v. 15. It is observable that it is the same number with their's that had not bowed the knee to Baal, (ch. 19. 18.) though, it is likely, not the same men.

II. The issue was accordingly; the proud Syrians were beaten, and the poor despised Israelites were more than conquerors; the young men gave an alarm to the Syrians, just at noon, at high dinner time, supported by what little force they had, v. 16. Ben-hadad despised them, at first, (v. 18.) but when they had, with unparalleled bravery and dexterity, slain every one his man, and so put the army into disorder, that proud man durst not face them, but mounted immediately, drunk as he was, and made the best of his way, v. 20. See how God strips off the spirit of princes, and makes himself terrible to the kings of the earth. Now where are the silver and gold he demanded of Ahab? Where the handfuls of Samaria's dust? Those that are most secure, are commonly least courageous. Ahab failed not to improve this advantage, but slew the Syrians with a great slaughter, v. 21. Note, God oftentimes makes one wicked man a scourage to another.

22. And the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself, and mark and see what thou doest: for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee. 23. And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills, therefore they were stronger than we: but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. 24. And do this thing: Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their rooms. 25. And number thee an army like the army that thou hast lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot: and we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. And he hearkened unto their voice, and did so. 26. And it came to pass, at the return of the year, that Ben-hadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel. 27. And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, and went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country. 28. And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 29. And they pitched one over against the other seven days: and so it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined: and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day. 30. But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and there a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the men that were left. And Ben-hadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber.

We have here an account of another successful campaign, which Ahab, by divine aid, made against the Syrians, in which he gave them a greater defeat than in the former. Strange! Ahab idolatrous, yet victorious a God of the hosts only! or God is wise and holy ends, in suffering wicked men to prosper, and in it glorifies his own name.

I. Ahab is admonished by a prophet to prepare for another war, v. 22. It should seem, he was now secure, and looked but a little way before him; those that are careless of their souls, are often as careless of their outward affairs; but the prophet to whom God made known the following counsels of the Syrians, told him, they would renew their attempt, at the return of the year, hoping to retrieve the honour they had lost, and be avenged for the blow they had received. He therefore bade him strengthen himself, put himself into a posture of defence, and be ready to give them a warm reception. God had decreed the end, but Ahab must use the means, else he tempts God: "Help thyself, strengthen thyself, and God will help and strengthen thee." The enemies of God's Israel are restless in their malice, and though they may take some breathing time for themselves, yet are still breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the church. It concerns us always to expect assaults from our spiritual enemies, and therefore to mark and see what we do.

II. Ben-hadad is advised by those about him concerning the operations of the next campaign. 1. They advised him to change his ground, v. 23. They take it for granted that it was not Israel, but Israel's gods, that beat them; (so great a regard was then universally had to invisible powers;) but they speak very ignorantly of Jehovah—that he was many, whereas he is One, and his name One—that he was their God only, a local deity, peculiar to that nation, whereas he is the Creator and Ruler of all the world—and that he was they under his protection, because David, their great prophet, had said, "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help, (Ps. 121. 1.) and that his foundation was in the holy mountain; (Ps. 87. 1—78. 54.) and much was said of his holy hill, (Ps. 15. 1—24. 3.) supposing him altogether such a one as their imaginery deities: they fancied he was confined to his hills, and could not, or would not, come down from them, and therefore could not be the object of their cognizance, and from under his protection; thus vain were the Gentiles in their imaginations concerning God, so wretchedly were their foolish hearts darkened, and, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. 2. They advise him to change his officers; (v. 24, 25.) not to employ the kings, who were commanders by birth, but captains rather,
who were commanders by merit, who, being inured to war, would not affect to make a show like the kings, but would go through with business; let every man be employed in that which he is brought up to, and used to, and preferred to that which he is fit for. Syria, in Susanus, was rich and populous, when it could furnish recruits sufficient, after so great a defeat, 

III. Both armies take the field: Ben-hadad, with his Syrians, encamps near Aphek, in the tribe of Asher, a city, it is likely, in his own possession, one of those which his father had won, (v. 34.) and the country about, flat and level, and fit for his purpose, v. 26. Ahab, with his forces, posted himself at some distance from them, v. 27. But the disposition of numbers was very remarkable; (v. 27.) the children of Israel, who were cantoned in two battalions, looked like two little flocks of kids, their numbers small, their equipage mean, and the figure they made contemptible; but the Syrians filled the country with their numbers, their noise, their chariots, their carriages, and their baggage.

IV. Ahab is encouraged to fight the Syrians, notwithstanding the advantages of the situation and confidence. A man of God is sent to him, to tell him that his numerous army should all be delivered into his hand, (v. 28.) but not for his sake; be it known to him, he was utterly unworthy, for whom God should do this: God would not do it, because Ahab had praised God, or prayed to him, (we do not read that he did either,) but because the Syrians had blasphemed God, and had said, He is the God of the hills and not of the valleys: therefore God will do it in his own vindication, and to preserve the honour of his own name: if the Syrians had said, “Ahab and his people have forsaken their God, and so put themselves out of his protection, and therefore we may venture to attack them,” God would probably have delivered Israel into their hands: but when they go upon a presumption so very injurious to the divine omnipotence, and the honour of him who is Lord of all hosts, not only in hills and valleys, but in heaven and earth, which they are willingly ignorant of, they shall be undeceived, at the expense of that vast army which is so much their pride and confidence.

V. After the armies had faced one another seven days, (the Syrians, it is likely, boasting, and the Israelites trembling,) they engaged, and the Syrians were totally routed; 100,000 men slain by the sword of Israel, in the field of Aphek, v. 29. and 27,000 men, that thought themselves safe under the walls of Aphek, a fortified city, (from the walls of which, the shooters might annoy the enemy if they pursed them, 2 Sam. 11. 24.) found their bane where they hoped for protection, the wall fell upon them, probably, overthrown by an earthquake, and, the cities of Canaan being walled up to heaven, it reached a great way, and they were all either killed, or hanged, or overthrown, and dismayed. Ben-hadad, who thought his city Aphek should have held out against the conquerors, finding it thus unwalled, and the remnant of his forces dispersed and dispersed, had nothing but secrecy to rely upon for safety, and therefore hid himself in a chamber within a chamber, lest the pursuers should seize him. See how the greatest confidence often ends in the greatest confusion. 

“Now, is the God of the valleys, or no?” He shall know, now that he is forced into an inner chamber to hide himself. See ch. 22. 25.

31. And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life. 32. So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, Is he yet alive? he is my brother. 33. Now the men did diligently observe whether any thing would come from him, and did hastily catch it: and they said, Thy brother Ben-hadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Ben-hadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot. 34. And Ben-hadad said unto him, The cities which my father took from thy father I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away: 35. And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said unto his neighbour in the word of the Lord, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him. 36. Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the Lord, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him. 37. Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded him. 38. So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face. 39. And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver. 40. And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it. 41. And he hasted, and took the ashes away from his face; and the king of Israel discerned him that he was of the prophets. 42. And he said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people. 43. And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria. Here is an account of what followed the victory which Israel obtained over the Syrians.

I. Ben-hadad's tame and mean submission; even in his inner chamber he fears, and would, if he could, flee further, though none pursues; his servants, seeing him and themselves reduced to the...
last extremity, advise that they surrender at discretion, and make themselves prisoners and petitioners to Ahab for their lives, v. 31. The servants will put their lives in their hands, and venture first, and their master shall act according as they speed. Their inducement to take this course, is, the great reputation the kings of Israel had acquired among their neighbors, and of their mercies; "We have heard that they are merciful kings, not oppressive to their subjects that are under their power," (as governments then went, that of Israel was one of the most easy and gentle,) "and therefore not cruel to their enemies, when they lie at their mercy." Perhaps they had this notion of the kings of Israel, because they had heard that the God of Israel proclaimed his name great and glorious, and that the kings would make their God their pattern; it was an honour to the kings of Israel to be thus represented, as indeed every Israelite is then dressed as becomes him, when he puts on border of mercy. "They are merciful kings, therefore we may hope to find mercy, upon our submission;" this encouragement poor sinners have to repent and humble themselves before God; "Have we not heard that this is a merciful God? Have we not found him so? Let us therefore rend our hearts and return to him," Joel 2. 13. That is evangelical repentance, which flows from an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ; there is forgiveness with him.

Two things they undertake to represent to Ahab;
1. Their master a penitent; for they girded sackcloth on their loins, as mourners, and put ropes on their heads, as condemned criminals going to execution.
2. The servant a beggar, a beggar for his life: "Thy servant Ben-hadad says, "I pray thee, let me live," v. 32. Though I live a perpetual exile from my own country, and captive in this, yet, upon any terms, let me live!" What a great change is here, (1.) In his condition; how is he fallen from the height of power and prosperity, to the depths of disgrace and distress, and all the miseries of poverty and slavery! See the uncertainty of human affairs; such things happen! Be not angry at the vicissitudes of life, that was so prosperous, may soon come to be undermost. (2.) In his temper; in the beginning of the chapter, hectoring, swearing, and threatening, and none more high in his demands; but here, humbling and bemoaning himself, and none more low in his requests: how poorly does he beg his life at the hand of him whom he had there been trampling upon! The most haughty in prosperity are commonly most abject in distress. The haughtiest man in these conditions; see how God glorifies himself, when he looks upon proud men, and abuses them, and hides them in the dust together, Job, 40. 11-13.

II. Ahab's foolish acceptance of his submission, and the league he suddenly made with him, upon it; he was proud to be thus courted by him whom he had feared, inquires for him with great tenderness, and then inquired of God whether his brother, the king, though not brother Israeltide; and Ahab valued himself more on his royalty, than on his religion, and others accordingly. "Is he thy brother, Ahab? Did he use thee like a brother, when he sent thee that barbarous message? v. 5, 6. Would he have called thee brother, if he had been the conqueror? Would he now have called himself thy servant, if he had not been reduced to the utmost strait? Canst thou suffer thyself to be thus imposed upon by a forced and counterfeit submission?" This word brother they catch at, (v. 33.) and were encouraged by that to go and fetch him to the king; he that calls him brother, will let him live; let poor penitents hear God, in his word, calling them children, (Jer. 31. 20.) catch at it, echo to it, and call him Father. He who has had his pretensions to the restitution of his own; he might now have demanded the stores, and treasures, and magazines, of Damascus, to augment the wealth and strength of his own kingdom, but is content with a poor liberty, at his own expense, to build streets there, a point of honour, and no advantage, or no more than what the kings of Syria had had in Samaria, though they never had had so much power as he had now, to support the demand of it. With this covenant he sent him away, without so much as reproving him for his blasphemous reflections upon the God of Israel, whose honour Ahab had no concern for. Note, There are those on whom success is ill bestowed; they know not how to serve either God or their generation, or even their own true interests, with their prosperity: Let favour be showed to none wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; or, III. The reproof given to Ahab for his clemency to Ben-hadad, and his covenant with him; it was given him by a prophet, in the name of the Lord; the Jews say it was Miriab, and not unlikely, for Ahab complains of him, (ch. 22. 8.) that he used to prophesy evil concerning him; this prophet designed to reprove Ahab by a parable, that he might oblige him to condemn himself, as Nathan did David; to make his parable the more plausible, he finds it necessary to put himself into the posture of a wounded soldier.

1. With some difficulty, he gets himself wounded, for he would not do it with his own hands; he commanded one of his brother prophets, his neighbour, or companion, (so the word signifies,) to smite him, and this, in God's name, (v. 33.) but finds him not so willing to give the blow as he is to receive it; but he disperses the army, and is ready to fly, and is not enough to smite prophets, they need not smite one another; we cannot but think it was from a good principle he declined it; "If it must be done, let another do it, not I; I cannot find in my heart to strike my friend." Good men can much more easily receive a wrongblow than give one; yet because he disobeyed an express command of God, (which was so much the worse if he were himself a prophet,) like other disobeidning Israelites, (Deut. 28. 24.) he was presently slain by a ben, v. 36. This was intended, not only to show, in general, how provoking disobedience is, (Col. 3. 6.) but to intimate to Ahab, who, no doubt, was told the story, that if a good prophet were thus punished for sparing his friend and God's, when God said, Smite, of much sorcer punishment should a wicked king be thought worthy, who spares his enemy God's, when God said, Smite him more prettily, not more just than God, more fierce or more compassionate than his Maker? We must be merciful as he is merciful, and not otherwise. The next he met with, made no difficulty of smiting him, (Valenti non fit injuria — He that asks for an injury is not wronged by it,) and did it so that he wounded him, (v. 37.) he fetched blood with the blow; it is likely, in his face.
2. Wounded as he was, and disguised with ashes, that he might not be known to be a prophet, he made his application to the king in a story, whereby he charged himself with such a crime as the king was now guilty of in sparing Ben-hadad, and waits for the king's judgment upon it; the case, in short, is this:—A prisoner taken in the battle was committed to his custody, by a man, (we may suppose one that had authority over him as his superior officer,) with this charge, If he be missing, thy life shall be for his life, v. 39. The prisoner has made his escape through his carelessness. Can the cency in the king's breast relieve him against his captive who demands his life in lieu of the prisoner? "The king is the king, the prophet is the prophet; shouldest either not have undertaken the trust, or been more careful and faithful to it, there is no remedy, (Curat lex.—Let the law take its course,) thou hast forfeited thy bond, and execution must go out upon it; so shall thy doom be, thyself hast decided it." Now the prophet what he has what he has, puts off his disguise, and is known by Ahab himself to be a prophet, (v. 41,) and plainly tells him, "Thou art the man," v. 42. No, it is thine mouth; No, if hast decided it; out of thine own mouth art thou judged, God, the Superior and Commander in chief, delivered into thy hands one plainly marked for destruction, both by his own pride, and God's providence, and thou hast not ceaselessly kept him, but withingly and willingly dismissed him, and so hast been false to thy trust; and lost the end of thy victory; expect therefore no other than that thy life shall go for his life, which thou hast spared, (and so it did,) ch. 22. 25. "And thy people for thy people, whom likewise thou hast spared," and so they did afterward, 2 Kings 10. 32, 33. When their other sins brought them low, this came into the account. There is a time, when keeping back the sword from blood, is doing the work of the Lord deceitfully, Jer. 48. 10. Foolish pity spoils the city.

We are told that Ahab took this reproach; he went to his house heavy and displeased; (v. 43,) not truly penitent, or seeking to undo what he had done amiss, but enraged at the prophet, exasperated against God, (as if he had been too severe in the sentence passed upon him,) and yet vexed at himself, every way out of humour, notwithstanding his victory; he who, by his providence, had mortified the pride of one king, by his word, cast a dam upon the lamps of his enemies; Be wise therefore, 0 ye kings, and be instructed to serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling, Ps. 2. 10. 11.

CHAP. XXII.

Ahab is still the unhappy subject of the sacred history; from the great affairs of his camp and kingdom this chapter leads us into his garden, and gives us an account of some little things, (and ill indeed they proved to him,) relating to his domestic affairs. 1. Ahab is sick for Naboth's vineyard, v. 1. 4. II. Naboth dies by Jezebel's plot, that the vineyard may escheat to Ahab, v. 5. 14. III. Ahab goes to take possession, v. 13. 16. IV. Elijah meets him, and judges the denunciations of God against him for his injustice, v. 17. 24. V. Upon his humiliation a reprieve is granted, v. 25. 29.

1. AND it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house; and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it: or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. 3. And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. 4. And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased, because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

Here is, Ahab's coveting his neighbour's vineyard, which, unless purchased, lay near his palace, and was convenient for a kitchen-garden, etc. Perhaps, Naboth had been pleased that he had a vineyard which lay so advantageously for a prospect of the royal gardens, or the vending of its productions to the royal family—but the situation of it proved fatal to him; if he had had no vineyard, or it had lain obscure in some remote place, he had preserved his life; but many a man's possessions have been his snare, and his neighbour's good, instead of the former, greatness, of pernicious consequence. Ahab sets his heart on the heart's desire, and it will be a pretty addition to his demesne, a convenient outlet to his palace, and nothing will serve him but it must be his own. He is welcome to the fruits of it, welcome to walk in it; Naboth perhaps would have made him a lease of it, for his life, to please him, but nothing will please him, unless he have an absolute property in it, and he and his heirs forever: yet he is not such a tyrant as to take it by force, but he propounds either to give him not full value of it in money, or a better vineyard in exchange; he had tamely quitted the great advantages God had given him, of enlarging his dominion for the honour of his kingdom, by his victory over the Syrians, and now is eager to enlarge his garden, only for the convenience of his house, as if to be penny-wise, would atone for being pound-foolish. To desire a convenience to his estate, was not evil; (there would be no buying, if there was no desire of what is bought; the virtuous woman considers a field and buys it;) but to desire any thing inordinately, though we would compass it by lawful means, is a fruit of selfishness, as if we must engross all the conveniences, and none must live, or live comfortably by us; contrary to the law of contentment, and the letter of the tenth commandment, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house.

IL The repulse he met with in this desire; Naboth would by no means part with it, (v. 3.) The Lord forbid it me; and the Lord did forbid it, else he would not have been so rude and uncivil to his prince, as not to gratify him in so small a matter. Canaan was, in a peculiar manner, God's land; the Israelites were his tenants; and this was one of the conditions of their leases, that they should not alienate them, (no matter how amerc'd,) one part of that which fell to their lot, unless in case of extreme necessity, and then only till the year of Jubilee, Lev. 25. 28. Now Naboth foresaw that if his vineyard were sold to the crown, it would never return to his heirs, not in the jubilee; he would gladly oblige the king, but he must obey God rather than men, and therefore in this matter he desires to be excused. Ahab knew the law, or should have known it, and therefore did not ask that which his subject could not grant without sin. Some conceive that Naboth looked upon his earthly inheritance as an earnest of his lot in the heavenly Canaan, and therefore would not part with the former, lest it should amount to a forfeture of the latter: he seems to have been a conscientious man, who would rather hazard the king's displeasure than offend God; and, probably,
was one of the 7000 that had not bowed the knee to Baal, for which, it may be, Ahab owed him a grudge.

I I. Ahab's great discontent and uneness, hereupon; he was, as before, (ch. 20. 43.) heavy and dwellcless; (v. 4.) grew melancholy upon it, threw himself upon his bed, would not eat, nor admit company to come to him; he could by no means digest the almen; his proud spirit attracted the indignti Naboth did him in denying them, as a thing not to be suffered; he cursed the squeamishness of his conscience, which he pretended to consult the peace of, and secretly mediated revenge; nor could he bear the disappointment, it cut him to the heart to be crossed in his desires, and he was perfectly sick for vexation. Note, 1. Discontent is a sin that is its own punishment, and makes men torment them- selves; it makes the spirit sad, the body sick, and all the enjoyments sour; it is the heaviness of the heart, and the rottenness of the bones. 2. It is a sin that is its own parent; it arises not from the condition, but from the mind: as we find Paul contented in a prison, so Ahab discontented in a palace; he had all the delights of Canaan, that pleasant land, at command, the wealth of a kingdom, the pleasures of a court, and the honours and powers of thence; and yet all this avails him nothing without Naboth's vineyard. Inordinate desires expose men to continual vexations, and that they are disposed to fret, be they ever so happy, will always find something or other to fret at.

5. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread? 6. And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.

7. And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. 8. So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth. 9. And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people; 10. And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king: and they carry him out, and stone him, that he may die. 11. And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles, who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them: 12. They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. 13. And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died. 14. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead. 15. And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead. 16. And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

Nothing but mischief is to be expected when Jezebel enters into the story—that cursed woman, 2 Kings 9. 34.

I. Under pretence of comforting her afflicted husband, she feeds his pride and passion, and blows the coals of his corruptions. It became her to take notice of his grief, and to inquire into the cause of it, p. 5. Those have forgotten both the duty and affection of the conjugal relation, that imagine themselves in each other's troubles. He tells her what troubled him, (v. 6.) yet invidiously conceals Naboth's reason for his refusal, representing it as peevish, when it was conscientious; I will not give it thee, whereas he said, I may not. What! (says Jezebel, v. 7.) Dost thou govern Israel? Arise, and eat bread. She does well to persuade him to shake off his melancholy, and not to sink under his burden, to be easy and cheerful; whatever was his grief, grieving would not redress it, but pleasantness would alleviate it; her plea is, Dost thou now govern Israel? This is capable of a good sense, "Does it become so great a prince as thou art, to cast thyself down for so small a matter? Thou shames thyself, and profanest thy crown; it is below thee to take notice of so incon siderable a thing. Art thou fit to govern Israel, who hast no better a government of thine own passions? Or hast thou so rich a kingdom at command, and canst not thou be without this one vineyard?" We should learn to quiet ourselves, under our crosses, with the thoughts of the mercies we enjoy, especially our hopes of the kingdom. But she meant it in a bad sense, "Dost thou govern Israel, and shall any subject thou hast, deny thee any thing thou hast a mind to? Art thou a king? It is below thee to buy and pay, much more to beg and pray; use thy prerogative, and take by force what thou canst not compass by fair means; instead of respecting the affront thus, revenge it. If thou knowest not how to support the dignity of a king, let me alone to do it; give me but leave to make use of thy name, and I will soon give thee the vineyard of Naboth; right or wrong, it shall be thy own shortly, and cost thee nothing." Unhappy princes! they are they, and have no respect for others, who have those about them, that stir them up to acts of tyranny, and teach them how to abuse their power.

II. In order to the gratifying of him, she projects and compasses the death of Naboth; no less than his blood will serve to atone for the affront he had given to Ahab, which she thirsts after the more greedily, because of his adherence to the law of the God of Israel. Had she aimed, only at this end, had her false witnesses might have sworn him out of that by a forged deed; (she could not have set up so weak a title, but the elders of Jezreel would have adjudged it good;) but the adultery will hunt for the licentious, Prov. 6. 26. Revenge is sweet; Naboth must die, and die as a malefactor, to gratify it.
1. Never were more wicked orders given by any prince, than these which Jezebel sent to the magistrates of Jezebel, v. 8-10. She borrows the privy-seal, but the king shall not know what she will do with it: it is probable this was not the first time he had lent it her, but that with π she had signed warrants for the slaying of the prophets. She makes use of the king’s name, knowing the thing would please him when it was done, yet fearfully he might scrawl the manner of the charge. In alarm, she commands them, upon their allegiance, to put Naboth to death, without giving them any reason. Had she sent witnesses to inform against him, the judges (who must go secundum allegiun et probata—according to allegations and proofs) might have been imposed upon, and their sentence had been rather their unhappiness than their crime; but to oblige them to find the witnesses, sons of Belial, to suborn them thither, and then to give judgment upon a testimony which they knew to be false, was such an impudent defiance to every thing that is honest and honourable, when she expected these orders should be obeyed; but she will put them in a way how to do it, having as much of the serpent’s subtlety as she had of insolence. (1.) It must be done under colour of religion. — "Proclaim a fast, signify to your city that you are apprehensive of some dreadful judgment coming upon you, which you must endeavour to avert, not only by prayer, but by finding out and putting away the accused thing; take on you to be afraid that there is some great offender among you undiscover’d, for God is angry with your city; change the people, if they know of any such, on that solemn occasion to inform against him, as they tender the welfare of the city, and at last let Naboth be fastened upon as the suspected person, probably, because he does not join with his neighbours in their worship: that may serve for a pretence to set him on high among the people, to call him to the bar; let proclamation be made, if any one can inform the court against him, and make him to be the Achan, they shall be heard; and then let the witnesses appear to give evidence against him." Note, There is no wickedness so vile, so horrid, but religion has sometimes been made a cloak and cover for it. We must not at all think the worst of fasting and praying for their having been sometimes thus abused, but much the worse of those wicked designs that have at any time been carried on under the colour of religion. (2.) It must be done under colour of justice, too, and with the formalities of a legal process. Had she sent them to hire some of their banditti, some desperate ruffians to assassinate him, to stab him as he went along the streets in the night, it had been bad enough; but to do it by a course of law, to use that power for the murdering of the innocent, while their pretence was, God was angry with them, and thus it was a most deterimental perverting of justice and judgment as yet we are bid not to marvel at, Eccl. 5. 8. The crime they must lay to his charge, was blaspheming God and the king; a complicated blasphemy. Sure she could not think to put a blasphemsous sense upon the answer he had given to Ahab, as if denying him his vineyard were blaspheming the king, and giving the divine law for the reason, were blaspheming God. No, she pretends not any ground at all for the charge; though there was no colour of truth in it, though witnesses must swear it, and Naboth must not be permitted to speak for himself, or cross-examine the witnesses, but immediately, under pretence of a universal detestation of the crime, they must carry him out and stone him. His blaspheming God would be the forfeiture of his life, but not of his estate, and therefore she is also charged with treason, in blaspheming the king, for which his estate was to be confiscated, that so Ahab might have his vineyard. 2. Never were wicked orders more wickedly obeyed, than these were by the magistrates of Jezebel. They do not so much as dispute the command, either on the account of any object of devotion, or palpably unjust; but punctually observed all the particulars of it, either because they feared Jezebel’s cruelty, or because they hated Naboth’s piety, or both. They did as it was written in the letters; (v. 11, 12) neither made any difficulty of it, nor met with any difficulty in it, but cleverly carried on the villainy; they sent Naboth to death, (v. 15) and, as it should seem, his sons with him, after him. When the Lord is come to make retribution for blood, we find that article in the account. (2 Kings 9. 26.) I have seen the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons. Perhaps they were secretly murdered, that they might not claim their father’s estate, or complain of the wrong done him. Let us take occasion from this sad story, (1.) To stand amazed at the wickedness of the wicked, and the power of Satan in the world. (2.) To rejoice in the belief of a judgment to come, in which such wrong judgments as these will be called over. Now we see that there be just men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked, (Eccl. 8. 14.) but all will be set to rights in the great day.

III. Naboth being taken off, Ahab takes possession of his vineyard. 1. The elders of Jezebel sent notice to Jezebel very unconcernedly, sent it her as a piece of greeable news, "Naboth is stoned, and is dead," v. 14. Here let us observe, that as obsequious as the elders of Jezebel were to Jezebel’s orders, which she sent from Samaria for the murder of Naboth, so obsequious were the elders of Samaria afterwards to Jehu’s orders, which he sent from Jezebel for the murder of Ahab’s seventy sons, only that was not done by course of law. 2 Kings 10. 6, 7. Those tyrants, that his orders debaun the conscience of their inferior magistrates, may, perhaps, find at last the wheel return upon them; and that those who will not stick to do one cruel thing for them, will be as ready to do another cruel thing against them. 2. Jezebel, Judah enough that her plot succeeded so well, brings notice to Ahab, that Naboth is not alive, but dead, therefore take possession of his vineyard, v. 17. He might have been pleased with this offer, but he was pleased with this to this offer, that he will make a journey to Jezebel himself to enter upon it; and it should seem he went in state too, as if he had got some mighty victory, for Jehu remembers long after, that he and Bidkar attended him at this time, 2 Kings 9. 25. If Naboth’s sons were all put to death, Ahab thought himself entitled to the estate, as if the law of lambs had foreseen the defectum (as if the law did not foresee it.) If not, yet Naboth dying as a criminal, he claimed it ob deletioem crimini. Or if neither would make him a good title, the absolute power of Jezebel will give it him, and who dares oppose it? Might often prevails against right, and wonderful is the divine patience that suffers so much to be done so. God is certainly of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and yet for g
17. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18. Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. 19. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. 20. And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee; because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord. 21. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel. 22. And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin. 23. And of Jezebel also spake the Lord, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. 24. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat. 25. But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. 26. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel. 27. And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. 28. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29. Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

In these verses, we may observe,

1. The very bad character that is given of Ahab, (v. 23, 26.) which comes in here, to justify God in the heavy sentence passed upon him, and to show that though it was passed upon occasion of his sin, in the matter of Naboth, (which David's sin, in the matter of Uriah, did too much resemble,) yet God would not have punished him so severely, if he had not been guilty of many other sins, especially idolatry; whereas David, except in that one matter, did that which was right. But for Ahab there was none like him; so ingenious and industrious in sin, and that made a trade of it. He sold himself to work wickedness; that is, he made himself a perfect slave to his lusts, and was as much at their beck and command, as ever any servant was at his master's. He was wholly given up to sin, and, upon condition he might have the pleasures of it, he would take the wages of it, which is death, Rom. 6. 23. Blessed Paul complains that he was sold under sin, (Rom. 7. 14.) as a poor captive against his will; but Ahab was voluntary, he sold himself to sin; of choice, and as his own act and deed, he abhorred to leave the dominion of sin. Yet this did not excuse him. Jezebel his wife stirred him up to do wickedly, and made him, in many respects, worse than otherwise he would have been: to what a pitch of impiety did he arrive, who had such tender of corruption in his heart, and such a temper in his bosom to strike fire into it. In many things, he did ill, but he did most abominably, in following idols, like the Canaanites; his immoralities were very provoking to God, but his idolatries were especially so. Israel's case was sad, when a prince of such a character as this reigned over them.

2. The message which Elijah was sent with to him, when he went to take possession of Naboth's vineyard, v. 17-19. Hitherto, God kept silence, did not intercept Jezebel's letters, nor stay the progress of the king's designs. Now, the issue of this is proved, and his sin set in order before his eyes. 1. The person sent, is, Elijah. A prophet of lower rank was sent with messages of kindness to him, ch. 20. 13. But the father of the prophets is sent to try him, and condemn him, for his murder. 2. The place is Naboth's vineyard; the time, just when he was taking possession of it; then, and there, must his doom be read him. By taking possession, he would show himself guilty, ex post facto—as an accessory after the fact. There he was taken in the commission of the errors, and therefore the conviction would come upon him with so much the more force. "What hast thou to do in this vineyard? What good cause thou expect from it, when it is purchased with blood, (Hab. 2. 12.) and thou hast caused the owner thereof to lose his life?" Job 31. 29. Now, it was plain he had gained the inheritance, by gotten wealth, and giving direction for the turning of this vineyard into a flower-garden, his meat in his bowels is turned. He shall not feel quietness. When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fiery wrath upon him, Job 20. 14, 20, 23. Let us see what passed between them.

(1.) Ahab vents his wrath against Elijah, falls into a passion at the sight of him, and, instead of humbling himself before the prophet, as he ought to have done, (2 Chron 36.12.) is ready to fly in his face, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? v. 20. This shows, [1.] That he hated him; the last time we found them together, they parted very good friends; (ch. 18. 46.) then Ahab had condescended the reformation, and therefore then all was well between him and the prophet; but now he was relapsed, and showed himself more than ever, to make him, he had made God his Enemy, and therefore he could not expect Elijah should be his friend. Note, That man's condition is very miserable, that has made the word of God his enemy, and very despicable; that reckons the ministers of that word his enemies, because they tell him the truth, Gal. 4. 16. Ahab, having sold himself to sin, was resolved to stand by his bargain, and could not endure him that would make himself to be a terror to him: (2.) That he feared him. Hast thou found me? Intimating that he shunned him all he could, and it was now a terror to him to see him. The sight of him was like that of the hand-writing upon the wall, to
1. Never were more wicked orders given by any prince, than these which Jezebel sent to the magistrates of Jezebel, v. 8-10. She borrows the privilege, but the king shall not know what she will do with it: it is probable this was not the first time he had lent it her, but that with it she had signed warrants for the slaying of the prophets. She makes use of the king's name, knowing the thing would not be done if she were examined; yet fearing he might supple the manner of doing it; in short, she commands them, upon their allegiance, to put Naboth to death, without giving them any reason. Had she sent witnesses to inform against him, the judges (who must go sequentia allegata et probata—according to allegations and proofs) might have been imposed upon, and their sentence had been rather their unlawful, than their just, act; but by putting them to find the witnesses, sons of Belial, to suborn them themselves, and then to give judgment upon a testimony which they knew to be false, was such an impudent defiance to every thing that is just and sacred, as we hope cannot be paralleled in any story; she must look upon the elders of Jezebel as men perfectly lost to every thing that is honest and honourable, when she expected them to do a thing which a corrupted conscience should put them in a way how to do it, having as much of the serpent's subtlety as she had of his poison.

(1.) It must be done under colour of religion.

"Proclaim a fast, signify to your city that you are apprehensive of some dreadful judgment coming upon you, which you must endeavour to avert, not only by prayer, but by finding out and putting away the accursed thing; take on you to be afraid that there is some greater offender among you undiscovered, for whose sake God is angry with your city; charge the people, if they know of any such, on that solemn occasion to inform against him, as they tender the welfare of the city, and at last let Naboth be fastened upon as the suspected person, probably, because he does not join with his neighbours in their worship; that may serve for a pretence to set him on high among the heathen, to call him to the bar; let proclamation be made, if any one can inform the court against the prisoner, and prove him to be the Achan, they shall be heard; and then let the witnesses appear to give evidence against him." Note, There is no wickedness so vile, so horrid, but religion has sometimes been made a cloak and cover for it. We must not at all think the worse of fasting and praying for a sinner, having been sometimes mistaken for them. Be much the worse of those wicked designs that have at any time been carried on under the umbrage of them.

(2.) It must be done under colour of justice too, and with the formalities of a legal process. Had she sent to them to hire some of their banditti, some desperate ruffians to assassinate him, to stab him as he went along the streets in the night, it had been but another way to do it by power that power for the murdering of the innocent, which ought to be their protection, was such a violent perversion of justice and judgment as yet we are bid not to marvel at, Eccl. 5. 8. The crime they must lay to his charge, was blaspheming God and the king; a complicated blasphemy. Sure she could not think to put a blasphemous sense upon the answer her husband gave, viz. That she must be free to do as she would with his vineyard, he, this vineyard were blaspheming the king, and giving the divine law for the reason, were blaspheming God. No, she pretends not any ground at all for the charge; though there was no colour of truth in it, though witnesses must swear it, and Naboth must not be permitted to speak for himself, or cross-examine the witnesses, but immediately, under pretence of a universal detestation of the crime, they must carry him out and stone him. His blaspheming God would be the forfeiture of his life, but not of his estate, and therefore he was also charged with treason, in blaspheming the king, for which his estate was to be confiscated, that so Ahab might have his vineyard.

2. Never were wicked orders more wickedly obeyed, than these were by the magistrates of Jezebel. They do not so much as dispute the thing, but with all the appearance of obedience, went about to do it. 1. As princes might, or make any objections against it, though so palpably unjust; but punctually observed all the particulars of it, either because they feared Jezebel's cruelty, or because they hated Naboth's piety, or both. They did as it was written in the letters; (v. 11, 12.) neither made any difficulty of it, nor met with any difficulty in it, but cleverly managed the business; 

a. In the instance of the wicked, and the power of Satan in the children of disobedience. What a holy indignation may we be filled with, to see wickedness in the place of judgment, Eccl. 3. 16. (2.) To lament the hard case of oppressed innocency, and to mingle our tears with the tears of those who are oppressed that have no comforter, while on the side of the oppressors there is power, Eccl. 4. 1. (3.) To commit the keeping of our lives and estates to God for his mercy itself will not always be our security. (4.) To rejoice in the belief of a judgment to come, in which such wrong judgments as these will be called over. Now we see that there be just men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked, (Eccl. 8. 14.) but all will be set to rights in the great day. III. Naboth being taken off, Ahab takes possession of his vineyard. 1. The elders of Jezebel sent notice to Jezebel very unconcernedly, sent it her as a piece of agreeable news, Naboth is stoned, and is dead, v. 14. Here let us observe, that as obsequious as the elders of Jezebel were to Jezebel's orders, which she sent from Samaria for the murder of Naboth, so obsequious were the elders of Samaria afterwards to Jehu's orders, which he sent from Jezebel for the murder of Ahab's seventy sons, they did not so much as dispute the thing, as 10. 6, 7. Those tyrants, that by their wicked orders debauch the consciences of their inferior magistrates, may, perhaps, find at last the wheel return upon them; and that those who will not stick to do one cruel thing for them, will be as ready to do another cruel thing against them. 2. Jezebel, jeocund enough that her pelt succeeded so well, brings notice to Ahab, that Naboth is not alive, but of death, therefore Arise, take possession of his vineyard, v. 15. He might have taken possession by one of his officers, but so pleased is he with this accession to his estate, that he will make a journey to Jezebel himself to enter upon it; and it should seem he went in state too, as if he had got some mighty victory, for Jehu remembers long after, that he and Bidkar attended him at that time. See 2 Kings, chap. 9, 11. If death were all that death, Ahab thought himself entitled to the estate, ob defectum sanguinis (as our law expresses it.) If not, yet Naboth dying as a criminal, he claimed it ob delictum criminis. Or if neither would make him a good title, the absolute power of Jezebel will give it him, and who dares oppose it? Might often prevails against right, and wonderful is the power of those that suffers it to do so. God is certainly ofurer eyes than to behold iniquity, and yet for a
time keepeth silence when the wicked devour the man that is more righteous than he, Hab. 1. 13.

17. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18. Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. 19. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. 20. And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee; because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord. 21. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and wilt cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel. 22. And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin. 23. And of Jezebel also spake the Lord, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. 24. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat. 25. But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. 26. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel. 27. And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. 28. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29. Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

In these verses, we may observe,

I. The very bad character that is given of Ahab, (v. 25, 26.) which comes in here, to justify God in the heavy sentence passed upon him, and to show that though it was passed upon occasion of his sin, in the matter of Naboth, (which David's sin, in the matter of Uriah, did too much resemble,) yet God would not have punished him so severely, if he had not been guilty of many other sins, especially idolatry; whereas David, except in that one matter, did that which was right. But for Ahab there was none like him; so ingenious an industrious sin, and that made a trade of it. He sold himself to work wickedness; that is, he made himself a perfect slave to his lusts, and was as much at their beck and command, as ever any servant was at his master's. He was wholly given up to sin, and, upon condition he might have the pleasures of it, he would take the wages of it, which is death, Rom. 6. 23. Blessed Paul complains that he was sold under sin, (Rom. 7. 14.) as a poor captive in the hands of his own lusts; but Ahab was voluntarily, he sold himself to sin; of choice, and as his own act and deed, he submitted to the dominion of sin. Yet this did not excuse him. Jezebel his wife stirred him up to do wickedly, and made him, in many respects, worse than otherwise he would have been: to what a pitch of impiety did he arrive, who had such tender of corruption in his heart, and such a tempter in his bosom to strike fire into it. In many things he did ill, but he did most abominably, by following idols, like the Canaanites; his immoralities were very provoking to God, but his idolatries were especially so. Israel's case was sad, when a prince of such a character as this reigned over them.

II. The message which Elijah was sent with to him, when he went to take possession of Naboth's vineyard, 25. Had Ahab done as I have commanded him, Hither to, he should not have come to pass, that Jezebel's letters, nor stay the process of the elders of Jezreel; but now, Ahab is reproved, and his sin set in order before his eyes. 1. The person sent, is Elijah. A prophet of lower rank was sent with messages of kindness to him, ch. 20. 13. But the father of the prophets is sent to try him, and condemn him, for his murder. 2. The place is Naboth's vineyard; the time, just before he went to take possession of it; then, there, must his doom be read him. By taking possession, he avouched all that was done, and made himself guilty, ex post facto—as an accessory after the fact. There he was taken in the commission of the errors, and therefore the conviction would come upon him with so much the more force. "What hast thou to do in this vineyard? What good canst thou expect from it, when it is purchased with blood? (Hab. 2:12.) and those hast caused the owner thereof to lose his life?" Job 31. 39. Now that he was pleasing himself with his ill-gotten wealth, and giving direction for the turning of this vineyard into a flower-garden, his meat in his bowels is turned. He shall not feel quietness. When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, Job 20. 14, 20, 23. Let us see what passed between them.

(1.) Ahab vents his wrath against Elijah, falls into a passion at the sight of him, and, instead of humbling himself before the prophet, as he ought to have done, (2 Chron 36.12.) is ready to fly in his face, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? v. 20. This shows, [1.] That he hated him: the last time we found them together, they parted very good friends; (ch. 18. 46.) then Ahab had contrived the death of Elijah, and had it as well between him and the prophet; but now he was relapsed, and worse than ever; his conscience told him he had made God his Enemy, and therefore he could not expect Elijah should be his friend. Note, That man's condition is very miserable, that has made the word of God his enemy, and very desperate, that reckons the ministers of that word his enemies, because they tell him the truth. Gal. 16. Ahab, having sold himself to sin, was resolved to stand to his bargain, and could not endure him that would have helped to recover himself. [2.] That he feared him. Hast thou found me? Intimating that he shunned him all he could, and it was now a terror to him to see him. The sight of him was like that of the hand-writing upon the wall, to
Belsheazaar, it made his countenance change, the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote me against another. Never was poor debtor or criminal so confounded at the sight of the officer that came to arrest him. Men may thank themselves, if they make God and his word a terror to them. (2.) Elijah denounces God's wrath against Ahab; I have found thee, (says he, v. 20.) because thou hast sold thyself to work evil. Note, Those that give up themselves to sin, will certainly be found out, sooner or later, to their unspeakable horror and amazement. Ahab is now set to the bar, as Naboth was, and trembles more than he did.

[1.] Elijah finds the indictment against him, and corrects him, upon the notorious evidence of the fact; (v. 21.) What hast thou done? He is here charged with the murder of Naboth; and it would not serve him to say the law killed him; (perverted justice is the highest injustice,) or, that if he were unjustly prosecuted, it was not his doing, he knew nothing of it: for it was to please him, that it was done, and he had showed himself pleased with it, and so had made himself guilty of all the rest was done in the unjust prosecution of Naboth. He killed, for he was possessed. If he takes the garden, he takes the guilt with it. Terra transit cum oneere-The land with the incumbence.

[2.] He passes judgment upon him. That his family should be ruined and rooted out, (v. 21.) and all his posterity cut off. That his house should be made like the houses of his wicked predecessors, Jeroboam and Baasha; (v. 21.) particularly, that they who died in the city, should be meat for dogs, and they who died in the field, meat for birds, (v. 24.) which had been foretold of Jeroboam's house, (ch. 14. 11.) and of Baasha's ch. 16. 4. That Jezebel, particularly, should be devoured by dogs, (v. 23.) which was fulfilled; (2 Kings 9. 36.) and as for Ahab himself, that the dogs should lick his blood in the very same place where they licked Naboth's, (v. 23.) Thy blood, even thine, though it be royal blood, though it swell thy veins with pride, and boil in thy heart with anger, ere long it shall be an entertainment for the dogs; which was fulfilled, ch. 22. 38. This intimates that he should die a violent death, should come to his grave with his blood, and that disgrace should attend him, the foresight of which must needs be a great mortification to a proud man. Punishments after death are here most intimated, and though such as affect the body only, perhaps, were designed as figures of the soul's misery after death.

III. Ahab's humiliation under the sentence passed upon him, and the favourable message sent him, thereupon.

1. Ahab was a kind of penitent. The message Elijah delivered him in God's name, put him into a fright so that he rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, v. 27. He is here called a proud hardened sinner, and yet thus reduced. Note, God can make the stoutest heart to tremble, and the proudest to humble itself. His word is quick and powerful, and is, when he pleases to make it so, like a fire, and a hammer, Jer. 32. 29. It made Felix tremble. Ahab put on the garb and guise of a penitent, and yet his heart was unhumbled and unchanged. He hereward to tell us the case of certain hypocrites, who, as the first prophet, ch. 22. 8. Note, It is no new thing to find the show and profession of repentance, where yet the truth and substance of it are wanting. Ahab's repentance was only what might be seen of men: Sert thou (says God to Elijah) how Ahab humbles himself? It was external only; and the garments rent, but not the heart. An hypocrite may go very far in the outward performances of holy duties, and yet come short.

2. He obtained, hereby, a reprieve, which I may call a kind of pardon. Though it was but an outside repentance, (lamenting the judgment only, and not the sin,) though he did not leave his idols, nor restore the vineyard to Naboth's heirs, yet because he did hereby give some glory to God, God took notice of it, and had Elijah take notice of it. See thou how Ahab humbles himself? v. 29. In consideration of this, the threatened ruin of his house, which had not been fixed to any time, should be adjourned to his son's days. The sentence should not be revoked, but the execution suspended. Now, (1.) This discovers the great goodness of God, and his readiness to show mercy, which here reje6tes against those who venture to displease him. Favour is showed to this wicked (and, that God might give him his good, (says Bishop Sanderson,) even to the hazard of his other divine perfections; as if, (says he,) God would be thought unholy, or untrue, or unjust, (though he be none of these,) or any thing, rather than unmerciful. (2.) This teaches us to take notice of that which is good, even in those who are not so good as they should be: let it be commended as far as it goes. (3.) This gives us some reason why wicked people sometimes prosper long: God is rewarding their external services with external mercies. (4.) This encourages all those that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe the holy gospel. If a pretendent partial penitent shall go to his house, reprieved, doubtless, a sincere penitent shall go to his house, justified.

CHAP. XXII.

This chapter finishes the history of Ahab's reign. It was promised, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that the ruin of his house should not come in his days, but his days, and even at an end, with the first son of his house at Ramoth-gilead, is that which we have an account of in this chapter. I. His preparations for that war. He consulted, 1. His privy-council, v. 1-3. 2. Jehoshaphat, v. 4-5. His prophets. (1.) His own, who encouraged him to go on this expedition, (v. 3, 4.) Zedekiah particularly, v. 11, 12. (2.) A prophet of the Lord, Micahiah, who was desired to come by Jehoshaphat, (v. 7, 8.) sent for, (v. 9, 10, 13, 14.) upbraided Ahab with his confidence in the false prophets, (v. 15.) but foretold his fall in this expedition, (16., 18.) and gave him an account how he came to be thus imposed upon by his prophets, v. 19-23. He is abused by Zedekiah, (v. 24, 25.) and imprisoned by Jehoshaphat, v. 28. II. The battle of RamOTH-gilead, and Jehoshaphat is exposed. But, 2. Ahab is slain, v. 29-40. In the close of the chapter, we have a short account, (1.) Of the good reign of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, v. 41-44. (2.) Of the wicked reign of Ahaziah king of Israel, v. 51-55.

1. AND they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel. 2. And it came to pass, in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. 3. And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria? 4. And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth-gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses. 5. And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord to-day. 6. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle,
or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. 7. And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him? 8. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

9. Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Imlah. 10. And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria: and all the prophets prophesied before them. 11. And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the Lord, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou hast consumed them. 12. And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the king's hand. 13. And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. 14. And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.

Though Ahab continued under guilt and wrath, and the dominion of the lusts to which he had sold himself, yet, as a reward for his professions of repentance and humiliation, though the time drew near when he should descend into battle and perish, yet we have him blessed with a three years' peace. (v. 1.) And an honourable visit made him by Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, v. 2. The Jews have a fabulous conceit, that when Ahab humbled himself for his sin, and lay in sackcloth, he sent for Jehoshaphat to come to him, to chastise him; and that he staid with him for some time, and gave him so many stripes every day. That is a groundless tradition. He came now, it is probable, to consult with him about the affairs of their kingdoms. It is strange that so great a man as Jehoshaphat, would pay so much respect to a kingdom revoluted from the house of David; and that so good a man would show so much kindness to a king revoluted from the worship of God. But though he was a godly man, his temper was too easy, which betrayed him into stares and inconveniences.

The Syrians durst not give Ahab any disturbance. But I. Ahab here meditates a war against the Syrians, and advises concerning it with those about him, v. 3. The king of Syria gave him the provocation; when he lay at his mercy, he promised to restore him his cities, (ch. 20. 34.) and Ahab foolishly took his word, when he ought not to have dismissed him, till the cities had been put into his possession. But now, he knows by experience, what he ought to have considered, that as the kisso, because the promises, of an enemy are deceitful: and there is no confidence to be put in leagues extorted by distress. Ben-hadad is one of those princes that think themselves bound by their word no further and no longer, than it is for their interest. Whether any other cities be restored, or not, Ra- moth-gilead was not: a considerable city in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan, a Levites' city, and one of the cities of refuge. Ahab blames himself, and his people, that they did not bestir themselves to recover it out of the hands of the Syrians, and to chastise Ben-hadad's violation of his league; and resolves to let that ungrateful perfidious prince know that as he had given him peace, he could give him trouble. Ahab has a good cause, yet succeeds not. Equity is not to be judged of by prophecy. II. He engages Jehoshaphat, and draws him in, to join with him in this expedition, for the recovery of Ramoth-gilead, v. 4. And here, I do not wonder that Ahab should desire the assistance of so pious and prosperous a neighbour. Even bad men have often coveted the friendship of the good. It is desirable to have an interest in those that have an interest in heaven. To have them on our side is to have God with them. But it is strange that Jehoshaphat will go so entirely into Ahab's interests, as to say, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people. I hope not; Jehoshaphat, and his people, are not so wicked and corrupt as Ahab and his people. Too great a complaisance to evil-doers, has brought many good people, through unwariness, into a dangerous fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Jehoshaphat had like to have paid dear for his compliment, when, in the battle, he was taken for Ahab. Yet some observe, that in joining with Israel against Syria, he atoned for his father's fault, in joining with Syria against Israel, ch. 15. 19, 20.

III. At the special instance and request of Jehoshaphat, he asks counsel of the prophets concerning this expedition. Ahab thought it enough to consult with his statesmen, but Jehoshaphat moves that they should inquire of the word of the Lord, v. 5. Note, I. Whithersoever a good man goes, he desires to take God along with him, and will acknowledge him in all his ways, ask leave of him, and look up to him for success. Whithersoever a good man goes, he ought to take his religion along with him, and not be ashamed to own it, no not when he is with those who have no kindness for it. Jehoshaphat has not left behind him, at Jerusalem, his affection and veneration for the word of the Lord, but both avows it, and endeavours to introduce it into Ahab's court. If Ahab drew him into his wars, he will draw Ahab into his devotions. IV. Ahab's 400 prophets, the standing regiment he had of them, (prophets of the graves they called them,) agreed to encourage him in this expedition, and to assure him of success, v. 6. He put the question to them with a seeming fairness, Shall I go up, or shall I wait? and they were not displeased with the inclination was, and designed only to humour the two kings. To please Jehoshaphat, they made use of the name Jehovah, He shall deliver it into the hand of the king; they stole the word from the true prophets, (Jer. 23. 30.) and spake their language. To please Ahab, they said, Go up. They had, indeed, probabilities on their side; Ahab had, not long since, beaten the Syrians twice; he had now a fair cause to march against them, and had the alliance with Jehoshaphat; but they pretended to speak by prophecy, not by rational conjecture; by divine, not human, foresight: "Thou shalt certainly recover Ramoth-gilead." Zedekiah, a leading man among these prophets, in imitation of the true prophets, illustrated his false prophecy with a sign, v. 11. He made him a pair of iron horns, represent-
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...ing the two kings, and their honour and power, (both which were signified by horns, exaltation and force,) and with these the Syrians must be pushed. All the prophets agreed, as one man, that Ahab should return from this expedition, a conqueror, v. 12. Unity is not always the mark of a true church, and Christ's saving truth, as in that fast, nor is it in the state of the church in the world, or any part of it. The departure of 40 men that prophesied with one mind and one mouth, and yet all in an error.

V. Jehoshaphat cannot relish this sort of preaching; it is not like what he was used to; the false prophets cannot so mimic the true, but that he who had spiritual senses exercised, could discern the fallacy, and therefore he inquires for a prophet of the Lord besides, v. 7. He is too much a courtier to be at the trouble of seeking a way of provoking the King's chaplains, but he waits to see a prophet of the Lord; intimating that he could not look upon these to be so. They seemed to be somewhat, (whatever they were, it made no matter to him,) but in conference, they added nothing to him, they gave him no satisfaction, 2 Chron. 20. 6. One faithful prophet of the Lord was worth them all.

VI. Ahab was another, but one he hates, Micaiah by name, and to please Jehoshaphat, he is willing to have him sent for, v. 8-10. Ahab owned they might inquire of the Lord by him, that he was a true prophet, and one that knew God's mind. And yet, 1. He hated him, and was not ashamed to own to the king of Judah that he did so, and to give this for his reason, He doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And whose fault was that? If Ahab had not his faults, he should have been accordingly from heaven; if he do ill, he may thank himself for all the unseasonableness which the reproofs and threats of God's word give him. Now, Those are wretchedly hardened in sin, and are ripening space for ruin, who hate God's ministers, because they deal plainly with them, and faithfully warn them of their misery and danger by reason of sin, and reckon those their enemies, that tell them the truth. 2. He had (it should seem) imprisoned him; for when he committed him, (v. 26.) he bade the officer carry him back; namely, to the place whence he came. We may suppose that this was he that reproved him for his clemency to Ben-hadad, (2 Chron. 20. 38, &c.) and for that was cast into prison, where he had lain these three years. And hence Ahab knew where to find him so readily, v. 9. But his imprisonment had not excluded him from divine visions, that referred to the present matter; nor was it any thing that he was bound, but the word of the Lord was not. Nor did it in the least abate his courage, or make him less confident or faithful in delivering his message. Jehoshaphat gave too gentle a reproach to Ahab, for expressing his indignation against a faithful prophet, Let not the king say so, v. 8. He should have said, Thou art unjust to the prophet, unkind to thyself, and puttest an affront upon thy Lord and thine, in saying so. Such sinners as Ahab, must be rebuked sharply. However, he so far yielded to the reproach, that, for fear of provoking Jehoshaphat to break off from his alliance with him, he orders Micaiah to be sent forth with all speed, v. 9. The two kings sat each in their robes and chairs of state, in the gate of Samaria, ready to receive this poor prophet, and to hear what he has to say; for they well knew that the hearing of the word of God was as an ointment, that will not lend it an obdient ear. They were attended with a crowd of flattering prophets, that would not think of prophesying anything but what was very sweet, and very smooth, to two such glorious princes now in confederacy. They that love to be flattered, shall not want flatterers.

LXXV. Micaiah is pressed by the officer that fetched him, to follow the cry, v. 13. That officer was unworthy the name of an Israeldite, who pretended to prescribe to a prophet; but he thought him altogether such a one as the rest, who wished to please men, and not God. He tells him how unanimous the other prophets were in foretelling the king's good success; how agreeable it was to the king: that it was his interest to say as they said; he might gain not only enlargement, but preference, by it. They that dote upon worldly things themselves, think every body else should do so too, and, true or false, right or wrong, speak and act for their secular interest only. He intimates likewise, that it would be to no purpose to contradict such a numerous and unanimous voice; he would be ridiculed, as infecting a foolish singularity, if he should. But Micaiah knew better things, he protests it, and back his protestation with a strong argument. The Lord doth not speak, says he, through the mouths of men; nor yet by the counsel of mortals. And he tells him his message from God with all faithfulness, whether it be pleasing or displeasing to his prince; (v. 14.) What the Lord saith to me, that will I speak, without addition, diminution, or alteration. Bravely resolved! And as became one who had his eye to a greater King than either of these, arrayed with brighter robes, and sitting on a higher throne.

15. So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. 16. And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord! 17. And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master; let them return every man to his house in peace. 18. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil? 19. And he said, Hear thou, therefore, the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand and on his left. 20. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. 21. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. 22. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. 23. Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee. 24. But Zechariah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee? 25. And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner cham-
ber to hide thyself. 26. And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; 27. And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, and with water of affliction, until I come in peace. 28. And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you.

Here Micaiah does well, but, as is common, suffers ill for so doing.

I. We are here told how faithfully he delivered his message, as one that was more solicitous to please God than to humour either the great or the many. Three ways he delivers the message, and all displeasing to Ahab.

1. He speaks as the rest of the prophets did, but ironically, Go, and prosper, v. 15. Ahab put the same question to him, that he had put to his own prophets, Shall we go, or shall we forbear? Seemingly desirous to know God's mind, when, like Baalaam, he was strongly bent to do his own; which Micaiah plainly took notice of, when he bade him go, but with such an air of pronouncement, as plainly shewed the impertinence of his purpose. He directly said, "I know you are determined to go, and I hear your own prophets are unanimous in assuring you of success; go then, and take what follows. They say, The Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king; but I do not tell thee that thus saith the Lord; no, he saith otherwise." Note, Those deserve to be bantered, that love to be flattered; and it is just with God to give up those to their own counsels, that will give up themselves to their own lusts, Ex. 11. 9. In answer to this, Ahab advises him to tell him the truth, and not to jest with him, (v. 16,) as if he sincerely desired to know what God would have him do, and what he would do with him; yet intending to represent the prophet as a perverse ill-humoured man, that would not tell him the truth, till he was thus put to his oath, or adjured to it.

2. Being thus pressed, he plainly foretold that the king would be cut off in this expedition, and his army scattered, v. 17. He saw them in a vision, or dream, dispersed upon the mountains, as sheep that have no one to guide them: Smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered, Zech. 13. 7. This intimates, (1.) That Israel should be deprived of their king, who was their shepherd; God took notice of it. These have no master. (2.) That they would be obliged to retire re infecta—without accomplishing what they went for. He does not foresee any great slaughter in the army, but that they should make a dishonourable retreat; Let them return every man to his house in peace: put into disorder indeed for the present, but no great losers, by the death of their king: he shall fall in war, but they shall go home in peace. Thus Micaiah, in his prophecy, testified what he had seen and heard, (let them take it how they pleased,) while the others prophesied merely out of their own hearts; see Jer. 23. 28. The prophet that has a dream, let him tell that, and so quote his authority; and he that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully, and not his own; for what is the chaff to the wheat? Now Ahab finds himself aggrieved, turns to Jehoshaphat, and appoints him, which Micaiah had not manifestly a spite against him, v. 18. They that bear malice to others, are generally willing to believe that they bear malice to them, though they have no cause for it, and therefore to put the worst constructions upon all they say. What evil did Micaiah prophesy to Ahab, in telling him, if he proceeded in this expedition, it would be fatal to him, while he might choose whether he would proceed in it or no? The greatest kindness was, and all the to one that is going in a dangerous way, is, to tell him of his danger.

3. He informed the king how it was, that all his prophets encouraged him to proceed; God permitted Satan, by them, to deceive him into his ruin, and he, by vision, knew of it: it was represented to him, and he represented it to Ahab, that the God of heaven had determined he should fall at Ramoth-gilead; (v. 19, 20,) that the favour he had wickedly shown to Ben-hadad might be recompensed with the ruin of his Syrians, and that he being in some doubt whether he should go to Ramoth-gilead or no, and resolving to be advised by his prophets, they should persuade him to do it, and prevail; (v. 21, 22,) and hence it was, that they encouraged him with so much assurance; (v. 23,) it was a lie from the father of lies, but by the divine permission. This matter is here represented after the manner of men; we are not to imagine that God is ever put upon his counsels, or is ever at a loss for means whereby to effect his purpose, or that he needs to consult with angels, or any creature, about the methods he should take, or that he is the Author of sin, or the cause of any man's either telling or believing a lie; but beside what was intended by this, with reference to Ahab himself, it is to teach us, (1.) That God is a great and powerful one, who rules the throne above all the thrones of earthly princes; "You have your thrones," (said Micaiah to these two kings,) "and you think you may do what you will, and we must all say as you would have us; but I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, and every man's judgment proceeding from him, and therefore I must say as he says; he is not a man, as you are; (2.) That God continually attended and served by an innumerable company of angels, those heavenly hosts, who stand by him, ready to go where he sends them, and to do what he bids them, messengers of mercy on his right hand, of wrath on his left hand. (3.) That he not only takes cognizance of, but presides over, all the affairs of this lower world, and overrules them according to the counsel of his own will: the rise and fall of princes, the issues of affairs, all the great affairs of state, which are the subject of the contemplation of wise and great men, are no more above God's direction, than the meanest concerns of the poorest cottagers are below his notice. (4.) God has many ways of bringing about his own counsels, particularly concerning the fall of sinners when they are ripe for ruin; he can do it either in this manner or in that manner. (5.) That there are malicious and lying spirits, which go about by the commission and direction of angels, and in order to that, seeking to deceive, and especially to put lies into the mouths of prophets, by them to entice many to their destruction. (6.) It is not without the divine permission, that the Devil deceives men. Thereby God serves his own purposes. With him is strength and wisdom; the deceived and the deceiver are his, Job. 12. 16. When he pleases, for the manifesting of these counsels, he does not the truth in the least of it, he only lets Satan loose to deceive them, (Rev. 20. 7, 8,) but gives up men to strong delusions to believe him, 2 Thess. 2. 11, 12. (7.) Those are manifestly marked for ruin, that are thus given up; God has certainly spoken evil concerning those whom he has given up to be imposed upon by lying prophets; thus Micaiah gave Ahab fair warning, not only of the danger of proceeding in this war, but of the danger of believing those that encouraged him to proceed; thus we are warned to beware of false prophets, and to try the
I. We are here told, how he was abused for delivering his message thus faithfully, thus plainly, in a way so very proper both to convince and to affect:

1. Zedekiah, a wicked prophet, impudently inquired of the Lord by a false and incorrect judgment from the mouth, to reproach him, to silence him and stop his mouth, and to express his indignation at him; (thus was our blessed Saviour abused, Matt. 26. 67. that Judge of Israel, Mic. 5. 1.) and as if he not only had the Spirit of the Lord, but the monopoly of this Spirit, that he might not go without his leave, he asks, Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak to thee? v. 24. The false prophets were not driven from the court, nor were his prophets driven by the truth of the prophets, and not only stirred up the government against them, but were themselves abusive to them, as Zedekiah here. To strike within the verge of the court, especially in the king's presence, is looked upon by our law as a high misdemeanor, yet this wicked prophet gives this abuse to a prophet of the Lord, and is not reprimanded or bound to his good behaviour for it; Ahab was pleased with his prophet, and Jehovah permitted that prophet to appear for the injured prophet, pretending it was out of his jurisdiction; but Micaiah, though he returns not his blow, (God's prophets are no strikers nor persecutors, dare not avenge themselves, render blow for blow, or be, any way, accessory to the breach of the peace,) yet, since he boasted so much of the Spirit, as those commonly do, that know least of his operations; he leaves him to be convinced of his error by the Lord:

 Thou shalt know when thou hidest thyself in an inner chamber, v. 25. It is likely, Zedekiah went with Ahab to the battle, and took his horns of iron with him, to encourage the soldiers, to see with pleasure the accomplishment of his prophecy, and return in triumph with the king; but the army being routed, he fled among the rest from the sword of the enemy, sheltered himself as Ben-hadad had done, in a chamber within a chamber. (ch. 20. 30.) lest he should perish, as he knew he deserved to do, with those whom he had deluded, as Balaam did, (Numb. 31. 8.) and lest the blind prophet should fall into the ditch, with the blinded prince whom he had misled. Note, Those that will not have their mistakes rectified in time by the word of God, will be undeceived, when it is too late, by the judgments of God.

2. Ahab, that wicked king, committed him to prison. (v. 27.) nor only ordered him to be taken into custody, or remitted to the prison whence he came, but to be fed with bread and water, coarse bread and puddle-water, till he should return; not doubting but he should return a conqueror, and then he would put him to death for a false prophet, v. 27. Hard usage for one that would have prevented his ruin! But by this it appeared that God had determined it by his 2 Chr. 25. 16. How confident is Ahab of success! He doubts not but he shall return in peace, forgetting what he himself had reminded Ben-hadad of. Let not him that girdeth on the harness, boast; but there was little likelihood of his coming home in peace, when he left one of God's prophets behind him in prison. Micaiah puts it upon the issue, and calls all the people to be witnesses that Ahab is a liar, and that the king, the Lord hath not spoken by me, v. 28. Let me incur the reproach and punishment of a false prophet, if the king come home alive. He ran no hazard by this appeal, for he knew whom he had believed; he that is terrible to the kings of the earth, and treads upon princes as mortars, will rather let thousands of them fall to the ground, than one jot or tittle of his own word; he will not fail to confirm the word of his servant, Isa. 44. 26.

29. So the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, went up to Ramoth-gilead. 30. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle. 31. But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel. 32. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely, it is the king of Israel. And they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out. 33. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. 34. And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded. 35. And the battle increased that day; and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot. 36. And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country. 37. So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria. 38. And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood, (and they washed his armour,) according unto the word of the Lord which he spake. 39. Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? 40. So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

The matter in contest between God's prophet and Ahab's prophet, is here soon determined, and it is made to appear which was in the right. Here,

1. The two kings march with their forces to Ramoth-gilead, v. 29. That the king of Israel, who hated God's prophet, should so far disbelieve his admonition, as to persist in his resolution, notwithstanding, is not strange; but that Jehovah, in that pious prince, who had desired to inquire by a prophet of the Lord, as disbelieving and discrediting Ahab's prophets, should yet proceed, after so fair a warning, is matter of astonishment; but by the easiness of his temper he was carried away with the delusion (as Barnabas was with the dissimulation, Gal. 2. 13.) of his friends; he gave too much heed to Ahab's prophets, because they pretended to speak from God too, and in his country he had never been imposed on by such cheats; he was ready to
give his opinion with the majority, and to conclude that it was 400 to one but they should succeed; Micaiah had not forbidden them to go; nay, at first, he said, Go, and prosper; if it came to the worst, it was only Ahab’s fall that was foretold, and therefore he hoped he might venture.

II. Ahab contrives to secure himself, and exposes his enemies: “Then shall I dress myself, and go in the habit of a common soldier, and let Jehoshaphat put on his robes, to appear in the dress of a general.” He pretended hereby to do honour to Jehoshaphat, and to compliment him with the sole command of the army in this action; he shall direct and give orders, and Ahab will serve as a soldier under him; but he intended, 1. To make a liar of a good prophet; thus he hoped to elude the danger, and so to defeat the threatening, as if, by disguising himself, he could escape the divine cognizance, and the judgments that pursued him. 2. To make a fool of a good king, whom he did not cordially love, because he was one that adhered to God, and so condemned his apostasy; he knew that if any perished, it must be the shepherd, so Micaiah had foretold; and perhaps he had intimation of the charge that was to be put upon him, which he had not foreseen, and therefore basely intended to betray Jehoshaphat to the danger, that he might secure himself. Ahab was marked for ruin; one would not have been in his attire for a great sum; yet he will over-persuade this godly king to muster for him. See what they get, that join in affinity with vicious men, whose consciences are debauched, and who are lost to every thing that is honourable. How can it be otherwise, who should have been true to his friend, that has been false to his God.

III. Jehoshaphat, having more piety than policy, put himself into the post of honour, though it was the post of danger, and was thereby brought into peril of his life, but God graciously delivered him: the king of Syria charged his captains to level their force, not against the king of Judah, for with him he had quarrel, but with the king of Israel only (v. 31), to aim at his person, as if against him he had a particular enmity; now Ahab was justly repaid for sparing Ben-hadad, who, as the seed of the serpent commonly do, stung the bosom in which he was fostered, and saved from perishing; some think that he designed only to have taken prisoner, that he might now give him as honourable a treat- ment as he had formerly received from him. Whatever was the reason, this charge the captains received, and endeavoured to oblige their prince in this matter; for, seeing Jehoshaphat in his royal habit, they took him for the king of Israel, and surrounded him. Now, 1. By his danger, God let him know that he was displeased with him for joining in confederacy with Ahab; he had said, in compliment to Ahab, (v. 4.) I am as thou art; and now he was indeed taken for him; they that associate with evildoers are thereby involved in their guilt. 2. By his deliverance, God let him know that though he was displeased with him, yet he had not desert- ed him; some of the captains that knew him, per- ceived their mistake, and so retired from the pursuit of him; but it is said, (2 Chron. 18. 31.) God moved them, (for he has all hearts in his hand,) to de- part from him; to him he cried out, not in cowardice, but begging his relief, and asking his life; Ahab was in no case to succour him; God is a Friend that will not fail us, when other friends do.

IV. Ahab received his mortal wound in the battle, notwithstanding his endeavours to secure himself in the habit of a private sentinel. Let no man think to hide himself from God’s judgments, no, not in masquerade; Thine hand shall find out all thine ene- mies, whatever disguise they are in. (v. 34). The Syrian that shot him, little thought of doing such a piece of service to God and his king, for he drew a bow at a venture, not aiming particularly at any man; yet God so directed the arrow, that, 1. He hit the right person, the man that was marked for destruction, whom, if they had taken alive, as was designed, perhaps Ben-hadad would have spared; those cannot escape with life, whom God hath doomed to death. 2. He hit him in the right place, between the joints of the harness, the only place about him where this arrow of death could find entrance. No arrow is proof against the darts of divine vengeance: case the criminal in steel, and it is all one; he that made him, can make his sword to approach to him. That which to us seems altogether casual, is done by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God.

V. The army was dispersed by the enemy, and sent home by the king. Either Jehoshaphat or Ahab ordered the retreat of the sheep, when the shepherd was smitten: “Every man to his city, for it is no purpose to attempt any thing more,” v. 36. Ahab himself lived long enough to see that part of Micaiah’s prophecy accomplished, that all Israel should be scattered on the mountains of Gilboa, (v. 17,) and perhaps with his dying lips did himself give orders for it; though he would be carried out of the army, to have his wounds dressed, (v. 34.) yet he would be stayed up in his chariot, to see if his army were victorious; but when he saw the battle increase against them, his spirits sunk, and he died, but his death was so lingering, that he had time to feel himself die; and we may well imagine, with what horror he now reflected upon the wickedness he had committed, the warnings he had slighted, Baal’s altars, Naboth’s vineyard, Micaiah’s imprisonment; now he sees himself flattered into his own ruin, and Zedekiah’s horns of iron, pushing, not the Syrians, but himself, into destruction. Thus is he brought to the king of terrors, without hope in his death.

The royal corpse was brought to Samaria, and buried there, (v. 37.) and thither were brought the bloody chariot and bloody armour in which he died, v. 38. One particular circumstance is taken notice of, because there was in it the accomplishment of a prophecy, That when they brought the chariot to the pool of Samaria, to be washed, the dogs (and swine, says the Septuagint) gathered about it, and, as is usual, licked the blood, or, as some think, the water in which it was mingled. Then was the blood of Ahab and the dogs made no difference between royal blood and other blood. Now Naboth’s blood was avenged, (ch. 21. 19.) and that word of David, as well as Elijah’s word, was fulfilled, (Ps. 68. 23.) That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same. The dogs licking the guilty blood, was perhaps designed to represent the terrors that press upon the guilty soul after death.

Lastly, The story of Ahab is here concluded in the usual form, v. 39, 40. Among his works, mention is made of an ivy house which he built, so called, because many parts of it were inlaid with ivy; perhaps it was intended to vie with the stately palace of the kings of Judah, which Solomon built.

41. And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. 42. Jehoshaphat was thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. 43. And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing
that which was right in the eyes of the Lord; nevertheless the high places were not taken away; for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places. 44. And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel. 45. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he showed, and how he warred, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? 46. And the remnant of the Sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land. 47. There was then no king in Edom: a deputy was king. 48. Jehoshaphat made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold; but they went not: for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber. 49. Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships: but Jehoshaphat would not. 50. And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead. 51. Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. 52. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin: 53. For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the Lord God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

Here is,

I. A short account of the reign of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, which we shall have a much fuller narrative of in the book of Chronicles, and of the greatness and goodness of that prince, neither of which was lessened nor nullified by any thing but his intimacy with the house of Ahab, which, upon several accounts, was a diminution to him; his confederacy with Ahab in war, we have already found dangerous to him, and his confederacy with Ahaziah his son in trade, spied no better; he offered to go partner with him in a fleet of merchant-ships, that should fetch gold from Ophir as Solomon's navy did, v. 48. See 2 Chron. 20, 33, 36. But while they were preparing to set sail, they were exceedingly damaged and disabled by a storm, broken at Ezion-geber, which a prophet gave Jehoshaphat to understand was a rebuke to him for his league with wicked Ahaziah, 2 Chron. 20, 37. And therefore, as we are told here, (v. 49.) when Ahaziah desired a second time to be a partner with him, or, if that could not be obtained, that he might but send his servants with some effects on board Jehoshaphat's ships, he refused; Jehoshaphat would not; the rod of God, expounded by the word of God, had effectually broken him off from his con-

federacy with that ungodly unhappy prince. Better buy wisdom dearer than be without it; but experience is therefore the mistress of fools, because they are fools that will not learn till they are taught by experience, and particularly, till they are taught the danger of associating with wicked people.

Now Jehoshaphat's reign appears here to have been none of the longest, but one of the best. 1. It was none of the longest, for he reigned but 25 years; (v. 42.) but then it was in the prime of his time, between 35 and 60, and these 25, added to his father's happy 41, give us a grateful idea of the flourishing condition of the kingdom of Judah, and of religion in it, for a great while, even when things were very bad, upon all accounts, in the kingdom of Israel. If Jehoshaphat reigned not so long as his father, to balance that, he had not those blemishes on the latter end of his reign, than his father had; (2 Chron. 16, 8, 10, 12.) and it is better for a man that has been in reputation for wisdom and honour, to die in the midst of it, than to outlive it. 2. Yet it was one of the best, both in respect of piety and prosperity. (1.) He did well, he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord; (v. 43.) observed the commands of his God, and trod in the steps of his good father, and persevered therein, he turned not aside from it; yet every man's character has some but or other, so had his; the high places were not taken away, no, not out of Judah and Benjamin, though those tribes lay so near Jerusalem, that they might easily bring their offerings and incense to the altar there, and could not pretend, as some other of the tribes, the inconvenience of lying remote; but old corruptions are with difficulty rooted out, especially when they have formerly had the patronage of those that were good, as the high places had of Samuel, Solomon, and some others. (2.) His affairs did well; he prevented the mischief which had attended their wars with the kingdom of Israel, establishing a lasting peace, (v. 44.) which had been a greater blessing, if he had contented himself with a peace, and not carried it on to an affinity with Israel: he put a deputy, or viceroy, in Edom, so that that kingdom was tributary to him; (v. 47.) and therein the prophecy concerning Esau and Jacob was fulfilled, that the elder should serve the younger; and, in general, mention is made of his might and his wars, v. 45. He pleased God, and God blessed him with strength and success; his death is spoken of, (v. 50.) to shut up his story, yet, in the history of the kings of Israel, we find mention of him afterward, 2 Kings 3. 7.

II. The beginning of the story of Ahaziah the son of Ahab; (v. 51.) his reign was very short, not two years. Some sinners God makes quick work with. It is a very bad character that is here given: he not only kept up Jeroboam's idolatry, but the worship of Baal likewise: though he had heard of the ruin of Jeroboam's family, and had seen his own father drawn into destruction by the prophets of Baal, who had often been proved false prophets, yet he received no instruction, took no warning, but followed the example of his wicked father, and the counsel of his more wicked mother Jezebel, who was still living. Miserable are the children that only derive a stock of corruption from their parents, but are thus taught by them to trade with it; and unhappy, most unhappy parents, they that help to damn their children's souls.
AN

EXPOSITION

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE SECOND BOOK OF

KINGS.

This second book of the Kings (which the Septuagint, numbering from Samuel, calls the fourth) is a continuation of the former book; and, some think, might better have been made to begin with the 51st verse of the foregoing chapter, where the reign of Ahaziah begins. The former book had an illustrous beginning, in the glories of the kingdom of Israel, when it was entire; this has a melancholy conclusion, in the desolations of the kingdoms of Israel first, and then of Judah, after they had been long broken into two; for a kingdom, divided against itself, cometh to destruction. But as Elijah's mighty works were very much the glory of the former book, toward the latter end of it; so were Elisha's the glory of this, toward the beginning of it. These prophets outshine their princes; and therefore, as far as they go, the history shall be accounted for in them. Here is,

I. Elijah fetching fire from heaven, and ascending in fire to heaven, ch. 1. 2.
II. Elisha working many miracles, both for prince and people, Israelites and foreigners, ch. 3••7.
III. Hazael and Jehu anointed, the former for the correction of Israel, the latter for the destruction of the house of Ahab, and the worship of Baal, ch. 8••10.
IV. The reigns of several of the kings, both of Judah and Israel, ch. 11••16.
V. The captivity of the ten tribes, ch. 17.
VI. The good and glorious reign of Hezekiah, ch. 18••20.
VII. Manasseh's wicked reign, and Josiah's good one, ch. 21••23.
VIII. The destruction of Jerusalem by the King of Babylon, ch. 24, 25. This history, in the several passages of it, confirms that observation of Solomon, That righteousness exults a nation, but sin is the reproach of any people.

II. KINGS, I.

We here find Ahaziah, the genuine son and successor of Ahab, on the throne of Israel. His reign continued not two years; he died by a fall in his own house; which, after the mention of the revolt of Moab, (v. 1.) we have here an account of. 1. The message, which, on that occasion, he sent to the god of Ekron, v. 2. 11. The message he received from the God of Israel, v. 3. 5. III. The destruction of the messengers he sent to seize the prophet, once and again, v. 9. 12. IV. His compassion to, and compliance with, the third messenger, upon his submission, and the delivery of the message to the king himself, v. 15. 16. V. The death of Ahaziah, v. 17, 18. In the story we may observe how great the prophet looks, and how little the prince.

1. THEN Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. 2. And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick. and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover of this disease. 3. But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? 4. Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed. 5. And when the messengers turned back unto him, he said unto them, Why are ye now turned back? 6. And they said unto him, There came a man up to meet us, and said unto us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Is it not
because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. 7. And he said unto them, What manner of man was he which came up to meet thee, and told you these words? 8. And they answered him, He was a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said It is Elijah the Tishbite.

We have here, Ahaziah, the wicked king of Israel, under God's rebukes, both by his providence and by his prophet; by his rod and by his word.

I. He is crossed in his affairs. How can those expect to prosper, that do evil in the sight of the Lord, and provoke him to anger? When he rebelled against God, and revolted from his allegiance to him, Moab rebelled against Israel, and revolted from the subjection they had long paid to the kings of Israel, v. 1. The Edomites that bordered on Judah, and were tributaries to the kings of Judah, still continued so, as we find in the chapter before, (2 K. xiv. 5.) and retained the same till their kingdom was broken that yoke, (ch. 8. 22.) as the Moabites did now. If men break their covenants with us, and withdraw their duty, we must reflect upon our breach of covenant with God, and the neglect of our duty to him. Sin weakens and impoverishes us.

We shall hear of the Moabites, ch. 3. 5.

II. He is seized with sickness in body, not from any inward cause, but by a severe accident; He fell down through a lattice, and was much bruised with the fall; perhaps it threw him into a fever, v. 2. Wherever we go, there is but a step between us and death. A man's house is his castle, but not to secure him against the judgments of God. The cracked lattice is as fatal to the son, when God pleases to make it so, as the bow drawn at a venture, was to the father. Ahaziah would not attempt to reduce the Moabites, lest he should perish in the fall; but he is not safe, though he tarry at home. Royal palaces do not always yield firm footing. The snare is laid for the sinner in the ground where he thinks least of it, Job 18. 9, 10. The whole creation, which groans under the burden of man's sin, will, at length, sink and break under the weight, like this lattice. He is never safe, that has God for his Enemy.

V. In his sickness, he sends messengers to inquire of the god of Ekron, whether he should recover or no, v. 2. And here. 1. His inquiry was very foolish; Shall I recover? Even nature itself would rather have asked, "What means may I use, that I may recover?" But as one solicits only to know his fortune, not to know his duty, his question is only this, Shall I recover? which a little time would give an answer to. We should be more careful to discern what will become of us after death, than how, or when, or where, we shall die; and more desirous to be told how we may conduct ourselves well in our sickness, and get good to our souls by it, than whether we shall recover from it. 2. His sending to Baal-zebub was very wicked; to make a dead and dumb idol, perhaps newly erected, (for idolaters were fond of new gods,) his oracle, was no less a reproach to his reason than to his religion. Baal-zebub signifies the lord of a fly; one of their Baals, that, perhaps, gave his answers either by the power of the demons, or the craft of the priests, with a humming noise, like that of a great fly; or that had, (as they fancied) rid their country of the swarms of flies wherewith it was infested, or of some pestilential disease brought among them by flies. Perhaps this dunghill-deity was as famous then, as the oracle of Delphos was, long after, in Greece. In the New Testament, the prince of the devils is called Brel-zebub; (Matt. 12. 24.) for the gods of the Gentiles were devils, and this, perhaps, gives him to be one of the most famous.

IV. Elijah is directed. God, meets the messengers, and turns them back with an answer that shall save them the labour of going to Ekron. Had Ahaziah sent for Elijah, humbled himself, and begged his prayers, he might have had an answer of peace; but if he send to the god of Ekron, instead of the God of Israel, that, like Saul's consulting the witch, shall fill the measure of his iniquity, and bring upon him a sentence of death. They that with not inquire of the word of God for their comfort, shall be made to hear it, whether they will or no, to their amazement.

1. He faithfully repries his sin; (v. 3.) Is it not because there is not (that is, because you think there is not) a God in Israel, (because there is no God, none in Israel, so it may be read,) that ye go to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, a despicable town? (vers. 12, 13.) Philiastus, Zech. 8, 7, says the king was a gross enough蠢 enough, giving that honour to the Devil, which is due to God alone, which was done as much by their inquiries, as by their sacrifices. Note, It is a very wicked thing, upon any occasion or pretence whatsoever, to consult with the Devil. This wickedness reigned in the heathen world, (Isa. 47. 12, 13.) and remains too much even in the christian world, and the Devil's kingdom is supported by it. (2.) The construction which Elijah, in God's name, puts upon it, makes it much worse: "It is because you think not only that the God of Israel is not able to tell you, but that there is no God at all in Israel; else you would not send so far for a divine answer." Note, A practical and constructive atheism is the cause and malignity of our departures from God. Surely we think there is no God in Israel, when we live at large, make flesh our arm, and seek a portion in the things of this world.

2. He plainly reads his doom; "Go, tell him, he shall surely die, v. 4. Since he is so anxious to know his fate, this is it; let him make the best of it." The certain fearful looking for of judgment and indignation which this message must needs cause, cannot but cut him to the heart.

V. The message being delivered to him by his servants, though they brought some of them by whom it was sent him, and concludes, by their description of him, that it must be Elijah, v. 7, 8. For, 1. His dress was the same that he had seen him in, in his father's court. He was clad in a hairy garment, and had a leathern girdle about him, plain and homely in his garb. John Baptist, the Elias of the New Testament, herein resembled him; for his clothes were made of the same material, and his girdle was of a leathern girdle, Mat. 3. 4. He was clothed with the Spirit, despised all rich and gay clothing. 2. His message was such as he used to deliver to his father, to whom he never prophesied good, but evil. Elijah is one of these witnesses that still torment the inhabitants of the earth, Rev. 11. 10. That he was a thorn in Ahab's eyes, will be so in the eyes of his son, while he lives in this wickedness; and he must be ready to cry out, as his father did, Hast thou found me, 0 mine enemy? Let sinners consider, that the word which rook hold of their fathers, is still as quick and powerful as ever. See Zech. 1. 6. Heb. 4. 12.

9. Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him; (and, behold, he sat on the top of a
II. KINGS, I.

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And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. 11. Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly. 12. And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. 13. And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him; and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life and the life of these fifty thy servants be precious in thy sight. 14. Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight. 15. And the angel of the Lord said unto Elijah, Go down with him; be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king. 16. And he said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, (is it not because there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word?) therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. 17. So he died, according to the word of the Lord, which Elijah had spoken: and Jehoram reigned in his stead, in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah; because he had no son. 18. Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?

Here,

1. The king issues out a warrant for the apprehending of Elijah. If the God of Ekron had told him he should die, it is probable he would have taken it quietly; but now that a prophet of the Lord tells him so, reproving him for his sin, and reminding him of the God of Israel, he cannot bear it: so far is he from making any good improvement of the warning given him, that he is enraged against the prophet; neither his sickness, nor the thoughts of death, made any good impressions upon him, or possessed him with any fear of God: no external alarms will startle and soften sinners, but rather exasperate them. Did the king think Elijah a prophet, a true prophet? Why then durst he persecute him? Did he think him a common person? What occasion was there to send such a force, in order to seize him? Thus a band of men must take our Lord Jesus.

11. The captain that was sent with his fifty soldiers, found Elijah on the top of a hill, (some think the cornel,) and he commanded him in the king's name, to surrender himself, v. 9. Elijah was now so far from abasing, as formerly, in the close recesses of a cave, that he makes a bold appearance on the top of a hill; experience of God's protection makes him more bold. The captain calls him a man of God, not that he believed him to be so, or reverenced him as such a one, but because he was commonly called so, and he resolved to have him up as a prophet, he would not have attempted to make him his prisoner; and had he thought him intrusted with the word of God, he would not have pretended to command him with the word of a king.

111. Elijah calls for fire from heaven, to consume this haughty daring sinner, not to secure himself, he could have done that some other way, nor to avenge himself, for it was not his own cause that he appeared and acted; but to prove his mission, and to reveal the wrath of God from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. This captain had, in scorn, called him a man of God: "If I be so," says Elijah, "thou shalt pay dear for making a jest of it." He valued himself upon his commission, (the king has said, Come down,) but Elijah will let him: know that the God of Israel is superior to the king of Israel, and has a greater power to do great things than he can; and that since Elijah had fetched fire from heaven, to consume the sacrifice, (1 Kings 18. 38.) in token of God's acceptance of that sacrifice as an atonement for the sins of the people; but they having slighted that, now the fire falls, not on the sacrifice, but on the sinners themselves, v. 10. See here, 1. What an interest the prophets had in heaven; what the Spirit of God in them demanded, the power of God effected; Elijah being an instrument of God's power. If, then, it had been the city, that formerly had fetched water from heaven, now fetches fire. O the power of prayer! Concerning the work of my hands, command ye me. Isa. 45. 11. 2. What an interest heaven had in the prophets! God was always ready to plead their cause, and avenge the injuries done to them. Kings shall still be rebuked for their sakes, and charged to do his prophets no harm. One Elijah not murdered by more than 10,000 captives among the fifties. Doubtless Elijah did this by a divine impulse, and yet our Saviour would not allow the disciples to draw it into a precedent, Luke 9. 54. They were now not far from the place where Elias did this act of justice upon provoking Israelites, and would needs, in like manner, call for fire upon those provoking Samaritans; "No," says Christ, "by no means; you know not what manner of spirit you are of;" that is, (4.) "You do not consider what manner of spirit are disciples, you are called to, and how different from that of the Old Testament dispensation; it was agreeable enough to thatdispensation of terror, and of the letter, for Elias to call for fire; but the dispensation of the Spirit and of grace will by no means allow of it." (2.) "You are not aware what manner of spirit you are upon, upon this occasion, actuated by, and how different from that of Elias; had he done it in holy zeal, you in passion; he was concerned for God's glory, you for your own reputation only." God judges men's practices by their principles, and his judgment is according to truth. 

IV. This is repeated a second time; would one think it? 1. Ahaziah sends, a second time, to apprehend Elijah, (v. 11.) as if he were resolved not to be baffled by omnipotence itself; or infinite sinners must be convinced and convinced, at last, by the fire of hell, for fire from heaven, it seems, will not do it. 2. Another captain is ready with his
In this chapter, we have, 1. That extraordinary event, the translation of Elijah; in the close of the foregoing chapter, we had a wicked king leaving the world in disgrace, here we have a holy prophet leaving it in honour; the departure of the former was his greatest misery, of the latter, his greatest bliss: men are as their end is. Here is, 1. Elijah taking leave of his friends, the sons of the prophets, and especially Elisha, who kept close to him, and walked with him through Jordan, v. 1-10. 2. His capture into heaven by the ministry of angels, (v. 11.) and Elisha's lamentation of the loss this earth had of him, v. 12. II. The manifestation of Elisha, as a prophet in his room. 1. By the dividing of Jordan, v. 13, 14. 2. By the respect which the sons of the prophets paid him, v. 15-18. 3. By the healing of the unwholesome waters of Jericho, v. 19. 22. 4. By the destruction of the children of Beth-el that mocked him, v. 23. This revolution in prophecy makes a greater figure than the revolution of a kingdom.

1. AND it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went from Gilgal. 2. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Beth-el. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Beth-el. 3. And the sons of the prophets that were at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold you your peace. 4. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. 5. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea I know it; hold you your peace. 6. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. 7. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. 8. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither; so that they two went over on dry ground.

Elijah's times, and the events concerning him, are as little dated as those of any great man in scripture; we are not told of his age, nor in what year of Ahab's reign he first appeared, nor in what year of Josiah's he disappeared, and therefore cannot conjecture how long he flourished: it is supposed about 20 years in all.

Here we are told,

1. That God had determined to take him up into heaven by a whirlwind, v. 1. He would do it, and it is probable, let him know of his purpose,
some time before, that he would shortly take him from the world, not by death, but translate him body and soul to heaven, as Enoch was, only causing him to undergo such a change as would be necessary to the qualifying of him to be an inhabitant in that world of spirits; and such as they shall undergo, who will be found alive at Christ's coming. It is among the saints, and the like of the peculiar honour upon Elijah above any other of the prophets; he was a man subject to like passions as we are, knew sin, and yet never tasted death. Wherefore is he thus dignified, thus distinguished, as a man whom the King of kings did delight to honour? We may suppose that herein, 1. God looked back upon his past services, which were eminent and remarkable; and required recompense for those, and an encouragement to the sons of the prophets to trend in the steps of his zeal and faithfulness, and, whatever it cost them, to witness against the corruptions of the age they lived in. 2. He looked down upon the present dark and degenerate state of the church, and thus would give a very sensible proof of another life after this; and draw the hearts of the faithful towards himself. 3. He looked to the evangelical dispensation, and, in the translation of Elijah, gave a type and figure of the ascension of Christ, and the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Elijah had, by faith and prayer, conversed much with heaven, and now he is taken thither, to assure us that if we have our conversation in heaven, while we are here on earth, we shall be there also, the soul and body (and that is evermore to be) in the very place, there for evermore.  

II. That Elisha had determined, as long as he continued on earth, to cleave to him, and not to leave him: Elijah seemed desirous to shake him off, would have had him stay behind at Gilgal, at Bethel, at Jericho, v. 2, 4, 6. Some think, out of humility; he knew what glory God designed for him, but would not seem to glory in it, nor desired it should be seen of men; (God's favours covet not having it proclaimed before them, that they are so, as the favourites of earthly princes do;) or rather, it was to try him, and make his constant adherence to him, the more commendable, like Naomi's persuading Ruth to go back: in vain does Elijah entreat him to tarry here, and tarry there; he resolves to tarry no where behind his master, till he goes to heaven, and leaves him behind on this earth; whatever comes of it, he is to be, and to perish only, for his master's sake. because he loved him, but, 1. Because he desired to be edified by his holy heavenly converse as long as he staid on earth; it had always been profitable, but, we may suppose, now, more so than ever. We should therefore do all the spiritual good we can, one to another, and get all we can, one by another, while we are together, because we are to be together but a while. 2. Because he desired to be satisfied concerning his departure, and to see him when he was taken up, that his faith might be confirmed, and his acquaintance with the invisible world increased. He had long followed Elijah, and he would not leave him now when he hoped for the parting blessing; let not those that follow Christ, come short by tiring at last.  

III. That Elijah, before his departure, visited the sons of the prophets, and took leave of them; it seems that there were such schools in many of the cities of Israel, probably, even in Samaria itself; here we find sons of the prophets, and considerable numbers of them, even at Bethel, where one of the calves was set up, and at Jericho, which was lately built in defence of a divine curse. At Jerusalem, and in the kingdom of Judah, they had priests and Levites, and the temple-service, the want of which, in the kingdom of Israel, God ciously made up by those colleges, where men were trained up and employed in the exercises of religion and devotion, and whither good people resorted to solemnize the appointed feasts with praying and hearing, when they had not conveniences for sacrifice or incense; and thus religion was kept up in a time of general apostasy. Much of God's way to it was, and is, to extend grace to the children of the desolate, whose number, and the value of their services, was sometimes equal to that of all the High Priests were comparable to the two great men Elijah and Elisha, who, for aught we know, never attended in the temple at Jerusalem. These seminaries of religion and virtue, which Elijah, it is probable, had been instrumental to found, he now visits, before his departure, to instruct, exhort, and bless them. Note, Those that are going to heaven themselves should be chiefly concerned for these they leave behind them on earth, and to leave with them their experiences, testimonies, counsels, and prayers, 2 Pet. 1. 15. When Christ said, with triumph, Now I am no more in the world, he added, with tenderness, But these are; Father, keep them.  

IV. That the sons of the prophets had intellectual feelings (either in themselves, or by the spirit of prophecy in some of their own society,) or suspected, by the solemnity of Elijah's farewell, that he was now shortly to be removed; and, 1. They told Elisha of it, both at Bethel, (v. 3,) and at Jericho, (v. 5.) Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? This they said, not as upbraiding him with his loss, or expecting that when his master was gone, he would be upon the level with them, but to show how fully they were of the thoughts of this matter, and big with expectation of the event, and to admonish Elisha to prepare for the loss: know we not that our nearest relations, and dearest friends, must shortly be taken from us? The Lord will take them, we lose them not till he calls for them, whose they are, and who takest away, and none can hinder him. He takes away superiors from our head, inferiors from our feet, equals from our arms; let us therefore carefully do the duty of every relation, that we may reflect upon it with comfort, when it comes to be dissolved. Elisha knew it too well, and sorrow had filled his heart upon this account, (as it did the disciples in a like case, John 16. 6.) and therefore he did not need to be told of it, nor did he suffer for hearing of it, and would not be interrupted in his contemplation on this great matter, or at least, diverted from his attendance upon his master; I know it, hold ye your peace: he speaks not this peevishly, or in contempt of the sons of the prophets, but as one that was himself, and would have them, composed and sedate, and with an awful silence expecting the event; I know it, be silent, Zech. 2. 13. 2. They went themselves to be witnesses of it at a distance, though they might not see the actual going up, but this would be so near to the event, as to make it a kind of a sight of it; if not actually present at it, yet so in the eye of their faith, that therefore, as the king might expect, and as we may, though not in person, to have a share of the glory of it, God so ordered it, that they might be eye-witnesses of the honour Heaven did to that prophet, who was despised and rejected of men. God's works are well worthy our notice; when a door is opened in heaven, the call is, Come up hither, come and see.  

V. That the miraculous division of the river Jordan was the greatest miracle Elisha wrought, only that of the heavenly Canaan, as it had been to the entrance of Israel into the earthly Canaan, v. 8. He must go on the other side Jordan, to be translated, because it was his native country, and that he might be near the place where Moses died, and that thus honour might be put on that part of the country, which was most despised. He and Elisha might have gone over Jordan by a ferry, as other passengers did, but God would magnify Elijah in his exit, as he
did Joshua in his entrance, by the dividing of this river, Josh. 3, 7. As Moses with his rod divided the sea, so Elijah with his mantle divided Jordan, both, the insignia—the badges of their office; these waters, of old, yielded to the ark, now, to the prophet's mantle, which, to those that wanted the ark, was an equivalent token of God's presence. When God will take up his faithful ones to heaven, death is the Jordan which, immediately before their translation, by must pass through, and they find a way through it, a safe and comfortable way; the death of Christ has divided those waters, that the ransomed of the Lord may pass over; O death, where is thy sting? thy hurt, thy terror!

9. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. 10. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. 11. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. 12. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

Here,

I. Elijah makes his will, and leaves Elisha his heir, now anointing him to be a prophet in his room, more than when he cast his mantle upon him, 1 Kings 19, 19.

1. Elijah, being greatly pleased with the constancy of Elisha's affection and attendance, bade him ask what he should do for him, what blessing he should leave him at parting; he does not say, 'as Bishop Hall well observes,' 'Ask of me when I am gone, in heaven I shall be better able to bless thee,' but, 'Ask before I go.' Our friends on earth may be spoken to, and can give us an answer, but we know not that we can have access to any friend in heaven but Christ, and God in him; Abraham is ignorant of us.

2. Elisha, having this fair opportunity to enrich himself with the best riches, prays for a double portion of his spirit; he asks not for wealth, or honour, or exemption from trouble, but to be qualified for the service of God and his generation; he asks, (1.) For the Spirit; not that the gifts and graces of the Spirit were in Elijah's power to give, therefore he says not, 'Give me the Spirit,' (he knew very well it was God's gift,) but, 'Let it be upon me, intercede with God for this, for me.'

Christ bade his disciples ask what they would, not one, but all, and promised to send the Spirit, with much more authority and assurance than Elijah could.

(2.) For his spirit; because he was to be a prophet in his room, to carry on his work, to father the sons of the prophets, and face their enemies; because he had the same difficulties to encounter, and the same perseverance to generate with, that he had, so that if he have not his spirit, he has not strength according to the day. (3.) For a double portion of his spirit; he does not mean double to what he had, but double to what the rest of the prophets had, from whom so much would not be expected as from Elisha, who had been brought up under Elijah. It is a holy ambition to covet earnestly the best gifts, and those which will render us most serviceable to God and our brethren. Note, We all ought, both ministers and people, to set before us the examples of our predecessors, to labour after their spirit, and to be earnest with God for that grace which carried them through their work, and enabled them to finish well.

3. Elijah promises him that which he asked, but under two provisos, v. 10. (1.) Provided he put a due value upon it, and esteem it highly: this he teaches him to do, by calling it a hard thing; not too hard for God to do, but too great for him to expect. These are best prepared for spiritual blessings, that are most sensible of their worth, and their own unworthiness to receive them. (2.) Provided he kept close to his master, even to the last, and was observant of him: If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so, otherwise not. A diligent attendance upon his master's instructions, and a careful observance of his example, particularly now in his last scene, were the condition, and would be a proper means of obtaining much of his spirit; taking strict notice of the manner of his ascension, would be likewise be of great use to him. The comforts of departing saints, and their experiences, will mightily help, both to gild our comforts, and to steel our resolutions. Or, perhaps, this was intended only as a sign; 'If God favour thee so far as to give thee a sight of me when I ascend, take that for a token that he will do this for thee, and depend upon it.' Christ's disciples saw him ascend, and were, thereupon, assured that they should, in a little time, see his Spirit. Acts 1, 8. Elisha, we may suppose, hereupon, prayed earnestly, Lord, show me this token for good.

II. Elijah is carried up to heaven in a fiery chariot, v. 11. Like Enoch, he was translated, that he should not see death; and was (as Mr. Cowley expresses it)

"The second man that leap'd the ditch Where all the rest of mankind fell, And went not downward to the sky."

Many curious questions might be asked about this matter, which could not be answered. Let it suffice that this was as it was, and that we may bless his disciples.

1. What his Lord, when he came, found him doing. He was talking with Elisha, instructing, and encouraging him, directing him in his work, and quickening him to it, for the good of those whom he left behind. He was not meditating or praying, as one wholly taken up with the world he was going to, but engaged in edifying discourse, as one concerned about the kingdom of God among men. What in men's books of preparation for heaven is carried on only by contemplation, and the acts of devotion, usefulness to others will pass as well in our account as any thing. Thinking of divine things is good, but talking of them (if it come from the heart) is better, because for edification, 1 Cor. 14, 4. Christ ascended as he was blessing his disciples.

2. What convey his Lord sent for him; a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which appeared either descending upon them from the clouds, or (as Bishop Patrick thinks) running toward them upon the ground: in this form the angels appeared. The souls of all the faithful are carried by an invisible guard of angels into the bosom of Abraham; but Elijah being to carry his body with him, this heavenly guard was visible, not in a human shape, as
usual, though they might so have borne him up in their arms, or carried him as on eagles' wings, but that had been to carry him like a child, like a lamb; (Isa. 40. 11, 31.) they appear in the form of a chariot and horses, that he might ride in state, may ride in triumph, like a prince, like a conqueror, yes, more than a conqueror; the angels are called, in scripture, Cherubim and Seraphim, and their appearance may seem below their dignity, answers to both these names; for, (1.) Seraphim signifies fiery, and God is said to make them a flame of fire, Ps. 104. 4. (2.) Cherubim (as many think) signifies chariots, and they are called the chariots of God, Ps. 68. 17. and he is said to ride upon a cherub, (Ps. 18. 10.) to which perhaps there is an allusion in Ezekiel's vision of four living creatures, and wheels, like horses and chariots; in Zechariah's vision they are so represented, Zech. 1. 8.—6. 1. Compare Rev. 6. 2, &c.

See the readiness of the angels to do the will of God, even in the meanest services, for the good of them that shall be heirs of salvation. Elijah must remove to the world of angels, and therefore, to show how desirous they were of his company, some of them would come to fetch him; the chariot and horses appeared like fog, not for burning, but bright to those that might or consume him, but to render his ascension conspicuous and illustrious in the eyes of those that stood afar off to view it. Elijah had burned with holy zeal for God and his honour, and now with a heavenly fire he was refined and translated.

3. How he was separated from Elisha; this chariot parted them both asunder. Note, The dearest friends must part; Elisha had protested he would not leave him, yet now he is left behind by him.

4. Whither he was carried; he went up by a whirlwind into heaven; the fire tends upward, the whirlwind helped to carry him through the atmosphere, out of the reach of the magnetic virtue of this earth, and then how swiftly he ascended through the pure ether to the world of holy and blessed spirits, we cannot conceive.

But where he went, will never be known,
Till phoenix-nature, aged grown,
To a better being shall aspire,
Mounting himself, like him, to eternity in fire. — Cowley.

Elijah had once, in a passion, wished he might die; yet God was so gracious to him, as not only not to take him at his word then, but to honour him with this singular privilege, that he should never see death; and by this instance, and that of Enoch, (1.) God showed how men should have left the world, if they had not sinned, not by death, but by a translation. (2.) He gave a glimpse of that life and immortality which are brought to light by the gospel, of the glory reserved for the bodies of the saints, and the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers, as then to Elijah; it was also a figure of Christ's ascension.

III. Elijah pathetically laments the loss of that great prophet, but attends him with an encomium, v. 12. 1. He saw it; thus he received the sign by which he was assured of the grant of his request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit; he looked steadfastly toward heaven, whence he was to expect that gift, as the disciples did, Acts 1. 10. He saw it a while, but the vision was presently out of his sight; and he saw him no more. 2. He rent his own clotli altogether, as he had of his own and the public cloths; though Elijah, as he may seem triumphantly to heaven, yet this world could ill spare him, and therefore his removal ought to be much regretted by the survivors. Surely their hearts are hard, whose eyes are dry, when God, by taking away faithful useful men, calls for weeping and mourning. Though Elijah's departure made way for Elisha's eminency, especially since he was now sure of a double portion of his spirit, yet he lamented the loss of him, for he loved him, and could have served him for ever. 3. He gave him a very honourable character, as the reason why he thus lamented the loss of him. (1.) He himself had lost the guide of his youth; My venerable father! he saw his own condition like that of a fatherless child thrown upon the world, and laments it accordingly. Christ, when he left his disciples, did not leave them orphans, (John 14. 15.) but Elijah must. (2.) The public had lost its best guard; he was the charriot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. He would have brought them all to heaven, as in this chariot, if it had not been their own fault; they used not chariots and horses in their wars, but Elijah was to them, by his counsels, reproofs, and prayers, better than the strongest force of chariot and horse, and kept off the judgments of God; his departure was like the routing of an army, an irreparable loss. Better have lost all our men of war than this man of God.

13. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; 14. And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? And when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over. 15. And when the sons of the prophets, which were to view at Jericho, saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him: 16. And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master; lest peradventure the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send. 17. And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent, therefore, fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not. 18. And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?

We have here an account of what followed immediately after the rapture of Elijah.

1. The tokens of God's presence with Elisha, and the marks of his elevation into Elijah's room, to be, as he had been, a father to the sons of the prophets, and the chariot and horsemen of Israel.

1. He was possessed of Elijah's mantle, the badge of his office, which, we may suppose, he put on, and wore, for his master's sake, v. 13. When Eli- jah went to heaven, though he did not let fall his body as others do, he let fall his mantle instead of it; for he was unclothed, that he might be clothed upon with immortality; he was going to a world where he needed not the mantle, either to adorn him, or to shelter him from weather, or to wrap his face in, as 1 Kings 19. 13. He left his mantle as a legacy to Elisha, and though in itself it was of small value, yet as it was a token of the descent of the Spirit upon him, it was more than if he had
bequeathed to him thousands of gold and silver. Elisha took it up, not as a sacred relic to be worshipped, but as a significant garment to be worn, and a recompense to him for his own garments when he had sold them; he loved this cloak ever since it was first cast over him, 1 Kings 19. 19. He that then so cheerfully obeyed the summons of it, and became Elisha's servant, is now dignified with it, and becomes his successor. There are remains of great and good men, which, like this mantle, ought to be gathered up and preserved by the survivors, their sayings, their writings, their examples, that as their works follow them in the sight of them, they may stay behind in the benefit of them.

2. He was possessed of Elijah's power to divide Jordan, v. 14. Having parted with his father, he returns to his sons in the schools of the prophets; Jordan was between him and them, it had been divided to make way for Elijah to his glory, he will try whether it will divide to make way for his business, and by that he will know that God is with him, and that he has the double portion of Elijah's spirit; Elijah's last miracle shall be Elisha's first; thus he begins where he left off, and there is no vacancy. In dividing the waters, (1.) He made use of Elijah's mantle, as Elijah himself had done, (v. 8.) to signify that he designed to keep to his master's methods, and would not introduce any thing new, as those affect to do, that think themselves wiser than their predecessors. (2.) Elisha's prayer for Elijah's God, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? He does not ask, Where is Elijah? as he who was longing for his happy state, as if, like the sons of the prophets here, he knew not what was become of him, or as curiosity inquiring concerning him, and the particulars of that state he was removed to; no, that is a hidden life, it is better for us to know nothing of what we may not expect. He may easily get help from him, no, Elijah is happy, but is neither omniscient, nor omnipotent; but he asks, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Now that Elijah was taken to heaven, God had abundantly proved himself the God of Elijah; if he had not prepared for him that city, and done better for him there than ever he did for him in this world, he would have been ashamed to be called his God, Heb. 11. 32. Now that Elijah is taken to heaven, Elisha inquired, [1.] After God; when our creature-comforts are removed, we have a God to go to, that lives for ever. [2.] After the God of Elijah, the God that Elijah served, and honoured, and pleaded for, and adhered to, when all Israel had deserted him. This honour is done to those who cleave to God in times of general apostasy, that God will be, in a peculiar manner, their God. "The God that they knew and served, and provided for, and many ways honoured him, especially now at last; where is he? Lord, am not I promised Elijah's spirit? Make good that promise." The words which next follow in the original, Aph-his—even he, which we join to the following clause, when he had also written the waters, some make an answer to this question, Where is Elijah's God? Elam hem adel hachim, he is living still, he is living in the earth, even at Jordan, we have lost Elijah, but we have not lost Elijah's God; he has not forsoaken the earth, it is even he that is still with me." Note, First, It is the duty and interest of the saints on earth to inquire after God, and apply themselves to him as the Lord God of the saints that are gone before to heaven, the God of our fathers. Secondly, It is very comfortable to those who inquire after God, that they know where to find him; it is even he that is in his holy temple, (Ps. 11. 4.) and near to all who call upon him, Ps. 145. 18. Thirdly, Those that walk in the spirit and steps of their godly faithful predecessors, shall certainly experience the same grace that they experienced; Elijah's God will be Elisha's too; the Lord God of the holy prophets is the same year by year, day, to-day, and for ever; and what will it avail us to have the mantles of those that are gone, then, places, their books, if we have not their spirit, their God?

3. He was possessed of Elijah's interest in the sons of the prophets, v. 15. Some of the fellows of the college at Jericho, who had placed themselves under the care of Elijah, before Jordan, to see what passed, were surprised to see Jordan divided before Elisha. He returned, and took that as a convincing evidence that the spirit of Elijah did rest upon him, and that therefore they ought to pay the same respect and deference to him, that they had done to Elijah. Accordingly, they went to meet him, to congratulate him on his safe passage through fire and water, and the honour God had put upon him; and they bowed themselves to the ground before him: they were trained up in the schools, Elisha was taken from the plough, yet, when they perceive that God is with him, and that this is the man whom he delights to honour, they readily submit to him, as his head and father, as the people to Joshua, when Moses was dead, Josh. 1. 17. Those that appear to have God's Spirit and presence with them, ought to have our esteem and best affections; notwithstanding the meanness of their extraction and education. Whomsoever God honours, we must. This ready submission of the sons of the prophets, no doubt, was a great encouragement to Elisha, and helped to clear his call.

II. The needless search which the sons of the prophets made for Elijah, 1. They suggested it possible that he was dead. Either alive or dead, upon some mountain, or in some valley; and it would be a satisfaction to them, if they sent some young men, whom they had at command, in quest of him, v. 16. Some of them perhaps started this as a dammner to the choice of Elisha; "Let us first be sure that Elijah is quite gone. Can we think Elijah thus neglected by heaven, that chosen vessel thus cast away as a vessel in which was no pleasure?" 2. Elisha consented not to their motion, till they overcame him with importunity, v. 17. They urged it with much reason; and he was willing, lest he should be thought wanting in his respect to his old master, or loath to resign the mantle again. Wise men may yield to that, for the sake of peace, and the good opinions of others, which yet their judgment is against, as needless and fruitless. 3. The issue made them as much ashamed of their proposal, as they, by their importunity, had made Elisha ashamed of opposing it. Their messengers, after they had tired themselves with fruitless search, returned with a non est inventus—he is not to be found, and gave Elisha an opportunity of upbraiding his friends with their folly; Did I not say unto you, Go not? v. 18. This would make them the more willing to acquiesce in his judgment another time. Travelling hills and valleys, will never bring us to Elisha, but the imitation of his holy faith and zeal will, in due time.

19. And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren. 20. And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. 21. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed.
these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. 22. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake. 23. And he went up from thence unto Beth-el: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald-head; go up, thou bald-head. 24. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them. 25. And he went from thence to mount Carmel; and from thence he returned to Samaria.

Elisha had, in this respect, a double portion of Elijah's spirit, that he wrought more miracles than he did. Some reckon them in number just double. Two are recorded in these verses—a miracle of mercy to Jericho, and a miracle of judgment to Beth-el. 101.

I. Here is an abessing upon the waters of Jericho, which was effectual to heal them. Jericho was built in disobedience to a command, in defiance to a threatening, and at the expense of the lives of all the builders' children; yet, when it was built, it was not ordered to be demolished again, nor were God's prophets or people forbidden to dwell in it, but even within those walls that were built by iniquity, we find a nursery of piety. Poets, they say, build houses for wise men to dwell in. Here the wealth of the sinner provided a habitation for the just. We find Christ at Jericho, Luke 19. 1. Hither Elisha came, to confirm the souls of the disciples with a more particular account of Elijah's translation than their spies could give them, who saw it at a distance. Here he staid while the fifty men were searching for him. And, 1. The men of Jericho represented to him their grievance, v. 19. God's faithful prophets love to be employed; it is wisdom not to lose one moment of time while their light is with us. They had not applied themselves to Elijah concerning the matter; perhaps because he was not so easy of access as Elisha was; but now, we may hope, by the influence of the divinity-school in their city, they were reformed. The situation was pleasant, and afforded a good prospect; but they had neither wholesome water to drink, nor fruitful soil to yield them food; and what pleasure could they take then in their prospect? Water is a common mercy, which we should estimate by the greatness of the calamity which the want or unwholesomeness of it would be. Some think that it was not all the ground about Jericho, that was barren, and had bad water, but some one part only, and that where the sons of the prophets had their lodgings, who are here called the men of the city.

2. He soon redressed their grievance. Prophets should endeavour to make every place they come to, some way or other, the better for them, endeavouring to sweeten bitter spirits, and to make barren souls fruitful, by the due application of the word of God. Elisha will heal their waters; but, (1.) They must furnish him with salt in a new cruse, v. 20. If salt had been proper to season the water, yet what could so small a quantity do towards it, and what the better for being in a new cruse? But, thus they that would be helped, must be employed, and their faith and obedience tried. God's works of grace are wrought, not by any operations of our's, but in our observance of his institutions. (2.) He cast the salt into the spring of the waters, and so healed the streams, and the ground they watered. Thus the way to reform men's lives, is, to renew their hearts; let those be seasoned with the salt of grace, for out of them are the issues of life. Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good. Purify the heart, and that will cleanse the hands. (3.) He did not assert his own office by his own power, but in God's name; Thus saith the Lord, I...waters. He is but the instrument, the channel through which God is pleased to convey this healing virtue. By doing them this kindness with a Thus saith the Lord, they would be made the more willing, hereafter, to receive from him a reproof, admonition, or command, with the same preface. If, in God's name, he can help them, in God's name, let him had harm and hurt them. Thus saith the Lord, out of Elisha's mouth must, ever after, be of mighty force with them. (4.) The cure was lasting, and not for the present only. The waters were healed unto this day, v. 22. What God doeth, it shall be for ever, Ex. 3. 14. When he, by his Spirit, heals a soul, there shall be no more death nor barrenness; the property is altered; what was useless and offensive, becomes grateful and serviceable.

II. Here is a curse upon the children of Beth-el, which was good, and designed well for them; for it was not a curse causeless. At Beth-el there was another school of prophets, thither Elisha goes next, in this his primary visitation; the scholars there, no doubt, welcomed him with all possible respect, but the townsmen were abusive to him. One of Jeroboam's calves was at Beth-el; this they were proud of, and fond of, and hated them that reproved them. The law did not empower them to suppress this pious academy, but we may suppose it was their usual practice to jeer the prophets as they went through the streets, to call them by some nickname or other, that they might expose them to contempt, prejudice their youth against them, and, if possible, drive them out of their town. Had the abuse done to Elisha, been the first offence of that kind, it is probable that it would not have been so severely punished. But mocking the messengers of the Lord, and mincing the prophecies, was one of the crying sins of Israel, as we find, 1. Kings 12. 16. 1. An instance of that sin. The little children of Beth-el (the boys and girls that were playing in the streets, notice, it is likely, being come to the town of his approach) went out to meet him, not with their hosannas, as they ought to have done, but with their scoffs; they gathered about him, and mocked him, as if he had been a fool, or one fit to make sport with: among other things that they used to jeer the prophets with, they had this particular taunt for him. Go up, thou bald-head; Go up, thou bald-head. It is a wicked thing to reproach any for their natural infirmities or deformities; it is adding affliction to the afflicted; and if they are as God made them, the reproach reflects upon him. But this was such a thing as scarcely deserved to be called a blemish, and would never have been turned to his reproach, if they had had any thing else to reproach him with. It was his character, as a prophet, that they designed to abuse. The honour God had crown'd him with, should have been sufficient to cover his bald head, and protect him from their scoffs. They bade him go up, perhaps reflecting on the assumption of Elijah: "Thy master," they say, "is gone up; why dost not thou go up after him? Where is the fiery chariot? When shall we be rid of thee too?" These children said as they were taught; they had no moral sense, no natural reason; they had their names, and gave bad language, especially to prophets. Perhaps their parents, did, at the same time, send them out, and set them on, that, if possible, they might keep the prophet out of their town.
2. A specimen of that ruin which came upon Israel, at last, for misusing God's proverbs, and of which this was intended to give them fair warning. Elisha heard their taunts, a good while, with patience; but, at length, the fire of holy zeal for God was kindled in his breast by the continued provocation, and he turned and looked upon them, to try if a grave and severe look would put them out of countenance, and oblige them to retire; to see if he could discern in their faces any marks of ingenuousness; but they were not amazed, neither could they bear and therefore he cursed them in the name of the Lord, both imprecated and denounced the following judgment, not in personal revenge for the indignity done to himself, but as the mouth of divine justice to punish the dishonour done to God. His summons was immediately obeyed; two she-bears (bears perhaps robbed of their whelps) came out of an adjacent wood, and presently killed 42 children, v. 24. Now in this, (1.) The prophet must be justified, for he did why divine impulse. Had the curse come from any bad principle, God would not have said, Amen, to it. We may think it had been better to have called for two rods for the correction of these children, than two bears for the destruction of them. But Elisha knew, by the Spirit, the bad character of these children, what a generation of vipers they were; and what mischief enemies they would be to God's prophets, and they should keep them at bay, who had suffered so much. He therefore turned toward making their family worse. He intended hereby to punish the parents, and to make them afraid of God's judgments. (2.) God must be glorified, as a righteous God that hates sin, and will reckon for it, even in little children. Let the hideous shrieks and groans of this wicked wretched brood make our flesh tremble for fear of God. Let little children be afraid of speaking wicked words, for they say unto them that they die not at any for their defects in mind or body, but pity them rather; especially let them know that it is at their peril, if they jeer God's people or ministers, and scoff at any for well-doing. Let parents that would have comfort in their children, train them up well, and do their utmost betimes to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts; for, (as Bishop Hall says,) "In vain do we look for good of those children when we educate them, and have neglected and in vain do we grieve for those miscarriages which our care might have prevented."

Elisha comes to Beth-el, and fears not the revenges of the bereaved parents; God, who bade him do what he did, knew he would bear him out. Thence he goes to mount Carmel, (v. 25.) where, it is probable, there was a religious house for retirement and contemplation. Thence he returned to Samaria, where, being a public place, this father of the prophets might be most serviceable. Bishop Hall observes here, "That he can never be a profitable seer, who is either always or never alone."

CHAP. III.

We are now called to attend the public affairs of Israel, in which we shall find Elisha concerned. Here is, I. The general character of Jehoram king of Isr-el, v. 1.- 3. 11. A war with Moab, in which Jehoram and his allies were engaged, v. 4.- 8. 11. The straits which the confederate army was as reduced to in their expedition against Moab, and their consulting of Elisha in that distress, with the answer of peace he gave them, v. 9.- 10. 11. The glorious issue of this campaign, (v. 10.) and the battle fought on the day following, 12.- 14. The bravery of the king of Moab took, 15. as well as the confederate army to retire, v. 26. 27. The house of Ahab is doomed to destruction; and though in this chapter we have both its character and its condition better than before, yet the threatened ruin is not far off.

1. Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Sama-ria the eleventh year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. 2. And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother; for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. 3. Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom. 4. And Mesha king of Moab was a sheep-master, and rendered unto the king of Israel a hundred thousand rams, and a hundred thousand rams, with the wool. 5. But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

Jehoram, the son of Ahab, and brother of Ahaziah, is here upon the throne of Israel; and though he was but a bad man, yet two things are here recorded of him. 1. That he removed his father's idols. He did evil in many things, but not like his father Ahab, or his mother Jezebel, v. 2. Bad he was, but not so bad, so overmuch wicked, as Solomon speaks, Eccl. 7. 17. Perhaps Jehoshaphat, though by his passionate and violent nature the house of Ahab he made his, yet was not so much of his family worse, did something from Ahab. If so, he made his family better. Jehoram saw his father and brother cut off for worshipping Baal, and wisely took warning by God's judgments on them, and put away the image of Baal, resolving to worship the God of Israel only, and consult none but his prophets. So far was well, yet it did not prevent the destruction of Ahab's family, nay, that destruction came in his lifetime, the people of Jerusalem being determined, though he was one of the best of the family, for then the measure of its iniquity was full. Jehoram's reformation was next to none: for, (1.) He only put away the image of Baal which his father had made, and this, probably, in compliment to Jehoshaphat, who otherwise would not have come into confederacy with him, any more than with his brother, 1 Kings 22. 49. But he did not destroy the worship of Baal, nor did he prevent the people from worshipping it, though he was one of the best of the family, for then the measure of its iniquity was full. Jehoram's reformation was next to none: for, (1.) He only put away the image of Baal, which his father had made, and this, probably, in compliment to Jehoshaphat, who otherwise would not have come into confederacy with him, any more than with his brother, 1 Kings 22. 49. But he did not destroy the worship of Baal, nor did he prevent the people from worshipping it, though he was one of the best of the family, for then the measure of its iniquity was full. Jehoram's reformation was next to none: for, (2.) When he put away the image of Baal, he maintained the worship of the calves, that politic sin of Jeroboam, v. 3. He departed not therefrom, because that was the state engine by which the division between the two tribes was supported. Those did not truly nor acceptably repent or reform, who only part with the sins that they lose by, but continue their affection to the sins that they get by. (2.) He only put away the image of Baal, he did not break it in pieces, as he ought to have done. He laid it aside for the present, yet not knowing but he might have occasion for it another time; and Jezebel, for reasons of state, was content to worship her Baal in private. 4. That he did what he could, to recover his brother's losses. As he had something more of the religion of an Israelite than his father, he had something more of the spirit of a king than his brother. Moab rebelled against Israel immediately upon the death of his father, ch. 1. 1. And we do not find that Ahaziah made any attempt to chastise or reduce them, but tamely let go his interest in them rather than entertain the cares, undergo the fatigues, and run the hazards, of a war with them. His folly and pusillanimity, herein, and his indifference to the public good, were the more aggra-
vated, because the tribute which the king of Moab paid was a very considerable branch of the revenue of the crown of Israel. A hundred thousand lambs, and a hundred thousand rams, v. 4. The riches of kings then lay more in cattle than coin, and they thought it not below them to know the state of their flocks and herds themselves, because, as Solomon observes, the crown doth not endure to every generation, Prov. 27. 23, 24. Taxes were then paid, not so much in money, as in the commodities of the country, which was an ease to the subject, whether it were an advantage to the prince or no. The revolt of Moab was a great loss to Israel, yet Ahabiah sat still in sloth and ease. But an upper chamber in his house proved as fatal to him, as the high places of the field could have been; (ch. 1. 2) and the breaking of his lattice let into his throne a man of a more active genius, that will not lose the dominion of Moab, without making, at least, one push for its preservation.

6. And king Jehoram went out of Sama- ria the same time, and numbered all Israel.

7. And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses. 8. And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom. 9. So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them. 10. And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab! 11. But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. 12. And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the Lord is with him. So the king of Israel, and Jeh-oshaphat, and the king of Edom, went down to him. 13. And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab. 14. And Elisha said, As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regarded the presence of Jeho- shaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee. 15. But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him. 16. And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches: 17. For thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. 18. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand. 19. And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of wa- ter, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

Jehoram has no sooner got the sceptre into his hand, than he takes the sword into his hand, to reduce Moab. Crowns bring such cares and perils to the heads that wear them; no sooner in honour than in war. Now here we have——

I. The concerted action of this expedition between Je- horam king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah. Jehoram levied an army, (v. 6.) and such an opinion he had of the godly king of Judah, that, 1. He courted him to be his confederate: Wilt thou go with me against Moab? And he gained him. Je- hoshaphat said, I will go up, I am as thou art, v. 7. Judah and Israel, though unhappily divided from each other, yet can unite against Moab a com- mon enemy. And when Jehoram had sent up the revolt from the house of David, nor makes it an article of their alliance, that they should return to their allegiance, though he had good reason to insist upon it, but treats with Israel as a sister-king- dom. Those are no friends to their own peace and strength, who can never find in their hearts to for- give and forget an old injury, and unite with those that have formerly broken in upon their rights.—Quod initio non valuit, tractu temporis irregularitatem. That which was originally destitute of authority, in the progress of time, acquires it. 2. He consulted him as his confidant, v. 8. He took advice of Je- hoshaphat, who had more wisdom and experience than himself, which way they should make their descent upon the country of Moab; and he advised that they should not march against them the nearest way, over Jordan, but go round through the wilder- ness of Edom. But the way might take the king of Edom (who was tributary to him) and his forces along with them: if two be better than one, much more will not a threefold cord be easily broken. Je- hoshaphat had like to have paid dear for his join- ing with Ahab, yet he joins with his son, and this expedition also had like to have been fatal to him. There is nothing got by being yoked with unbelievers. II. The great fruits that the army of the confe- ders was reduced in this expedition. Before they saw the face of an enemy, they were all in danger of perishing for want of water, v. 9. This ought to have been considered before they ventur- ed a march through the wilderness, the same wilder- ness, (or very near it,) where their ancestors wanted water, Numb. 20. 2. God suffers his peo- ple, by their own improvidence, to bring themselves into distress, that the wisdom and goodness of his providence may be glorified in their relief. What is more cheap and common, than water? It is drink to every beast of the field; (Ps. 104. 11.) yet the want of it will soon humble and ruin kings and armies. The king of Israel sadly laments the present distress, and the imminent danger it put them in, of falling into the hands of their enemies the Moabites, to whom, when weakened by thirst, they would be an easy prey, v. 10. It was he that had called these kings together, yet he charges it upon Providence, and reflects upon that as unkind,
The Lord has called them together. Thus the foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then his heart freteth against the Lord, Prov. 19. 3.

III. Jehoshaphat's good motion to ask counsel of God in this exigence, v. 11. The place they were now in, could not but remind them of the wonder which their fathers told them of, the waters fetched out of the rock for Israel's seasonsal supply. The thought of this, we may suppose, encouraged Jehoshaphat to ask, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, like unto Moses? He was the more concerned, because it was by his advice that they fetched this compass through the wilderness, v. 8. It was well that Jehoshaphat inquired of the Lord now, but it had been much better, if he had done it sooner, before he engaged in this war, or steered this course; so the distress might have been prevented. Good men are sometimes remiss and forgetful, and neglect their duty, till necessity and affliction drive them to it.

IV. Elisha recommended as a proper person for them to consult with, v. 11. And here we may wonder, 1. That Elisha should follow the camp, especially in such a tedious march as this, as a volunteer, unasked, unobserved, and in no post of honour at all; not in the office of priest of the war, (Deut. 26. 2.) or president of the council of war, but in such obscurity and retirement. 2. That the men that now they call such a jewel in the treasures of their camp, nor so good a friend in their retinue. We may suppose it was by special direction from heaven, that Elisha attended the war, as the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. Thus does God go before his people with the blessings of his goodness, and provide his oracles for those that provide them not for themselves. It would often be bad with us, if God did not overtake us, as the horse of a prophet, and overtake us before our affairs were in such a state, as far as we were concerned, as they were in to those who consulted him; so that he, not we, might be best provided for. 2. That a servant of the king of Israel knew of his being there, when the king himself did not. Probably, it was such a servant as Obadiah was to his father Ahab, one that feared the Lord; to such a one Elisha made himself known, not to the kings. The account he gives of him, is, that it was he that poured water on the hands of Elijah, that is, he was his servant, and, particularly attended him in his travels, washed his hands. He that will be great, let him learn to minister; he that will rise high, let him begin low.

V. The application which the kings made to Elisha. They went down to him to his quarters, v. 12. Jehoshaphat had such an esteem for a prophet with whom the word of the Lord was, that he would condescend to visit him in his own person, and not send for him up to him. The other two kings were pleased by the straits they were in, to make their court to the prophet. He that humbled himself, was thus exalted, and looked great; when three kings came to knock at his door, and beg his assistance; see Rev. 3. 9.

VI. The entertainment which Elisha gave them.

1. He was very plain with the wicked king of Israel; (v. 13.) "What hast thou to do with me? Hast thou not sent prophets to the prophets, and books to the kings of Judah?" Elisha was not imposed upon, as Jehoshaphat was, by his partial and hypocritical reformation; he knew that though he had put away the image of Baal, Baal's prophets were still dear to him; for some of them were now in his camp. Go, said he, go to them. Get thee to the prophets of thy father and mother, whom thou hast countenanced and maintained in thy prosperity, and let them help thee now in thy distress." Elisha was not imposed upon, as Jehoshaphat was, by his partial and hypocritical reformation; he knew that though he had put away the image of Baal, Baal's prophets were still dear to him; for some of them were now in his camp. Go, said he, go to them. Get thee to the gods whom ye have served, Judg. 10. 14. The word and the flesh have ruled you, let them help you; why should God be inquired of by you? Ezek. 14. 3. Elisha tells him, to his face, in a holy indignation at his wickedness, that he could scarcely find in his heart to look toward him, or to see him, v. 14. Jehoram is to be respected as a prince, but as a wicked man, he is a vile person, and is to be condemned, Ps. 15. 4. Elisha, as a subject, will honour him, but, as a prophet, he will make him to know his iniquity. For them that had such an extraordinary commission, it was fit (though not for a common person) to say to a king, Thou art seeked, Job 34. 18. Jehoram has so much demand as to take it patiently; he cares not now for hearing of the prophets of Baal; but is a humble suitor to the God of Israel and his prophet, representing the present case as very deplorable, and humbly recommends it to the prophet's compassionate consideration. In effect, he owns himself unworthy, but let not the other kings be ruined for his sake.

2. He showed a great respect to the godly king of Judah, regarded his presence, and, for his sake, would inquire of the Lord for them all. It is good being with those that have God's favour, and his prophet's love. Wicked people often fare the better for the friendship and society of those that are godly.

3. He composed himself to receive instructions from one to whose mind was somewhat ruffled and disturbed at the sight of Jehoram; though he was not put into a sinful heart or passion, nor had spoken unadvisedly, yet his zeal, for the present, indisposed him for prayer and the operations of the Spirit, which require a mind very calm and sedate. He therefore called for a musician, (v. 15.) a devout musician, one accustomed to play upon his harp, and sing psalms to it. To hear God's praises sweetly sung, as David was appointed, would cheer his spirits, and lift him up, and help to put him into a right frame, both to speak to him, and to hear from him. We find a company of prophets prophesying with a psaltery and a tabret before them, 1 Sam. 10. 5. Those that desire communion with God, must keep their spirits quiet and serene. Elisha being refreshed, and having the tumult of his spirits laid by this divine music, the hand of the Lord came upon him, and his visit did him more honor than that of three kings.

4. God, by him, gave them assurance that the issue of the present distress would be comfortable and glorious.

(1.) They should speedily be supplied with water, v. 16, 17. "To try their faith and obedience, he bids them make the valley full of ditches to receive the water. They that expect God's blessings, must take care for them, dig the fountains for the rain to fill, as they did in the valley of Bacah, and so made even that a well, Ps. 84. 6. To raise their wonder, he tells them they should have water enough, and yet there should be neither wind nor rain.

Elijah, by prayer, obtained water out of the clouds, but Elisha fetches it nobody knows whence.

The spring of these waters shall be as secret as the head of the Nile. God is not tied to second causes. Ordinarily, it is by a plentiful rain, that God confirms his inheritance, (Ps. 68. 9.) but here it is done without rain, at least, without rain in that place. Some of the fountains of the great deep, it is likely, were broken up on this occasion; and, to increase the miracle, that valley only (as it should seem) was filled with water, and no other place had any share of it.

(2.) That supply should be an earnest of victory, v. 18. "This is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord; you shall not only be saved from perishing, but shall return in triumph." As God gives freely to the unworthy, so he gives richly, like himself, more than we are able to ask or think. His grants outdo our requests and expectations. They that
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an early seek for the dew of God's grace, shall have it, and by it be made more than conquerors.
It is promised that they should be masters of the rebellious country, and that the sword and their spoil was
waste and ruin it, v. 19. The law forbade them to fell fruit-trees to be employed in their sieges, (Deut. 20. 19.) but not when it was intended, in justice, for the starving of a country that had forfeited its fruits, by denying tribute to whom tribute is due.

20. And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat-offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom; and the country was filled with water.
And only this Elisha heard of it; but when it was intended, in justice, for the starving of a country that had forfeited its fruits, by denying tribute to whom tribute is due.

21. And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border. 22. And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood: 23. And they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil.
And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in their country. 25. And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees: only in Kirharaseh left they the stones thereof; howbeit, the singers went about it, and smote it.

26. And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not. 27. Then he took his eldest son, that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: And they departed from him, and returned to their own land.

We have here the divine gift of both those things which God had promised by Elisha: water and victory; and the former not only a pledge of the latter, but a means of it. God, who created, and commands, all the waters both above and beneath the firmament, sent them an abundance of water on a sudden, which did them double service.

I. It relieved their armies, which were ready to perish, v. 20. And, which was very observable, this relief came just at the time of the offering of the morning-sacrifice upon the altar at Jerusalem, a certain time, and universally known; that time Elisha chose for his hour of prayer, (it is likely looking toward the temple, for so they were to do in their prayers, while they were going out to battle, and encamped at a distance, 1 Kings 8. 44.) in token of his communion with the temple-service, and his expectation of success, by virtue of the great Sacrifice. We now cannot pitch upon any hour more acceptable than another, because our High Priest is always appearing for us, to present and plead his sacrifice. That time God chose for the hour of sacrifice, to perform the daily sacrifice which had been despised. God answered Daniel's prayer just at the time of the evening-sacrifice, (Dan. 9. 21.) for he will glorify his own institutions.

II. It deceived their enemies, who were ready to triumph, into their destruction. Notice is brought to the Moabites of the advances of the confederate army; to oppose which, all that were able to put on armour, were raised, and posted upon the frontiers, where they are ready to give them a warm reception, (v. 21.) promising themselves, that it would be easy dealing with an army fatigued by so long a march through the wilderness of Edom. But see here.

1. How easily they were drawn into their own delusions; observe the steps of their self-deceit. (1.) They saw the water in the valley where the army of Israel encamped, and conceived it was blood, (v. 22.) because they knew it was a dry valley, and (there having been no rain) could not imagine it should be water. The sun shone upon it, and, probably, the sky was red and lowering, a presage of foul weather that day, (Matth. 16. 3.) and so it proved to them. But this making the water look red, their own fancies, which made them willing to believe what made for them, suggested, This is blood; God permitting them thus to impose upon themselves. God was thus full of blood, they conclude, "Certainly the kings have fallen out, (as confederates of different interests are apt to do,) and they have slain one another, (v. 23.) for what else should slay them?" And, (3.) "If the armies have slain one another, we have nothing to do but to divide the prey, Now therefore, Moab, to the spoil." These were the words which the Moabites supposed some of their enemies among them, that thought themselves wiser and happier in their conjectures than their neighbours; and the rest, being desirous it should be so, were forward to believe it was so. Quod volumus facile credimus—What we wish, we readily believe. Thus they that are to be destroyed, are first deceived, (Rev. 20. 8.) and none are so effectually deceived as those that deceive themselves.

2. How far they thereby themselves ran upon their own destruction. They rushed carelessly into the camp of Israel, to plunder it, but were undeceived, when it was too late. The Israelites, animated by the assurances Elisha had given them of victory, fell upon them with the utmost fury, routed them, and pursued them into their own country, (v. 24.) which they laid waste; (v. 25.) destroyed the cities, marred the ground, stopped up the wells, felled the timber, and left only the royal city standing in the walls of which they made great breaches with their battering engines. This they got by rebelling against Israel. Who ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered?

In the close of the chapter, we are told what the king of Moab did, when he found himself reduced to the last extremity by the besiegers, and that his capital city was likely to fall into their hands.
(1.) He attempted that which was prudent and brave. He got together 700 choice men, and with them sallied out upon the intrenchments of the king of Edom, who, being but a mercenary in this expedition, would not, he hoped, make any great resistance if he were vigorously attacked, and so he might make his escape that way. But it would not do; even the king of Edom proved too hard for him, and obliged him to retire, v. 26.

(2.) This failing, he did that which was brutish and barbarous; he took his own son, his eldest son,
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that was to succeed him, than whom nothing could be more dear to himself, and his people, and offered him for a burn't-offering upon the wall, v. 27. He designed by this, [1.] To obtain the favour of Che- mosh his god, which, being a devil, delighted in blood and murder, and the destruction of mankind. The nearer any thing was to them, the more acceptable those idolaters thought it must needs be, if offered in sacrifice to their gods, and therefore burnt their children in the fire to their honour. [2.] To terrify the heathen, and oblige them to retire. Therefore he did it upon the wall, in their sight, that they might see what desperate courses he resolved to take rather than surrender, and how dear he would sell his city and life. He intended hereby to render them odious, and to exasperate and enrage his own subjects against them. This effect it had; there was great indignation against Israel for driving him to this extremity. Whereupon, they raised the siege, and returned. Tender and generous spirits would not do that, though just, which will drive any man distracted, or make him des- perate.

CHAP. IV.

Great service Elisha had done, in the foregoing chapter, for the three kings; to his prayers and prophecies they owed their lives and triumphs. One would have expect- ed that he should have desired such as his honours and what dignities were conferred on Elisha for this: that he should immediately have been preferred at court, and made prime-minister of state; that Jehosha- phat should have taken him home with him, and advanced him to the highest places in his kingdom. No, the wise man delivered the army, but no man remembered the wise man, Eccl. 9. 15. Or, if he had preferred him, he declined it; he preferred the honour of doing good in the schools of the prophets before that of being great in the courts of princes. God magnified him, and that sufficed him; magnified him indeed, for we have him here employed in working no less than five miracles. 1. He multiplied the poor widow's oil, v. 1-7. II. He obtained for the good Shunammite the blessing of a son in her old age, v. 8-17. III. He raised that child to life, when it was dead, v. 18-37. IV. He healed the deadly pottage, v. 38-41. V. He fed a hundred men with twenty small loaves, v. 42-44.

1. NOW there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to bondmen. 2. And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me: what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house save a pot of oil. 3. Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. 4. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. 5. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and her sons, who brought the vessels to her, and she poured out. 6. And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. 7. Then she came and told the man of God: and he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

Elisha's miracles were for use, not for show: this here was so; an act of real charity: Christ's were so; not only great wonders, but great favours, to them for whom they were wrought. God magnifies his goodness with his power.

I. Elisha readily receives a poor widow's complaint. She was a prophet's widow; to whom therefore should she apply herself, but him that was a father to the sons of the prophets, and concerned himself in the welfare of their families? It seems, the prophets had wives, as well as the priests, though prophecy went not by entail, as the priesthood did. Marriage is honourable in all, and not inconsistent with the most sacred professions. Now, by the complaint of this poor woman, (v. 1.) we are given to understand, 1. That her husband, being one of the sons of the prophethood, was well known to Elisha. Ministers of eminent gifts and stations should make themselves familiar with those that are every way their inferiors, and know their character; and state. 2. That he had the reputation of a godly man. Elisha knew him to be one that feared the Lord, else he had been unworthy of the honour, and unfit for the work, of a prophet. He was one that kept his integrity in a time of general apostasy; one of the 7000 that had not bowed the knee to Baal. 3. That he was dead, though a good man, a good minister. The prophets—do they live for ever? They that were clothed with a Spirit of prophecy, were not thereby armed against the stroke of death. 4. That he died poor, and in debt more than he was worth. He did not contract his debts by prodigality, and luxury, and riotous living, for he was one that feared the Lord, and therefore burst not, nor allow himself in such courses: nay, reli- gion obliges men not to live so that they may no- nor to spend more than what God gives them, no not in expenses otherwise lawful; for hereby, of necessity, they must disable themselves, at last, to give every one his own, and so prove guilty of a continued act of injustice all along: yet it may be the lot of those that fear God, to be in debt, and insolvent, through afflictive providences, losses by fire, or by water, or their own imprudence, for the children of light are not always happy; and perhaps this prophet was impoverished by persecution: when Jezebel ruled, prophets had much ado to live, and especially if they had families. 5. That the creditors were very severe to her. Two sons she had, to be the support of her widowed state, and their labour is reckoned assets in her hand; that must go therefore, and they must be bound as she was. She, when very poor, went out this debt. Those that leave their families under a load of debt disproportionate to their estates, know not what trouble they entail. In this distress, the poor widow goes to Elisha, in dependence upon the promise, that the seed of the righteous shall not be forsaken. The generation of the upright may expect help from God's providence, and counten- ance from his prophets.

II. He kindly relieves this poor widow's distress, and puts her in a way both to pay her debt, and to maintain herself and her family. He did not say, Be warmed, be filled; but gave her real help. He did not give her some small matter for her pre- sent provision, but set her up in the world to sell oil, and put a stock into her hand to begin with. This was done by miracle, but it is an indication to us what is the best method of charity, and the greatest kindness one can do to poor people, which, if, if possible, to help them into a way of improving
what little they have, by their own industry and ingenuity.

1. He directed her what to do; considered her case; *What shall I do for thee?* The sons of the prophets' were poor, and it would signify little to make to them a great gift; but when the great God of the holy prophets is able to supply all her need; and if she has a little committed to her management, her need must be supplied by his blessing and increasing that little. Elisha therefore inquires what she had to make money of, and finds she had nothing to sell but one pot of oil, v. 2. If she had had any plate or furniture, he would have hidden her part with it, to enable her to be just to her creditors. He directs her to shut the door upon her and her sons, while she filled all those vessels out of that one. She must shut the door, to prevent interruptions from the creditors and others; and if she did this, it will work upon this, and so teach us to make the best of what we have. The prophet, knowing her to have credit among her neighbours, bids her borrow of them *empty vessels,* (v. 3.) for, it seems, she had sold her own, toward the satisfying her creditors. He directs her to shut the door upon her and her sons, while she filled all those vessels out of that one. She must shut the door, to prevent interruptions from the creditors and others; and if she did this, it will work upon this, and so teach us to make the best of what we have.

2. She did it accordingly. She did not tell the prophet he designed to make a fool of her, but, firmly believing the divine power and goodness, and in pure obedience to the prophet, she borrowed vessels large and many of her neighbours, and poured out her oil into them; one of her sons was employed to bring her empty vessels, and the other carefully to set aside those that were full, while they were all amazed to find their pot, like a fountain of living water, always flowing, and yet always full; they see not the spring that supplies it, but believe it to be in *Him in whom all our springs are.* Job's metaphor is now verified in the letter; (Job 29. 6.) *The rock poured me out rivers of oil.* Perhaps this was in the tribe of Asher, part of whose blessing it was, that he should *dye his foot in oil,* Deut. 33. 29.

3. The oil continued flowing as long as she had any empty vessels to receive it; when every vessel was full, the oil stayed, (v. 6.) for it was not fit that this precious liquor should run over, and be as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Note, We are never straitened in God, and in his power and bounty, and the riches of his grace; all our straitness is in ourselves. It is our fault if all falls not into our hands. It gives rise above what we ask; were there more vessels, there is enough in God to fill them; enough for all, enough for each. Was not this pot of oil exhausted, as long as there were any vessels to be filled from it? And shall we fear lest the golden oil which flows from the very root and fatness of the good olive, should fail, as long as there are any lamps to be supplied from it? *Zech. 4. 12.*

4. The prophet directed her what to do with the oil she had, v. 7. She must not keep it for her own use, to *make her face to shine.* Those whom Providence has made poor, must be content with poor accommodations for themselves—that is *knowing that it is a time to work.* It is a time to work; it is not a time to make for ourselves: she must get a little of that which is better than ordinary, to feed their own luxury; no, (1.) She must sell the oil to those that were rich, and could afford to bestow it on themselves. We may suppose, being produced by miracle, it was the best of its kind; (like the wine, John 2. 10.) so that she might have both a good price, and a quick market, for it. Probably, the merchants bought it to export, for oil was one of the commodities that Israel traded. *Ezek. 27. 17.* (2.) She must pay her debt with the money she received for her oil. Though her creditors were too rigorous with her, yet they must not therefore lose their debt. Her first care, now that she has wherewithal, must be to discharge that, even before she makes any provision for her children. It is one of the fundamental laws of our religion, that we render to all their due, pay every just debt, give every creditor his own, though we do not lay out our own money at all; and this, not of constraint, but willingly and without grudging; not only for wrath, to avoid being sued, but also for conscience-sake. They that bear an honest mind, cannot with pleasure eat their daily bread, unless it be their own bread. (3.) The rest must not be laid up, but she and her children must live upon it, not upon the oil, but upon the money received from it, with which they must put themselves into a capacity of getting an honest livelihood. No doubt, she did as the man of God directed; and hence, (1.) Let those that are poor and in distress, be encouraged to trust God for supply in the way of duty: *Verily, thou shalt be fed,* though not feasted. It is true, we cannot now expect miracles, yet we may expect mercies, if we wait on God, and seek to him. Let widows particularly, and prophets' widows in a special manner, depend upon him to preserve them and their fatherless children alive, for to them he will be a Husband, a Father. (2.) Let those whom God has blessed with plenty, use it for the glory of God, and under the direction of his word: let them do justly with it, as the widow did, and serve God cheerfully in the use of it; and, as Elisha, be ready to do good to those that need them, be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame.

8. And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where *was a great woman,* and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, *that,* as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. 9. And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God which passeth by us continually. 10. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick; and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither. 11. And it fell on a day that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there. 12. And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him. 13. And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be
spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people. 14. And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old. 15. And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door. 16. And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid. 17. And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.

The giving of a son to such as were old, and had been long childless, was an ancient instance of the divine power and favour, in the case of Abraham, and Isaac, and Manoah, and Elkanah: we find it here among the wonders wrought by Elisha. This was wrought in recompense for the kind entertainment which a good woman gave him, as the promise of a son was given to Abraham, when he entertained angels unawares. 1 Kings 19:16.

The kindness of the Shunammite woman to Elisha. Things are bad enough in Israel, yet not so bad, but that God's prophet finds friends, wherever he goes. Shunem was a city in the tribe of Issachar, that lay in the road between Samaria and Carmel, a road that Elisha often travelled, as we find ch. 2. 25. There lived a great woman, who kept a good house, and was very hospitalitable, her husband having a good countenance in his heart also, and trusting in her, and in her discreet management, Prov. 31. 11. So famous a man as Elisha, could not pass or repass unobserved. Probably, he had been accustomed to take some private obscure lodgings in the town; but this pious matron, having notice once of his being there, pressed him with great importunity, and, with much difficulty, constrained him to dine with her, v. 8. He could not refuse, any loath to be a burden to his host, and affected not to associate with those of the first rank; so that it was not without some difficulty, that he was first drawn into an acquaintance there: but afterward, whenever he came that way in his circuit, he constantly called there. So well pleased was she with her guest, and so desirous of his company, that she would not bid him welcome to her table, but provided a lodging-room for him in her house, that he might rest the longer stay, not doubting but her house would be blessed for his sake, and all under her roof edified by his pious instructions and example; a good design, yet she will not do it without acquainting her husband, will neither lay out his money, nor invite strangers to his house, without his consent asked and obtained, v. 9, 10. She suggests to him, 1. That the stranger she would invite, was a holy man of God, who therefore would do well to have his family, and God would recompense the kindness done to him; perhaps, she had heard how well paid the widow of Sarepta was for entertaining Elijah. 2. That the kindness she intended him, would be no great charge to them; she would build him only a little chamber: perhaps, she had no spare room in the house, or none private and retired enough for him, who spent much of his time in contemplation, and did not fear being disturbed with the help of the family. The furniture shall be very plain; no costly hangings, no stands, no couches, no looking-glasses; but a bed, and a table, a stool, and a candlestick; all that was needful for his convenience, not only for his repose, but for his study, his reading and writing. Elisha seems highly pleased with these accommodations, for he turned in and lay there, (v. 11.) and, as it should seem, his man in the same chamber, for he was far from taking state.

II. Elisha's gratitude for this kindness; being exceedingly pleased with the quietness of his apartment, and the friendliness of his entertainment, he began to consider with himself what recompense he should make her. They that receive courtesies, should study to return them; it ill becomes men of God to be ungrateful, or to sponge upon those that are generous.

1. He offers to use his interest for her in the king's court, v. 13, Thou hast been careful for us with all this care; thus does he magnify the kindness he received, as those that are humble are accustomed to do, though, in the purse of one so rich, and in the breast of one so rich, if it was inquired what should be done for her now, what shall be done for thee? As the liberal devise liberal things, so the grateful devise grateful things. "Wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or the captain of the host, for an office for thine husband, civil or military? Hast thou any complaint to make, any petition to present, any suit or law depending, that needs the countenance of the higher powers? Wherein can I serve thee? It seems, he had not forgot what services she had done for him, for she only asked what she might now render to him. But he answers her, and tells her, that though he chose not to prefer himself by it, yet he was capable of preferring his friends; a good man can take as much pleasure in serving others, as in raising himself. But she needs not any good offices of this kind to be done for her, I dwell (says she) among mine own people, that is, "We are well off as we are, and do not aim at preferment. It is a happiness to dwell among our own people, and to live and be content in a country of doing good; and a greater happiness to be content to do so, to be easy, and to know when we are well off; why should those that live comfortably among their own people, covet to live delicately in kings' palaces? It would be well with many, if they did but know when they are well off.

Some years after this, we find this Shunammite had occasion to be spoken for to the king, though it is not said to what purpose: 2 Chron. 16. 8. 3, 4. Though that dwell among their own people, must not think their mountain stands so strong as that it cannot be moved; they may be driven, as this good woman was, to sojourn among strangers; our continuing city is above.

2. He did use his interest for her in the court of heaven, which was far better. Elisha consulted with his servant what kind of favour to do her; such a freedom did this great prophet admit even his servant to: Gehazi tells him she is childless, has a great estate, but no son to leave it to, and was past hopes of having any, her husband being old; if Elisha can obtain this favour from God for her, it will be the removal of that which, at present, was her only grievance. Those are the most welcome kindnesses, which are most suited to our necessities. He sent for her immediately; she verily and respectfully stood in the door, (v. 15.) according to her accustomed modesty, and then he assured her that within a year she should bring forth a son, v. 16. She had received this prophet in the name of a prophet, and now she had not a courtier's reward, in being spoken for to the king, but a prophet's reward, a signal mercy given by prophets, and in answer to prayer; the promise was a surprise to her, and she begs he may not be flat¬ted by it; "Nay, my lord, thou art a man of God, and therefore, I hope, speaketh seriously, and dost not jest with me, nor lie unto thine handmaid." The event, within the time limited, confirmed the truth of the promise; she bare a son at the season
that Elisha spake of, v. 17. God built up her house, in reward of her kindness in building the prophet a chamber. We may well imagine what joy this brought to the family; Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear.

18. And when the child was grown, it fell on a day that he went out to his father to the reapers. 19. And he said unto his father, My head, my head! And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. 20. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. 21. And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out. 22. And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again. 23. And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him today? it is neither new moon nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well. 24. Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee. 25. So she went, and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite: 26. Run now, I pray thee, to meet her; and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well. 27. And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me. 28. Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me? 29. Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child. 30. And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her. 31. And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing: wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked. 32. And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. 33. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. 34. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm. 35. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. 36. And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. 37. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

We may well suppose, after the birth of this son, that the prophet was doubly welcome to the good Shunammite: he had thought himself indebted to her, but from her kindness, and long and careful love, she will think herself in his debt, and that she never do too much for him. We may also suppose that the child was very dear to the prophet, as the son of his prayers, and very dear to the parents, as the son of their old age. But here is,

I. The sudden death of the child, though so much a daring; he is so far past the perils of infancy, that he is able to go to the field to his father, who, no doubt, is pleased with his engaging talk, and his joy of his son is greater for the joy of his harvest; but either the cold or the heat of the open field overcame the child, that was bred tenderly, and he complains to his father that his head aches, v. 19. Whither should we go with our complaints, but to our heavenly Father? Thither the Spirit of adoption brings believers with all their grievances, all their desires, teaching them to cry, with groanings that cannot be uttered, My head, my head; my heart, my heart is broken. The father of these children lie his mother's arms, his mother's lap, little suspecting any danger in his indisposition, but hoping he will drop asleep in his mother's bosom, and awake well; but it proves fatal, he sleeps the sleep of death; (v. 20.) well in the morning, and dead by noon; all the mother's care and tenderness cannot keep him alive: a child of promise, a child of prayer, and given in love, yet taken away. Little children lie open to the arrests of sickness and death. But how admirably does the prudent pious mother guard her lips, under this surprising affliction! Not one peevish indecent word comes from her; she has a strong belief that the child will be raised to life again: like a genuine daughter of Abraham's faith, as well as joins, she accounts that God is able to raise him from the dead, for thence she received a son in a figure, Heb. 11. 19. She had heard of the raising of the widow's son of Sarepta, and that the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha; and such confidence had she of God's goodness, that she was very ready to believe that he who so soon took away what he had given, would restore what he had now taken away; by this faith, women received their dead raised to life, Heb. 11. 35. In this faith, she makes no preparation for the burial of her dead child, but puts him unembalmed, for she lays him in the prophet's bed, (v. 21.) expecting that he would stand her friend; O woman, great is thy faith! He that wrought it, would not frustrate it.

II. The sorrowful mother's application to the prophet, on this sad occasion; for it happened very opportunely that he was now at the college upon mount Carmel, not far off.
1. She begged leave of her husband to go to the prophet, yet not acquainting him with her errand, lest he should not have faith enough to let her go, v. 22. He objected, It is neither new-moon nor sabbath; (v. 23.) which intimates that on those feasts the people usually used to assemble in the temple, which he presided, with other good people, to hear the word, and to join with him in prayers and praises; she did not think it enough to have his help sometimes in her own family, but, though a great woman, attended on public worship, for which this was none of the times appointed; 

"Wherefore," said the husband, "why wilt thou go to the prophet? What is the matter?" No harm," said she; "it shall be well with me;" and therefore she journeyed thither. See how this husband and wife vied with each other, in showing mutual regard; she was so dutiful to him, that she would not go till she had acquainted him with her journey, and he so kind to her, that he would not oppose it, though she did not think fit to acquaint him with her business.

2. She made all the haste she could to the prophet, (v. 24.) who, seeing her at a distance, sent his servant to inquire whether any thing was amiss, v. 25, 26. The questions were particular, Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child? Note, It well becomes the men of God, with tenderness and concern, to inquire about the welfare of their friends, and their families; the answer was general, It is well. Gehazi was not the man that she came to complain to, and therefore she puts him off with this; she said little, and little said is soon amended; (Ps. 59. 1, 2.) but what she did say, was very patient; "It is well with me, with my husband, with the child."—all well, and yet the child dead in the house. Note, When God calls away our dearest relations by death, it becomes us quietly to say, "It is well both with us and them," it is well, for all is well that God does; all is well with them that are gone to heaven, and all well with that stay behind, if by the affliction we are furthered in our way thither.

3. When she came to the prophet, she humbly reasoned with him concerning her present affliction; she threw herself at his feet, as one troubled and in grief, which she never showed till she came to him, who, she believed, could help her, v. 27. When her passion would do her service, she knew how to discover it, as well as how to conceal it, when it would do no service. Gehazi knew his master would not be pleased to see her lie at his feet, and therefore would have raised her up; but Elisha waited to hear from her, since he might not know immediately from God, what was the cause of her trouble. God discovered things to his prophets, as he saw fit, not always as they desired; God did not show this to the prophet, because he might know it from the good woman herself. What she said, was a fair appeal to the prophet, (1.) Concerning her indigence and the misery which was now taken from her; "Did I desire a son of my lord? No, thou knowest I did not; it was thine own proposal, not mine; I did not fret for the want of a son, as Hannah, nor beg, as Rachel, Give me children, or else I die." Note, When any creature-comfort is taken from us, it is well, if we can say, through grace, that we did not set our hearts inhospitably upon it, we have reason to fear it was given in anger, and taken from us in wrath.

(2.) Concerning her entire dependence upon the prophet's word; Did I not say, Do not deceive me? Yes, she did say so, (v. 16.) and this reflection upon it may be considered either, [1.] As quarrelling with the prophet for deceiving her; she was ready to think herself mocked with the mercy, when it was so soon removed, and that it had been better she had never had this child, than to be deprived of him, when she began to have comfort in him. Note, The loss of a mercy should not make us undervalue the gift of it; or, [2.] As pleading with the prophet for the raising of the child to life again; I said, Do not deceive me, and I know thou wilt not. Note, However it may grieve us, God may disappoint us, we may be sure the promise of God never did, nor ever will, deceive us; hope in that will not make us ashamed.

III. The raising of the child to life again; we may suppose that the woman gave Elisha a more express account of the child's death, and he gave her a more express promise of his resurrection, than is here related; where we are briefly told, 1. That Elisha sent Gehazi to go to all haste, to the dead child, gave him his staff, and bade him lay that on the face of the child, v. 29. I know not what to make of this; Elisha knew that Elijah raised the dead child with a very close application, stretching himself upon the child, and praying again and again; and could he think to raise this child by so slight a ceremony as this, especially when nothing hindered him from coming himself? Shall such a servant as Gehazi be delegated, and better a man than Gehazi? Bishop Hall suggests that it was done out of human conceit, and not by divine instinct, and therefore it failed of the effect; God will not have such great favours made too cheap, nor shall they be too easily come by, lest they be undervalued.

2. The woman resolves not to go back without the prophet himself; (v. 30.) I will not leave thee. She had no great expectation from the staff; she will have the hand, and she was in the right of it; perhaps, it was intended hereby to teach us not to put that confidence in creatures that are servants, which the power of the Creator, their Master and our's will alone bear the weight of. Gehazi returns re infecta—without success, with the todings of any sign of life in the child; (v. 31.) The child is not awaked; intimating, to the comfort of the mother, that its death was but a sleep, and that he expected it would shortly be awaked. In the raising of dead souls to spiritual life, ministers can do no more by their own power than Gehazi here could; they lay the word, like the prophet's staff, before their faces, but there is neither voice nor hearing, till Christ, by his Spirit, comes himself; the letter alone kills, it is the Spirit that gives life; it is not prophesying upon dry bones, that will put life into them, breath must come from heaven, and breathe upon those slain.

3. The prophet, by earnest prayer, obtains from God the restoring of this dead child to life again; he found the child dead upon his own bed, (v. 32.) and shut the door upon them twain, v. 33. Even the dead child is spoken of as a person, one of the twain, for it was still in being, and not lost; he shut out all company, that he might not seem to glory in the thing he had given him, or to use it for ostentation, and to be seen of men.

Observe, (1.) How closely the prophet applied himself to this great operation; perhaps being sensible that he had tempted God too much, in thinking to effect it by the staff in Gehazi's hand, for which he thought himself rebuked by the disappointment, he now finds it a harder task than he then thought, and therefore addresses himself to it with great solemnity. Gehazi was sent, says God, probably, as Elijah had done, Let this child's soul come into him again. Christ raised the dead to life, as one having authority, Damsel, arise; Young man, I say unto thee, Arise; Lazarus come forth: for he was powerful and faithful as a Son, the Lord of life, but Elijah and Elisha did it by petition as servants. [2.] He lay upon the child, (v. 54.) as if
he would communicate to him some of his vital heat or spirits; thus he expressed the earnestness of his desire, and gave a sign of that divine power which he depended upon for the accomplishment of this great work. He first put his mouth to the child's mouth, as if, in God's name, he would breathe into him the breath of life, then his eyes to the child's eyes, to open them again to the light of life, then his hands to the child's hands, to put strength into them. He then returned, and walked in the house, as one full of care and concern, and wholly intent upon what he was about; then he went up stairs again, and, the second time, stretched himself upon the child, v. 33. Those that would be instrumental in conveying spiritual life to dead souls, must thus affect themselves with their case, and accommodate themselves to it, and labour fervently in prayer for them.

(2.) How gradually the operation was performed; at the first application, the flesh of the child waxed warm, (v. 34.) which gave the prophet encouragement to continue instant in prayer; after a while, the child sneezed seven times, which was an indication, not only of life, but liveliness. Some have reported it is an ancient tradition, That when God breathed into Adam the breath of life, the first evidence of his being alive, was sneezing, which gave rise to the usage of paying respect to those that sneeze. Some observe here, that sneezing clears the head, and there lay the child's dis TEMPER.

(3.) How joyfully the child was returned alive to his mother, (v. 36, 37.) and all parties concerned were not a little comforted, Acts 20. 12. See the power of God, who kills and makes alive again; see the power of prayer; as it has the key of the clouds, so it has the key of death: see the power of faith; that fixed law of nature (that death is a way whence there is no returning) shall rather be dispensed with, than this believing Shunammite shall be disappointed.

38. And Elisha came again to Gilgal, and there was a death in the land, and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets. 39. And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shed them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not. 40. So they poured out for the men to eat: and it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot; and they could not eat thereof. 41. But he said, Then bring meal. And he cast it into the pot; and he said, Four out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot. 42. And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the first-fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat. 43. And his servitor said, What, should I set this before a hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof. 44. So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD.

We have here Elisha, in his place, in his element, among the sons of the prophets, teaching them, and, as a father, providing for them; and happy it was for them, that they had one over them, who naturally cared for their state, under whom they were well fed and well taught. There was a death in the land, for the wickedness of them that did dwell therein; that the sons of the prophets might not be ashamed in this evil time, but even, in the days of famine, might be satisfied, Ps. 37. 19.

1. He made hurtful food to become safe and wholesome.

1. On the lecture-day, the sons of the prophets being all to attend, he ordered his servant to provide food for their bodies, while he was breaking to them the bread of life for their souls; whether there was any flesh-meal for them, does not appear; he orders only that pottage should be seethed for them of herbs, v. 38. The sons of the prophets should be examples of temperance and mortification, not desirous of dainties, but content with plain food: if they have neither savoury meats, nor sweet meats, may, if a mess of pottage be all the dinner, let them remember that this great prophet entertained himself and guests no better.

2. One of the servants, that was sent to gather herbs, (which it should seem, must serve instead of flesh for the pottage;) by mistake, brought in that which was noxious, or, at least, very nauseous, and shed it into the pottage, wild gourds they are called, v. 39. Some think it was coloquintida, a herb strongly cathartic, and, if not qualified, dangerous. The sons of the prophets, it seems, were better skilled in divinity than in ethnology, and read their Bibles more than their Herbals. If any of the fruits of the earth be hurtful, we must look upon it as an effect of the curse, (Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee,) for the original blessing made all good.

3. The guests complained to Elisha of the unwholesomeness of their food. Nature has given the senses of man to be satisfied with wholesome food; that wholesome food may be pleasant, but that the which is unwholesome, may be discovered before it comes to the stomach; the mouth tries meat by tasting it, Job 12. 11. This pottage was soon found by the taste of it to be dangerous, so that they cried out, There is death in the pot, v. 40. The table often becomes a snare, and that which should be for our welfare, proves a trap, which is a good reason why we should not feed on lively without fear, lest we are receiving the supports and comforts of life, we must keep up an expectation of death, and a fear of sin.

4. Elisha immediately cured the bad taste, and prevented the bad consequences, of this unwholesome pottage; as before, he had healed the bitter waters with salt, so now, the bitter broth with meal, v. 41. It is probable that there was meal in it before, but that was put in by a common hand, only to thicken the pottage; this was the same thing, but
cast in by Elisha's hand, and with intent to heal the potage; by which it appears that the change was not owing to the meal, (that was the sign only, not the means,) but to the divine power. Now all were bound to give alms, but no harm, in the pot; we must acknowledge God's goodness in making our food wholesome and nourishing; I am the Lord that healeth thee.  

11. He made a little food to go a great way. 

1. Elisha had a present brought him of 20 barley-leaves and some ears of corn, (v. 42.) a present which, in those ages, would not be despicable at any time, but now, in a special manner valuable, when there was a dearth in the land. It is said to be of the first-fruits, which was God's due out of their increase; and when the priests and Levites were all at Jerusalem, out of their reach, the religious people among them, with good reason, looked upon the prophets as God's receivers, and brought their first-fruits to them, which helped to maintain their schools. 

2. Having freely received, he freely gave, ordering it all to be set before the sons of the prophets, reserving none for himself, none for hereafter, Let the morrow take thought for the things of itself, give it all to the people that they may eat. It well becomes the men of God to be generous and open-handed, and the fathers of the prophets to be liberal to the sons of the prophets. 

3. Though the loaves were little, it is likely, no more than what one man would ordinarily eat at a meal, yet with 20 of them he satisfied 100 men, v. 43, 44. His servant thought that to set so little meat before so many men, was but to tantalize them, and shame his master for making so great an invitation to such short commons; but he, in God's name, pronounced it a full meal for them, and so it proved; they did eat, and thereof, not because their stomachs failed them, but because the bread increased in the eating; God has promised his church, (Ps. 110. 7.) that he will fulfill his mercies to his people, grant them their provision, and satisfy her poor with bread; for whom he feeds, he fills, and what he blesses, comes to much, as what he blows upon, comes to little. Hag. 1. 9. Christ's feeding his hearers was a miracle far beyond this, but both teach us that those who wait upon God in the way of duty, may hope to be both protected and supplied by a particular care of Divine Providence. 

CHAP. V. 

Two more of Elisha's miracles are recorded in this chapter. 1. The cleansing of Naaman, a Syrian, a stranger, from his leprosy; and there, 1. The badness of his case, v. 1. 2. The providence that brought him to Elisha, the intelligence given him by a captive maid, v. 2. 4. A letter from the king of Syria to the king of Israel, to introduce him, v. 5-7. And the invitation Elisha sent his servant, v. 8. 3. The method prescribed for his cure: his abstinence, after objecting to that method, and his cure thereby, v. 9-14. 4. The grateful acknowledgments he made to Elisha, hereupon, v. 13, 19. 11. The smiling of Gehazi, his master's servant, for Naaman's sins, which were, belying his master to Naan, v. 20, 24. And lying to his master when he examined him, v. 25. 5. His punishment for this sin; Naan's leprosy was entailed on his family, v. 26, 27. And if Naan's cure was typical of the calling of the Gentiles, as our Saviour seems to make it, (Luke 4, 27.) Gehazi's stroke may be looked upon as typical of the blinding, softening, and turning of the Jews, which revealed God's grace to the Gentiles, as Gehazi envied Elisha's favour to Naan.

1. NOW Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable; because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper. 2. And the Syrains had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. 3. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy. 4. And one went in and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. 5. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now, when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy. 6. And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me. 7. And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. 

Our Saviour's miracles were intended for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet one, like a crum, fell from the table to a woman of Canaan; so, this one miracle Elisha wrought for Naaman, a Syrian; for God does good to all, and will have all men to be saved. Here is, 

The leprosy of Naaman was under, in the midst of all his honours, v. 1. He was a great man, in a great place; not only rich and raised, but particularly happy for two things, 1. That he had been very serviceable to his country, God made him so; by him the Lord had often given deliverance to Syria, success in their wars even with Israel. The preservation and prosperity even of those that do not know God and serve him, must be ascribed to him, for he is the Saviour of all men, but especial- ly of them that believe. Let Israel know that when the Syrains prevailed, it was from the Lord. 2. That he was very acceptable to his prince, was his favourite, and prime-minister of state; so great was he, so high, so honourable, and a mighty man of valour; but he was a leper, was under that loathsome disease, which made him a burthen to himself. Note, (1.) No man's greatness, or honour, or interest, or valour, or victory, can set him out of the reach of the sorest calamities of human life; there is many a sickly crazy body under rich and gay clothing. (2.) Every man has some but or other in his character, something that blemishes and diminishes him, some aliy to his grandeur, some damp to his joy; he may be very happy, very good, yet, in something or other, not so good as he should be, nor so happy as he would be. Naaman
was as great as the world could make him, and yet (as Bishop Hall expresses it) the basest slave in Sy-
ria would not change skins with him.
II. The notice that was given him of Elisha's
power, by a little maid that waited on his lady, v. 2.
2. Though he was an Israelite, provid-
entially carried captive into Syria, and there
pre-
ferred into Naaman's family, where she publishes
Elisha's fame, to the honour of Israel, and Israel's
God. The unhappy dispersing of the people of
God has sometimes proved the happy occasion of
the diffusion of the knowledge of God, Acts 8. 4.
This little maid, i. As became a true-born Israel-
ite, consulted the honour of her country; could give
any information of the prophet; she might have
left them and had among them. Children should betimes
acquaint themselves with the wondrous works of
God, that, wherever they go, they may have them
to talk of. See Ps. 8. 2. 2. As became a good ser-
vant, she desired the health and welfare of her
master, though she was a captive, a servant by
force; much more should servants of choice seek
their masters' good: the Jews in Babylon were to see
that they were a people of God: Jeremiah 29. 7.
Elisha had not cleansed any lepers in Israel;
(Luke 4. 27.) yet this little maid, from the other
miracles he had wrought, infers that he could
cure her master, and from his common beneficence
fers that he would do it, though he was a Syrian.
Servants may be blessings to the families where
they are, by telling what they know of the glory of
God, and the honour of his prophets.
III. The application which the king of Syria,
hereupon, made to the king of Israel on Naaman's
behalf. Naaman took notice of the intelligence,
though given by a simple maid, and did not despise
it for the sake of her meanness, when it tended to
his bodily health; he did not say, "The girl talks
like a fool; how can any prophet of Israel do that
for me, which all the physicians of Syria have at-
tempted in vain?" Though he neither loved nor
honoured the Jewish nation, yet if one of that na-
tion can but cure him of his leprosy, he will thank-
fully acknowledge the obligation. O that they who
are spiritually diseased, would hearken thus readi-
ly to the tidings brought them of the great Physi-
cian! See what Naaman did, upon this little hint.
1. He would not send for the prophet to come to him,
but such honour would he pay to one that had so
much of a divine power with him as to be able to
cure diseases, that he would go to him himself,
though he himself was sickly, unfit for society, the
journey long, and the country an enemy's; princes,
he thinks, must stoop to prophets, when they need
them. 2. He would not go in disguise, though his
errand proclaimed his loathsome disease, but went
in state, and with a great retinue, to do the more
honour to the prophet. 3. He would not go empty-
hand, but would make him a present of the rich robe,
to present to his physician; those that have wealth,
and want health, show which they reckon the more
valuable blessing; what will they not give for ease,
and strength, and soundness of body? 4. He would
not go without a letter to the king of Israel from
the king his master, who did himself earnestly desire
his recovery; he knows not where in Samaria to
find this wonder-working prophet, but takes it for
granted that he will find him; and, to engage the
prophet to do his utmost for Naaman, he will go to
him, supported with the interest of two kings.
If the king of Syria must entreat his help, he
wishes the king of Israel, being his liege-lord,
may command it: the gifts of the subject must all
be (he thinks) for the service and honour of the
prince, and therefore he desires the king that he
would recover the leper, (v. 6.) taking it for grant-
ed that there was a greater intimacy between the
king and the prophet than really there was.
IV. The alarm this gave to the king of Israel, v.
7. He apprehended there was in this letter, 1. A
great affront upon God, and therefore he
would, according to the custom of the Jews, when
they heard or read that which they thought blas-
phemous; and what less could it be, than to attribute
to him a divine power? "Am I a God, to kill whom
I will, and make alive whom I will? No, I pretend
not to such an authority;" Nebuchadnezzar did, as we
find, Dan. 5. 19. "Am I a God, to kill with a
word, and make alive with a word? No, I pretend
not to such a power;" or, he will make that a preference
to his own, which is made to own that he is the more
good. Why did he not, with this consideration, correct himself
for his idolatry, and reason thus? "Shall I worship
those as gods, that can neither kill nor make alive;
can do neither good nor evil?" 2. A bad design
upon himself; he appeals to those about him for
this, "See how he seeketh a quarrel against me; he
requires me to recover the leper, and if I do not,
thou cannot, he will make that a pretence to
wrong me, and me;" which he suspects the rather
because Naaman was his general. Had he rightly
understood the meaning of the letter, that when the
king wrote to him to recover the leper, he meant,
that he would take care he might be recovered,
and had not been in this fright. Note, We often create
a great deal of uneasiness to ourselves, by misinter-
preting the words and actions of others that are well
intended; it is charity to ourselves, to think no evil.
If he had betrothed himself of Elisha and his pow-
er, he would easily have understood the letter, and
have known what he had to do, but he is put into
this confusion, by making himself a stranger to
the prophet; the captive maid had him more in
her thoughts than the king had.
V. The proffer which Elisha made of his service;
he was willing to do any thing to make his prince
easy, though he was neglected, and his former good
services forgotten, by him; hearing on what occa-
sion the king had rent his clothes, he sent to him,
to let him know that if his patient would come to him,
he should not lose his labour; (v. 8.) he shall know
that there is a prophet in Israel; (and it were sad
with Israel if there were not;) that there is a pro-
phet in Israel, who can do that which the king of
Israel dares not attempt, which the prophets of Sy-
ria cannot pretend to; it was not for his own honour,
but for the honour of God, that he coveted to make
them all know that there was a prophet in Israel,
though obscure and overlooked.
9. So Naaman came with his horses and
with his chariot, and stood at the door of the
house of Elisha. 10. And Elisha sent a
messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash
in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall
come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.
11. But Naaman was wroth, and went
away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will
surely come out to me, and stand and call
on the name of the Lord his God, and strike
his hand over the place, and recover the
leper. 12. Are not Abana and Pharpar,
ri-
vers of Damascus, better than all the waters
of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be
clean? So he turned, and went away in a
rage. 13. And his servants came near,
and spake unto him, and said, My father, if
the prophet had bid thee do some great thing,
wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? 14. Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

We have here the cure of Naaman's leprosy. I. The short and plain direction which the prophet gave him, with assurance of success. Naaman designed to do honour to Elisha, when he came in his chariot, and with all his retinue, to Elisha's door, v. 9. They that showed little respect to prophets at other times, when they needed them, were very complaisant to them; he attended at Elisha's door as a beggar for an alms. They that would be cleansed from their spiritual leprosy, must wait at Wisdom's gate, and watch at the posts of her doors. Naaman expected to have his compliment returned, but Elisha gave him his answer without any formality; would not go to the door to him, lest he should seem too much pleased with the honour done him, but sent a messenger to him, saying, Go wash in Jordan seven times, and promising him that if he did so, his disease should be cured. Thus was he invited, Thou shalt be clean; the method prescribed was plain, Go wash in Jordan. This was not intended as any means of the cure; though cold bathing is recommended by many as a very wholesome thing, yet some think that in the case of a leprosy, it was rather hurtful; but it was intended as a sign of the cure, and a trial of his obedience: they that would be helped of God, must do as they are bidden. But Elisha sent a messenger to him, with these directions? 1. Because he was not tired, at this time, for devotion, was intent upon his prayers for the cure, and would not be diverted; or, 2. Because he knew Naaman to be a proud man, and he would let him know, that before the great God, all men stand upon the same level.

II. Naaman's disgust at the method prescribed, because it was not what he expected. Two things disgust a proud man; Elisha's effectual cure, put a light upon his person, in sending him only a messenger, his servant, and not coming to him himself, v. 11. Being big with the expectations of a cure, he had been fantasying how this cure would be wrought, and the scheme he had laid, was this; "He will surely come out to me, that is the least he can do to me, a peer of Syria, to me that am come to him in all this state, to me that have so often been victorious over Israel; he will stand, and call on the name of his God, name me in his prayer, and then he will wave his hand over the place, and so effect the cure;" and because the thing is not done just thus, he falls into a passion, forgetting, (1.) That he was a leper, and the law of Moses, which Elisha would religiously observe, shut those out from society; a leper, and therefore he ought not to insist upon the punctilios of honour. Note, Many have hearts unhumbled under humbling providences; see Num. 12. 14. (2.) That he was a petitioner, suing for a favour which he could not demand; and beggars must not be choosers, patients must not prescribe to their physician. See in Naaman the folly of pride; a cure will not content him, unless he be cured with ceremony, with a great deal of pomp and parade; he seems to be healed, unless he be humoured. 2. That Elisha, as he thought, put a slight upon his country; but why did Elisha send a messenger to him, and say, Go wash in Jordan? Was not theJordan, a river of Israel, when he thought Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel. How magnificently does he speak of these two rivers that watered Damascus, which soon after fell into one, called by geographers Chrysopas—the golden stream. How sorrowfully does he speak of all the waters of Israel, though God had called the land of Israel the glory of all lands, and particularly for its brooks of water, Deut. 8. 7. So common is it for God and man to differ in their judgments. How slightly does he speak of the prophet's directions! May I not wash in them and be clean? He might wash in them, and be clean from dirt, but not wash in them, and be clean from leprosy. He was angry that the prophet bade him wash and be clean; he thought that the prophet must do all, and is not pleased that he is hidden to do any thing; or he thinks this too cheap, too plain, too common, a thing for so great a man to be cured by; or he did not believe it would at all affect the cure, or if it would, what medicinal virtue was there in Jordan more than in the rivers of Damascus? But he did not consider, (1.) That Jordan belonged to Israel's God, from whom he was to expect the cure, and not from the gods of Damascus; it watered the Lord's land, the holy land, and, in a miraculous cure, relation to God was much more considerable than the depth of the channel, or the beauty of the stream. (2.) That Jordan had more than once, before this, obeyed the commands of Omnipotence; it had, of old, yielded a passage to Israel, and, of late, to Elijah and Elisha, and therefore was sanctified by the presence of God, whose servant it had only observed the common law of their creation, and had never been thus distinguished; but above all, Jordan was the river appointed, and if he expected a cure from the divine power, he ought to acquiesce in the divine will, without asking why or wherefore. Note, It is common for those that are wise in their own conceits, to look with contempt on the dictates and prescriptions of divine Providence, and to think that a greater wisdom; they that are for establishing their own righteousness, will not submit to the righteousness of God, Rom. 10. 3.

Naaman talked himself into such a heat, (as passionate men usually do,) that he turned away from the prophet's door in a rage, ready to swear he would never have anything more to say to Elisha; and who then would be the loser? Note, They that do not observe the will of men, forsake their own vanities, form another justification; and therefore, that they are for establishing their own righteousness, will not submit to the righteousness of God, Rom. 10. 3.

III. The modest advice which his servants gave him, to observe the prophet's prescriptions, with an implicit reproof of his resentment, v. 13. Though, at other times, they kept their distance, and now saw him in a passion, yet, knowing him to be a man that would hear reason, at any time, and from any body, (a good character of great men, and a very rare one,) they drew near, and made bold to argue the matter a little with him. They had conceived a great opinion of the prophet, (having, perhaps, heard more of him from the common people, whom they had conversed with, than Naaman had heard from the king and courtiers, whom he had conversed with,) and therefore begged of him to consider; If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, had ordered thee to a tedious course of physic, or to submit to some painful operation, blistering, or cupping, or salivating, wouldest thou not have done it? No doubt, thou wouldest. And wilt thou not submit to so easy a method as this, Wash, and be clean?

Observe, 1. His own servants gave him this reproof and counsel, which was no more disgraceful to him than that he had intelligence of, that could cure him, from his wife's maid, v. 2. Note, It is a great mercy to have those about us, that will be free with us, and faithfully tell us of our faults and follies, though they be our inferiors. Mas
ters must be willing to hear reason from their servants, Job 31. 13, 14. As we should be deaf to the counsel of the ungodly, though given by the greatest and most renowned men, so we should not be unopen to good advice, though brought us by those who are much below us: no matter who speaks, if it be well said.

2. The reproof was very modest and respectful; they call him, Father; for servants must honour and obey their masters with a kind of filial affection. In giving reproof and counsel, we must make it appear that it comes from love and true honour, and that we intend, not reproach, but reformation.

3. It was very rational and considerate. If the rude and unthinking servants had stirred up their master's angry resentment, and offered to avenge his quarrel upon the prophet, who (he thought) affronted him, how mischievous had the consequences been! Fire from heaven, probably, upon them all! But they, to our great surprise, took the prophet's part. Elisha, though it is likely he perceived that what he had said, had put Naaman out of humour, took care to pacify him: it was at his peril, if he persisted in his wrath: but his servants are made use of by Providence to reduce him to temper. They reason with him, (1.) From his earnest desire of a cure; Wouldst thou do any thing? Note, When diseased sinners are come to this, that they are content to do any thing, to submit to any thing, to part with any thing, for a cure, then, and not till then, we begin to indulge some hopes of them. Then they will take Christ on his own terms, when they are made willing to have Christ upon any terms. (2.) From the easiness of the method prescribed; it is but, Wash, and be clean. It is but trying; the experiment is cheap and easy, it can do no hurt, but may do good. Note, The methods prescribed for the healing of the leprosy of sin, are so plain, that we are utterly inexcusable if we do not observe them. It is but, Believe, and be saved.” Repent, and be pardoned,” “Wash, and be clean.”

IV. The cure effected, in the use of the means prescribed, v. 14. Naaman, upon second thoughts, yielded to make the experiment, yet, it should seem, with no great faith or resolution; for whereas the prophet had him wash in Jordan seven times, he did but dip himself so many times, as lightly as he could. However, God is pleased so far to honour himself and his word, as to make that effectual. His flesh came again like the flesh of a child, to his great surprise and joy. This, men get by yielding to the will of God, by attending to his institutions. His being cleansed by washing, put an honour on the law for cleansing lepers: God will magnify his word above all his name.

15. And he returned to the man of God, and he and all his company, and came and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant. 16. But he said, As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused. 17. And Naaman said, Shall there then not be prayer made to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord. 18. In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leanceth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon; when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing. 19. And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.

Of the ten lepers our Saviour cleansed, the only one that returned to give thanks, was a Samaritan, Luke 17. 16. This Syrian did so, who here bespeaketh himself.

1. Convinced of the power of the God of Israel, not only that he is God, but that he is God alone, and that indeed that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel, v. 15. A noble confession, but such as bespeaks the misery of the Gentile world; for the nations that had many gods, really had no God, but were without God in the world. He had formerly thought the gods of Syria gods indeed, but now experienced he rectified his mistake, and knew that Israel's God was God alone, the sovereign Lord of all. Had he seen other lepers cleansed, perhaps it had not convinced him, but the mercy of the cure affected him more than the miracle of it. Those are best able to speak of the power of divine grace, who have themselves experienced it.

II. Grateful to Elisha the prophet: “Therefore, for his sake, whose servant thou art, I have a present for thee, silver, and gold, and raiment, whatever Israel's God was God alone, the sovereign Lord of all. Had he seen other lepers cleansed, perhaps it had not convinced him, but the mercy of the cure affected him more than the miracle of it. Those are best able to speak of the power of divine grace, who have themselves experienced it.

11. 9. 10. 11. 31. 32.

III. Proscryed to the worship of the God of Israel. He will not only offer a sacrifice to the Lord, in thanks for his present cure, but he resolves he will never offer sacrifice to any other gods, v. 17. It was a happy cure of his leprosy, which cured him of his idolatry, a more dangerous disease. But here are two instances of his weakness and infirmity in his conversation.

In one instance, he over-did it, that he would not only worship the God of Israel, but he would have clods of earth out of the prophet's garden, or, at least, of the Prophet's ordering, to make an altar of, v. 17. He that a while ago had spoken very slightly of the waters of Israel, (v. 12.) now is in another extreme, and over-values the earth of Israel, supposing (since God appointed altars of earth, Ex. 20. 24.) that the earth itself was most acceptable to him; not considering that all the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. Or perhaps the transport of his affection and veneration for the prophet, not only upon the account of his power, but of his virtue and generosity, made him, as we say, love the very ground he went upon, and desire to have some of it home with him. The modern
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compliment equivalent to this, would be, "Pray, sir, let me have your picture."

2. In another instance, he under-did it, that he reserved to himself a liberty to him, in the house of Rimmon, in compliance to the king his master, and according to the duty of his place at court; (v. 18.) in this thing he must be excused. He owns he ought not to do it, but that he cannot otherwise keep his place; protests his bowing is not, nor ever shall be, as it had been, in honour to the idol, but only in honour to the king; and therefore he hopes God will forgive him. Perhaps, all things considered, this might admit of some apology, though it was not altogether justifiable. But as to us, I am sure, (1.) If, in coveting with God, we make a reservation for any known sin, which we will continue to indulge ourselves in, that reservation is a defeasance of his covenant. We must cast away all our transgressions, and not except any house of Rimmon. (2.) Though we are encouraged to pray for the remission of the sins we have committed, yet if we ask for a dispensation to go on in any sin for the future, we mock God, and deceive ourselves. (3.) Those that know not how to quit a place at court, when they cannot keep it without sinning against God, and wronging their consciences, do not rightly value the divine favour. (4.) Those that truly hate evil, will make conscience of abstaining from all appearances of evil. Though Naaman's deluding of his religion cannot be approved, yet because his promise to offer no sacrifice to any but the God of Israel only, was a great point gained with a Syrian, and because, by asking pardon in this matter, he showed such a degree of conviction and ingenuousness as gave hopes of improvement, the prophet took fair leave of him, and bid him Go in peace, v. 19. Young converts must be tenderly dealt with.

20. But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him. 21. So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well? 22. And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments. 23. And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him. 24. And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed. 25. But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comeest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither. 26. And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?

Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive-yards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and maid-servants? 27. The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

Naaman, a Syrian, a courtier, a soldier, had many servants, and we read how wise and good they were, v. 13. Elisha, a holy prophet, a man of God, has but one servant, and he proves a base liar. They that heard of Elisha at a distance, honoured him, and got good by what they heard; but he that stood commonly before him, to hear his wisdom, had no good impressions made upon him either by his doctrine or miracles. One would expect that Elisha's servant should be a saint, (even Ahab's servant, Obadiah, was,) but even Christ himself had a Judas among his followers. The means of grace cannot give grace. The best men, the best ministers, have often had those about them, that have been their grief and shame. The nearer the prophet's courtier, the further from God. Many went from the east and went to sit down with Abraham, when the children of the kingdom shall be cast out. Here is,

1. Gehazi's sin. It was a complicated sin.

1. The love of money, that root of all evil, was at the bottom of it. His master condemned Naaman's treasures, but he coveted them, v. 20. His heart (says Bishop Hall) was packed up in Naaman's chest, and he must run after him to fetch it. Multitudes, by coveting worldly wealth, have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

2. He blamed his master for refusing Naaman's present, condemned him as foolish, in not taking gold when he might have it, envied and grudged at his kindness and generosities to this stranger, though it was for the good of his soul. In short, he thinkes himself wiser than his master.

3. When Naaman, like a person of accomplished manners, alighted from his chariot to meet him, (v. 21.) he told him a deliberate lie, that his master sent him to him, and so he received that courtesy to himself, which Naaman intended to his master.

4. He abused his master, and basely misrepresented him to Naaman, as one that had so often repented of his generosity, that he told him, and did not know his own mind; that would say and unsay, swear and unswear, that would not do an honourable thing, but he must presently undo it again. His story of the two sons of the prophets was as silly as it was false; if he would have begged a token for two young scholars, surely less than a talent of silver might serve them.

5. There was danger of his alienating Naaman from the only religion which he had espoused, and lessening his good opinion of it. He would be ready to say, as Paul's enemies suggested concerning him, (2 Cor. 12. 16, 17.) that though Elisha himself did not burthen him, yet, being crafty, he caught him with guile, sending those that made a gain of him. We hope that he understood afterward that Elisha's hand was not in it, and that Gehazi was forced to restore what he had unjustly taken from his master again.

6. His seeking to conceal what he had unjustly got, added much to his sin. (1.) He hid it, as Achish did his gain, by sacrilege, in the tower, a secret place, a strong place, till he had an opportunity of laying it out, v. 24. Now he thought himself sure of it, and applauded his own management of a fraud, by which he had imposed, not only upon the prudence of Naaman, but upon Elisha's spirit of dis-
concerning, as Ananias and Sapphira upon the apostles. (2.) He denied it: he went in, and stood before his master, ready to receive his orders; none looked more observant of his master, though really none more injurious to him; he thought, as Ephraim, I am become rich, but they shall find no iniquity in me, Hos. 12. 8. His master asked him, where he had been. "No, sir," (said he,) "out of the house." Note, One lies commonly begets another; the way of that sin is down-hill; therefore dare to be true.

II. The punishment of this sin. Elisha immediately called him to an account for it; and observe,

1. How he was convicted. He thought to impose upon the prophet, but was soon to understand that the Spirit of prophecy could not be deceived, and that it was in vain to lie to the Holy Ghost.

2. What he designed, though he had denied it. "Thou sayest thou wast no whither; but went not my heart with thee?" v. 26. Was Gehazi yet to learn that prophets had spiritual eyes; or could he think to hide anything from a seer, from him with whom the secret of the Lord was? Note, It is folly to presume upon sin, in hopes of secrecy. When thou goest aside into any by-path, (as Gehazi did, vs. 13.) conscience follows thee. Does not the eye of God go with thee? He that covers his sin, shall not prosper; particularly, a lying tongue is but for a moment, Prov. 12. 19. Truth will transpire, and often comes to light, strangely, to the confusion of those that make lies their refuge.

(2.) What he designed, though he kept that in his own breast. He could tell him the very thoughts and intents of his heart, that he was projecting, now that he had got these two talents, to purchase ground and cattle, to leave Elisha's service, and to set up for himself. Note, All the foolish hopes and contrivances of carnal worldlings are open before God. And he tells him also the evil of it. "Is it a time to receive money? Is this an opportunity of enriching thyself? Couldst thou find no better a way of getting money, than by belying thy master, and laying a stumbling-block before a young convert?" Note, Those that are for getting wealth at any time, and by any means, either steal, or cheat, or vext the poor, or lay themselves open to a great deal of temptation. They that will be rich, (her fus, per nefas; rem, quam quaque modo rem—by fair means, by foul means; careless of principle, intent only on money,) drown themselves in destruction and perdition, 1 Tim. 6. 9. War, and fire, and plague, and shipwreck, are not, as many make them, times to get money. It is not a time to increase our wealth, when we cannot do it but in such ways as are dishonourable to God and religion, or injurious to our brethren, or the public.

2. How he was punished for it. The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to thee, v. 27. If he will have his money, he shall take his disease with it, Transit cum onere—It passes with this encumbrance. He was contriving to entail lands upon his posterity; but, instead of them, entails a leathernosome disease on the heirs of his body, from generation to generation. The sentence was immediately executed on himself; no sooner said than done, he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow. Thus he is stigmatised and made infamous, and carries the mark of his shame wherever he goes: thus he loads himself and family with a curse, which shall not only for the present proclaim his villany, but for ever perpetuate the remembrance of it. The getting of treasures by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death, Prov. 21. 6. Those who get wealth by fraud and injustice, cannot expect either the comfort or the continuance of it. What was Gehazi profited, though he gained his two talents, when thereby he lost his health, his honour, his peace, his service, and, if repentance prevented not, his soul for ever? See Job 20. 12, &c.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter, we have, I. A further account of the wondrous works of Elisha. 1. His making iron to swim, v. 1. 7. 2. His disclosing to the king of Israel the secret counsels of the king of Syria, v. 8. 12. 3. His saving himself out of the hands of those who were sent to apprehend him, v. 13., 14. II. The besieging of Samaria by the Syrians, and the great distress the city was reduced to, v. 24., 35. The relief of it is another of the wonders wrought by Elisha's word, which we shall have the opportunity of in the next chapter. Elisha is still a great blessing both to church and state, both to the sons of the prophets and to his prince.

1. And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us. 2. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye. 3. And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go. 4. So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood. 5. But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed. 6. And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he showed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim. 7. Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it.

Several things may be observed here,

I. Concerning the sons of the prophets, and their condition and character. The college here spoken of, seems to be that at Gilgal; for there Elijah was, ch. 4. 38. and it was near Jordan; and, probably, wherever Elisha resided, as many as could of the sons of the prophets, flocked to him for the advantage of his instructions, counsels, and prayers. Every one would covet to dwell with him, and be near him. Those that would be teachers, should lay out themselves to get the best advantages for learning.

Now observe,

1. Their number increased, so that they wanted room. The place is too strait for us, v. 1. A good hearing! For it is a sign many are added to them. Elisha's miracles, doubtless, drew in many; perhaps they increased the more now that Gehazi was cashiered, and, it is likely, a more honest man put in his room, to take care of their provisions, for it should seem by that instance, ch. 4. 43. that Naaman's case was not the only one in which he grudged his master's generosity.

2. They were humble men, and did not affect that which was gay or great. When they wanted room, they did not speak of sending for cedars, and marble-stones, and curious artificers, but only of getting every man a beam, to run up a plain hut or cottage with. It becomes the sons of the prophets, who profess to look for great things in the other world, to be content with mean things in this.

3. They were poor men, and men that had no interest in great ones. It was a sign that Joram was king, and Jezebel ruled too, else the sons of the prophets, when they wanted room, would have needed only to apply to the government, not to con-
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It was a signal of the divine summons to the iron to rise. God’s grace can thus raise the sunk iron heart, which is sunk into the mud of this world, and raise up affections, naturally earthly, to things above.

8. Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. 9. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. 10. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him; and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. 11. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel? 12. And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, teloth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber.

Here we have Elisha, with his spirit of prophecy, serving the king, as, before, helping the sons of the prophets; for that, as other gifts, is given to every man to profit withal; and whatever abilities any man has of doing good, he is by them made a debtor, both to the wise and unwise. Observe here,

1. How the king of Israel was informed by Elisha of all the designs and motions of his enemy, the king of Syria, more effectually than he could have been by the most vigilant and faithful spies. If the king of Syria, in a secret council of war, determined in what place to make an inroad upon the coasts of Israel, where he thought it would be the greatest surprise, and they would be least able to make resistance, before his forces could receive his orders, the king of Israel had notice of them from Elisha, and so had opportunity of preventing the mischief; and this, many a time, v. 8—16. See here, (1.) That the enemies of God’s Israel are politic in their devices, and restless in their attempts, against him. They shall not know, nor see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, Neh. 4. 11. (2.) All those devices are known to God, even those that are deepest laid. He knows not only what men do, but what they design, and has many ways of counterturning them. (3.) It is a great advantage to us, to be warned of our danger, that we may stand upon our guard against it. The work of God’s prophets, is to give us warning; if, being warned, we do not save ourselves, it is our own fault, and our blood will be upon our own head. The king of Israel would regard the warnings Elisha gave him of his danger by the Syrians, but not the one which he gave him of his danger by his sins. Such warnings are little heeded by most; they will save themselves from death, but not from hell.

2. How the king of Syria resented this. He suspected treachery among his senators, and that his counsels were betrayed, v. 11. But one of his servants that had heard, by Naaman and others, of Elisha’s wonderful works, concludes it must needs be he that gave this intelligence to the king of Israel, v. 12. What could not he discover, who could tell Gehazi his thought? Here, a confession

sult among themselves, about the enlargement of their buildings. God’s prophets have seldom been the world’s favourites. Nay, so poor were they, that they had not wherewithal to hire workmen, (but must leave their studies, and work for themselves,) no, nor to buy tools, but must borrow of their neighbours. Poverty then is no bar to prophecy.

4. They were industrious men, and willing to take pains; they desired not to live, like idle drones, (idle monks, I might have said,) upon the labours of others, but only desired leave of the presidents to work for themselves. As the sons of the prophets must not be so taken up with contemplation, as to render themselves unfruitful for action; so much less must they so indulge themselves in their ease, as to be averse to labour. He that must eat or die, must work or starve, 2 Thess. 3. 8. 10. Let no man think an honest employment either a burden or a disparagement.

5. They were men that had a great value and veneration for Elisha; though they were themselves prophets, they paid much deference to him. (1.) They would not go about to build at all, without his leave, v. 2. It is good for us all to be suspicious of our own judgment, even when we think we have most reason for it, and to be desirous of the advice of those who are wiser and more experienced; and it is especially commendable in the sons of the prophets, to take their fathers along with them, and to act in all things of moment under their conduct, fereimus superiorum—by permission of their superiors. (2.) They would not willingly go to fell timber without his company: “Go with thy servants;” (v. 3.) not only to advise us in any exigence, but to keep good order among us, that, being under thine eye, we may behave as becomes us.” Good disciples desire to be always under good discipline.

6. They were honest men, and men that were in their means when they could; when one of them, accidentally fetching too fierce a stroke, (as those that work seldom, are apt to be violent,) threw off his axe-head into the water, he did not say, “It was a mischance, and who can help it?” It was the fault of the helve, and the owner deserves to stand to the loss.” No, he cries out, with deep concern, Alas, master! for it was borrowed, v. 5. Had the axe been his own, it would only have troubled him; but that he could not be further serviceable to his brethren; but now, beside that, it troubles him that he cannot be just to the owner, to whom he ought to be not only just, but grateful. Note, We ought to be as careful of that which is borrowed, as of that which is our own, that it receive no damage, because we must love our neighbour as ourselves, and do as we would be done by. It is likely, that this prophet was poor, and had not wherewithal to pay for the axe, which made the loss of it so much the greater trouble. To those that have an honest mind, the sorest grievance of poverty is, not so much their own want and disgrace, as their being by it rendered unable to pay their just debts.

II. Concerning the father of the prophets, Elisha.

1. That he was a man of great condescension and compassion; he went with the sons of the prophets to the woods, when they desired his company, v. 3. Let no man, especially no minister, think himself too great to stoop to do good, but be tender to all.

2. That he was a man of great power; he could make iron to swim, contrary to its nature, (v. 6.) for the God of nature is not tied up to its laws. He did not throw the helve after the hatchet, but cut down a new stick, and cast it into the river; we need not double the miracle, by supposing that the stick sunk to fetch up the iron, it was enough that...
of the boundless knowledge, as, before, of the boundless power, of Israel’s God, is extorted from Syrians. Nothing done, said, thought, by any person, in any place, at any time, is out of the reach of God’s cognizance.

13. And he said, Go, and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. 14. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. 15. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, a host compassed the city, both with horses and chariots. And his servants said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? 16. And he answered, Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. 17. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man: and he saw, and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. 18. And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the Lord, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness, according to the word of Elisha. 19. And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city; follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria. 20. And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. 21. And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them? 22. And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldst thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master. 23. And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

Here is,

1. The great force which the king of Syria sent to seize Elisha. He found out where he was, at Dothan, (v. 13.) which was not far from Samaria; thither he sent a great host, who were to come upon him by night, and to bring him dead or alive, v. 14. Perhaps he had heard that when only one captain and his 50 men were sent to take Elijah, they were baffled in the attempt, and therefore he sent an army against Elisha, as if the fire from heaven that consumed 50 men, could not as easily consume 50,000. Naaman could tell him that Elisha dwelt not in any strong hold, nor was attended with any guards, nor had any such great interest in the people, that he needed to fear a tumult among them; what occasion then was there for this great force? But they were here to shew, perhaps, especially upon him by surprise. Foolish man! Did he believe that Elisha had informed the king of Israel of his secret counsels or not? If not, what quarrel had he with him? If he did, could he be so weak as to imagine that he would not discover the designs laid against himself? And that, having interest enough in heaven to discover them, he would not have been strong enough to defeat them? Those that fight against God, his people, and prophets, know not what they do.

II. The grievous fright which the prophet’s servant was in, when he perceived the city surrounded by the Syrians, and the effectual course which the prophet took to pacify him, and free him from his fears. It seems, Elisha used his servant to rise early, that is the way to bring something to pass, and have it done to the work of a day. Being up, we may suppose he heard the noise of soldiers thereupon, looked out, and was aware of an army compassing the city, (v. 15.) with great assurance, no doubt, of success; and that they should have this troublesome prophet in their hands presently. Now observe, 1. What a consternation he was in; he runs straight to Elisha, to bring him an account of it, “Alas, master;” (said he,) “what shall we do? We are undone: it is to no purpose to think either of fighting or flying, but we must unavoidably fall into their hands.” Had he but studied David’s Psalms, which were then extant, he might have learnt not to be afraid of ten thousands of people, (Ps. 3. 6.) no not of a host encamped against him, Ps. 27. 3. Had he considered, that he was embarked with his master, by whom God had done great things, and whom he would not now leave to fall into the hands of the uncircumcised, and who, having saved others, no doubt, would save himself, he had not been thus at a loss. If he had only said, What shall I do? it had been the more excusable, and like that of the disciples, Lord, save us, we perish; but he needed not to put his master in, as in distress, nor to say, What shall we do? 2. How his master quieted him; (1.) By word: what he said to him, (v. 16.) is spoken to all the faithful servants of God, when what appears to be wrong, and within are fears; “Fear not, with that fear which has torment and amazement, for they that be with us, to protect us, are more than they that be against us, to destroy us; angels, unspeakably more numerous; God, infinitely more powerful.” When we are magnifying the causes of our fear, we ought to possess ourselves with clear, and great, and high, thoughts of God, and the invisible world. If God be for us, whom can stand against us? Rom. 8. 31. (2.) By vision, v. 17. [1.] It seems, Elisha was much concerned for the satisfaction of his servant. Good men desire, not only to be easy themselves, but to have those about them easy. Elisha had lately parted with his old man, and this, being newly come into his service, had not the advantage of experience; his master was therefore desirous to give him other convincing evidence of that omnipotence which had employed for him. Note, They whose faith is strong, ought tenderly to consider and compassionate those who are weak, and of a timorous spirit, and to do what they can, to strengthen their hands. [2.] He saw himself safe, and wished no more than that his servant might see what he saw, a guard of angels round about him; such as were his master’s convey to the gates of heaven, were his protectors against
the gates of hell: chariots of fire, and horses of fire.

Fire is both dreadful and devouring; that power which was engaged for Elisha's protection, could both terrify and consume the assailants. As angels are God's messengers, so they are his soldiers, his hosts (Gen. 32. 2.) his legions, or regiment: (Matt. 26. 53.) for the good of his people. [3.]

For the satisfaction of his servant, there needed no more of his power than to pray for, and therefore did he pray for, and obtained for him, Lord, open his eyes that he may see.

The eyes of his body were open, and with them he saw the danger, "Lord, open the eyes of his faith, that with them he may see the protection we are under." Note, First, The greatest kindness we can do for those that are fearful and faint-hearted, is, to pray for them, and so to recommend them to the mighty grace of God. Secondly, The opening of our eyes will be the silencing of our fears; in the dark we are most apt to be frightened; the clearer sight we have of the sovereignty and power of heaven, the less we shall fear the calamities of this earth.

III. The shameful defeat which Elisha gave to the host of Syrians who came to seize him; they thought to make a prey of him, but he made fools of them, perfectly played with them, so far was he from fearing them, or any danger from them.

1. He prayed to God to smite them with blindness, and they were all struck blind immediately, not stone-blind, nor so as to be themselves aware that they were blind, for they could see the light, but their sight was so altered, that they could not know the persons and places they were before acquainted with, v. 18. They were so confounded, that those among them whom they depended upon for information, did not know of this place to be Dothan, nor this person to be Elisha; but "scooped at their noon-day as in the night;" (Isa. 59. 10. Job 12. 24, 25.) their memory failed them, and their distinguishing faculty. See the power of God over the minds and understanding of men, both ways; he enlightened the eyes of Elisha's friend, and darkened the eyes of his foes, that they might see indeed, but not perceive, Isa. 6. 9. For this twofold judgment Christ came in, v. 21. "There is a riddle which set not, might see, and that they which see, might be made blind;" (John 9. 39.) as a savour of life to some, of death to others.

2. When they were thus bewildered and confounded, he led them to Samaria, (v. 19.) promising that he would show them the man whom they sought, and did so. He did not lie to them, when he told them, This is not the way, nor is this the city where Elisha is; for he was now come out of the city; and if they would see him, they must go to another city, which he would direct them to. They that fight against God and his prophets, deceive themselves, and are justly given up to delusions.

3. When he had brought them to Samaria, he prayed to God so to open their eyes, and restore them their memories, that they might see where they were; (v. 20.) and, behold, to their great terror, they were in the midst of Samaria, where, it is probable, there was a standing force sufficient to cut them all off, or make them prisoners of war. Satan, the God of this world, blinds men's eyes, and so deludes them into their own ruin; but when God enlightens their eyes, they then see themselves in the midst of their enemies, captives to Satan, and in danger of hell, though, before, they thought their condition good. The enemies of God and his church, when they see his hand by triumph, will find themselves conquered and triumphed over.

4. When he had them at his mercy, he made it appear that he was influenced by a divine goodness as well as a divine power.

(1.) He took care to protect them from the danger into which he had brought them, and was content to show them what he could have done; he needed not the sword of an angel to avenge his cause, the sword of the king of Israel is at his service, if he pleases, v. 21. My father, (so respectfully does he now speak to him, though, soon after, he swore his death,) shall I smite them? And again, as if he longed for the assault, Shall I smite them? Shall I smite them? Enraged at this at his father, for letting go out of his hands the man whom he had put into his power to destroy, and he would not offend in like manner; yet such a reverence has he for the prophet, that he will not strike a stroke without his commission; but the prophet would by no means suffer him to meddle with them, they were brought hither, to be convinced and ashamed, not to be killed, v. 22. Had they been his prisoners, taken captive by his sword and bow, when they had asked quarter, it had been barbarous to deny, and when he had given it them, it had been pernicious to do them any hurt, and against the law of arms to kill men in cool blood; but they were not his prisoners, they were God's prisoners, and the prophet's, and therefore he must do them no harm; they that humble themselves under God's hand, take the best course to secure themselves.

(2.) He provided for another; he ordered the king to treat them humanely, and then dismiss them fairly, which he did, v. 23. [1.] It was the king's praise, that he was so obsequious to the prophet, contrary to his inclination, and, as it seemed, to his interest, 1 Sam. 24. 19. Nay, so willing was he to oblige Elisha, that whereas he was ordered only to set bread and water before them, (and that is good fare for captives,) he prepared great provision for them, for the credit of his court and country, not Elisha's. [2.] It was the prophet's praise, that he was so generous to his enemies, who, though they came to take him, could not but go away admiring him, as both the mightiest and the kindest man they ever met with. The great duty of loving enemies, and doing good to those that hate us, was both commanded, in the Old Testament, (Prov. 25. 21, 22. If thine enemy hunger, feed him, Exod. 23. 4, 5.) and practised, as here by Elisha; his predecessor had given a specimen of divine justice, when he called for flames of fire on the heads of his persecutors to consume them, but he gave a specimen of divine mercy, in heaping coals of fire on the heads of his persecutors to melt them; let not us then be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Lastly, The good effect this had, for the present, upon the Syrians; they came no more into the land of Israel, (v. 23.) namely, upon this errand, to take Elisha; they saw it was to no purpose to attempt that, nor would any of their bands be persuaded to make an assault on so great and good a man. The most glorious victory over an enemy is to turn him into a friend.

24. And it came to pass after this, that Ben-hadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria.

25. And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of door's dung for five pieces of silver. 26. And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king! 27. And he said, If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn-floor, or out of
the wine-press? 28. And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow. 29. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him; and she hath hid her son. 30. And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh. 31. Then he said, God do so and more also to me if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day. 32. But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him: and the king sent a man from before him: but ere the messenger came to him, he said to the elders. See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: is not the sound of his master's feet behind him? 33. And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him, and he said, Behold, this evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?

This last paragraph of this chapter should, of right, have been the first of the next chapter, for it begins a new story, which is there continued and concluded.

Here is,

I. The siege which the king of Syria laid to Samaria, and the great distress which the city was reduced to thereby; the Syrians had soon forgotten the kindnesses they had lately received in Samaria, and very ungratefully, for aught that appears, without any provocation, seek the destruction of it, v. 24. Those are base spirits, that show no lasting gratitude.

The country, we may suppose, was plundered and laid waste, when this capital city was brought to the last extremity, v. 25. The dearth which had of late been in the land was, probably, the occasion of the emptiness of their stores; or the siege was so sudden, that they had not time to lay in provisions: so that while the sword devoured without, the famine within was more grievous; (Lam. 4. 9.) for, it should seem, the Syrians designed not to storm the city, but to starve it. So great was the scarcity, that an ass's head, that has but little flesh on it, and that unsavoury, unwholesome, and ceremonially unclean, was sold for five pounds, and a small quantity of fishes, or lentiles, or some such coarse corn, then called döver's dünge, no more of it than the quantity of six eggs, for five pieces of silver, about twelve or fifteen shillings. Learn to value plenty, and to be thankful for it; see how contemptible money is, when, in time of famine, it is so freely parted with for any thing that is eatable.

II. The sad complaint which a poor woman had to make to the king, in the extremity of the famine; he was passing by upon the wall to give orders for the measuring of the guard, the posting of the archers, the repair of the breaches, and the like, when a woman of the city cried to him, Help, my lord, O king, v. 26. Whither should the subject, in distress, go for help but to the prince, who is, by office, the protector of right, and the avenger of wrong? He returns but a melancholy answer, (v. 27.) If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I? Some think it was a quarrelling word, and the language of his fretfulness; "Why dost thou expect any thing from me, when God himself deals thus hardly with us?" Because he could not help her as he would, out of the floor or the wine-press, he would not help her at all; we must take heed of being made cross by importunate prayers. It rather seems to be a quieting word; "Let us be content, and make the best of our affliction, looking up to God, for till he help us, I cannot help thee." 1. He laments the emptiness of the floor and the wine-press; those were not as they had been, even the king's failed. We read, v. 23, of great provisions which he had at command, sufficient for the entertainment of an army; yet now he has not wherewithal to relieve one poor woman. The city sometimes follows upon great plenty; we cannot be sure that to-morrow shall be as this day. Isa. 56. 12. Ps. 30. 6. 2. He acknowledges himself thereby disabled to help, unless God would help them. Note, Creatures are helpless things without God, for every creature is that, all that, and only that, which he makes it to be. However, though he cannot help her, he is willing to hear her; (v. 28.) What ills thee? Is there any thing singular in the case, or dost thou fare worse than thy neighbours? Truly yes; she and one of her neighbours had made a barbarous agreement, that, at all provocations failing, they should boil and eat her son first, and then her neighbour's; her's was eaten, (who can think of it without horror!) and now her neighbour hid her, v. 28, 29. See an instance of the dominion which the flesh has got above the spirit, when the most natural affections of the mind may be thus overpowered by the natural appetites of the body: see the case of God's afflicted; among the threatenings of God's judgments upon Israel for their sins, this was one, (Deut. 28. 53 ...57.) that they should eat the flesh of their own children, which one would think incredible, yet it came to pass.

III. The king's indignation against Elisha, upon this occasion; he laments the calamity, rent his clothes, and had sackcloth upon his flesh, (v. 30.) as he had heartily lamented for the misery of his people, and that it was not in his power to relieve them. He laments not his own iniquity, nor the iniquity of his people, which was the procuring cause of the calamity; he is not sensible that his ways and his doings have procured this to himself; this is his wickedness, for it is bitter; the foolishness of man hurcets his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord; instead of vowing to pull down the calves at Dan and Beth-el, or letting the law have its course against the prophets of Baal, and of the groves, he swears the death of Elisha, v. 31. Why, what is the matter? What has Elisha done? His head is the most innocent and valuable in all Israel, and yet that must be devoted, and made an anathema. Thus in the days of the persecuting emperors, when the empire groaned under any extraordinary calamity, the fault was laid on the Christians, and they were doomed to destruction, (Acts 17.)—Away with the Christians to the lions! Perhaps there was a quarrel against Elisha, because he had foretold this judgment, or had persuaded him to hold out, and not surrender, or rather, because he did not, by his prayers, raise the siege, and relieve the city, which he thought he could do, but would not; whereas till they repented and reformed, and were ready fordeliverance, they had no reason to expect that the prophet should pray for it.

IV. The foresight Elisha had of the king's design against him; (v. 32.) he sat in his house well composed, and the elders with him well employed, ne
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doubt, while the king was like a wild bull in a net, or like the troubled sea when it cannot rest; he told the elders there was an officer coming from the king to strike off his head, and bade them send him at the door, and not let him in, for the king his master was just following him, to revoke the order, as we may suppose. The same spirit of prophecy that enabled Elisha to tell what was done at a distance, authorized him to call the king the son of a murderer, which, unless we could produce such an extraordinary commission, it is not for us to imitate; far be it from us to despise dominion, and to speak evil of dignities. He appeals to the elders, whether he had deserved so ill at the king's hands; see whether in this he be not the son of a murderer? For, what evil had Elisha done? He had not desired the woful day, Jer. 17. 16.

V. The king's passionate speech, when he came to prevent the execution of his edict for the beheading of Elisha; he seems to have been in a struggle between his convictions and his corruptions, knew not what to say, but, seeing things brought to the last extremity, he even abandons himself to despair; (v. 33.) This evil is of the Lord: therein his notions were right, and well applied; it is a general truth, that all penal evil is of the Lord, as the First Cause, and Sovereign Judge, (Amos 3. 6.) and this we ought to apply to particular cases; if all evil, then this evil, whatever it is we are now groaning under; whoever are the instruments, God is the principal Agent; v. 34. But because this is a new and great truth was foolish and wicked, What should I wait for the Lord any longer? When E1, and David, and Job, said, It is of the Lord, they grew patient upon it, but this bad man grew outrageous upon it; "I will neither fear worse, for worse cannot, nor expect better, for better never will, come; we are all undone, and there is no remedy." It is an unreasonable thing to be weary of waiting for God, for he is God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him.

CHAP. VII.

Relief is here brought to Samaria and her king, when the case was, in a manner, desperate, and the king despairing. 1. It is foretold by Elisha, and an unbelieving lord shut out from the benefit of it, v. 1, 2. 11. It is brought about, 1. By an unaccountable fright which God put the Syrians into, (v. 6.) which caused them to retire precipitately, v. 7. 2. By the seasonable discovery which four lepers made of this, (v. 3.-5.) and the account they gave of it to the court, v. 8.-11. 3. By the cautious trial which the king made of the truth of it, v. 12. 15. Lastly, The event answered the prediction both in the sudden plenty, (v. 16.) and the death of the unbelieving lord, (v. 17.20.) for no word of God shall fall to the ground.

1. THEN Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the Lord: Thus saith the Lord, To-morrow, about this time, shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. 2. Then a lord, on whose hand the king leaned, answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

Here, 1. Elisha foretells that notwithstanding the great straits that the city of Samaria was reduced to, within 24 hours they should have plenty, v. 1. The king of Israel despaired of it, and grew weary of waiting: Elisha said this, then, when things were at the worst; man's extremity is God's opportunity of magnifying his own power; his time to appear for his people is, when their strength is gone, Deut. 32. 35. When they had given over expecting help it came: When the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth? Luke 18. 8. The king said, What should I wait for the Lord any longer? And perhaps some of the elders were ready to say the same; "Well," said Elisha, "you hear what these say; now hear ye the word of the Lord, hear what he says, hear it and heed it, hear it and believe it; to-morrow, corn shall be sold at the usual rate in th gate of Samaria;" that is, (1.) The siege shall be raised, for the gate of the city shall be opened, and the market shall be held there as formerly; the return of peace is thus expressed, Judg. 5. 11. Then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates, to buy and sell there. (2.) The consequence of that shall be great plenty: this would, in time, follow, of course, but that corn should be thus cheap in so short a time, was quite beyond what could be thought of; though the king of Israel had just now threatened Elisha's life, God promises to save his life and the life of his people, for where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound.

2. A peer of Israel, that happened to be present, openly declared his disbelief of this prediction, v. 2. He was a courtier whom the king had an affection for, as the man of his right hand, on whom he leaned, that is, on whose prudence he much relied, and in whom he reposed much confidence; he thought the time was not ripe for the performance of this event, so he abandoned himself to despair; (v. 33.) This evil is of the Lord: therein his notions were right, and well applied; it is a general truth, that all penal evil is of the Lord, as the First Cause, and Sovereign Judge, (Amos 3. 6.) and this we ought to apply to particular cases; if all evil, then this evil, whatever it is we are now groaning under; whoever are the instruments, God is the principal Agent; v. 34. But because this is a new and great truth was foolish and wicked, What should I wait for the Lord any longer? When E1, and David, and Job, said, It is of the Lord, they grew patient upon it, but this bad man grew outrageous upon it; "I will neither fear worse, for worse cannot, nor expect better, for better never will, come; we are all undone, and there is no remedy." It is an unreasonable thing to be weary of waiting for God, for he is God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him.

3. And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? 4. If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live: and if they kill us, we shall but die. 5. And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there. 6. For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. 7. Wherefore they arose, and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses even the camp as it was,
and fled for their life. 8. And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it. 9. Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household. 10. So they came, and called unto the porter of the city; and they told him, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were. 11. And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's house within.

We are here told.
I. How the siege of Samaria was raised in the evening, at the edge of night, (v. 6, 7.) not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, striking terror upon the spirits of the besiegers; here was not a sword drawn against them, not a drop of blood shed, it was not by thunder or hailstones that they were discomfited, nor were they slain, as Sennacherib's army before Jerusalem, by a dry four angels, but—

1. The Lord made them to hear a noise of chariots and horses; the Syrians that besieged Dothan, had their sight imposed upon; (ch. 6. 18.) these had their hearing imposed upon, for God knows how to work upon every sense, pursuant to his own counsels; as he makes the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, so he makes the deaf and the blind, Exod. 4. 11. Whether the noise was really made in the air by the ministry of angels, or whether it was a sound in their ears, is not certain; whichever it was, it was from God, who both brings the wind out of his treasures, and forsaith the spirit of man within him. The sight of horses and chariots had encouraged the prophet's servant, (ch. 6. 17.) the noise of horses and chariots terrified the hosts of Syria; for notices from the invisible world are either very comfortable, or very dreadful, according as men are at peace with God, or at war with him.

2. Hearing this noise, they concluded the king of Israel had certainly procured assistance from some foreign power; he has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians; there was, for aught we know, but one king of Egypt, and what kings there were of the Hittites no body can imagine; but as they were imposed upon by that dreadful sound in their ears, so they imposed upon themselves by the interpretation they made of it. Had they supposed the king of Judah to have come with his forces, there had been more of probability in it, than to dream of the kings of the Hittites, and the Egyptians; if the fancies of any of them raised this spectre, yet their reasons might soon have hid it: how could the king of Israel, who was closely beseced, hold intelligence with these distant princes? What had he to hire them with? It was impossible but some notice would come, before, of the motions of so great an host; but there were they in great fear, where no fear was.

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3. Hereupon they all fled with incredible precipitation, as for their lives, left their camp as it was, and even their tents, (v. 10.) might have remained their flight, they could not stand to take with them, v. 7. None of them had so much sense as to send out scouts to discover the supposed enemy, much less, courage enough to face the enemy, though fraught with a long march; the wicked flee, when none pursues; God can, when he pleases, dispirit the boldest and most brave, and make the stoutest heart tremble; as for them that will not fear God, then make them fear at the shaking of a leaf.

II. How the Syrians' flight was discovered by four lepers. Samaria is delivered, and does not know it; the watchmen on the walls were not aware of the retreat of the enemy, so silently did they steal away; but Providence employs four lepers to be the intelligencers, who had their lodging without the gate, being excluded the city, as ceremonially unclean: the Jews say they were Gehazi and his three sons; perhaps Gehazi might be one of them, which might make him be taken notice of afterward by the king, ch. 8. 4. See here,

1. How these lepers reasoned themselves into a resolution to make a visit in the night to the camp of the Syrians, v. 3, 4. They were ready to perish for hunger, none passed through the gate to relieve them, should they go into the city, there was nothing to be had there, they must die in the streets; could they not, if they might, return to thence to their cottage; they therefore determine to go over to the enemy, and throw themselves upon their mercy; if they killed them, better die by the sword than by famine, one death than a thousand; but perhaps they would save them alive, as objects of compassion: common prudence will put us upon that method which may mend our condition, but cannot make it worse. The prodigal son resolves to return to his father with displeasure he had reason to fear, rather than perish with hunger in the far country. These lepers conclude, "If they kill us, we shall but die;" and happy they who, in another sense, can thus speak of dying; "We shall but die, that is the worst of it, not die and be damned, not be hurt of the second death." According to this resolution, they went, in the beginning of the night, to the camp of the Syrians, and to their great surprise, found not a man there, neither seen or heard in it, v. 5. Providence ordered it, that these lepers came as soon as ever the Syrians were fled, for they fled in the twilight, (the evening twilight,) v. 7. and in the twilight the lepers came; (v. 5.) and so no time was lost.

2. How they reasoned themselves into a resolution to bring tidings of this to the city; they feasted in the first tent they came to, (v. 6.) and then began to think of enquiring themselves with the plunderer: but they correct themselves; (v. 9.) "We do not do well, to conceal those good tidings from the community we are members of, under colour of being avenged upon them for excluding us their society; it was the law that did it, not they, and therefore let us bring them the news; though it awake them from sleep, it will be life from the dead to them." Then it was that the lepers decided, the mischief would befall them, if they acted separately, and sought themselves only; selfish narrow-spirited people cannot expect to prosper, the most comfortable prosperity is that which our brethren share with us in. According to this resolution, they returned to the gate, and acquainted the sentinel with what they had discovered, (v. 10.) whostraightway brought the intelligence to court, (v. 11.) and it was never the less acceptable for being first brought by lepers.

12. And the king arose in the night, and
said unto his servants, I will now show you what the Syrians have done to us: They knew that we be hungry, therefore are they gone out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city. 13. And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it; behold, I say, they are even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed,) and let us send and see. 14. They took therefore two chariot horses ; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see. 15. And they went after them unto Jordan; and, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste: and the messengers returned, and told the king. 16. And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord. 17. And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him. 18. And it came to pass, as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to-morrow, about this time, in the gate of Samaria: 19. And that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. 20. And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died. 

Here is, 1. The king's jealousy of a stratagem in the Syrians' retreat; (v. 12.) he feared they withdrew into an ambush, to draw out the besieged, that they might fall on them with more advantage; he knew he had no reason to expect that God should appear thus wonderfully for him, having forfeited his favour by his unbelief and impatience; he knew no reason the Syrians had to fly, for it does not appear that he or any of his attendants heard the noise of the chariots which the Syrians were frightened at. Let not those who, like him, are unstable in all their ways, think to receive anything from God; nay, a guilty conscience fears the worst, and makes men suspicious. 11. The course they took for their satisfaction, and to prevent their falling into a snare; they sent spies to see what was become of the Syrians, and found they were all fled indeed, commanders as well as common soldiers; they could track them by the garments which they threw off, and left by the way, for their greater expedition, v. 15. He that gave this advice, seems very sensible of the deplorable condition the people were in, (v. 13.) for, speaking of the horses, many of which were dead, and the rest ready to perish for hunger, he says and repeats, They are as all the multitude of Israel. Israel used to glory in their multitude, but now they are diminished and brought low: he advised to send five horsemen, but it should seem, there were only five chariot horses, as those chariot-horses, v. 14. Now the Lord repented himself concerning his servants, when he saw that their strength was gone, Deut. 32. 36. III. The plenty that was in Samaria, from the plunder of the camp of the Syrians, v. 16. Had the Syrians been governed by the modern policy of war, when they could not take their baggage and their tents with them, they would rather have left them, (as it is common to do with the forage of a country,) than let them fall into their enemies' hands; but God intended that the besieging of Samaria, which was intended for its ruin, should turn to its advantage, and that Israel should now be enriched with the spoil of the Syrians, as of old with those of the Egyptians. Here see, 1. The wealth of the sinner laid up for the just, (Job 27. 16, 17.) and the spoilers spoilt, Isa. 33. 1. 2. The ways of peace are paved with blood. God is pleased in a way to satisfy the desire of the upright, of which should encourage us to depend upon the power and goodness of God in our greatest straits. 3. The word of Elisha fulfilled, to a little, a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel; they spoiled the camp, had not only enough to supply themselves with, but an overplus to sell at an easy rate for the benefit of others; and so even they that tarried at home, did divide the spoil, Ps. 66. 12. Isa. 33. 23. Let him that promised may rely on, for, on good of his shall fall to the ground. IV. The death of the unbelieving courtier, that questioned the truth of Elisha's word; divine threatenings will as surely be accomplished as divine promises; He that believeth not shall be damned, stands as firm as He that believeth, shall be saved. This lord, 1. Was preferred by the king to the charge of the gate, (v. 17.) to keep the peace, and to see that there was no disorder among the multitude. 2. Was treasured with the revenues of the spoil; so much trust did the king repose in him, and in his prudence and gravity, and so much did he delight to honour him: he that will be great, let him serve the public. 2. Was trodden to death by the people in the gate, either by accident, the crowd being exceeding great, and he in the thickest of it, or perhaps designedly, because he abused his power, and was imperious, in restraining the people from satisfying their hunger: however it was, God's justice was glorified, and the word of Elisha was fulfilled; he saw the plenty, for the silencing and shaming of his unbelief, corn cheap without opening windows in heaven, and therein saw his own folly in prescribing to God; but he did not eat of the plenty he saw; when he was about to fill his belly, God cast the fury of his wrath upon him, (Job 20. 23.) and it came between the cup and the lip; justly are those thus tantalized with the world's promises, that think themselves tantalized with the promises of God; if believing shall not be seeing, seeing will not be enjoying. This matter is repeated, and the event very particularly compared with the prediction, (v. 18., 20.) that we might take special notice of it, and might learn, (1.) How deeply God resents our distrust of him, and of his power, providence, and promises; when Israel said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? and was wrath. Infinite wisdom will not be limited by our folly: God never promises the end, without knowing where to provide the means. (2.) How uncertain life is, and
the enjoyments of it; honour and power cannot secure men from sudden and inglorious deaths; he whom the king leaned upon, the people trod upon; he who fancied himself the stay and support of the government, is trampled under foot as the more in the streets: thus hath the pride of men's glory been often stilled. (S) How certain God's threatenings are, and how sure it is: on the guilty and abominable heads: let all men fear before the great God, who treads upon princes as a mortar, and is terrible to the kings of the earth.

CHAP. VIII.

The passages of story recorded in this chapter, oblige us to look back. 1. We read, before, of a Shunammite woman that was a kind benefactor to Elisha; now here we are told how she fared the better for it, afterward, in the advice Elisha gave her, and the favour the king showed for his sake, v. 1. 6. II. We read, before, of the designation of Hazael to be king of Syria, (1 Kings 19. 15.) and here we have an account of his elevation to that throne, and the way he forced himself to it, by killing his master, v. 7. 15. III. We read, before, of Jehoram's reigning over Judah in the room of his father Jehoshaphat; (1 Kings 22. 50.) now here we have a short and sad history of his short and wicked reign, (v. 16. 22.) and the beginning of the history of the reign of his son Ahaziah, v. 25. 29.

1. THEN spake Elisha unto the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the Lord hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years. 2. And the woman arose, and did after the saying of the man of God: and she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years. 3. And it came to pass at the seven years' end, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines: and she went forth to cry unto the king for her house and for her land. 4. And the king talked with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done. 5. And it came to pass, as he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land. 6. And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life. 6. And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field, since the day that she left the land, even until now.

Here we have,

I. The wickedness of Israel punished with a long famine, one of God's sore judgments of them threatened in the law: Canaan, that fruitful land, is turned into barrenness, for the iniquity of them that dwelt therein. The famine in Samaria was so long continued, by the raising of the siege, but neither that judgment, nor that mercy, had a due influence upon them, and therefore the Lord calls for another famine; for when he judgeth, he will overcome; if lesser judgments do not prevail to bring men to repentance, he will send greater and longer; they are at his beck, and will come when he calls for them. He does, by his ministers, call for reformation and obedience, and if these calls be not regarded, we may expect to see the immediate hand of God in it, for which he will be heard; the famine had continued for seven years, as long again as that in Elijah's time; for, if men will walk contrary to him, he will heat the furnace yet hotter.

II. The kindness of the good Shunammite to the prophet rewarded by the care that was taken of her in that famine; she was not indeed fed by miracle, as the widow of Sarepta was, but, 1. She had notice given her of this famine before it came, that she might provide accordingly, and was directed to remove to some other country; any where, but in Israel, she would find plenty. It was a great advantage to Egypt in Joseph's time, that they had notice of the famine before it came, so it was to this Shunammite; others would be forced to remove at last, after they had long borne the grievances of the famine, and had wasted their substance, and could not settle elsewhere upon such good terms as she might, that went early before the crowd, and took her stock with her unbroken. It is our happiness to foresee an evil, and our wisdom, when we foresee it, to hide ourselves. 2. Providence gave her a comfortable settlement in the land of the Philistines, who, though subdued by David, yet were not wholly rooted out; it seems the famine was peculiar to the land of Israel, and other countries that joined close to them, had plenty at the same time, which plainly showed she was in the immediate hand of God in it, as the plagues of Egypt, when they distinguished between the Israelites and Egyptians, and that the sins of Israel, against whom this judgment was directly levelled, were more provoking to God than the sins of their neighbours, because of their profession of relation to God; You only have I known, therefore will I punish you, Amos 3. 2. Other countries had rain when they had none, were free from locusts, and were not caught up with them; for some think this was the famine spoken of, Joel 1. 3. 4. It is strange that when there was plenty in the neighbouring countries, there were not those that made it their business to import corn into the land of Israel, which might have prevented the inhabitants removing; but as they were befuddled with their idolatries, so they were infatuated even in the matters of their civil interest.

III. Her petition to the king at her return, favoured by the seasonableness of her application to him.

1. When the famine was over, she returned out of the land of the Philistines; that was no proper place for an Israelite any longer than there was necessity for it, for there she could not keep her new moons and her sabbaths as she used to do in her own country, among the schools of the prophets, ch. 22. 3. 2. At her return, she found herself kept out of the possession of her own estate, it being either confiscated to the exchequer, seized by the lord, or usurped, in her absence, by some of the neighbours; or perhaps the person she had intrusted with the management of it, proved false, and would neither resign it to her, nor come to an account with her for the profits; so hard is it to find a person that can put a trust into one in a time of trouble, Prov. 25. 19. Mic. 7. 5. 3. She made her application to the king himself for redress; for, it seems, (be it observed to his praise,) he was easy of access, and did himself take cognizance of the complaints of his injured subjects.
Time was, when she dwelt so securely among her own people, that she had no occasion to be shone for to the king, or to the captain of the host; (ch. 4. 13.) but now her own familiar friends, in whom she trusted, proved so unjust and unkind, that she was glad to appeal to the king against them; such uncertainty there is in the creature, that may fail us, which we most depend upon, and that befriended us, which we think we shall never need.

4. She found the king talking with Gehazi about Elisha's miracles, v. 4. It was his shame, that he needed now to be informed concerning them, when he might have acquainted himself with them as they were done from Elisha himself, if he had not been willing to shut his eyes against the convincing evidences of his mission; yet it was his praise, that he was now better disposed, and would rather talk with a leper that was capable of giving a good account of them, than continue ignorant of them. The law did not forbid all conversation with lepers, but only dwelling with them; there being then no priests in Israel, perhaps the king, or some one appointed by him, had the inspection of lepers, and passed the judgment upon them, which might bring him acquainted with Gehazi.

5. This happy coincidence befriended both Gehazi's interest and his petition. Providence is to be acknowledged in ordering the circumstances of events, for sometimes those that are minute in themselves, prove of great consequence, as this here for,

(1.) It made the king ready to believe Gehazi's narrative, when it was thus confirmed by the persons most nearly concerned; "This is the woman, and this her son," let them speak for themselves, v. 5. Thus did God even force him to believe what he might have had some colour to question, if he had only had Gehazi's word for it, because he was branded for a liar, witness his leprosy.

(2.) It made him ready to grant her request; for who would not be ready to favour one whom Heaven had thus favoured, and to support a life which was given once and again by miracle? In consideration of this, the king gave orders that her land should be restored, and all that had been made of it in her absence; if it were to himself, that the land and profits had eschewed, it was generous and kind to make so full a restitution; he would not (as Pharaoh did in Joseph's time) enrich the crown by the calamities of his subjects; if it were by some other person that her property was invaded, it was an act of justice in the king, and part of the duty of his place to do her right, Ps. 82. 3, 4. Prov. 31. 9. It was not enough for those in authority, that they do no wrong themselves, but they must support the right of those that are wronged.

7. And Elisha came to Damascus; and Ben-hadad the king of Syria was sick: and it was told him, saying, The man of God is come hither. 3. And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go, meet the man of God, and inquire of the Lord by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease? 9. So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden, and came and stood before him, and said, Thy son Ben-hadad king of Syria, hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease? 10. And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit, the Lord hath showed me that he shall surely die. 11. And he settled his countenance steadfastly until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept. 12. And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child. 13. And Hazael said, But what is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria. 14. So he departed from Elisha, and came to his master; who said to him, What said Elisha to thee? And he answered, He told me that thou shalt surely recover. 15. And it came to pass on the morrow, that he took a thick cloth, and dipped it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died; and Hazael reigned in his stead.

Here,

I. We may inquire what brought Elisha to Damascus, the chief city of Syria. Was he sent to any but the lost sheep of the house of Israel? It seems he was, perhaps he went to make a visit to Naaman his convert, and to confirm him in his choice of the true religion, which was the meekest needful now, because, it should seem, he was now out of his place, for Hazael is supposed to be captain of the host; either he resigned it, or was turned out of it, because he would not bow, or not bow heartily, in the house of Rimmon; some think he went to Damascus upon account of the famine, or rather, he went thither in obedience to the orders God gave Elijah, (1 Kings 19. 15.) Go to Damascus and anoint Hazael, thou, or thy successor.

II. We may observe that Ben-hadad, a great king, rich and mighty, lay sick; no honour, wealth, or power, will secure men from the common diseases and disasters of human life; palaces and thrones lie as open to the arrests of sickness and death as the meanest cottage.

III. We may wonder that the king of Syria, in his sickness, should make Elisha his oracle. Notice was soon brought him that the man of God (for by that title he was well known in Syria since he cured Naaman) was come to Damascus, v. 7. Never in better time, says Ben-hadad; Go, and inquire of the Lord by him; in his health, he bowed in the house of Rimmon; but now that he is sick, he distrusts his idol, and sends to inquire of the God of Israel. Affliction brings those to God, who, in their prosperity, had made light of him; sometimes sickness opens men's eyes, and rectifies their mistakes. This is the more observable, 1. Because it is not long since a king of Israel had, in his sickness, sent to inquire of the God of Ekron, (ch. 1. 2.) as if there had been no God in Israel. Note, God sometimes fetches to himself that honour from strangers, which is denied him, and alienated from him, by his own professing people. 2. Because it is not long since this Ben-hadad had sent a great force to treat Elisha as an enemy, (ch. 6. 14.) yet now he courts him as a prophet. Note, Among other instances of the change of men's minds by sickness and affliction, this is one, that it often gives them other thoughts of God's ministers, and teache-
them to value the counsels and prayers of those whom they had hated and despised.

To put an honour upon the prophet, (1.) He sends to him, and does not send for him, as if, with the centurion, he thought himself not worthy that the man of God should come under his roof. (2.) He sends to him by Hazael, his prime minister of state, and not by a common messenger. It is no disparagement to the greatest of men, to attend the prophets of the Lord; Hazael must go meet him at the place where he had appointed a meeting with his friends. (3.) He sends him a noble present, of every good thing of Damascus, as much as loaded forty camels; (v. 6.) testifying hereby his affection to the prophet, bidding him welcome to Damascus, and providing for his sustenance while he sojourned there; it is probable that Elisha accepted it, (why should he not?) though he refused Naaman's. (4.) He orders Hazael to call him his son Ben-hadad, (v. 15.) What says he, is thy servant a dog, that beled the prophets fathers. Lastly, He put an honour upon him as one acquainted with the secrets of Heaven, when he inquired of him, Shall I recover? It is natural to us, to desire to know things to come in time, while things come to eternity are little thought of, or inquired after.

IV. What passed between Hazael and Elisha, is especially remarkable. 1. Elisha answers his question, and tells him that he might recover, the disease was not mortal, but that he should die another way, (v. 10.) not a natural, but a violent death. There are many ways out of the world, and sometimes, while men think to avoid one, they fall by another. 2. He looked Hazael in the face with an unusual concern, till he made Hazael blush, and himself weep, v. 11. The man of God could out-face the man of war. It was not in Hazael's heart to be disposed to do what Elisha read what he would do, but God did, at this time, reveal it to him, and it fetched tears from his eyes: the more foresight men have, the more grief they are liable to. 3. When Hazael asked him why he wept, he told him what a great deal of mischief he foresaw he would do the Israel of God, (v. 12.) what desolations he would make of their strong holds, and barbarous destruction of the metropolis itself. M. It was not in Hazael's heart to do such things to the prophet himself; and of Israel provoked God to give them up into the hands of their cruel enemies, yet Elisha wept to think that ever Israelites should be thus abused; for though he foretold, he did not desire, the woful day. See what havoc war makes, what havoc sin makes, and how the nature of man is changed by the fall, and stript even of humanity itself. 4. Hazael is greatly surprised at this prediction; (v. 13.) What says he, a dog should live, that told the prophets fathers, and do this great thing? This great thing he looks upon to be, (1.) An act of great power, not to be done but by a crowned head; it must be some mighty potentate that can think to prevail thus against Israel, and therefore not I; many are raised to that dominion which they never thought of, and it often proves to their own hurt, Eccl. 8. 9. (2.) An act of great barbarity, which could not be done but by one lost to all honour and virtue: "Therefore," says he, "it is what I shall never find in my heart to be guilty of: Is thy servant a dog, to rend, and tear, and devour? Unless I were a dog, I could not do it." See here, [1.] What a bad opinion he had of the sin, he looked upon it to be great wickedness, fitter for a brute, for a beast of prey, to do than a man. Note, It is possible for a wicked man, under the convictions of natural light, to express great abhorrence of a sin, and yet afterward to be well reconciled to it. [2.] What a good opinion he had of himself, how much better than he deserved; he thought it impossible he should do such barbarous things as the prophet foresaw.

V. What mischief Hazael did to his master, hereupon; if he took any occasion to do it from what Elisha had said, the fault was in him, not in the word.

1. He basely cheated his master, and belied the prophet; (v. 14.) He told me thou shouldst certainly recover: this was abominably false, he told him he should die; (v. 10.) but he unfairly and unfaithfully concealed that, either because he was leath to put the king out of humour with bad news, or because hereby he might the more effectually carry that bloody design, which he conceived when he was told he should be his successor. The Devil tempts men, by telling them they shall certainly recover and do well; so rocking them asleep in security, than which nothing is more fatal: this was an injury to the king, who lost the benefit of this warning to prepare for death, and an injury to Elisha, who would be counted a false prophet.

2. He barbarously murdered his master, and so made good the prophet's word, v. 15. He dipped a thick cloth in cold water, and spread that upon his face, under pretence of cooling his heat, but so that it stopped his breath, and stifled him presently, he being weak, (and not able to help himself,) or perhaps asleep; such a bubble is the life of the greatest of men, and so much exposed are princes to violence. Hazael, who was Benhadad's confidant, is his murderer, and, some think, was not suspected, nor did it ever come out but by the pen of this inspired historian. We found this haughty monster, (1 Kings 20.) the most mighty in the land of the living, but he goes down slain to the pit with his iniquity upon his bones, Ezek. 32. 25.

16. And in the fifth year of Joram, the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then king of Judah, Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, began to reign. 17. Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 18. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab; for the daughter of Ahab was his wife: and he did evil in the sight of the Lord. 19. Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah for David his servant's sake, as he promised to give him always a light, and to his children. 20. In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves. 21. So Joram went over to Zair, and all the chieftains with him: and he arose by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him about, and the captains of
the chariots: and the people fled into their tents. 22. Yet Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time. 23. And the rest of the acts of Joram, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? 24. And Joram slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

We have here a brief account of the life and reign of Jehoram, (or Joram,) one of the worst of the kings of Judah, but the son and successor of Jehoshaphat, one of the best. Note, 1. Parents cannot give grace to their children: many that have themselves wicked, have the grief and shame of seeing those that came forth out of their bowels, wicked and vile; let not the families that are thus afflicted, think it strange. 2. If the children of good parents prove wicked, commonly they are worse than others; the unclean spirit brings in seven others more wicked than himself, Luke 11. 26. 3. A nation is sometimes justly punished with the miscarries of a bad reign, for not improving the blessings and advantages of a good one.

Concerning this Jehoram, observe,
I. The general idea here given of his badness; (v. 18.) He did as the house of Ahab, and worse he could not do; his character is taken from the bad example he followed, for men are according to the company they converse with, and the copies they write after. No mistake is more fatal to young people, than in mistake in the choice of those whom to their conduct, and of those they commit themselves to, and take their measures from, and whose good opinion they value themselves by; Jehoram chose the house of Ahab for his pattern rather than his father's house, and it was his ruin. We have a particular account of his wickedness. 2 Chron. 21. murder, idolatry, persecution, every thing that was bad.

II. The occasions of his badness; his father was a very good man, and, no doubt, took care to have him taught the good knowledge of the Lord; but, 1. It is certain he did ill, to marry him to the daughter of Ahab; no good could come of an alliance with an idolatrous family, but all mischief with such a daughter of such a mother, as Athaliah the daughter of Jezebel: the degeneracy of the old world took rise from the unequal yoking of professors with profane; those that are ill-matched, are already half damned. 2. I doubt he did not do well, to make him king in his own life time: it is said here, (v. 16.) he began to reign, Jehoshaphat being then king; hereby he gratified his pride, (than which nothing is more pernicious to young people,) indulged him in his ambition, in hopes to reform him by humouring him, and so brought a curse upon his family, as Eli did, whose sons made themselves vile, and the retribution went not. Jehoshaphat had made this wicked son of his, viceroy, once when he went with Ahab to Ramoth-gilead, from which Jehoshaphat's 17th year, (1 Kings 22. 51.) is made Jehoram's second; (ch. 1. 17.) but afterward, in his 22d year, he made him partner in his government, and from thence Joram's eight years are to be dated; three years before his father's death. It has been hurtsful to many young men, to come too soon to their estates; Samuel got nothing by making his sons judges.

III. The rebukes of Providence which he was under for his badness. 1. The Edomites revolted, who had been under the government of the kings of Judah ever since David's time, about 150 years, v. 20. He attempted to reduce them, and gave them a defeat, (v. 21.) but he could not improve the advantage he had got, so as to recover his dominion over them; yet Edom revolted; (v. 22.) and the Edomites were, after this, bitter enemies to the Jews, as appears by the prophecy of Obadiah, and Ps. 137. 7. Now Isaac's prophecy was fulfilled, that this house of Jacob should be younger; yet in process of time, he should break that yoke from his neck, Gen. 27. 40. 2. Libnah revolted, that was a city in Judah, in the heart of his country, a priests' city, the inhabitants of that city shook off his government, because he had forsaken God, and would have compelled them to do so too, 2 Chron. 21. 10, 11. In order that they might preserve their religion, they set up for a free state; perhaps, other cities did the same. 3. His reign was short, God cut him off in the midst of his days, when he was but 40 years old, and had reigned but eight years; bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.

IV. The gracious care of Providence for the keeping up of the kingdom of Judah, and the house of David, notwithstanding the apostasies and calamities of Jehoram's reign, (v. 19.) Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah; he could easily have done it, he might justly have done it, it would have been no loss to him to have done it; yet he would not do it, for David's sake, not for the sake of any merit of his which could challenge this favour to his family as a debt, but for the sake of a promise made to him, that he should always have a lamp, that is, a succession of kings from one generation to another; by which his name should be kept bright and illustrious, as a lamp is kept burning by a constant fresh supply of oil: thus his family was not to be extinct, till it terminated in the Messiah, that Son of David, on whom was to be hung all the glory of his Father's house, and in whose everlasting kingdom that promise to David is fulfilled, (Ps. 132. 17.) I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.

V. The conclusion of this impious and inglorious reign, v. 24. Nothing peculiar is here said of him; but we are told, 2 Chron. 21. 19, 20. that he died of sore diseases, and died without being desired.

25. In the twelfth year of Joram, the son of Ahab king of Israel, did Athaliah, the son of Jehoram king of Judah, begin to reign. 26. Two and twenty years old was Athaliah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Athaliah, the daughter of Omri king of Israel. 27. And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the Lord, as did the house of Ahab: for he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab. 28. And he went with Joram the son of Ahab to the war against Hazael king of Syria in Ramoth-gilead; and the Syrians wounded Joram. 29. And king Joram went back to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. And Athaliah, the son of Jehoram king of Judah, went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.
As among common persons, there are some that we call little men, who make no figure, are little regarded, and less valued; so among kings, there are some whom, in comparison with others, we may call little kings. This Ahaziah was one of these; he looks mean in the history, and, because wicked, in God's account, vile. It is too plain an evidence of the affinity between Jehoshaphat and Ahab, that they had the same names in their families, at the same time, in which, we may suppose, they designed to compliment one another. Ahab had two sons, Ahabizah and Jehoram, who reigned successively; Jehoshaphat had a son and grandson named Jehoram and Ahabiah, who, in like manner, reigned successively. Names indeed do not make natures, but it was a bad omen to Jehoshaphat's family, to borrow names from Ahab's; or if he lent the names to that wretched family, he could not communicate with them the devotion of their significations, Ahabiah, Taking hold of the Lord; and Jehoram, The Lord exalted. Ahabiah king of Israel had reigned but two years, Ahabiah king of Judah reigned but one. We are here told that his relation to Ahab's family was the occasion.

1. Of his wickedness; (v. 27.) He walked in the way of the house of Ahab, that idolatrous bloody house; for his mother was Ahab's daughter, v. 26. So that he sucked in wickedness with his milk. Partus sequitur ventrem—The child must resemble the mother. When men choose wives for themselves, they must remember they are choosing mothers for their children, and are concerned to choose accordingly.

2. Of his fall; Joram, his mother's brother, courted him to join with him for the recovery of Ramoth-gilead, an attempt fatal to Ahab; so it was to Joram his son, for in that expedition he was wounded, (v. 28.) and returned to Jezreel to be cared for, leaving his army there in possession of the place. Ahabiah was likewise returned, but went to Jezreel, to see how Jehoram did, v. 29. Providence so ordered it, that he who had been debauched by the house of Ahab, might he cut off with them, when the measure of their iniquity was full, as we shall find in the next chapter. They who partake with sinners in their sin, must expect to partake with them in their plagues.

CHAP. IX.

Hazael and Jehu were the men that were designed to be the instruments of God's justice in punishing and destroying the house of Ahab. Elijah was bid to appoint them to this service; but, upon Ahab's humiliation, a reprieve was granted, and so it was left to Elisha to appoint them. Hazael's elevation to the throne of Syria we read in the following chapter; and we must now attend Jehu to the throne of Israel; for him that escapeth the sword of Hazael, as Joram and Ahabiah did, Jehu must slay, of which this chapter gives us an account. I. A commission is sent to Jehu by the hand of one of the prophets, to take upon him the government, and destroy the house of Ahab, v. 1. 10. II. Here is his speedy execution of this commission. 1. He communicates it to his captains, v. 11. 15. 2. We must march directly to Jezreel, (v. 16. 20.) and there despatches, (1.) Joram king of Israel, v. 20. 26. (2.) Ahabiah king of Judah, v. 27. 29. (3.) Jezebel, v. 30. 37.

1. AND Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead: 2. And when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber: 3. Then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the Lord, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Then open the door, and flee, and tarry not. 4. So the young man, even the young man the prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead. 5. And when he came, behold, the captains of the host were sitting: and he said, I have an errand to thee, 0 captain. And Jehu said, Unto which of all us? And he said, To thee, O captain. 6. And he arose, and went into the house; and he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel. 7. And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel. 8. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; and I will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel: 9. And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah: 10. And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door and fled.

We have here the anointing of Jehu to be king, who was, at this time, a commander (probably, in chief) of the forces employed at Ramoth-gilead, v. 14. There he was fighting for the king his master, but received orders from a higher King to fight against him. It does not appear that Jehu aimed at the government, or that he ever thought of it, but the commission given him was a perfect surprise to him. Some think that he had been anointed before by Elijah, whom God ordered to do it, but privately, and with an intention that he must not act till further orders; Samuel anointed David long before he was to come to the throne; but that is not at all probable, for then we must suppose Elijah had anointed Hazael too. No, when God bade him do these things, he bade him anoint Elisha to be prophet in his room, to do them when he was gone, as God should direct him.

Here is,

1. The commission sent. Elisha did not go himself to anoint Jehu, because he was old, and unfit for such a journey, and so well known, that he could not do it privately, could not go and come without observation; therefore he sends one of the sons of the prophets to do it, v. 1. Ther not only revered him as their father, (ch. 9. 15.) but observed to them his father. This service of anointing Jehu, 1. Had danger in it, (1 Sam. 16. 2.) and therefore it was not fit that Elisha should expose himself, but one of the sons of the prophets, whose life was of less value, and who could do it with less danger. 2. It required labour, and therefore fitter for a young man in his full strength. Let youth work, and age direct. 3. Yet it was an honourable piece of service, to anoint a king, and be that did it, might hope to be preferred for it after-
ward, and therefore, for the encouragement of the young prophets, Elshah employed one of them: he would not en gross all the honours to himself, nor grudge the young prophets a share in them.

With the young prophets. (1.) He put the oil into his hand, with which he must anoint Jehu. Take this box of oil. Solomon was anointed with oil out of the tabernacle, 1 Kings 1. 39. That could not now be had, but oil from a prophet's hand was equivalent to oil out of God's house. It was not the constant practice to anoint kings, but upon the disturbance of the succession, as in the case of Solomon; or the interruption of it, as in the case of Josiah, (ch. 11. 12.) or the translation of the government to a new family, as here, and in the case of David; yet it might be used generally, though the scripture does not mention it. (2.) He put the words into his mouth which he must say, (v. 3.) I have anointed thee king, and, no doubt, told him all the rest that he said, v. 7 - 10. Those whom God sends on his errand, shall not go without full instructions.

He also ordered him, [1.] To do it privately; to single out Jehu from the rest of the captains, and anoint him in an inner chamber, (v. 2.) that Jehu's confidence in his commission might be tried, when he had no witness to attest it; his being, of a sudden, animated for the service, would be proof sufficient of his being anointed to it, there needed no other proof. The thing signified was the best evidence of the sign. [2.] To do it expeditiously; when he went about it, he must gird up his loins; when he had done it, he must flee and not tarry for a fee, or a treat, or to see what Jehu would do. It becomes the sons of the prophets to be quick and lively at their work, to go about it, and go through it, as men that hate sauntering and trifling. They should be as angels that fly swiftly.

The commission delivered. The young prophet did his business with dispatch; was at Ramothgilead presently, v. 4. There he found the general officers sitting together, either at dinner, or in council of war, v. 5. With the assurance that became a messenger from God, notwithstanding the meanness of his appearance, he called Jehu out from the rest, not waiting his leisure, or begging his pardon for disturbing him, but as one having authority, I have an errand to thee, O captain. Perhaps Jehu had some intimation of his business; and therefore, that he might not seem too forward to catch at the hand, of a stranger, and heretofore unknown to him, he might not be spoken to, but got it by speaking first, but they might all be satisfied he was indeed the person designed.

When the prophet had him alone, he anointed him, v. 6. The anointing of the Spirit is a hidden thing, that new name, which none knows but they that have it. Herewith, 1. He invests him with the royal dignity; Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, whose messenger I am, in his name I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord. He gives him an incontestable title, but reminds him that he was made king, (1.) By the God of Israel; from him he must see his power derived, for by him kings reign, for him he must use it, and to him he must be accountable. Magistrates are the ministers of God, and must therefore act in dependence upon him, and with an eye to his will, office, and authority. Over the Israel of God; though the people of Israel were wretchedly corrupted, and had forfeited all the honour of relation to God, yet they are here called the people of the Lord, for he had a right to them, and had not yet given them a bill of divorce. Jehu must look upon the people he was made king of, as the people of the Lord, not as his vassals, but God's freemen, his sons, his first-born, not to be abused or tyrannized over; God's people, and therefore to be ruled for him, and according to his laws.

2. He instructs him in his present service, which was to destroy all the house of Ahab; (v. 7.) not that he might clear his own way to the crown, but secure to himself the possession of it, but that he might execute the judgments of God upon that guilty and obnoxious family. He calls Ahab his master, that the relation might be no objection. "He was thy master; and to lift up thy hand against his son and successor, would be not only base ingratitude, but treason, rebellion, and all that is bad, if thou hadst not an immediate command from God to do it: but thou art under higher obligations to thy Master in heaven, than to thy master Ahab; He has determined that the whole house of Ahab shall perish, and by thy hand; fear not, has he not commanded thee? Fear not sin; his command will justify thee, and bear thee out: fear not danger; his command will secure and prosper thee."

That he might, intelligently, and in a right manner, do this great execution on the house of Ahab, he tells him,

1. What was his crime, what the ground of the controversy, and wherefore God had this quarrel with them, that he might have an eye to that which God had an eye to, and that was the blood of God's servants the prophets, and his other faithful worshippers, which they had shed, and which must now be required at the hand of Jezebel. That they were idolaters, was bad enough, and merited all that was brought upon them; yet that is not mentioned here, but the controversy God has with them is, for their being persecutors, not so much their throwing down God's altars, as their slaying his prophets with the sword. Nothing fills the measure of the iniquity of any prince or people so this does, or brings a sucor and sorcer ruin. This was the sin that brought on Jerusalem its first destruction, (2 Chron. 36. 16.) and its final one, Mat. 23. 37, 38. Jezebel's whoredoms and witchcrafts were not so provoking as her persecuting the prophets, killing some, and driving the rest into corners and caves, 1 Kings 18. 4.

2. What was their doom; they were sentenced to utter destruction; not to be corrected, but to be cut off, and rooted out. This Jehu must know, that his eye might not spare for pity, favour, or affection. All that belonged to Ahab, must be slain, v. 8. A pattern is given him of the destruction extended, in which he is to destroy the families of Jeroboam, Joram, and Baasha; (v. 9.) and he is particularly directed to throw Jezebel to the dogs, v. 10. The whole stock of royal blood was little enough, and too little, to alone for the blood of the prophets, the saints and martyrs, which, in God's account, is of great price. The prophet, having done this errand, made the best of his way home again, and left Jehu alone to consider what he had to do, and to beg direction from God.

11. Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord; and one said unto him, Is all well? wherefore came this mad fellow to thee? And he said unto them, Ye know the man, and his communication. 12. And they said, It is false; tell us now. And he said, Thus and thus spake he to me, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I have anointed thee king over Israel. 13. Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king. 14. So Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, con-
spired against Joram. (Now Joram had kept Ramon-gilead, he and all Israel, because of Hazael king of Syria. 15. But king Joram was returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria.) And Jehu said, If it be your minds, then let none go forth nor escape out of the city, to go to tell it in Jezreel.

Jehu, after some pause, returned to his place at the board, taking no notice of what had passed, but, as it should seem, selecting, for the present, to keep it to himself, if they had not urged him to discover it. Let us therefore see what passed between him and the captains.

1. With what contempt the captains speak of the young prophet; (v. 11.) "Wherefore came this mad fellow to thee? What business has he with thee? And why wouldest thou humour him so far as to retire for conversation with him? Are prophets company for captains?" They call him a mad fellow, because of those who would not run with them to an excess of riot, (1 Pet. 4. 4.) but that lived a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world, and spent their time in devotion; for these things they thought the prophets were fools, and the spiritual men were mad, Hos. 9. 7. Note, Those that have no religion, commonly speak with disdain of those that are religious, and look upon them as mad. They said of our Saviour, He is beside himself; of John Baptist, He has a devil, is a poor melancholy man; of St. Paul, Much learning has made him mad. The highest wisdom is thus represented as folly, and those that best understand themselves, are looked upon as beside themselves. Perhaps Jehu intended it for a rebuke to his friends, when he said, "Ye know the man to be a prophet, why then do ye call him a mad fellow? Ye know the way of his communication to be not from madness, but inspiration." Or, "Being a prophet, you may guess what his business is, to tell me of my faults, and to teach me my duty: I need not inform you concerning it." Thus he thought to have put them off, but they urged him to tell them. "It is false," say they; "we cannot conjecture what was his errand, and therefore tell us." Being thus pressed to it, he told them that the prophet had anointed him king, and, it is probable, showed them the oil upon his head, v. 12. He knew not but some of them, either out of loyalty to Joram, or envy of him, might oppose him, and go near to crush his interest in its infancy; but he relied on the divine appointment, and was not afraid to own it, knowing whom he had trusted: he that raised him, would stand by him.

2. With what respect they compliment the new king, upon the first notice of his advancement, v. 13. How men are ever ready to think that the prophet that anointed him, and of his office, they expressed a great veneration for the royal dignity of him that was anointed, and were very forward to proclaim him with sound of trumpet. In token of their subjection and allegiance to him, their affection to his person and government, and their desire to see him high and easy in it, they put their garments under him, that he might stand or sit upon them. He was seated, in sight of all the army, who, upon the first intimation, came together to grace the solemnity. God put it into their hearts thus readily to own him, for he turns the hearts of people as well as kings, like the rivers of water, into what channel he pleases. Perhaps they were disquieted at Joram's government, or had a particular affection for Jehu; however, it seems, things were ripe for the revolution, and they all came into Jehu's interest, and conspired against Joram, v. 14.

3. With what caution Jehu proceeded. He had advantages against Joram, and he knew how to secure himself, and to protect himself. He had the army with him; Joram had left it, and was gone home badly wounded. Jehu's good conduct appears in two things; (1.) That he complimented the captains, and would do nothing without their advice and consent; ("If it be your minds, we will do so and so, else not;") thereby intimating the deference he paid to their judgment, and the confidence he had in their fidelity, both which tended to please and fix them. It is the wisdom of those that would rise fast, and stand firm, to take their friends along with them. (2.) That he contrived to surprise Joram; and, in order thereto, to come upon him with speed, and to prevent his having notice of what was now done: "Let none go forth to tell it in Jezreel, that, as a snare, the ruin may come on him and his house." The suddenness of an attack sometimes turns to as good an account as the force of it.

16. So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel; for Joram lay there. And Ahaziah king of Judah was come down to see Joram. 17. And there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company. And Joram said, Take a horseman, and send to meet them, and let him say, Is it peace? 18. So there went one on horseback to meet him, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it peace? And Jehu said, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me. And the watchman told, saying, The messenger came to them, but he cometh not again. 19. Then he sent out a second on horseback, which came to them, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it peace? And Jehu answered, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me. 20. And the watchman told, saying, He came even unto them, and cometh not again: and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously. 21. And Joram said, Make ready. And his chariot was made ready. And Joram king of Israel, and Ahaziah king of Judah, went out, each in his chariot, and they went out against Jehu, and met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite. 22. And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts, are so many? 23. And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, There is treachery, O Ahaziah! 24. And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms; and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot. 25. Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite:
for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the Lord laid this burden upon him; 26. Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the Lord; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the Lord. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the Lord. 27. But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden-house: and Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot. And they did so at the going up to Gorus, which is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo, and died there. 28. And his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his sepulchre with his fathers in the city of David. 29. And in the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab began Ahaziah to reign over Judah.

From Ramoth-Gilead to Jezreel was more than one day's march; about the mid-way between them, the river Jordan must be crossed. We may suppose Jehu to have marched with all possible expedition, and to have taken the utmost precaution to prevent the tidings from getting to Jezreel before him; and, at length, we have him within sight first, and then within reach, of the devoted king.

1. Joram's watchmen discovers him first at a distance, him and his retinue, and gives notice to the king of the approach of a company, whether of friends or foes he cannot tell. But the king (impatient to know what is the matter, and perhaps jealous that the Syrians, who had wounded him, had traced him by the blood to his own palace, and were coming to seize him) sent first one messenger, and then another, to bring him intelligence, v. 17. 19. He had scarcely recovered the fright he was put into in the battle, and his guilty conscience put him into a continual terror. Each messenger asked the same question, "Is it peace? Are you for us, or for our adversaries? Do you bring good tidings or bad?" Each had the same answer. What hast thou to do with peace? Turn thee behind me; (v. 18, 19.) as if he had said, "It is not to thee, but to him that sent thee, that I will give an answer; for thy part, if thou consult thy own safety, turn thee behind me, and enlist thyself among my followers." The watchman gives notice that the messengers were taken prisoners; and, at length, observes that the leader of this troop drove like Jehu, who, it seems, was noted for driving a chariot, whereby discovering himself to be a man of a hot eager spirit, intent upon his business, and pushing forward with all his might. A man of such a violent temper, was fittest for the service to which Jehu was designated. The wisdom of God is seen in the choice of proper instruments to be employed in his work. But it is not much for any man's reputation, to be known by his fury. He that has rule over his own spirit, is beloved of God. This paraphrase gives this a contrary sense: The leading is like that of Jehu, for he leads quietly. And, it should seem, he did not come up very fast, for then there had not been time for all this that passed. And some think he chose to march slowly, that he might give Joram time to come out to him, and so dispatch him before he entered the city.

II. Joram himself goes out to meet him, and takes Ahaziah king of Judah along with him; neither of them equipped for war, as not expecting an enemy, but in haste to have their curiosity satisfied. How strange that Providence sometimes ordered it, that men have been in haste to meet their ruin, when their day has come to fall.

1. The place where Joram met Jehu, was ominous, in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite, v. 21. The very sight of that ground was enough to make Joram tremble, and Jehu triumph; for Joram had the guilt of Naboth's blood fighting against him, and Jehu had the force of Elijah's curse fighting for him. And circumstances of events are sometimes so ordered by Divine Providence, as to make the punishment answer to the sin, as face answers to face in a glass.

2. Joram's demand was still the same, "Is it peace, Jehu? Is all well? Dest thou come home thus, flying from the Syrians, or more than a conqueror over them?" It seems, he looked for peace, and could not entertain any other thought. Note, It is very common for great sinners, even when they are upon the brink of ruin, to flatter themselves with an opinion that all is well with them, and to cry peace to themselves.

3. Jehu's reply was very startling: he answered him with a question, What peace canst thou expect, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, (who, though queen-dowager, was, in effect, queen-regent,) and her witchcrafts, are so many? See how plainly Jehu deals with him. Formerly, he durst not do so, but now he had another spirit, and was allowed to speak freely. Sinners will not always be flattered; one time or other, they will have their own given them, Ps. 36. 2. Observe, (1.) He charges upon him his mother's wickedness, because he had at first learned it, and then with his kingly power protected it. She stands impeached for whoredom, corporal and spiritual, serving idols, and serving them with the very acts of lewdness; for witchcraft likewise, enchantments and divinations, which are the mother of her idoms; and these multiplied the whoredoms and the witchcrafts many; for those that abandon themselves to wicked courses, know not where they will stop. One sin begets another. (2.) Upon that account, he throws him off from all pretensions to peace; "What peace can come to that house in which there is so much wickedness unreformed of?" Note, The way of sin can never be the way of peace, Isa. 33. 7. 8. If a king can sinners have with God, and what peace with their own consciences, what good, what comfort, can they expect in life, in death, or after death, who go on still in their trespasses? No peace so long as sin is persisted in; but as soon as it is repented of and forsaken, there is peace.

4. The execution was done immediately. When Joram heard of his mother's crimes, his heart failed him, he presently concluded the long-threatened day of reckoning was now come, and cried out, "There is treachery. O Ahaziah; Jehu is our enemy, and it is time for us to shift for our safety." Both fled, and,

(1.) Joram king of Israel was slain presently, v. 24. Jehu despatched him with his own hands. The bow was not drawn at a venture, as that which sent the fatal arrow through the joints of his father's harness, but Jehu directed the arrow, by his shield, and caught it. The word is a general word of God's arrow, which he has ordained against the persecutor, Ps. 7. 13.) and it reached to his heart, so that he died upon the spot. He was now the top-branch of Ahab's house, and therefore was first cut off. He died a criminal, under the sentence of the law, which Jehu, the executioner, pursues in the disposal of the dead body. Naboth's vineyard was hard by, which put him in mind of that circumstance of the doom. Eight years after Ahab, I will require thee in this plat, said the Lord, (v. 25, 26.) for the blood of
Naboth himself, and for the blood of his sons, who were either put to death with him as partners in his crime, or secretly murdered after, lest they should bring an appeal, or find some way to avenge their father's death; or had broken their hearts for the loss of him; or (his whole estate being confiscated, as well as his vineyard) had lost their livelihoods, which was, in effect, to lose their lives: for this, the house of Ahab must be reckoned with; and that very piece of ground which he, with so much pride and pleasure, had made himself master of, at the expense of the guilt of innocent blood, now became the theatre on which his son's dead body lay exposed a spectacle to the world. Thus the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth, Higgaion. Selah.

(2.) Ahab's reign of Judah was pursued, and slain in a little time, and not far off, v. 27, 28. [1.] Though he was now in Joram's company, he had not been slain, but that he was joined with the house of Ahab both in affinity and iniquity; he was one of them; so he had made himself by his sins, and therefore he must fare as they fare. Was 2.[2.] Perhaps he had not at this time fallen with them, if he had not been found in company with them. It is a dangerous thing to associate with evil-doers; we may be entangled both in guilt and misery by it.

30. And when Jehu was come to Jezebel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tiptoed her head, and looked out at a window. 31. And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master? 32. And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. 33. And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot. 34. And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter. 35. And they went to bury her; but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. 36. Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This is the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezebel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel: 37. And the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel.

The greatest delinquents in the house of Ahab, was Jezebel: it was she that introduced Baal; slew the Lord's prophets; contrived the murder of Naboth; stired up her husband first, and then her son Jehoram after him; plotted his head, of which she called, (v. 34.) a curse to the country, and whom all that wished well to their country, had a curse for; three reigns her reign had lasted, but now, at length, her day is come to fall. We read of a false prophetess in the church of Thyatira, that is compared to Jezebel, and called by her name; (Rev. 2. 20.) her wickedness the same, seducing God's servants to idolatry; a long space given her to repent, (v. 21.) as to Jezebel; and a fearful ruin brought upon her, at last, (v. 22, 23.) as here upon Jezebel. So that Jezebel's destruction may be looked upon as typical of the destruction of idolaters and persecutors, especially that great whore, that mother of harlots, that hath made herself drunk with the blood of saints, and the nations drunk with the wine of her fornications, when God shall put it into the heart of the kings of the earth to hate her, Rev. 17. 5, 6, 16. Now here we have,

1. Jehzebel during the judgment. She heard that Jehu had slain her son, and slain him for her whoresoms and witchcrafts, and thrown his dead body into the portion of Naboth, according to the word of the Lord, v. 31; and also the place where she could not but expect herself to fall next a sacrifice to his revenging sword: now see how she meets her fate; she posted herself in a window at the entering of the gate, to affront Jehu, and set him at defiance.

1. Instead of hiding herself, as one afraid of divine vengeance, she exposed herself to it, and scorned to flee; mocked at fear, and was not affrighted. See how a heart, hardened against God, will brave it out to the last, run upon him, even upon his neck, Job 15. 26. But never did any thus harden their hearts against him, and prosper.

2. Instead of humbling herself, and putting herself into close mourning for her son, she painted her face, and tired her head, that she might appear like herself, that is, (as she thought,) great and majestic, hoping thereby to daunt Jehu, to put him out of countenance, and to stop his career. The Lord God called to baldness and girding with sackcloth, but behold, painting and dressing, walking contrary to God, Isa. 22. 12, 13. There is not a surer presage of ruin than an unhumbled heart under humiliating providences. Let painted faces look in Jezebel's glass, and see how they like themselves.

3. Instead of trembling before Jehu, the instrument of God's vengeance, she thinks to make him troubled with that threatening question, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master? Observ. 1. (She took no notice of the hand of God gone out against her family, but flew in the face of him that was only the sword in his hand. We are very apt, when we are in trouble, to break out into a passion against the instruments of our trouble, when we ought to be submissive to God, and angry at ourselves only. 2.) She pleased herself with the thought, that what Jehu was now doing, would certainly end in his own ruin, and that he would not have peace in it. He had cut her off from all pretensions to peace, (v. 22.) and now she thinks to cut him off likewise. Note, It is no new thing for those that are doing God's work, to be looked upon as out of the way of peace. Active reformers, faithful reprovers, are threatened with trouble; but let them be in nothing terrified, Phil. 1. 28. (3.) She quoted a precedent, to deter him from the execution of such an enterprise; "Had Zimri peace? No, he said not; he was put to the three by blood and treachery, and within seven days was constrained to burn the palace over his head, and himself in it; and canst thou expect to fare any better?" Had the case been parallel, it had been proper enough to give him this memorandum: for the judgments of God upon those that have gone before us in any sinful way, should be warnings to us to deter us from the like. But the instance of Zimri had no application to Jehu: Zimri had no warrant for what he did, but was incited to it merely by his own ambition and cruelty; whereas Jehu was anointed by one of the sons of the prophets, and did this by order from heaven, which would bear him out. In comparing persons and things, we must carefully distinguish between the precious and the vile, and take heed, lest from the fate of sinful men we read the doom of useful men.
II. Jehu demanded aid against her. He looked up to the window, not daunted at the menace of her impudent but impotent rage, and cried, Who is on my side? Who? v. 32. He was called out to do God’s will in matters of great importance and purposed the thing that had devouched it; and here he calls out for assistance in the doing of it; looked if there were any to help, any to uphold, Isa. 63. 5. He lifts up a standard, and makes proclamation, as Moses, (Exod. 32. 26.) Who is on the Lord’s side? And the psalmist, (Ps. 94. 16.) Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? Note, When reformation-work is set on foot, it is time to ask, Who side with us? III. Her own attendants delivering her up to his just revenge. Two or three chamberlains looked out to Jehu with such a countenance as encouraged him to believe they were on his side, and to them he called, not to seize or secure her till further orders, but immediately to throw her down, which was one way of stoning malefactors, casting them headlong from some steep place. Thus was vengeance taken on her for the stoning of Naboth, they threw her down, v. 33. If God’s command will justify Jehu, his command would justify them. Perhaps they had a secret dislike of Jezebel’s wickedness, and hated her, though they served her; or, it may be, she was barbarous and injurious to those about her, and they were pleased with this opportunity of being avenged on her; or, observing Jehu’s success, they hoped thus to ingratiate themselves with him, and keep their places in his court. However it was, thus she was most shamefully put to death, dashed against the wall, and the pavement, and then trodden on by the horses, which were all besmeared with her blood and brains. See the end of pride and cruelty, and say, The Lord is righteous.

IV. The very dogs completing her shame and ruin, according to the prophecy. When Jehu had taken some refreshment in the palace, he beheld himself of showing so much respect to Jezebel’s sex and quality, as to bury her. As bad as she was, she was a daughter, a king’s daughter, a king’s wife, a king’s mother; Go, and bury her, v. 34. But though he had forgotten what the prophet said, (v. 10, Dogs shall eat Jezebel,) God had not forgotten it. While he was eating and drinking, the dogs had devoured her dead body, the dogs that went about the city, (Ps. 69. 6.) and fed on the carcase, so that there was nothing left but her bare skull, (the painted face was gone,) and her feet and hands. The hungry dogs had no respect to the dignity of her extraction: a king’s daughter was no more to them than a common person. When we pamper our bodies, and use them deliciously, let us think how vile they are, and that, shortly, they will be either a feast for worms under ground, or beasts above ground. When notice was brought of this to Jehu, he remembered the threatening, (1 Kings 21. 23.) The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Nothing should remain of her but the monuments of her infamy. She had been used to appear on public days in great state, and the cry was, This is Jezebel. What a majestic figure! How great she looks! But now it shall be said none of her. We have often seen the wicked buried, (Ecc. 8. 10.) and sometimes here, they have no burial, Eccl. 6. 3. Jezebel’s name no where remained, but as stigmatized in sacred writ: they could not so much as say, This is Jezebel’s grave; or, This is Jezebel’s deed. Thus the name of the wicked shall rot, rot above ground.

CHAP. X.

We have, in this chapter, 1. A further account of Jehu’s execution of his commission. He cut off, 1. All Ahab’s sons, v. 1. 10. 2. All Ahab’s kindred, v. 11. 14. 17. 3. Ahab’s idolatry; his zeal against that, he took Jona- \?


d sort of Baal to attend, (v. 18. 23.) and slew them all, (v. 24. 25.) and then abolished that idolatry, v. 26. 25. II. A short account of the administration of his government. 1. The old idolatry of Israel was re-\?


tained, the worship of the calves, v. 29. 31. 2. This brought God’s judgments upon them by Hazael, with which his reign concludes, v. 32. 36.

1. And Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. And Jehu wrote letters, and sent to Samaria, unto the rulers of Jez-\?


to the elders, and to them that brought up Ahab’s children, saying, 2. Now, as soon as this letter cometh to you, seeing your master’s sons are with you, and there are with you chariots and horses, a fenced city also, and armour, 3. Look even out the best and meetest of your master’s sons, and set him on his father’s throne, and fight for your master’s house. 4. But they were exceedingly afraid, and said, Behold, two kings stood not before him: how then shall we stand? 5. And he that was over the house, and he that was over the city, the elders also, and the bringers-up of the children, sent to Jehu, saying, We are thy servants, and will do all that thou bid us; we will not make any king: do thou that which is good in thine eyes. 6. Then he wrote a letter the second time to them, saying, If ye be mine, and if ye will hearken unto my voice, take ye the heads of the men your master’s sons, and come to me to Jez-\?


to-morrow this time. (Now the king’s sons, being seventy persons, were with the great men of the city, which brought them up.) 7. And it came to pass, when the letter came to them, that they took the king’s sons, and slew seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent them to Jezreel. 8. And there came a messenger, and told him, saying, They have brought the heads of the king’s sons. And he said, Lay ye them in two heaps at the entering in of the gate until the morning. 9. And it came to pass in the morning, that he went out, and stood, and said to all the people, Ye are righteous: behold, I conspired against my master, and slew him: but who slew all these? 10. Know now that there shall fall unto the earth nothing of the word of the Lord, which the Lord spake concerning the house of Ahab: for the Lord hath done that which he spake by his servant Elijah. 11. So Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinsfolks, and his priests, until he left him none remaining. 12. And he arose and departed, and came to Samaria. And as he was at the shearing-house in the way,
13 Jehu met with the brethren of Ahaziah king of Judah, and said, Who are ye? And they answered, We are the brethren of Ahaziah; and we go down to salute the children of the king, and the children of the queen. 14. And he said, Take them alive. And they took them, and slew them at the pit of the shearing-house, even two and forty men: neither left he any of them.

We left Jehu in quiet possession of Jezreel, triumphing over Joram and Jezebel: and must now attend his further motions. He knew the whole house of Ahab must be cut off, and therefore proceeds in this bloody work, and does not do it deceitfully, or by halves, Jer. 46. 10. He got the heads of all the sons of Ahab, cut off by their own guardians at Samaria. Seventy sons (or grandsons) Ahab had; Gideon's number, Judg. 8. 30. In such a number that bare his name, his family was likely to be perpetuated, and yet it is extirpated all at once. Such a quiver full of arrows could not protect his house from divine vengeance. Numerous families, if vicious, must not expect to be long prosperous. The sons of Ahab were not at Jezreel; for a strong city, it is not brought thither upon occasion of the war with Syria, as a place of safety, or upon notice of Jehu's insurrection; with them were the rulers of Jezreel, that is, the great officers of the court, who went to Samaria to secure themselves, or to consult what was to be done. Those of them that were yet under tuition, had their tutors with them, who were intrusted with their education in learning, agreeable to their character. Such an event as this he feared, brought them up in the idolatries of their father's house, and made them all worshippers of Baal. Jehu did not think fit to bring his forces to Samaria to destroy them, but, that the hand of God might appear the more remarkably in it, made their guardians their murderers.

1. He sent a challenge to their friends to stand by them; (v. 2, 3.) "You that are hearty well-wishers to the house of Ahab, and entire in its interests, now is your time to appear for it: Samaria is a strong city, you are in possession of it, you have forces at command, you may choose out the likeliest person of all the royal family to head you, you know you are not tied to the eldest, unless he be the best and meetest of your master's sons; if you have any spirit in you, show it, and set one of them on his father's throne, and stand by him with your lives and fortunes. Not that he desired they should do this, or expected they would, but thus he upbraided them with their cowardice, and utter inability to contest with the divine counsels. "Do it if you dare, and see what will come of it." Those that have forsaken their religion, have often, with it, lost both their sense and their courage, and deserve to be upbraided with it.

2. Hereby he gained from them a submission. They prudently resigned themselves, Behold, two kings stood not before him, but fell as sacrifices to his rage; how then shall we stand? v. 4. Therefore they sent him a surrender of themselves, "We are thy servants, thy subjects, and will do all that thou shalt bid us, right or wrong, and will set up nobody in competition with thee." They saw it was to no purpose to contend with him, and therefore it was their interest to submit to him. With much more reason may we thus argue ourselves into a subjection to the great God. Many kings and great men have fallen before his wrath, for their wickedness; and how then shall we stand? Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? No, we must either bend or break.

3. This is improved so far as to make them the executioners of these whom they had the tuition of: (v. 6.) If ye be mine, bring me the heads of your master's sons by to-morrow at this time. Though he knew it must be done, and was loath to do it himself, one would think he could not expect they should do it. Could they betray such a trust? Could they be cruel to their master's sons? It seems, so may they stop in their admiration of the rising sun, that they did it; they cut off the heads of those 70 princes, and sent them in baskets a present to Jehu, v. 7. Learn hence not to trust in a friend, nor to put confidence in a guide, not governed by conscience. One can scarcely expect that he who has been false to his God, should ever be faithful to his prince: But observe God's righteouness in their unrighteousness. These elders of Jezreel had been wickedly obsequious to Jezebel's order for the murder of Naboth, 1 Kings 21. 11. She gloried, it is likely, in the power she had over them; and now the same base spirit makes them as pliable to Jehu, and as ready to obey his orders for the murder of Ahab's sons. Let none aim at an arbitrary power, lest they be found rolling a stone which, some time or other, will return upon them. Princes that make their people slaves, take the surest way to be enslaved by their own. Men's consciences, as Jezebel did, they lose their hold of them.

When the separated heads were presented to him, he slyly upbraided them that were the executioners, yet owned the hand of God in it. (1.) He seems to blame those that had been the executioners of this vengeance. The heads were laid in two heaps, at the gate, the proper place of judgment. It was a deep reproach to them that he might thereby bring them to the mercy of men's consciences, as Jezebel did, they lose their hold of them. When the separated heads were presented to him, he slyly upbraided them that were the executioners, yet owned the hand of God in it. (2.) He resolves all into the righteous judgment of God. (v. 10.) The Lord hath done that which he spake by Elijah. God is not the author of any man's sin, but even by that which men do from bad principles, God serves his own purposes, and glorifies his own name; and is righteous in that wherein men are unrighteous. When the Assyrian is made the rod of God's anger, and the instrument of his justice, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, Is. 10. 7.

II. He proceeded to destroy all that remained of the house of Ahab, not only those that descended from him, but those that were in any relation to him, all the officers of his house, and those in command under him, called here his great men, v. 11. all his kinsfolk and acquaintance, who had been partners with him in his wickedness, and his priests, or domestic chaplains, whom he employed in his idolatrous services, and who strengthened his hand, that he should not turn from his evil way. Having done this in Jezreel, he did the same in Samaria, (v. 17.) slew all that remained to Ahab in Samaria. This was his blood work, and is not now, in any case, to be drawn into a precedent. Let the guilty suffer, but not the guiltless for their sakes. Perhaps such terrible destructions as these, were intended as types of the
look that there be here with you none of the servants of the Lord, but the worshippers of Baal only. 24. And when they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt-offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men without, and said, If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, he that letteth him go, his life shall be for the life of him. 25. And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt-offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, Go in, and slay them; let none come forth. And they smote them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the captains cast them out, and went to the city of the house of Baal. 26. And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burned them. 27. And they brake down the image of Baal, and brake down the house of Baal, and made it a draught-house unto this day. 28. Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.

Jehu, pushing on his work, is here,
I. Courting the friendship of a good man, Jehonadab the son of Rechab, v. 15, 16. This Jehonadab, though mortified to the world, and meddled little with the business of it, (as appears by his charge to his posterity, which they religiously observed 300 years after, not to drink wine, nor dwell in cities, Jer. 33. 6, &c.) yet, upon this occasion, went to meet Jehu, that he might encourage him in the work to which God had called him. The countenance of good men is a thing which great men, if they be wise, will value, and value themselves by. David prayed, Let those that fear thee turn to me, Ps. 119. 79. This Jehonadab, though no prophet, priest, or Levite, no prince, or ruler, was, we may suppose, very eminent for prudence and piety, and generally respected for that life of self-denial and devotion to God which he lived; Jehu, though a soldier, knew him, and honoured him. He did not indeed think of sending for him, but when he met him, (though, it is likely, he drove now as curiously as ever,) he stopt to speak to him; and we are here told what passed between them.

1. Jehu saluted him; he blessed him, so the word is; paid him the respect, and showed him the goodwill, that were owing to so great an example of sincerity and goodness.

2. Jehonadab assured him that he was sincere in his interest, and a hearty well-wisher to his cause. Jehu professed that his heart was right with him; that he had a true affection for his person, and a reverence for the crown of his Nazaritieship, and desired to know whether he had the same affection for him, and satisfaction in that crown of royal dignity which God had put upon his head, Is thine heart right? A question we should often put to ourselves: "I make a plausible profession, have gained a reputation among men, but, is my heart right? Am I sincere and inward with God?" Jehonadab gave him his word, It is, and gave him his hand as a pledge of his heart, yielded to him, (so giving the hand is rendered, 2 Chron. 30. 8,) concurred and covenanted with him, and owned him in the work both of revenge and of reformation he was now about.

3. Jehu took him up into his chariot, and took him along with him to Samaria. He put some honour upon him, by taking him into the chariot with him; (Jehonadab was not often in a chariot, especially with a king;) but he received more honour from
him, and from the countenance he gave to his present work. All sober people would think the better of Jehu, when they saw Jehonadab in the chariot with him. This was not the only time that the piety of some has been made to serve the policy of others; and that designing men have strengthened themselves by drawing good men into their interests. Jehonadab was a stranger to the arts of fleshly wisdom, and has his conversation in simplicity, and godly sincerity; and therefore, if Jehu be a servant of God, and an enemy to Baal, he will be his faithful friend. "Come then," (says Jehu,) "come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord; and then thou wilt see reason to espouse my cause." This is commonly taken as not well said by Jehu, and as giving cause to suspect that his heart was not right with God in what he did, and that the zeal he pretended for the Lord, was really zeal for himself and his own advancement. For, (1.) He boasted of it, and spake as if God and man were mightily indebted to him for it. (2.) He desired it might be seen, and taken notice of, like the Pharisees, who did all, to be seen of men. An upright heart approves itself to God, and covets no more than his acceptance. If we aim at the applause of men, and make their praise our highest end, we are upon a false bottom. Whether Jehu looked any further, we cannot judge; however, Jehonadab went with him, and, it is likely, among the fourteen thousand of his commission, (v. 17.) destroying all Ahab's friends in Samaria. A man may hate cruelty, and yet love justice; may be far from thirsting after blood, and yet may wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, Ps. 58. 10.

II. Contriving the destruction of all the worshippers of Baal. The service of Baal was the crying sin of the house of Ahab: that root of this idolatry was the worship of Baal, and of other heathen gods, which were infected with it, and would be in danger of infecting others. The law of God was express, that they were to be put to death; but they were so numerous, and so dispersed throughout all parts of the kingdom, and perhaps so alarmed with Jehu's beginnings, that it would be a hard matter to find them all out, and an endless task to prosecute and execute them one by one: Jehu's project therefore is to cut them all off.

1. By a wile, by a fraud, he brings them together to the temple of Baal. He pretended he would worship Baal more than ever Ahab had done, v. 18. Perhaps he spoke this ironically, or to try the body of the people, whether they would oppose such a resolution as this, and would resent his threatening to increase his predecessor's idolatries, as they did Rehoboam's threatening to increase his predecessor's exactions, and say, "If it be so, we have no part in Jehu, nor inheritance in the son of Nimshi." But it rather seems to have been spoken purposely to deceive the worshippers of Baal, and then it cannot be justified. The truth of God needs not any man's lie. He issued out a proclamation, requiring the attendance of all the worshippers of Baal, to join with him in a sacrifice to Baal; (v. 19, 20.) not only the prophets and priests, but all, throughout the kingdom, who worshipped Baal, who were not near so many as they had been in Elijah's time. Jehu's friends, we may suppose, were aware of what he designed, and were not offended at it; but the bigoted besotted Baalites began to think themselves very happy, and that now they should see golden days again. Joram had just away the image of Baal; (ch. 3. 2.) if Jehu will restore it, they have what they had lost, and come up to Samaria with joy from all parts to celebrate the solemnity; and were pleased to see the house of Baal crowded, (v. 21.) to see his priests in their vestments, (v. 22.) and themselves perhaps with some badges or other to notify their relation to Baal, for there were vestments for all his worshippers.

2. He takes care that none of the servants of the Lord should be among them, v. 23. This they took as a provision to preserve the worship of Baal from being profaned by strangers: but it was a wonder, that they did not, by this, see themselves brought into a snare, and discern a design upon them. They that suffer themselves to be deceived by Baal, (as all idolaters were by their idols,) no marvel if they are deceived by Jehu to their destruction.

3. He gives order for the cutting of them all off, and Jehonadab joined with him therein, v. 23. When a strict search was made, lest some of the servants of God should, either for company or curiosity, be got among them, lest some wheat should be mixed with those tares; and when 80 men were set to stand guard at all the avenues to Baal's temple, that none might escape, (v. 24.) then the guards were sent in, to put them all to the sword, and to mingle their blood with their sacrifices, in a way of just revenge, as they themselves had sometimes done, when, in their blind devotion, they cut themselves with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out, 1 Kings. 18. 28. This was accordingly done, and the dong of it, though seemingly barbarous, was, considering the nature of their crime, really righteous; The Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God.

The idols of Baal were utterly destroyed. The buildings about the house of Baal, (which were so many, and so stately, that they are here called a city,) where Baal's priests and their families lived, were destroyed: all the little images, statues, pictures, or shrines, which beautified Baal's temple, with the great image of Baal himself, were brought out and burnt, (v. 26, 27.) and the temple of Baal broken down, and made a dungeon, the potion sink, or sewer, of the city: so that the remembrance of it might be blotted out, or made infamous. Thus was the worship of Baal quite destroyed, at least, for the present, out of Israel, though it had once prevailed so far, that there were but 7000 of all the thousands of Israel, that had not bowed the knee to Baal, and those concealed. Thus will God destroy all the gods of the heathen, and, sooner or later, triumph over them all.

29. Howbeit, from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to will, the golden calves that were in Beth-el, and that were in Dan. 30. And the Lord said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel. 31. But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin. 32. In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel; 33. From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aror, (which is by the river Arnon,) even Gilead and Bashan. 34. Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did, and all his might, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of
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Israel? 35. And Jehu slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria. And Je-hoa haz his son reigned in his stead. 36. And the time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty and eight years.

Here is all the account of the reign of Jehu, though it continued 28 years. The progress of it answered not to the glory of its beginning. We have here,

I. God’s approbation of what Jehu had done. Many, it is probable, censured him as treacherous and barbarous, called him a rebel, a usurper, a murderer, and prostiticated ill concerning him, that a family thus raised, would soon be ruined; but God said, Well done, (v. 30.) and this is sufficiently proved, who said otherwise. I. God pronounced that to be right, which he had done. It is justly questionable, whether he did it from a good principle, and whether he did not take some false steps in the doing of it; and yet, (says God,) Thou hast done well in executing that which was right in mine eyes. The extirpating of idolaters and idolatry, was a thing right in God’s eyes, for it is an iniquity he visits as surely and severely as any other: it was his indignation which moved him at last, he had designed, all he designed; Jehu went through with his work. 2. God promised him a reward, That his children of the fourth generation from him should sit upon the throne of Israel. This was more than what took place in any of the dignities or royal families of that kingdom; of the house of Ahab there were indeed four kings, Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah and Joram, but the two last were brothers, so that it reached but to the third generation, and that whole House of David continued, but about 43 years all, were it not that Jehu’s continued in four, beside himself, and, in all, about 120 years. Note, No services done for God shall go unrewarded.

II. Jehu’s carelessness in what he was further to do. By this it appeared that his heart was not right with God, that he was partial in his reformation. 1. He did not put away all the evil. He departed from the sins of Ahab, but not from the sins of Jeroboam; discarded Baal, but adhered to the calves. The worship of Baal was heathenish evil, and more heinous in the sight of God, but the worship of the calves was a great evil: true conversion is not only from gross sin, but from all sin; not only from false gods, but from false worship. The worship of Baal weakened and diminished Israel, and made them beholden to the Sidonians, and therefore he could easily part with that: but the worship of the calves was a political idolatry, was begun, and kept up, for reasons of state, to prevent the return of the ten tribes to the house of David, and therefore Jehu clave to that. True conversion is not only from wasteful sins, but from gainful sins; not only from those sins that are destructive to the secular interest, but from those that support and befriend it; in forsaking which, is the great trial, whether we can deny ourselves, and trust God. 2. He put away evil, but he did not mind that which was good; (v. 31.) He took away the worship in the law of the Lord God of Israel. He abolished the worship of Baal, but did not keep up the worship of God, nor walk in his law. He had showed great care and zeal for the rooting out of a false religion, but, in the true religion, (1.) He showed no care, took no heed, lived at large, was not at all solicitous to please God, and do his duty; took no heed to the scriptures, to the prophets, to their conscientious, but watchful, and God-thoughtful care. Those that are heedless, it is to be feared, are graceless; for where there is a good principle in the heart, it will make men cautious and circumspect, desirous to please God, and jealous of doing any thing to offend him. (2.) He showed no zeal; what he did in religion, he did not do it with his heart, with all his heart, but did it as if he did it not, without any liveliness or concern. It seems, he was a man that had little religion himself, and yet God made use of him as an instrument of reformation in Israel. It is a pity but that those that do good to others, should always be good themselves.

III. The judgment that came upon Israel in his reign. We have reason to fear that when Jehu took no heed himself to walk in God’s law, the people were generally as careless as he, both in their devotions, and in their conversations. There was a general decay of piety, and increase of profaneness; and therefore it is not strange that the next laws we hear, is, In these days the Lord began to cut Israel short, v. 32. Their neighbours encroached upon them on every side; they were short in their duty to God, and therefore God cut them short in their extent, wealth, and power. Hazael king of Syria was, above any other, vexatious and mischievous to them, smote them in all the coasts of Israel, particularly the countries on the other side Jordan, which lay next him, and most exposed; on these he made continual inroads, and thus defiled, wasted. Many, 1 and Rechabites and Gadites smarmed for the choice which their ancestors made of an inheritance on that side Jordan, which Moses reproved them for, Numb. 32. Now Hazael did what Elisha foresaw he would do, and foretold. Yet, for doing it, God had a quarrel with him, and with his kingdom, as we may find, Amos 1. 3. 4. Because they of Damascus have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron, therefore (says God) I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad.

Lastly, The conclusion of Jehu’s reign, v. 34-36. Notice is taken, in general, of his might; but because he took no heed to serve God, the memorials of his mighty enterprise and achievements are justly buried in oblivion.

CHAP. XI.

The revolution in the kingdom of Israel was soon perfected in Jehu’s settlement; we must now inquire in the affairs of the kingdom of Judah, which lost its head, (such as it was,) at the same time, and by the same hand, as Israel did; but things continued longer there in distraction than in Israel, yet, after some years, they were brought to so good posture, as we shall find in this chapter.

I. Athaliah usurps the government, and destroys all the seed royal, v. 1. II. Joash, a child of a year old, is wonderfully preserved, v. 2, 3. III. At six years’ end, he is produced, and, by the agency of Jehoiada, king, v. 4-12. IV. Athaliah is slain, v. 13...16. Both the civil and religious interests of the kingdom are well settled in the hands of Joash, v. 17...21. And thus, after some interruption, things returned with advantage into the old channel.

1. AND when Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she arose, and destroyed all the seed royal. 2. But Jehosheba the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king’s sons which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bed-chamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain. 3. And he was with her hid in the house of the Lord six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land.

God had assured David of the continuance of his family, which is called his ordaining a lamp for his anointed: and this cannot but appear a great thing, now that we have read of the utter extinction of so
many royal families, one after another. Now here we have David’s promised lamp almost extinguished, and yet wonderfully preserved.

I. It was almost extinguished by the barbarous malice of Athaliah, the queen-mother, who, when she heard that her son Ahaziah was slain by Jehu, arose and destroyed all the seed royal, (v. 1.) all that she knew to be akin to the crown. Her husband’s death preceded hers by but little; and though the seed of Jehoram, 2 Chron. 21. 4. The Arabians had slain all Jehoram’s sons, but Ahaziah, 2 Chron. 22. 1. Jehu had slain all their sons, (2 Chron. 22. 8.) and Ahaziah himself. Surely never was royal blood so profusely shed: happy the men of inferior birth, who live below envy and emulation! But, as if all this were but a small matter, Athaliah destroys all that were left of the seed royal: it was strange that one of the tender sex could be so barbarous, that one who had been herself a king’s daughter, a king’s wife, and a king’s mother, could be so barbarous to a royal family, and a family into which she was herself ingrafted; but she did it, 1. From a spirit of ambition; she thirsted after rule, and thought she could not get to it any other way; that none might reign with her, she slew even the infants and sucklings that might have reigned after her; for fear of a competitor, not any must be reserved for a successor; and, 2. From a spirit of revenge and rage against God; the house of Ahab being utterly destroyed, and her son Ahaziah among the rest, because he was akin to it; she resolved, as it were, by way of reprisal, to destroy the house of David, and cut off his line, in defiance of God’s promise to perpetuate it; a foolish attempt, and fruitless, for who can dissuade what God hath proposed? Grandmother have been thought more fond of their grandchildren, and would have preserved them of their own; yet Ahaziah’s own mother is the wilful murderer of Ahaziah’s own sons, and in their infancy too, when she was obliged, above any other, to nurse them, and take care of them; well might she be called, Athaliah, that wicked woman, (2 Chron. 24. 7.) Jezabel’s own daughter; yet herein God was righteous, and visited the iniquity of Joram and Ahaziah, those degenerate branches of David’s house, upon their children.

II. It was wonderfully preserved by the pious care of one of Joram’s daughters, (who was wife to Jehoiada the priest,) who stole away one of the king’s sons, Joash by name, and hid him, v. 2, 3. This was a brand plucked out of the fire; what number were slain, we are not told, but, it seems, this, being a child in the nurse’s arms, was not missed, or not inquired after, or, however, not found; the person that delivered him, was his own aunt, the daughter of wicked Joram; for those whom God will have protected, he will raise up protectors: the place of his safety was the house of the Lord, one of the chambers belonging to the temple, a place Athaliah seldom troubled; his aunt, by bringing him hither, put him under God’s special protection, and so hid him by faith, as Moses was hid, now were David’s words made good, one of his seed, (Ps. 27. 5.) In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me. With good reason did this Joash, when he grew up, set himself to repair the house of the Lord, for it had been a sanctuary to him; now was the promise made to David, bound up in one life, and yet it did not fail. Thus to the Son of David will God, according to his promise, secure a spiritual seed, which, though sometimes reduced, and brought very low, and seemingly lost, will be perpetuated to the end of time, hidden sometimes, and unseen, but hidden in God’s pavilion, and unhurt. It was a special providence that Joram, though a king, a wicked king, married his daughter to Jehoiada a priest, a godly priest:

some perhaps thought it a disparagement to the royal family, to marry a daughter to a clergyman, but it proved a happy marriage, and the saving of the royal family from ruin; for Jehoiada’s interest in the temple gave her an opportunity to preserve the child, and her interest in the royal family gave him an opportunity to set him on the throne: see the wisdom and care of Providence, and how it prepares for what it designs; and see what blessings they lay up in store for their families, that marry their children to those that are wise and good.

4. And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the Lord, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the Lord, and showed them the king’s son. 5. And he commanded them, saying, This is the thing that ye shall do: A third part of you that enter in on the sabbath shall even be keepers of the watch of the king’s chamber; and a third part shall be at the gate of Sur; and a third part at the gate behind the guard: so shall ye keep the watch of the house, that it be not broken down. 6. And two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath, even they shall keep the watch of the house of the Lord about the king. 8. And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand: and he that cometh within the ranges, let him be slain: and be ye with the king as he goeth out, and as he cometh in. 9. And the captains over the hundreds did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest commanded: and they took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest. 10. And to the captains over hundreds did the priest give king David’s spears and shields, that were in the temple. 11. And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, round about the king, from the right corner of the temple to the left corner of the temple, along by the altar and the temple. 12. And he brought forth the king’s son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony: and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.

Six years Athaliah tyrannised; we have not a particular account of her reign, no doubt, it was of a piece with the beginning; while Jehu was extirpating the worship of Baal in Israel, she was establishing it in Judah, as appears, 2 Chron. 24. 7. The court and kingdom of Judah had been debauched by their alliance with the house of Ahab, and now one of that house is a curse and plague to both; sinful friendships speed no better: all this while, Joash lay hid, entitled to a crown, and intended for it, and yet buried alive in obscurity. Though the sons and heirs of heaven are now hidden, the world
know them not; (1 John 3. 1.) but the time is fixed when they shall appear in glory, as Joash in his seventh year; by that time, he was ready to be shown, not a babe, having served his first apprenticeship to life, and being arrived at his first chimerical year, he had taken a good step toward manhood; by that time, the people were grown weary of Athaliah’s tyranny, and ripe for a revolution; now, by the grace of God, excepted, we have:

1. The manager of this great affair was Jehoiada the priest, probably the High Priest, or, at least, the Sagan, (as the Jews called him,) or suffragan to the High Priest; by his birth and office, he was a man in authority, whom the people were bound by the law to observe and obey, especially when there was no rightful king upon the throne, Deut. 17. 12. By marriage, he was allied to the royal family, and if all the seed royal were destitute of wife, as daughter to Joram, had a better title to the crown than Athaliah had. By his eminent gifts and graces, he was fitted to serve his country, and better service he could not do it, than to free it from Athaliah’s usurpation; and we have reason to think he did not make this attempt, till he had first asked counsel of God, and known his mind, either by prophets, or Uriam, or both.

2. The management was very discreet, and as became so wise and good a man as Jehoiada was.

2. He concerted the matter with the rulers of hundreds and the captains, the men in office, ecclesiastical, civil, and military; he got them to him to the temple, consulted with them, laid before them the grievances they at present laboured under, gave them an oath of secrecy, and, finding them free and forward to join him, showed them the king’s son, (v. 4.) and so well satisfied were they with his fidelity, that it was of no use to suspect an imposition. We may well think what a pleasing surprise it was to the good people among them, who feared that the house and lineage of David were quite cut off, to find such a spark as this in the embers.

2. He posted the priests and Levites, who were more immediately under his direction, in the several avenues to the temple, to keep the guards, put them in mind of the commandment of God to the dreaders, v. 9. David had divided the priests into courses, which waited by turns; every sabbath day morning, a new company came into waiting, but the company of the foregoing week did not go out of waiting till the sabbath evening, so that on the sabbath day, when double service was to be done, there was a double number to do it, both they that were to come in, and they that were to go out; these Jehoiada employed to attend on this great occasion, he armed them out of the magazines of the temple with David’s spears and shields, either his own or those he had taken from his enemies, which he devoted to God’s honour, v. 10. If they were old and unfashionable, yet they that used them, might by their being David’s be reminded of God’s covenant with him, which they were now acting in the defence of.

Two things they were ordered to do; (1.) To protect the young king from being insulted; they must keep the watch of the king’s house, (v. 5.) compass the king, and be with him, (v. 8.) to guard him from Athaliah’s partisans, for still there were those that thirsted after royal blood. (2.) To preserve the holy temple from being profaned by the concourse of people that would come together on this occasion; (v. 6.) Keep the watch of the house, that is, put watchmen on the tower, the court, and ganze, and so strangers should crowd in, or such as were unclean. He was not so zealous for the projected revolution, as to forget his religion; in times of the greatest hurry, care must be taken, Ne detrimentum cedit ecclesia—that the holy things of God be not trenched upon. It is observable that Jehoiada appointed to each his place as well as his work, (v. 6, 7.) for good order contributes very much to the expediency and accomplishing of any great enterprise; let every man know, and keep, and make good, his post, and then the work will be done quickly.

3. When the guards were fixed, then the king was brought forth, v. 12. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, for even in thy holy mountain thy king appears, a child indeed, but not such a one as brings a woe upon the land, for he was the son of nobles. The son of David, Eccl. 10. 17. A child indeed, but he had a good guardian, and, which was better, a good God, to go to. Jehoiada, without delay, proceeded to the coronation of this young king; for though he was not yet capable of despatching business, he would be growing up towards it by degrees, this was done with great solemnity, v. 12. (1.) In token of his being invested with kingly power, he put the crown upon him, though it was yet too large and heavy for his head; the regalia, it is probable, were kept in the temple, and so the crown was ready at hand. (2.) In token of his obligation to govern by law, and to make the word of God his rule, he gave him the testimony of his right hand, which he must read in all the days of his life, Deut. 17. 18. 19. (3.) In token of his receiving the Spirit, to qualify him for this great work to which he before was called, he anointed him; though notice is taken of the anointing of their kings in case of interruption, as here, and in Solomon’s case, yet I know not but the ceremony might be used to all their kings, at least, those of the house of David, because their royalty was typical of Christ, who was to be anointed above his fellows, above all the sons of David. (4.) In token of the people’s acceptance of him, and subjection to his government, they clapped their hands for joy, and expressed their hearty good wishes to him, Let the king live; and thus they made him king, made him their king, consented to, and condescended with the divine appointment. They had reason to rejoice in the perpetuation of the Davidic line, and the restoration of the temple, without the omission of religion, by a king under the tuition of so good a man as Jehoiada; they had reason to bid him welcome to the crown, whose right it was, and to pray, Let him live, who came to them as life from the dead, and in whom the house of David was to live. With such acclamations of joy and satisfaction must the kingdom of Christ be welcomed into our hearts, when his throne is set up there, and Satan the usurper is deposed; Hosanna, blessed be he that comes: clap hands, and say, “Let King Jesus live, for ever live and reign, in my soul, and in all the world” it is promised, (Ps. 72. 15.) He shall live, and prayer shall be made for him, and his kingdom, continually.

13. And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the Lord. 14. And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner was, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets: and Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason, treason! 15. But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges; and him that followeth
nor kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the LORD. 16. And they laid hands on her; and she went by the way by which the horses came into the king's house: and there was she slain.

We may suppose it was designed, when they had finished the solemnity of the king's inauguration, to make a visit to Athaliah, and call her to an account for her murders, usurpations, and tyranny; but, like her mother Jezebel, she saved them the labour, went out to meet them, and hastened her own destruction.

1. Hearing the noise, she came in a fright to see what was the matter; v. 13. Jehoiada and his friends began in silence, but now that they found their strength, they proclaimed what they were doing. It seems Athaliah was little regarded, else she had had intelligence brought her of this daring attempt, before with her own ears she heard the noise; had the design been discovered before it was perfected, it might have been quashed, but now it was too late; when she heard the noise, it was strange that she was so ill advised as to come herself, and forsook her house and palace; and surely she was not so neglected as to have none to go for her, or none to go with her, but she was wretchedly infatuated by the transport both of fear and indignation she was in; whom God will destroy, he befools.

2. Seeing what was done, she cried out for help: she saw the king's place by the pillar possessed by one to whom the princes and people did homage, (v. 14,) and had reason to conclude her power at an end, which, she knew, was usurped; this made her rend her clothes like one distracted, and cry, "Treason, treason! Come and help against the traitors." Josephus adds, that she cried to have him killed, that possessed the king's place. What was now doing, was the highest justice, yet it is branded as the highest crime; she herself was the greatest traitor, and yet is first and loudest in crying Treason, treason! Those that are themselves most guilty, are commonly most forward to reproach others.

3. Jehoiada gave orders to put her to death, as an idolater, a usurper, and an enemy to the public peace; care was taken, (1.) That she should not be killed in the temple, or any of the courts of it, in reverence to that holy place, which must not be stained with the blood of any human sacrifice, though ever so justly offered. (2.) That he who appeared for her, should die with her; "Him that follows her, to protect or rescue her, any of her attendants that resolve to adhere to her, and will not come into the interests of their rightful sovereign, kill with the sword, but not unless they follow her now," v. 15. According to these orders, she endeavouring to make her escape the back way to the palace, through the stalls, they pursued her, and there killed her, v. 16. So let all these enemies heresia O Lord: thus give the bloody harlot blood to drink, for she is worthy.

17. And Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people; that they should be the LORD's people; between the king also and the people. 18. And all the people of the land went into the house of Baal, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. And the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD. 19. And he took the rulers over hundreds and the captains, and the guard, and all the people of the land; and they brought down the king from the house of the LORD, and came by the way of the gate of the guard to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings. 20. And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was in quiet: and they slew Athaliah with the sword beside the king's house. 21. Seven years old was Jehoash when he began to reign.

Jehoiada has now got over the hardest part of his work; when, by the death of Athaliah, his young prince had his way to the throne cleared of all opposition, he is now to improve his advantages for the perfecting of the revolution, and the settling of the government.

Two things we have an account of here:
I. The good foundation he laid, by an original contract, v. 17. Now that prince and people were together in God's house, as it should seem, before they stirred, he took care that they should jointly covenant with God, and mutually covenant with each other, that they might rightly understand their duty both to God and to one another, and be firmly bound to it.

1. He endeavoured to settle and secure the interests of religion among them, by a covenant between them and God. King and people would then cleave most firmly to each other, when both had joined themselves to the Lord. God had, already, on his part, promised to be their God; (Jehoiada could show them that in the book of the testimony,) now the king and people on their part must covenant and agree that they will be the Lord's people; in this covenant, the king stands upon the same level with his subjects, and is as much bound as any of them to serve the Lord. By this engagement they renounced Baal, whom many of them had worshipped, and resigned themselves to God's government. It is well with a people, when all the changes of the times pass over them, help to revive, strengthen, and advance, the interests of religion among them. And those are likely to prosper, who set cut in the world under fresh and sensible obligations to God and their duty. By our bonds to God the bonds of every relation are strengthened; they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us, 2 Cor. 8. 5.

2. He then settled both the coronation-oath, and the oath of allegiance, the facta conveniant, between the king and the people, by which the king was obliged to govern according to law, and to protect his subjects, and they obliged, while he did so, to obey him, and to bear faithful and true allegiance to him. Covenants are of use, both to remind us of, and to bind us to, those duties which are already binding on us. It is good, in all relations, for them to understand one another fully, particularly in that between prince and subject, that the one may understand the limits of his power and prerogative, the other of his liberty and property; and never may the ancient landmarks which our fathers have set before them, be removed.

II. The good beginnings he raised on those foundations.

1. Pursuant to their covenant with God, they immediately abolished idolatry, which the preceding
kings, in compliance with the house of Ahab, had introduced; (v. 18.) All the people of the land, the mob, got together, to show their zeal against idolatry; and (2) very often as they were so well headed, would lend a hand to pull down Baal's temple, his altars, and his images. All his worshippers, who should seem, deserted him; only his priest Mattan stuck to his altar alone, though all men forsook Baal, he would not, and there he was slain, the best sacrifice that ever was offered upon that altar. Having destroyed Baal's temple, they appointed officers over the house of God, to see that the service of God was regularly performed by the proper persons, in due time, and according to the instituted manner.

2. Pursuant to their covenant with one another, they expressed a mutual readiness to, and satisfaction in, each other. (1.) The king was brought in state to the royal palace, and sat there on the throne of judgment, the thrones of the house of David, (v. 19.) ready to receive petitions and appeals, which he would refer to Jehoiada to give answers to, and to give judgments upon. (2.) The people rejoiced, and Jerusalem was in quiet; (v. 20.) and Josephus says, they kept a feast of joy many days, making good Solomon's observation, (Prov. 11. 10.) When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, and when the wicked perish, there is shouting.

CHAP. XII.

This chapter gives us the history of the reign of Joash, which does not answer to that glorious beginning of it, which we had an account of in the foregoing chapter; he was not so illustrious at forty years' old as he was at seven, yet his reign is to be reckoned one of the better sort, and appears much worse in Chronicles than it does here, (2 Chron. 24.) for there was the blood of one of God's prophets laid at his door; here we are only told, I. That he did well, while Jehoiada lived, v. 1. 3. II. That he was careful and active to repair the temple, v. 4. 16. III. That after a mean composition with Hazael, (v. 17, 18.) he died ingloriously, v. 19. 21.

1. IN the seventh year of Jehu, Jehoash began to reign; and forty years reigned ed he in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. 2. And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him. 3. But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.

The general account here given of Joash is,

1. That he reigned 40 years; as he began his reign when he was very young, he might, in the course of nature, have continued much longer; for he was cut off when he was but 47 years old; v. 1.
2. That he did that which was right, as long as Jehoiada lived to instruct him, v. 2. Many young men have come too soon to an estate, having wealth, and power, and liberty, before they knew how to use them, and it has been of bad consequence to them; but against this danger Joash was well guarded, (1.) By having such a good director as Jehoiada was, a wise, and experienced, and faithful man, to who he was so much wished to as to hearken to him and be directed by him, even when he was grown up. Note, It is a great mercy to young people, and especially to young princes, and all young men of consequence, to be under good direction, and to have those about them, that will instruct them to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord; and they then do wisely and well for themselves, when they are willing to be counselled and ruled by such: a child left to himself, brings his mother to shame, but a child left to such a tuition, may bring himself to honour and comfort.

3. That the high places were not taken away, v.

3. Up and down the country, they had altars both for sacrifice and incense, to the honour of the God of Israel only, but in competition with, and at least in implicit contempt of, his altar at Jerusalem. These private altars, perhaps, had been more used in the late bad reigns than formerly, because it was not safe to go up to Jerusalem, nor was the temple-service performed as it should have been; and, it may be, Jehoioada connived at them, because some well-meaning people were glad of them when they could not have better, and he hoped that the reforming of the temple, and putting things into a good posture there, would, by degrees, draw people from their high places, and they would dwindie of themselves; or perhaps neither the king nor the priest had zeal enough to carry on their reformation so far, nor courage and strength enough to encounter such an inveterate usage.

4. And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the Lord, even the money of every one that passeth the account, the money that every man is set at, and all the money that cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the Lord. 5. Let the priests take it to them, every man of his acquaintance; and let them repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found. 6. But it was so, that, in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash, the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house. 7. Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and the other priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? Now, therefore, receive no more money of your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house. 8. And the priests consented to receive no more money of the people, neither to repair the breaches of the house. 9. But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the Lord; and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord. 10. And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags, and told the money that was found in the house of the Lord. 11. And they gave the money, being told, into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of the Lord: and they laid it out to the carpenters and builders that wrought upon the house of the Lord. 12. And to masons, and hewers of stone, and to buy timber and
hewed stone to repair the breaches of the house of the Lord, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it. 13. Howbeit, there were not made for the house of the Lord bowls of silver, snuffers, basons, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money that was brought into the house of the Lord: 14. But they gave that to the workmen, and repaired therewith the house of the Lord. 15. Moreover, they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully. 16. The trespass-money and sin-money was not brought into the house of the Lord: it was the priests'.

We have here an account of the repairing of the temple in the reign of Josiah.

I. It seems, the temple was gone out of repair; though Solomon built it very strong, of the best materials, and in the best manner, yet, in time, it went to decay, and there were breaches found in it; (v. 5.) in the roofs, or walls, or floors, the ceiling, or wainscoting, or the floors, or partitions of the courts; even temples themselves are the worse for the wearing; the heavenly temple will never wax old. Yet it was not only the teeth of time, that made these breaches, the sons of Athaliah had broken up the house of God, (2 Chron. 24. 7.) and, out of enmity to the service of the temple, had damaged the buildings of it, and the priests had not taken care to repair the breaches in time, so that they went not stay till it was too late. Let us then take care to repair our souls, that we have not nothing to excuse ourselves; it would be a terrible thing for men to have this valuable vineyard let out to them upon such easy terms, who could not afford to keep the wine-press in due and tenantable repair; (Matt. 21. 23.) justly did their great Lord sue them for this permissive waste, and by his judgments recover locum vastatum—for dilapidations, (as the law speaks,) when this neglected temple was laid even with the ground.

II. The king himself was (as it should seem) the first and forwardest man that took care for the repair of it; we do not find that the priests complained of it, or that Jehoiada himself was active in it, but the king was zealous in the matter; 1. Because he was king, and God expects and requires from those who have power, that they use it for the maintenance and support of religion, the redress of grievances, and repairation of decays, for the exciting and engaging of ministers to do their part, and people theirs. 2. Because the temple had been both his nursery and his sanctuary, when he was a child, in a grateful remembrance of which, he now appeared zealous for the honour of it. They who have experienced the comfort and benefit of religious assemblies, will make the reproach of them their burthen, (Zeph. 3. 18.) the support of them their care, and the prosperity of them their chief joy.

III. The priests were ordered to collect money for these repairs, and to take care that the work was done; the king had the affairs of his kingdom to mind, and could not himself inspect this affair, but he employed the priests to manage it, the fittest persons, and most likely, one would think, to be hearty in it. 1. He gave them orders for the levy-ing of the money of the dedicated things; they must not stint, it was paid by them, but they must call for it where they knew it was due in their respective districts, either as redemption-money, by virtue of the law, (Exod. 30. 13.) or as estimation-money, by virtue of the law, (Lev. 27. 2, 3.) or as a free-will offering; (v. 4.) this they were to gather every man of his acquaintance, and it was supposed that there was no man but had acquaintance with some or other of the priests. Note, We should take the opportunity that God gives us of exciting those we have a particular acquaintance with, to that which is good. 2. He gave them orders for laying out the money they had levied, in repairing the breaches of the house, v. 5.

IV. This method did not answer the intention, v. 6. Little money was raised; either the priests were careless, and did not call to the people to pay in their dues, or the people had so little confidence in the priests' management, that they were backward to pay money into their hands; if they were distrusted without cause, it was the people's shame; if with, it was more their's. But what money was raised, was not applied to the proper use; the breaches of the house were not repaired; the priests thought it might serve as well as it had done, and therefore put it off from time to time. Church-work is usually slow work, but it is pity that churchmen, of all men, should be slow at it. Perhaps, what little money they raised, they thought it necessary to use for the maintenance of the priests, which must needs fall much short, when ten tribes were wholly revolted, and the other two wretchedly corrupted.

Another method was therefore taken; the king has his heart much upon it, to have the breaches of the house repaired, v. 7. His apostasy, at last, gives us cause to question whether he had as good an affection for the service of the temple as lie had for the structure; many have been zealous for building and beautifying churches, and for other forms of godliness, who yet have been strangers to the power of it: however, we commend his zeal, and the breaches of the house and temple are, as the king himself when he saw them, a remiss; and so convincing was his reproof, that the priests owned themselves unworthy to be any longer employed, and consented to the taking of some other measures, and the giving up of the money they had received, into other hands, v. 8. It was honestly done, when they found they had not spirit to do it themselves, not to hinder other people from doing it. Another cause was taken.

1. For raising money, v. 9, 10. The money was not paid into private hands, but put into a public chest, and then people brought it in readily, and in great abundance, not only their dues, but their free-will offerings for so good a work. The High Priest and the secretary of state counted the money out of the chest, and laid it by in specie for the use to which it was appropriated. When public distributions are made faithfully, public contributions will be made cheerfully. The money that was given, (1.) Was dropped into the chest through a hole in the lid, past recall, to intimate that what has been once resigned to God, must never be resumed; every man, as he purposed in his heart, so let him give. (2.) The chest was put on the right hand as they went in, which, some think, is alluded to in that kind of charity which our Saviour gives, Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. But while they were getting all they could, for the repair of the temple, they did not break in upon that which was the stated maintenance of the priests, (v. 16.) the trespass-money and the sin-money which were given to them by that law, Lev. 5. 13, 16. were reserved to them. Let not the servants of the temple be starved, under colour of repairing the breaches of the house.

2. For laying out the money that was raised. (1.) They did not put it into the hands of the priests, who were not versed in affairs of this nature, having other work to mind, but into the hands of those that...
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did the work, or, at least, had the oversight of it, v. 11. They were fittest to be intrusted with this business, whose employment lay that way: Tractant fabrilis foœri—Every artist has his trade assigned; but let not those who are called to war, the holy warfare, entangle themselves in the affairs of this life. That they were thus intrusted did the business, [1.] Carefully; purchasing materials, and paying workmen, v. 12. Business is done with expedition, when those are employed in it, that understand it, and know which way to go about it. [2.] Faithfully; such a reputation they got for honesty, that there was no occasion to examine their bills, or audit their accounts; let all that are intrusted with public money, or public work, learn hence to deal faithfully, as those that know God will reckon with them, whether men do or no, those that think it is no sin to cheat the government, cheat the country, or cheat the church, will be of another mind, when God shall set their sins in order before them. (2.) They did not lay it out in ornaments for the temple, in vessels of gold or silver, but in necessary repairs first; (v. 13.) whence we may learn, in all our expenses, to give that the preference, which is most needful, and, in dealing for the public, to deal as we would for ourselves. After the repairs were finished, we find the overplus turned into plate for the service of the temple, 2 Chron. 24. 14.

17. Then Hazael king of Syria went up, and fought against Gath, and took it: and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem.

18. And Jehoash king of Judah took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jechoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the Lord, and in the king's house, and sent it to Hazael king of Syria; and he went away from Jerusalem.

19. And the rest of the acts of Jehoash, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? 20. And his servants arose, and made a conspiracy, and slew Jehoash in the house of Millo, which goeth down to Silla. 21. For Joachaz the son of Shimeath, and Jehozabad the son of Shomer, his servants, smote him, and he died; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David: and Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.

When Joash had revolted from God, and was become both an idolater and a persecutor, the hand of the Lord went out against him, and his last state was worse than his first. 1. His wealth and honour became an easy prey to his neighbours. Hazael, when he had chastised Israel, (ch. 10. 32.) threatened Judah and Jerusalem likewise; took Gath, a strong city, (v. 17.) and thence intended to march with his forces against Jerusalem, the royal city, the holy city, but whose defence, on account of its smallness, was departed. Joash had neither spirit nor strength to make head against him, but gave him all the hallowed things, and all the gold that was found both in his exchequer and in the treasures of the temple, (v. 18.) to hire him to march another way. If it were lawful to do this for the public safety, better part with the gold of the temple than expose the temple itself; yet, (1.) If he had not forsaken God, and forfeited his protection, his affairs had not been brought to this extremity, but he might have forced Hazael to retire. (2.) He diminished himself, and made himself very mean, lost the honour of a prince and a soldier, and of an Israelite too, in alienating the dedicated things. (3.) He impoverished himself and his kingdom. And, (4.) He tempted Hazael to come again, when he could bring home so rich a booty without striking a stroke. And it had this effect, for, the next year, the host of Syria came up against Jerusalem, destroyed the princes, and plundered the city, 2 Chron. 24. 23, 24.

2. His life became an easy prey to his own servants. They conspired against him, and slew him; (v. 20. 21.) not aiming at his kingdom, for they opposed not his son's succeeding him, but they were acting on some design of their own, and committed on some crime he had committed; and we are told in Chronicles, that his murdering of the prophet, Jehoiada's son, was the provocation. In this, how unrighteoussoever they were, (vengeance was not ther'e, nor did it belong to them to repay,) God was righteous; and this was not the only time that he let even kings know that it was at their peril, if they touched his anointed, and did his prophets any harm; and that when he comes to make inquisition for blood, the blood of prophets will run the account very high. Thus fell Joash, who began in the spirit, and ended in the flesh. God usually sets marks of his displeasure upon apostates, even in this life; for they, of all sinners, do most reproach the Lord.

CHAP. XIII.

This chapter brings us again to the history of the kings of Israel, and particularly of the family of Jehu. We have here an account of the reign, 1. Of his son Jehoahaz, which continued 17 years. His bad character in general, v. 1. 2. He was in trouble he was brought into, (v. 3.) and the low ebb of his affairs, v. 7. His humiliation before God, and God's compassion toward him, v. 4. 5. and again, v. 23. His continuance in his idolatry notwithstanding, v. 6. His death, v. 8. 9. 11. Of his grandson Joash, which continued 16 years. Here is a general account of his reign in the usual form, (v. 11. 13.) but a particular account of the death of Elisha in his time. The kind visit the king made him, (v. 14.) and the encouragement he gave him in his wars with Syria, v. 15. 19. His death and burial, (v. 20.) and a miracle wrought by his bones, v. 21. And, Lastly, The advantages Joash gained against the Syrians, according to his predictions, v. 24. 25.

1. IN the three and twentieth year of Joash, the son of Ahaziah king of Judah, Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years. 2. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom. 3. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel; and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-Hadad the son of Hazael, all their days. 4. And Jehoahaz besought the Lord, and the Lord hearkened unto him; for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them. 5. (And the Lord gave Israel a Saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians; and the children
of Israel dwelt in their tents as beforetime.
6. Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin, but walked therein; and there remained the grove also in Samaria.) 7. Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing.
3. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?
9. And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his stead.

This general account of the reign of Jehoahaz, and of the state of Israel during his 17 years, though short, is full of significant incidents, which are here grouped into two things which are very affecting and instructive.
1. The glory of Israel raked up in the ashes, buried and lost, and turned into shame. How unlike does Israel appear here to what it had been, and might have been! How is its crown profaned, and its honour laid in the dust!
1. It was the honour of Israel, that they worshipped the only living and true God, who is a Spirit; of an eternal mind, and had rules, by which to worship him, of his own appointment: but by changing the glory of the incorruptible God into the similitude of an ox, the truth of God into a lie, they lost this honour, and levelled themselves with the nations that worshipped the work of their own hands. We find here that the king followed the sins of Jeroboam, (v. 2.) and the people departed not from them, but walked therein, v. 6. There could not be a greater reproach than these two idolatrous calves were to a people that were instructed in the service of God, and intrusted with the lively oracles. In all the history of the ten tribes we never find the least shock given to that idolatry, but, in every reign, still the calf was their god, and they separated themselves to that shame.
2. It was the honour of Israel, that they were taken under the special protection of Heaven; God himself was their Defence, the Shield of their help, and the Sword of their excellency. Happy wast thou, O Israel, upon this account. But here, as often before, we find them stripped of this glory, and exposed to the insults of all their neighbours. They, by their sins, provoked God to anger, and then he delivered them into the hands of Hazael and Ben-hadad, v. 3. Hazael oppressed Israel, v. 22. Surely no nation so often plundered and pillaged by their neighbours as Israel.
This they brought upon themselves by sin; when they had provoked God to pluck up their hedge, the goodness of their land did but tempt their neighbours to prey upon them. So low was Israel brought in this reign by the many depredations which the Syrians made upon them, that the militia of the kingdom, and all the force they could bring into the field, were only fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen, a desperate remnant, v. 7.
Are the thousands of Israel come to this? How is the gold become dim! The debauching of a nation will certainly be the debasing of it.
II. Some sparks of Israel's ancient honour appearing in these ashes. It is not quite forgotten, notwithstanding all these quarrels, that this people is the Israel of God, and he the God of Israel. For,
1. It was the ancient honour of Israel, that they were a praying people; and here we find somewhat of that honour revived; for Jehoahaz his king, in his distress, brought the Lord; (v. 4.) applied himself for help, not to the calves, (what help could they give him?) but to the Lord. It becomes kings to be beggars at God's doors; and the greatest of men to be humble petitioners at the footstool of his throne. Need will drive them to it.
2. It was the ancient honour of Israel, that they had God nigh unto them in all that they called upon him for, (Deut. 4. 7.) and so he was here. Though he might justly have rejected the prayer, as an abomination to him, yet the Lord hearkened unto Jehoahaz, and to his prayer for himself and for his people. Oh, that our people, like these, had long since promised to have respect to, Lev. 26. 42. See how swift God is to show mercy; how ready to hear prayers; how willing to find out any reason to be gracious! else he would not look so far back as that ancient covenant which Israel had so often broken, and forfeited all the benefit of. Let this invite and engage us forever to him; and encourage even those that have forsaken him, to return and repent; for there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared.
10. In the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah, began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned sixteen years. 11. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin; but he walked therein. 12. And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? 13. And Joash slept with his fathers; and Jeroboam sat upon his throne: and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. 14. Now Elisha was fallen sick, of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof! 15. And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows: and he took unto him bow and arrows. 16. And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow: and he put his hand upon it; and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. 17. And he said, Open the window eastward: and he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot: and he shot. And he said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aohek till thou have con-
summer them. 18. And he said, Take the arrows: and he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground: and he smote thrice, and stayed. 19. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times, hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.

We have here Jehoash, or Joash, the son of Jehohaz, and grandson of Jehu, upon the throne of Israel. Probably, the house of Jehu intended some respect to the house of David, when they gave this heir-apparent to the crown, the same name with him that was then king of Judah.

I. The general account here given of him and his reign, is much the same with what we have already met with, and has little in it remarkable, v. 10-13. He was none of the worst, and yet, because he kept up that ancient and politic idolatry of the house of Jeroboam, it is said, He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. That one evil was enough to leave an indelible mark of infamy upon his name; for, how little evil soever men saw in it, it was, in the sight of the Lord, a very wicked thing; and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth. It is not possible but that lightly the indigeneous race should pass over his acts, and his might wherever he quarried, leaving it to the common historians to record them, while he takes notice only of the respect he showed to Elisha. One good action shall make a better figure in God's book, than 20 great ones; and, in his account, it gains a man a much better repute to honour a prophet, than to conquer a king and his army.

II. The particular account of what past between him and Elisha, has several things in it remarkable.

1. Elisha fell sick, v. 14. Observe, (1.) he lived long, for it was now about 60 years since he was first called to be a prophet. It was a great me cy to Israel, and especially to the sons of the prophets, that he was continued so long, a burning and shining light. Elisha finished his testimony in a fourth part of the time. God's prophets have their day set them, some longer, others shorter, as Infinite Wisdom sees fit. (2.) All the latter part of his time, from the anointing of Jehu, which was 45 years before Joash began his reign, we find no mention made of him, or of any thing he did, till we find him here upon his death-bed. He might be useful to the last, and yet not so famous as he had sometimes been. The time of his flourishing was less than the time of his living. Let not old people complain of obscurity, but rather be well pleased with retirement. (3.) The Spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha, and yet he is not sent for to heaven in a fiery chariot, as Elijah was, but goes the common road out of the world, and is visited with the visitation of all men. If God honour some above others, who are not inferior to them in gifts or graces, who shall stand fault? May he not do what he will with his own?

2. King Joash visited him in his sickness, and wept over him, v. 14. This was an evidence of some good in him, that he had a value and affection for a faithful prophet; so far was he from hating and persecuting him as a troubler of Israel, that he loved and honoured him more of the greatest blessings, inspired and lamented the loss of him. There have been those who would not be obedient to the word of God, and yet have had the faithful ministers of it so manifested in their consciences, that they could not but have an honour for them.

Observe here, (1.) When the king heard of Elisha's sickness, he came to visit him, and to receive his dying cod and blessing; and it was no disparagement to him, though a king, thus to honour one whom God honoured. Note, It may turn much to our spiritual advantage, to attend the sick-beds and death-beds of good ministers and other good men, that we may learn to die, and may be encouraged in religion by the living comforts they have from it in a dying hour. (2.) Though Elisha was very old, had been a great while useful, and, in the eyes of nature, could not long outlive the king, when he saw him sick and likely to die, wept over him. The aged are most experienced, and therefore can worst be spared. In many cases, one old witness is worth ten young ones. (3.) He lamented him in the same words with which Elisha had himself lamented the removal of Elijah, My father, my father. It is probable he did heard or read them in that fannous story. Note, Those that give just honours to the generation that goes before them, are often recompensed with the like from the generation that comes after them. He that watereth with tears, shall be so watered also himself, when it comes to his own turn, Prov. 11. 25. (4.) This king was herein selfish, he lamented the loss of Elisha, because he was the chariots and horsemen of Israel, and therefore could be ill spared, whereas his prophet was the best chariots and horsemen we find they were, (v. 7.) when they had in all but fifty horsemen and ten chariots. They who consider how much good men contribute to the defence of a nation, and the keeping off of God's judgments, will see cause to lament the removal of them.

3. Elisha gave the king great assurances of his success against the Syrians, Israel's present oppressors, and encouraged him to prosecute his war against him with vigour. Elisha was aware that therefore he was loath to part with him, because he looked upon him as the great bulwark of the kingdom against that common enemy, and depend much upon his blessings and prayers in his designs against them. "Well," says Elisha, "if that be it that makes thee thus sad, let not that trouble thee, thou shalt be victorious over the Sy-
arrow more force than the hands of the king in his full strength. The Syrians had made themselves masters of the country that lay eastward, ch. 10. 33. Thitherward therefore the arrow is directed, and such an interpretation seems the more likely, from the fact of shooting of this arrow, though shot, in one respect, at random, as made it [1] A commission to the king, to attack the Syrians, notwithstanding their power and possession. [2] A promise of success therein: it is the arrow of the Lord’s deliverance, even the arrow of deliverance from Syria. It is God that commands deliverance; and when he will effect it, who can hinder? The arrow of deliverance is his. He shoots out his arrows, and the work is done, Ps. 18. 14. “Thou shalt smite the Syrians in Ahabek, where they are now encamped, or where they are to have a general rendezvous of their forces, till thou hast consumed those of them that are vexatious and oppressive to thee and thy kingdom.”

2. To strike with the arrows, v. 18, 19. The prophet having in God’s name assured him of victory over the Syrians, he will now try what improvement he will make of his victories, whether he will push them on with more zeal than Ahab did, when Ben-hadad lay at his mercy. For the trial of this, he bids him smite with the arrows on the ground; “Believe them brought to the ground by the arrow of the Lord’s deliverance, and laid at thy feet; and now show me what thou wilt do to them when thou hast them down, whether thou wilt do as David did when God gave him the necks of his enemies, beat them small as the dust before the wind,” Ps. 18. 40, 42. The king showed not that eagerness and flame which one might have expected upon this occasion, but throve thrice, and no more. Either out of a foolish tenderness to the Syrians, he smote as if he were afraid of hurting them, or, at least, of ruining them; willing to show mercy to them that never did, nor ever would, show mercy to him or his people. Or, perhaps, he smote but thrice, and very coldly, because he thought it but a silly thing, that it looked idle and childish for a king to beat the floor with his arrows; and thrice was often enough for him to play the fool, merely to please the prophet. But, by continuing the sign, he lost the thing signified, sorely to the grief of the dying prophet, who was wrapt with him, and told him he should have smitten five or six times. Not a sign of straightsome given to the king, and promise of God, why should he be straitened in his own expectations and endeavours? Note, It cannot but be a trouble to good men, to see those they wish well to, stand in their own light, and forsake their own mercies; to see them lose their advantages against their spiritual enemies, and so give them advantage.

20. And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. 21. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha; and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet. 22. But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. 23. And the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet. 24. So Hazael the king of Syria died; and Ben-hadad his son reigned in his stead. 25. And Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, took again, out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war: three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel.

We must now attend,

1. The sepulchre of Elisha: he died in a good old age, and they buried him; and what follows, shows,

1. What power there was in his life to keep off judgments; for, as soon as he was dead, the bands of the Moabites invaded the land; not great armies to face them in the field, but roving skulking bands, that murdered and plundered by surprise. God has many ways to chastise a provoking people. The king was apprehensive of danger only from the Syrians, but, behold, the Moabites invade him. Trouble comes sometimes from that point whence we least feared it. The mentioning of this, immediately upon the death of Elisha, intimates, that the removal of God’s faithful prophets, is a presage of judgments coming. When ambassadors are recalled, heralds may be expected.

2. What power there was in his dead body; it communicated life to another dead body, v. 21. This great miracle, though very briefly related, was a decided proof of his mission, and a confirmation of all his prophecies. It was also a plain indication of another life after this; when Elisha died, there was not an end of him, for then he could not have done this. From operation we may infer existence. By this it appeared that the Lord was still the God of Elisha, therefore Elisha still lived, for he is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And it may, perhaps, have a reference to Christ, by whose death and burial the grave is made to all believers a safe and happy passage to life. It likewise intimated that though Elisha was dead, yet, in the virtue of the promises made by him, Israel’s interests, though they seemed quite sunk and lost, should revive and flourish again. The neighbours were carrying the dead body of a man to the grave, and fearing to fall into the hands of the Moabites, a party of whom they saw at a distance near the place where the body was to be interred, they laid the corpse in the next convenient place, which proved to be Elisha’s sepulchre. The dead man, upon touching his bones, revived, and, it is likely, went home again with his friends. Josephus relates the story otherwise: That some thieves, having robbed and murdered an honest traveller, threw his dead body into Elisha’s grave, and it immediately revived. Elisha was afterwards on his departure, Elisha was honoured after his departure. God thus dispenses honours as he pleases, but, one way or other, the rest of all the saints will be glorious, Is. 11. 10. It is good being near the saints, and having our lot with them both in life and death.

2. The sword of Jehosh king of Israel; and we find it successful against the Syrians.

1. The case of his his success was God’s favour; (v. 25.) The Lord was gracious to them, had compassion on them in their miseries, and respect unto them. The several expressions here of the same import, call upon us to observe and admire the triumphs of divine goodness in the deliverance of such a provoking people. It was of the Lord’s mercies, that they were not consumed; because he would not destroy them as yet. He foresaw they
would destroy themselves, at last, but, as yet, he would reprove them, and give them space to repent. The slowness of God's processes against sinners must be construed to the honour of his mercy, not the impeachment of his justice.

2. The effect of his success, was, Israel's benefit. He recovered out of the hands of Ben-hadad the cities themselves of Israel which the Syrians were possessed of, v. 25. This was a great kindness to the cities themselves, which were hereby brought from under the yoke of oppression; and to the whole kingdom, which was much strengthened by the reduction of those cities. Thrice Joash beat the Syrians, just as often as he had struck the ground with the arrows, and then a full stop was put to the course of his victories. Many have repented, when it was too late, of their distrusts, and the straitness of their desires.

CHAP. XIV.

This chapter continues the history of the succession in the kingdoms both of Judah and Israel. I. In the kingdom of Judah, here is the entire history (as much as is recorded in this book) of Amaziah's reign; his good character; (v. 1.) how the last of his ancestors, his father, (v. 5, 6.) his victory over the Edomites; (v. 7.) his war with Joash, and his defeat in that war; (v. 8. - 14.) his fall, at last, by a conspiracy against him; (v. 17. - 22.) and the beginning of the history of Asa, v. 21. 22. II. In the kingdom of Israel, the conclusion of the reign of Joash, (v. 15. 16.) and the entire history of Jeroboam his son, the second of that name, v. 23. 29. How many great men are made to stand in a little compass in God's book!

1. IN the second year of Joash, son of Jehoahaz king of Israel, reigned Amaziah, the son of Joash king of Judah. 2. He was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. 3. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David his father: he did according to all things as Joash his father did. 4. Howbeit the high places were not taken away: as yet the people did sacrifice and burnt incense on the high places. 5. And it came to pass, as soon as the kingdom was confirmed in his hand, that he slew his servants which had slain the king his father. 6. But the children of the murderers he slew not: according unto that which is written in the book of the law of Moses, wherein the Lord commanded, saying, The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers: but every man shall be put to death for his own sin. 7. He slew of Edom, in the valley of Salt, ten thousand, and took Selah by war, and called the name of it Joktheel unto this day.

Amaziah is the king whom here we have an account of, the son and successor of Joash: let us take a view of him.

1. In the temple; and there he acted, in some measure, well, like Joash, but not like David, v. 3. He began well, but did not persevere. He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, kept up his attendance on God's altars, and his attention to God's word, yet not like David. It is not enough to do that which our pious predecessors did, merely to keep up the usage, but we must do it as they did it, from the same principle of faith and devotion, and with the same sincerity and resolution. It is here taken notice of, as before, that the high places were not taken away, v. 4. It is hard to get clear of those corruptions, which, by long usage, have gained both prescription and a favourable opinion.

2. On the bench; and there we have him doing justice on the traitors that murdered his father; not as soon as ever he came to the crown, lest he should have occasioned some disturbance, but he prudently deferred it till the kingdom was confirmed in his hand, v. 5. To weaken a factious party gradually, when it is not safe to provoke, often proves the way to ruin it effectually. Justice strikes surely by striking slowly, and is often executed most prudently, when it is not executed presently. Wisdom here is profitable to direct. Amaziah did thus, (1.) According to the rule of the law, that ancient rule, that he that sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. Never let traitors or murderers expect to come to their graves like other men: let them flee to the pit, and let no man stay them. (2.) Under the limitation of the law. The children of murderers he slew not, because the law of Moses had expressly provided that the children should not be put to death for the fathers, v. 6. It is probable that this is taken notice of, because there were those about him, that advised him to that rigour, both in revenge, because the crime was extraordinary, the murder of a king; and in policy, that the children might not plot against him, in revenge for their father's death. But against these insinuations he opposed the express law of God, (Deut. 24. 16.) which he was to judge by, and which he resolved to adhere to, and trust God with the issue. God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, because every man is guilty before him, and owes him a death; so that if he require the life for the father's sin, he does no wrong, the sinner having forfeited it already by his own: but he does not allow earthly princes to do thus; the children, before them, are innocent, and therefore must not suffer as guilty.

3. In the field; and there we find him triumphing over the Edomites, v. 7. Edom had revolted from under the hand of Joash in Joash's days, (ch. 8. 22.) now he makes war upon them to bring them back to their allegiance; kills 10,000, and takes the chief city of Arabia the Stony, called Selah, a rock, and gave it a new name. We shall find a larger account of this expedition, 2 Chron. 25. 5., &c.

3. Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu king of Israel, saying, Come, let us look one another in the face. 9. And Jehoash the king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle. 10. Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine heart hath lifted thee up: glory of this, and tarry at home; for why shouldst thou meddle to thy hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou, and Judah with thee? 11. But Amaziah would not hear: therefore Jehoash king of Israel went up; and he and Ama-
Amaziah king of Judah looked one another in the face at Beth-shemesh, which belongeth to Judah. And Jehoshaphat put to the worse before Israel; and they fled every man to their tents. And Jehoshaphat king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Jehoash, the son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh, and came to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, from the gate of Ephraim unto the corner-gate, four hundred cubits. And he took all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house, and hostages, and returned to Samaria.

For several successions after the division of the kingdoms, that of Judah suffered much by the enmity of Israel. After Asa's time, for several successions, it suffered more by the friendship of Israel, and by the strength and affinity they made with them. But now we meet with hostility between them again, which had not been for some ages before. I. Amaziah, upon no provocation, and without showing any cause of quarrel, challenges Joash into the field; (v. 8.) "Come, let us look one another in the face; let us try our strength in battle. Had he challenged him to a personal duel only, the error had remained with himself, but each must bring all their forces into the field, and thousands of lives on both sides must be sacrificed to his capricious humour. Hereby he showed himself proud, presumptuous, and prodigal of blood. Some think that he intended to avenge the injury which the dismissed, disgusted Israelites had lately done to his country, in their return, (2 Chron. 25. 13.) and that he had also the vanity to think of subduing the kingdom of Israel, and reuniting it to Judah. A fool's made thus enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. They that challenge, are chargeable with that beginning of strife, which is as the letting forth of water. He is eager either to fight, or to go to law, may perhaps have enough of it quickly, and be the first that repents it.

II. Joash sends him a grave reproof for his challenge, with advice to withdraw it, v. 9, 10. 1. He mortifies his pride, by comparing himself to a cedar, a stately tree, and Amaziah to a thistle, a sorry weed; telling him, he was so far from fearing him, that he despised him, and scorned as much to have any thing to do with him, or make any alliance with him, as he despised him, and scorned as much to have any thing to do with him, or make any alliance with him, as he despised him, and scorned as much to have any thing to do with him, or make any alliance with him, as he despised him. 2. Joash tells him, he would be so bold, even to offer to come to him, and yet he break down their wall, (and, as Josephus says, drove his chariot in triumph through the breach,) in reproach to them, and that he might, when he pleased, take possession of the royal city. 4. He plundered Jerusalem, took away all that was valuable, and returned to Samaria, laden with spoils, v. 14. It was said of Joash, that he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and of Amaziah, that he did that which was right; and yet Joash triumphs thus over Amaziah; and why so? Because God would show, in Amaziah's fate, that he resists the proud; or because, whatever they were otherwise, Joash had lately been respectful to one of God's prophets, (ch. 13. 14.) but Amaziah had been abusive to mother; (2 Chron. 25. 16.) and God will honour those who humbly honour him in his prophets, but those who despise them, and him in them, shall be lightly esteemed.

15. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoash which he did, and his might, and how he fought with Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? 16. And Jehoash slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; and Joash his son reigned in his stead. 17. And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz king of Israel, fifteen years. And the rest of the acts of Amaziah, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? 19. Now they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem: and he fled to Lachish: but they sent after him to Lachish, and slew him there.
ple of Judah took Azariah, which was sixteen years old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah. 

22. He built Elath, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers.

Here are three kings brought to their graves in these few verses.

1. Joash king of Israel, v. 15, 16. We attended his funeral once before, ch. 13. 12, 13. But because the historian had occasion to give a further account of his life and actions, he again mentions his death and burial.

2. Amaziah king of Judah; 15 years he survived his conqueror the king of Israel, v. 17. A man may live a great while after he has been shamed, may be thoroughly mortified, (as Amaziah, no doubt, was,) and yet not dead; his acts are said to be found written in his annals, (v. 18,) but not his might, for his cruelty when he was a conqueror over the Edomites, and his insolence when he challenged the king of Israel, showed him void of true courage. He was slain by his own subjects, who hated him for his mal-administration, (v. 19,) and made Jerusalem disagreeable to him, the ignominious breach made in their walls being occasioned by his folly and presumption; he fled to Lachish; how long he continued concealed or sheltered there, we are not told, but, at last, he was there murdered, v. 19. No further did the rage of the rebels extend, for they brought him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him there among his ancestors.

3. Azariah succeeded Amaziah, but not till 12 years after his father's death, for Amaziah died in the 15th year of Jeroboam, (as appears by comparing v. 23. with v. 1.) but Azariah did not begin his reign till the 27th of Jeroboam; (ch. 25. 1.) for he was but four years old at the death of his father, so that, for 12 years, till he came to be 16, the government was in the hands of protectors: he reigned very long, (ch. 15. 2.) and yet the account of his reign is here industriously huddled up, and broken off abruptly, v. 22. He built Elath, which had belonged to the Edomites, but, it is probable, was recovered by his father, (v. 7.) after that the king slept with his fathers, as if that had been all he did, that was worth mentioning; or rather, it is meant of king Amaziah, he did it soon after he died.

23. In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. 24. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 25. He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher. 26. For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. 27. And the Lord said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash. 28. Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and Hamath, which belonged to Judah, for Israel, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? 29. And Jeroboam slept with his fathers, even with the kings of Israel; and Zachariah his son reigned in his stead.

Here is an account of the reign of Jeroboam the second; I doubt it is an indication of the affection and adherence of the house of Jehu to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, that they called an heir-apparent to the crown by his name; thinking that an honourable name, which, in the book of God, is infamous and stigmatized as much as any other.

I. His reign was long, the longest of all the reigns of the kings of Israel, he reigned 41 years; yet his contemporary Azariah, the king of Judah, reigned longer, even 52 years. This Jeroboam reigned just as long as Asa had done; (1 Kings 15. 10.) yet one did that which was good, and the other that which was evil. We cannot measure men's characters by the length of their lives, or of their outward prosperity; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked.

II. His character was the same with that of the rest of those kings; he did that which was evil, (v. 24.) for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam; he kept up the worship of the calves, and never left that, thinking there was no harm in it, because it had been the way of all his ancestors and predecessors; but sin is never the less evil in God's sight, whatever it is in our own minds; and a frivolous plea it will be against doing good, that we have been accustomed to do evil.

III. Yet he prospered more than most of them; for though, in that one thing, he did evil in the sight of the Lord, yet, it is likely, in other respects, there was some good found in him, and therefore God owned him.

1. By prophecy; he raised up Jonah the son of Amittai, a Galilcean, (so much were they mistaken, that said, Out of Galilee arises no prophet, John 7. 53.) and by him intimated the purposes of his favour to Israel, notwithstanding their provocations, encouraged him and his kingdom to take up arms for the recovery of their ancient possessions, and (which would contribute no little to their success) assured them of victory. It is a sign that God has a great trust in his people, if he continue faithful ministers among them; when Elisha was gone, who strengthened the hands of Joash, Jonah was sent to encourage his son. Happy is the land that has a succession of prophets running parallel with a succession of princes, that the word of the Lord may endure for ever; of this Jonah we read much in that little book of scripture, that bears his name; it is probable that it was when he was a young man, and fit for such an expedition, that God sent him to Nineveh, and that it was when he had yet been but a little conversant with the visions of God, that he flew off and frett ed as he did; and if so, this is an undoubted evidence of the forgiveness of his faults and follies, that he was afterward employed as a messenger of mercy to Israel. A commission amounts to a pardon, and he that had himself found mercy, notwithstanding his provocations, could the better encourage them, with greater reason, for being repentant and withstanding their's. Some that have been foolish and passionate, and have gone about their work very awkwardly at first, yet afterward have proved useful and eminent; men must not be thrown away for every fault.
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2 By providence; the event was according to the word of the Lord, his arms were successful; he restored the coast of Israel, recovered those frontiers which lay farther from the sea in the north, to the sea of the plain, that is, the sea of Sodom in the south, all which the Syrians had possessed themselves of, v. 25. Two reasons are here given why God blessed them with those victories, (1.) Because the distress was very great, which made them the objects of his compassion, v. 26. Though he saw not any signs of their repentance and reformation, yet he saw their affliction, that it was very bitter; they that lived in those countries, which the enemies were masters of, were miserably oppressed and enslaved, and could call nothing their own; the rest, we may suppose, were much impoverished by the frequent incursions the enemy made upon them to plunder them, and continually terrified by their threatenings, so that there was none shut up or left, both towns and countries were laid waste, and strip of their wealth, and no helper appeared. To this extremity they reduced them, in many parts of the country, in the beginning of Jero-boa\'s reign, when God, in mere pity to them, heard the cry of their affliction, (for no mention is made here of the cry of their prayers,) and wrought this deliverance for them by the hand of Jeroboam. Let those whose case is pitiable, take comfort from the divine pity: we read of God\'s bowels of mercy, (Isa. 63. 15. Jer. 31. 20.) and that he is full of compassion, Ps. 86. 15. (2.) Because the decree was the y\'t prosperity with the utter destruction. He had not as yet said, he would blot out the name of Israel, (v. 27.) and because he had not said it, he would not do it: if it be understood of the dispersion of the ten tribes, he did say it, and do it, not long after; (reproves are not pardons;) if of the utter extermination of the name of Israel, he never said it, nor will ever do it, for that name still remains under heaven in the gospel-Israel, and will, to the end of time; and because, they at present, bare that name, while peace was to have this lasting honour, he showed them this favour, as well as for the sake of the ancient honour of that name, ch. 13. 23.

Lastly, Here is the conclusion of Jeroboam\'s reign; we read (v. 28.) of his might, and how he warred; but (v. 29.) he slept with his fathers; for the mightiest must yield to death, and there is no discharge in this world.

Many prophets there had been in Israel, a constant succession of them in every age, but none of the prophets had left any of their prophecies in writing, till those of this age began to do it, and their prophecies are part of the canon of scripture; it was in the reign of this Jeroboam, that Hosea (who continued very long a prophet) began to prophesy, and he was the first that wrote his prophecies, therefore the word of the Lord by him is called the word of the Lord, Hos. 1. 2. Then that part of the word of the Lord began to be written; at the same time, Amos prophesied and wrote his prophecy; soon after, Micah, and then Isaiah, in the days of Ahaz and Hezekiah; thus God never left himself without witness, but, in the darkest and most degenerate ages of the church, raised up some to be burning and shining lights in it, to their own age by their preaching and living, and a few by their writings to reflect light upon us on the works of the world here done.

CHAP. XV.

In this chapter, 1. The history of two of the kings of Judah is briefly recorded. 1. Of Azariah, or Uzziah, v. 1-7. 2. Of Jotham his son, v. 32, 33. It. The history of many of the kings of Israel that reigned at the same time, is given us in short, five in succession, all of whom, except one, went down slain to the pit, and their murderers were their successors. 1. Zechariah, the last of the house of Jehu, reigned six months, and then was slain, and succeeded by Shallum, v. 8-12. 2. Shallum reigned one month, and then was slain, and succeeded by Menahem, v. 13-15. 3. Menahem reigned ten years, (or) tyrannized rather, such was his ungodliness, v. 15 and unreasonable exactions, v. 20.) and then died in his bed, and left his son to succeed him first, and then suffer for him, v. 17. 22. 4. Pekahiah reigned two years, and then was slain, and succeeded by Pekah, v. 25. 26. 5. Pekah reigned twenty years, and then was slain, and succeeded by Hoshea, the last of all the kings of Israel; (v. 27-31.) for things were now working and hastening apace toward the final destruction of that kingdom.

In the twenty and seventh year of Je-roboam king of Israel, began Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign. 2. Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned two and fifty years in Jerusalem: and his mother\'s name was Jehochaliah of Jerusalem. 3. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done; 4. Save that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places. 5. And the Lord smote the king, so that he was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house. And Jotham the king\'s son was over the house, judging the people of the land. 6. And the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? 7. So Azariah slept with his fathers; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David; and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

This is a short account of the reign of Azariah. 1. Most of it is general, and the same that has been given of others; he began young and reigned long; (v. 2.) did, for the most part, that which was right, v. 3. It was happy for the kingdom, that a good reign was a long one; only he had not zeal and courage enough to take away the high places, v. 4. That which is peculiar, that God smote him with a leprosy, (v. 5.) is more largely related, with the occasion of it, 2 Chron. 26. 16, &c. where we have also a fuller account of the glories of the former part of his reign as well as of the disgraces of the latter part of it. He did that which was right, as Amaziah had done; like him, he began well, but failed before he finished. Here we are told, (1.) That he was a leper, the greatest of men are not only subject to the common calamities, but also to the common infirmities, of human nature; and if they be guilty of any heinous sin, they lie as open to the meanest to the most grievous strokes of divine vengeance. (2.) God smote him with this leprosy, to chastise him for his presumptions, invasion of the priests\' office; if great men be proud men, some way or other, God will humble them, and make them know he is both above them, and against them for resistance, to make them circumvent. (3.) That he was a leper to the day of his death; though we have reason to think he repented, and the sin was pardoned, yet, for warning to others, he was continued under this mark of God\'s displeasure as long as he lived, and perhaps it was for the good of his soul, that he was so. (4.) That he dwelt in a several house, as being made ceremonially unclean by the law, to the discipline of which, though a king, he must submit,
II. KINGS, XV.

he that presumptuously intruded into God's temple, and pretended to be a priest, is justly shut out from his own palace, and shut up as a prisoner or recluse, ever after. We suppose that his several house was made as convenient and agreeable as might be; some translate it a free house, where he had liberty to take his pleasure: but, however, it was a great mortification to one that had been so much a man of honour, and a man of business, as he had been, to be cut off from society, and dwell always in a several house: it would almost make life itself a burthen, even to kings, though they have never any to converse with but their inferiors: the most contemplative men would soon be weary of it. (5.) That his son was his vicerey in the affairs both of his court, for he was over the house, and of his kingdom, for he was judging the people of the land; and it was both a comfort to him, and a blessing to his kingdom, that he had such a son to fill up his room.

8. In the thirty and eighth year of Azariah king of Judah, did Zachariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel in Samaria six months. 9. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 10. And Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. 11. And the rest of the acts of Zachariah, behold, they are written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel. 12. This was the word of the Lord which he spoke unto Jehu, saying, Thy sons shall sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth generation. And so it came to pass. 13. Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the nine and thirtieth year of Uzziah king of Judah; and he reigned a full month in Samaria. 14. For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and smote Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. 15. And the rest of the acts of Shallum, and the conspiracy which he made, behold, they are written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel. 16. Then Menahem smote Tiphsah, and all that were therein, and the coast thereof from Tirzah: because they opened not to him, therefore he smote it; and all the women therein that were with child he ripped up. 17. In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah king of Judah, began Menahem the son of Gadi to reign over Israel, and reigned ten years in Samaria. 18. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 19. And Pekah the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem gave Pekah a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him, to confirm the kingdom in his hand. 20. And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria: so the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land. 21. And the rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel? 22. And Menahem slept with his fathers; and Pekahiah his son reigned in his stead. 23. In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekahiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned two years. 24. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 25. But Pekah the son of Remaliah, a captain of his, conspired against him, and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob and Arieh, and with him fifty men of the Galadites: and he killed him, and reigned in his stead. 26. And the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, and all that he did, behold, they are written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel. 27. In the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned twenty years. 28. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 29. In the days of Pekah king of Israel, came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria. 30. And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah. 31. And the rest of the acts of Pekah, and all that he did, behold, they are written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel.

The best days of the kingdom of Israel were while the government was in Jehoahaz's family; in his reign, and the next three, though there were many abominable corruptions and miserable grievances in Israel, yet the crown went in succession, the kings died in their beds, and some care was taken of public affairs; but now that these days are at an end, the history which we have in these verses, of about 33 years, represents the affairs of that kingdom in the utmost confusion imaginable; woe to them that were with child, (v. 16.) and to them that gave suck in those days, for then must needs be great tribulations, when, for the transgression of the land, many are the princes thereof.
I. Let us observe something, in general, concerning these unhappy revolutions, and the calamities which must needs attend them, these bad times, as they may truly be called.

1. God had tried the people of Israel both with judgments and mercies, explained and enforced by his servants the prophets, and yet they continued impenitent and unformed, and therefore God justly brought these miseries upon them; as Moses had warned them. If ye will yet walk contrary to me, I will punish you yet seven times more, Lev. 26. 24, &c.

2. God made good his promise to Jethu, that his sons, to the fourth generation after him, should sit upon the throne of Israel; which was a greater favour than was shown to any of the royal families either before or after his. God had said it should be so, (ch. 16. 30.) and we are told in this chapter (v. 12.) that so it came to pass. See how punctual God is to his promises; these calamities God long designed for Israel, and they deserved them, yet they were not inflicted till that word had taken effect to the full; thus God rewarded Jethu for his zeal in destroying the worship of Baal and the house of Ahab; and yet, when the measure of the sins of the house of Jethu was full, God avenged upon it the blood then shed, called the blood of Jezreel, Hos. 14.

3. All these kings did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, for they walked in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat; though at variance with one another, yet, in this, they agreed, to keep up idolatry, and the people loved to have it so; though they were emptied from vessel to vessel, that taste remained in them, and that scent was not changed. It was sad indeed, when their government was so often altered, (yet never for the better,) that among all those contending interests, none of them should think it as much their interest to destroy the calves as others had done to support them.

4. Each of these (except one) conspired against his predecessor, and slew him, Shalumm, Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea; all traitors and murderers, and yet all kings a while; one of them ten, another twenty, and another nine years; for God may suffer wars and contentions, and to carry away the wealth and honours awhile, but, sooner or later, blood shall have blood, and he that dealt treacherously shall be dealt treacherously with: one wicked man is often made a scourge to another, and every wicked man, at length, a ruin to himself.

5. The ambition of the great men made the nation miserable. Here is Tiblshah, a city of Israel, barbarously destroyed, with all the coasts thereof, by one of these pretenders, (v. 16.) and, no doubt, it was through blood that each of them waded to the throne; nor could any of these kings perish alone. No land can have greater pests, nor Israel worse troubles, than such men as care not how much the welfare and repose of their country are sacrificed to their revenge, and affection of dominion.

6. While the nation was thus shattered by divisions at home, the kings of Assyria, first one, (v. 19.) and then another, (v. 29.) came against it, and did what they pleased. Nothing does more toward the making of a nation an easy prey to a common enemy, than intestine broils, and contests for the sovereignty; happy the land where that is settled.

7. This was the condition of Israel, just before they were quite ruined, and carried away captives, for thislew down, in the ninth year of Hoshea, the last of these usurpers. If they had, in these days of confusion and perplexity, humbled themselves before God, and sought his face, that final destruction might have been prevented, but when God judgeth, he will overcome; these factions, the fruit of an evil spirit sent among them, hastened that captivity; for a kingdom, thus divided against itself, will soon come to desolation.

II. Let us take a short view of the particular reigns.

1. Zachariah, the son of Jeroboam, began to reign in the thirty-eighth year of Azariah, or Uziah, king of Judah, v. 8. Some of the most critical chronologers reckon that between Jeroboam and this son Zachariah, the throne was vacant 22 years, others 11 years, through the disturbances and discontents that were in the kingdom; and then it was not strange that Zachariah was deposed before he was well seated on the throne: he reigned but six months, and then Shallum slew him before the people, perhaps, as Caesar was slain in the senate; or he put him to death publicly as a criminal, with the approbation of the people, to whom he had, some way or other, made himself odious: so ended the line of Jethu.

2. But had Shallum peace, who slew his master? No, he had not, (v. 13.) one month of days measured his reign, and then he was cut off; perhaps to this the prophet, who then lived, refers, (Hos. 5. 7.) Now shall a month devour them with their portions. That dominion seldom lasts long, which is founded in blood and falsehood. Menahem, either provoked at Tirzah, and immediately animated by his example, soon served him as he had served his master, slew him, and reigned in his stead, v. 14. Probably, he was general of the army, which then lay encamped at Tirzah, and, hearing of Shallum’s treason and usurpation, hastened to punish it, as Omri did that of Zimri in a like case, 1 Kings 16, 17.

3. Menahem held the kingdom ten years, v. 17. But wondrously we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel were meretricious kings, (1 Kings 20. 31.) this Menahem (the son of Scaddai,) was so prodigiously cruel to those of his own nation, which hesitated, a little, at submitting to him, that he not only ruined a city, and the coasts thereof, but, forgetting that he himself was born of a woman, roused up all the women with child, v. 16. We may well wonder that ever it should enter into the heart of any man, to be so barbarous, and to be so perfectly lost to humanity itself. By the means of his ambition, he hoped to strengthen himself, and to frighten all others into his interests; but it seems he did not gain his point, for when the king of Assyria came against him, (1.) So little confidence had he in his people, that he durst not meet him as an enemy, but was obliged, at a vast expense, to purchase a peace with him. (2.) Such need had he of help to confirm the kingdom in his hand, that he made it a part of his bargain with him, (a bargain which, no doubt, the king of Assyria knew how to make a good hand of, another time,) that he should assist him against his own subjects that were disaffected to him. The money wherewith he purchased his friendship, was a vast sum, no less than 1,000 talents of silver, (v. 19.) which Menahem exacted, it is probable, by military execution, of all the mighty men of wealth, very considerably sparing the poor, and laying the burden (as was fit) on those that were best able to bear it: being raised, it was given to the king of Assyria, as pay for his army, 50 shekels of silver for each man in it. Thus he got clear of the king of Assyria for this time; he stayed not to quarter in the land, (v. 20.) but his army now got so rich a booty with so little trouble, that it encouraged them to come again, not long after, when they laid all waste; thus was he the betrayer of his country, that should have been the protector of it.

4. Pekahiah, the son of Menahem, succeeded his father, but reigned only two years, and then was treacherously slain by Pekah, falling under the load
both of his own and of his father's wickedness. It
is repeated concerning him, as before, that he de-
parted not from the sins of Jeroboam: still that is
mentioned, to show that God was righteous in
brining that destruction upon them, which came not
long after, because they hated to be reformed, v. 24.
Pekah, therefore, had many fine figures in his in-
terest; two of them are here named, (v. 25.)
and with their help he compassed his design.

5. Pekah, though he got the kingdom by treason,
kept it 20 years; (v. 27.) so long it was before his
violent dealing returned upon his own head; but it
returned at last. This Pekah, son of Remaliah,
(1.) Made himself more considerable abroad than
any of these usurpers, for he was, even in the latter
end of his time, (in the reign of Jotham of Judah, which be-
egan in his 17th year,) a great terror to the kingdom of
Judah, as we find, Isa. 7. 1. &c. (2.) He lost a
great part of his kingdom to the king of Assyria;
several cities are here named, (v. 29.) which were
taken from him; all the land of Gilead on the other
side Jordan, and Galilee in the north, containing the
tribes of Naphtali and Zebulen, were seized, and
the inhabitants carried captive into Assyria. By
this judgment God punished him for his attempt
upon Judah and Jerusalem; it was then foretold,
that within two or three years after he made that at-
tempt, before a child, then born, should be able to
cry My father and my mother, the riches of Sama-
ria should be taken away before the king of Assyria;
(Isa. 8. 4.) and here we have the accomplishment
of that prediction. (3.) Soon after this, he left his
life to the resentments of his countrymen, who, it
is probable, were disgusted at him for leaving them
exposed to a foreign enemy, while he was invading
Judah; this Hoshea took advantage of, and, to gain
his crown, seized his life, slew him, and reigned in
his stead, Surely he was fond of a crown indeed, who,
at this time, would run such a hazard as a traitor
did: for the crown of Israel, now that it had lost the
choicest of its flowers and jewels, was lined more
than ever with thorns, had, of late, been fatal to all
the heads that had worn it, it was forfeited to divine
justice, and now ready to be laid in the dust; a
crown, which a wise man would not have taken up
in the street, yet Hoshea not only venturers upon it,
but ventures for it, and it cost him dear.

32. In the second year of Pekah the son of
Remaliah king of Israel, began Jotham the
son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign.
33. Five and twenty years old was he when
he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen
years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name
was Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok. 34.
And he did that which was right in the sight
of the Lord: he did according to all that
his father Uzziah had done. 35. Howbeit,
the high places were not removed: the people
sacrificed and burnt incense still in the high
places. He built the higher gate of the
house of the Lord. 36. Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did,
are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? 37.
In those days the Lord began to send
against Judah, Rezin the king of Syria,
and Pekah the son of Remaliah. 38. And
Jotham slept with his fathers, and was
buried with his fathers in the city of David
his father: and Ahaz his son reigned in his
stead.

We have here a short account of the reign of
Jotham king of Judah, of whom we are told,
1. That he reigned well, did that which was right:
in the sight of the Lord, v. 34. Josephus gives him
a very high character, that he was pious toward
God, just toward men, and laid out himself for the
public good; that, whatever was amiss, he took care
to have it rectified; and, in short, wanted no virtu-
ous figure that became a good prince. Though the high
places were not taken away, yet, to draw people
from them, and keep them close to God's holy
place, he showed great respect to the temple, and
built the higher gate which he went through to the
temple. If magistrates cannot do all they would,
for the suppressing of vice and profaneness, let
them do so much the more for the support and
advancement of piety and virtue, and bringing of
them into reputation. If they cannot pull down the
high places of sin, yet let them build and beautify
the high gate of God's house.

2. That he died in the midst of his days, v. 38.
Of most of the kings of Judah we are told how old
they were when they began their reign, and by that
may compute how old they were when they died;
but no account is kept of the age of any of the kings
of Israel, but what is remembered in the re-
records of the reigns. This honour God would put upon the kings
of the house of David above those of other families.
And by these accounts it appears that there was
none of all the kings of Judah, that reached David's
age, 70, the common age of man. Asa's age I do
not find, Uzziah lived to be 68, Manasses 67, and
Jehoshaphat 60; and these were the three oldest,
many of them that were of note, did not reach 50.
This Jotham died at 41. He was too great a bless-
ing to be continued long to such an unworthy
people. His death was a judgment, especially con-
idering the character of his son and successor.
3. That in his days the confederacy was formed
against Judah by Rezin, and Remaliah's son, the
king of Syria, and the king of Israel, which ap-
peared so very formidable in the beginning of the
reign of Ahaz, that, upon notice of it, the heart of
that prince was moved, and the heart of the people,
and the bones of the whole were moved with the wind,
Isa. 7. 2. The confederates were unjust in the
attempt, yet it is here said, (v. 37.) The Lord be-
gan to send them against Judah, as he bade Shime-
 curse David, and took away from Job what the
Sabaeans robbed him of. Men are God's hand, the
word, the rod, in his hand, which he makes use
of as he pleases, to serve his own righteous couns-
els, though men be unrighteous in their intentions.
This storm gathered in the reign of pious Jotham,
but he came to his grave in peace, and it fell upon
his degenerate son.

CHAP. XVI.

This chapter is wholly taken up with the reign of Ahaz;
and we have quite enough of it, unless it were better.
He had a good father, and a better son, and yet was
himself one of the worst of the kings of Judah. 1. He
was a notorious idolater, v. 1-4. II. With the tre-
asures of the temple, as well as his own, he hired the king
of Assyria to invade Syria and Israel, v. 5-9. III. He
took pattern, from an idol's altar which he saw at Do-
sanæus, v. 9-16. IV. He abused and embezzeled the furniture of the tem-

1. In the seventeenth year of Pekah the
son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of
Jotham king of Judah began to reign. 2.
Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began
to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord his God, like David his father. 3. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel; yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel. 4. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

We have here a general character of the reign of Ahaz, few and evil were his days: few, for he died at 36; evil, for we are here told,

1. That he did not that which was right, like David; (v. 2.) that is, he had none of that concern and affection for the instituted service and worship of God, which David was famous for. He had no love for the temple, made no conscience of his duty to God, nor had any regard to his law. Herein he was unlike David, it was his honour, that he was of the house and lineage of David, and it was owing to God's ancient covenant with David, that he was now upon the throne, which aggravated his wickedness, that he was a reproach to that honourable name and family, which therefore was really a reproach to him; (Degenerantii genus prophoribum—A good extraction is a disgrace to him who degenerates from it;) and that though he enjoyed the benefit of David's piety, he did not tread in the steps of it.

2. That he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, (v. 3.) who all worshipped the calves. He was not joined in any affinity with them, as Jehovah and Ahaziah were with the house of Ahab, but exmero motu—without any instigation, walked in their way. The kings of Israel pleaded policy and reasons of state for their idolatry, but Ahaz had no such pretence, in him it was the most unreasonable and impolitic thing that could be. They were his enemies, and had proved enemies to themselves too by their idolatry; yet he walked in their way.

3. That he made his sons to pass through the fire, to the honour of his dunghill-deities. He burnt them, so it is expressly said of him, 2 Chron. 28. 3. burnt some of them, and perhaps made others of them (Hezekiah himself not excepted, though afterward he was never the worse for it) to pass between two fires, or to be drawn through a flame, in token of their dedication to the idol.

4. That he did according to the abomination of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out. It was an instance of his great folly, that he would be guided by those in his religion, and follow them, whom he saw fallen into the ditch before his eyes; and of his great impiety, that he would conform to those usages which God had declared to be abominable to him; and set himself to write after the copy of those whom God had cast out, thus walking directly contrary to God.

5. That he sacrificed in the high places, v. 4. If his father had but had zeal enough to take them away, it might have prevented the debauching of his sons: but they that connive at sin, know not what dangerous snares they lay for those that come after them. He forsook God's house, was weary of that place where, in his father's time, he had often been detained before the Lord, and performed his devotions on high hills, where he had a better prospect, and under green trees, where he had a more pleasant shade. It was a religion little worth, which was guided by fancy, not by faith.

5. Then Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him. 6. At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day. 7. So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant, and thy son: come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me. 8. And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria. 9. And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him; for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

Here is,

1. The attempt of his confederate neighbours, the kings of Syria and Israel, upon him. They thought to have made themselves masters of Jerusalem, and to have set a king of their own in it, Isa. 7. 6. In that, they fell short, but the king of Syria recovered Elath, a considerable port upon the Red sea, which Amaziah had taken from the Syrians, 2 Chron. 28. 14. 22. When then they were, that have lost their religion? Let them expect, thenceforward, to be always on the losing hand.

2. His project to get clear of them. Having forsaken God, he had neither courage nor strength to make head against his enemies, nor could he, with any boldness, ask help of God, but he made his court to the king of Assyria, and got him to come in for his relief. Those whose hearts condemn them, will go any whither, as in distress rather than to God. Was it because there was not a God in Israel, that he sent to the Assyrian for help? Was the Rock of ages removed out of its place, that he stayed himself on this broken reed? The sin itself was its own punishment; for though it is true that he gained his point, (the king of Assyria hearkened to him, and, to serve his own turn, made a descent upon Damascus, whereby he gave a powerful diversion to the king of Syria, (v. 9.) and obliged him to let fall his design against Ahaz,) carrying the Syrians captive to Kir, as Amos had expressly foretold, (ch. 1. 5.) yet, considering all, he made but a bad bargain; for, to compass this,

(1.) He enslaved himself; (v. 7.) I am thy servant and thy son; that is, "I will be as dutiful and obedient to thee as to a master or father, if thou wilt but do me this good turn." Had he thus humbled himself to God, and implored his favour, he might have been delivered upon easier terms; he might have saved his money, and needed only to have parted with his sins: but if the prodigal forsake his father's house, he soon becomes a slave to the worst of masters, Luke 15. 15.

(2.) He impoverished himself; for he took the silver and gold that were laid up in the treasury both of the temple and of the kingdom, and sent it to the king of Assyria, v. 8. Both church and state must be squeezed and exhausted, to gratify this his new patron and guardian. I know not what authority he had thus to dispose of the public stock; but it is common for those that have brought them-
selves into straits by one sin, to help themselves out by another; and those that have alienated themselves from God, will make no difficulty of alienating any of his rights.

10. And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof. 11. And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made it against king Ahaz came from Damascus. 12. And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon. 13. And he burnt his burnt-offering, and his meat-offering, and poured his drink-offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace-offerings upon the altar. 14. And he brought also the brazen altar, which was before the Lord, from the fore-front of the house, from between the altar and the house of the Lord, and put it on the north side of the altar. 15. And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt-offering, and the evening meat-offering, and the king's burnt-sacrifice, and his meat-offering, with the burnt-offering of all the people of the land, and their meat-offering, and their drink-offerings; and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt-offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice: and the brazen altar shall be for me to inquire by. 16. Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.

Though Ahaz had himself sacrificed in high places, on hills, and under every green tree, (v. 4.) yet God's altar had hitherto continued in its place, and in use, and the king's burnt-offering and his meat-offering, (v. 15.) had been offered upon it by the priests that attended it; but here we have it taken away by wicked Ahaz, and another altar, an idolatrous one, put in the room of it—a bolder stroke than the worst of the kings had yet given to religion. We have here,

I. The model of this new altar, taken from one at Damascus, by the king himself, v. 10. The king of Assyria having taken Damascus, thither Ahaz went, to congratulate him on his success, to return him thanks for the kindness he had done him by this expedition, and, as his servant and son, to receive his commands. Had he been faithful to his God, he had not needed to have crouched thus to a foreign power. At Damascus, either while viewing the rarities of the place, or rather while joining with them in their devotions, (for when he was there, he thought it no harm to do as they did,) he saw an altar that pleased his fancy extremely, not such a plain old-fashioned one as that which he had been trained up in attendance upon a Jerusalem, but curiously carved, it is likely, and adorned with image-work; there were many things about it, which were significant, he thought, surprising, charming, and calculated to excite his devotion. Solomon had but a dull fancy, he thinks, compared with the ingenious artifice that made this altar. Nothing will serve him but he must have an altar just like this; a pattern of it must be taken immediately; he cannot stay till he returns himself, but sends it before him in all haste, with orders to Urijah the priest, to get one made exactly according to this model, and have it ready against he came home. The pattern God showed to Moses in the mount, or to David by the Spirit was not comparable to this; a dunghill and a hill of idols walked after their eyes, which are therefore said to go a whoring after their idols; but the true worshippers worship the true God by faith. 11. The making of it by Urijah the priest, v. 11. This Urijah, it is likely, was the chief priest, who, at this time, presided in the temple-service. To him Ahaz sent an intimation of his mind, (for we read not of any express orders he gave him,) to get an altar made by this pattern. And, without any dispute, or objection, he put it in hand immediately, being perhaps as fond of it as the king was, at least, being very willing to humour the king, and desirous to curry favour with him. Perhaps he might have this excuse for gratifying the king herein, that, by this means, he might keep him to the temple at Jerusalem, and prevent his totally deserting it for the high places and the groves. "Let us oblige him in this, Urijah, and make him no sacrifice but this," says God to the prophet, "and so we shall secure his sacrifices to us; for by this craft we get converting." But, whatever pretence he had, it was a most base wicked thing for him that was a priest, a chief priest, to make this altar, in compliance with an idolatrous prince. For hereby, 1. He prostituted his authority, and profaned the crown of his priesthood, making himself a servant to the lusts of men. There is not a greater disgrace to the ministry, or to unobsequiousness to such wicked commands, as this was. 2. He betrayed his office as a priest, he was bound to maintain and defend God's institutions, and to oppose and witness against all innovations; and for him to assist and serve the king, in setting up an altar to confront the altar which, by divine appointment, he was consecrated to minister at, was such a piece of treachery and perfidiousness, as may justly render him infamous to posterity. Had he only complied at the doing of it, had he been frightened into it by menace, had he endeavoured to dissuade the king from it, or but delayed the doing of it till he came home, that he might first talk with him about it, it had not been so bad; but so willingly to walk after his commandment, as if he were glad of the opportunity to oblige him, was such an affront to the God he served, as was utterly inexcusable. III. The dedication of it. Urijah, perceiving that the king's heart was much upon it, took care to have it ready against he came down, and set it near the brazen altar, but somewhat lower and further from the door of the temple. The king was exceedingly pleased with it, and approached to it with all possible veneration, and offered thereon his burnt-offering, &c. v. 12, 13. His sacrifices were not offered to the god of Israel, but to the gods of Damascus; (as we find, 2 Chron. 28. 23.) and when he borrowed the Syrians' altar, no marvel that he borrowed their gods. Naaman, the Syrian, embraced the God of Israel, when he got earth from the land of Israel to make an altar of.

IV. The removal of God's altar, to make room for it. Urijah was so modest, that he put this altar at the lower end of the court, and left God's altar in its place, between this altar and that at Jerusalem, v. 14. But that would not satisfy Ahaz; he removed God's altar to an obscure corner, in the north side of the court, and put his own before the
sanctuary, in the place of it. He thinks his new altar is much more stately, and much more sightly, and disgracesthat; and therefore let that be laid aside as a vessel in which there was no pleasure. His superstitious invention, at first, justified with, but at length justified out God's sacred institution. Note, Those will soon come to make nothing of God, that will not be content to make him their all. Ahaz durst not, (perhaps for fear of the people,) quite demolish the brazen altar, and knock it to pieces; but while he ordered all the sacrifices to be offered upon his new altar, (v. 15.) The brazen altar (says he) shall be for me to inquire by. Having thrust it out from the use for which it was instituted, which was to sanctify the gifts offered upon it, he pretends to advance it above its institution, which it is common for superstitious people to do. The altar was never designed for a temple, and yet Ahaz will have it for that use. The Romish church seemingly magnifies Christ's sacraments, yet wretchedly corrupts them. But some give another sense of Ahaz's purpose; "As for the brazen altar, I will consider what to do with it, and give order about it." The Jews say, that, afterward, of the brass of it he made that famous dial, which was called the dial of Ahaz, ch. 20. 11. The brass compounding of the poor-spirited priest with the presumptuous usurpations of an ill-spirited king, is again taken notice of; (v. 16.) Urijah the priest did according to all that king Ahaz commanded. Miserable is the case of great men, when those that should reprove them for their sins, strengthen and serve them in their sins.

17. And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the basins, and removed the laver from them; and took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones: 18. And the covert for the sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the Lord for the king of Assyria. 19. Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? 20. And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

Here is,
1. Ahaz abusing the temple: not the building itself, but some of the furniture of it. (1.) He defaced the bases on which the lavers were set, (1 Kings 7. 28, 29,) and took down the molten sea, v. 17. These the priests used for washing; against them therefore he seems to have a particular spite. It is one of the greatest prejudices that can be done to religion, to obstruct the purifying of the priests, the Lord's ministers. (2.) He removed the covert for the sabbath; erected either in honour of the sabbath, or for the convenience of the priests, when, on the sabbath, they officiated in greater numbers than on other days. Whatever it was, it should seem that in removing it, he intended to put a contempt upon the sabbath, and so to open a wide and airy passage to all manner of impiety. (3.) The king's entry, which led to the house of the Lord, for the convenience of the royal family, (perhaps, that ascent which Solomon had made, and which the queen of Sheba admired, (1 Kings 10. 5.) he turned another way, to show that he did not intend to frequent the house of the Lord any more.

This he did for the king of Assyria, to oblige him, who perhaps returned his visit, and found fault with this entry, as an inconvenience and disparagement to his palace. When those that have had a ready passage to the house of the Lord, to please their neighbours, turn it another way, they are going down the hill space toward their ruin.

2. Ahaz resigning his life in the midst of his days, at 36 years of age, (v. 19.) and leaving his kingdom to a better man, Hezekiah his son, (v. 20) who proved as much a friend to the temple, as he had been an enemy to it. Perhaps, this very son he had made to pass through the fire, and thereby dedicated him to Moloch; but God, by his grace, snatched him as a brand out of the burning.

CHAP. XVII.

This chapter gives us an account of the captivity of the ten tribes, and so finishes the history of that kingdom, after it had continued about 265 years, from the setting up of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. In it, we have, I. A short narrative of this destruction, v. 1. 6. II. Remarks upon it, and the causes of it, for the justifying of God in it, and for warning to others, v. 7. 23. III. An account of the nations which succeeded them in the possession of the land, and the mongrel religion set up among them, v. 24. 41.

IN the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years. 2. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him. 3. Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents. 4. And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. 5. Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. 6. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

We have here the reign and ruin of Hoshea, the last of the kings of Israel, concerning whom observe.

I. That though he forced his way to the crown by treason and murder, (as we read ch. 15. 30.) yet he gained not the possession of it till seven or eight years after; for it was in the fourth year of Ahaz that he slew Pekah, but did not begin to reign till the 12th year of Ahaz. (v. 1.) Whether by the king of Assyria, or by the king of Judah, or by some of his own people, does not appear; but, it seems, so long he was kept out of the throne he aimed at. Justly were his bad practices thus chastised, and the word of the prophet was thus fulfilled, (Hos. 10. 3.) Now they shall reign. We have no king, because we feared not the Lord.

II. That though he was bad, yet not so bad as the kings of Israel that had been before him, (v. 2.) not so devoted to the calves as they had been. One of them, (that at Dan,) the Jews say, had been, before this, carried away by the king of Assyria in
that expedition, ch. 15. 29, to which, perhaps, the
prophet refers; (Hos. 8. 5.) Thy calf, O Samaria,
has cast thee off, which made him put the less con-

idence in the other. And some say that this Ho-
shea took off the embargo which the former kings
had put their subjects under, forbidding them to go
up to Jerusalem to worship, which he permitted
those to do, that had a mind to it. But what shall
we think of this dispensation of providence, that the
destruction of the kingdom of Israel should come in
by the indirect and most unexpected means? This
judgments, O God, are a great deep. God would
hereby show that in bringing this ruin upon them,
he designed to punish, 1. Not only the sins of that
generation, but of the foregoing ages, and to reckon
for the iniquities of their fathers, who had been
long in filling the measure, and treasuring up wrath
against this day of wrath. 2. Not only the sins of
their kings, but the sins of the people. If Hoshea
was not the king as the former kings, yea the people
were as bad as those that went before them, and it
was an aggravation of their badness, and brought
ruin the sooner, that their king did not set them so
has an example as the former kings had done, nor
hinder them from reforming; he gave them leave
to do better, but they did as bad as ever, which laid
the blame of their sin and ruin wholly upon them-
selves.

III. That the destruction came gradually. They
were for some time made tributaries, before they
were made captives, to the king of Assyria, (v. 3.)
and if that lesser judgment had prevailed to hurl
and reform them, the greater had been prevented.

IV. That they brought it upon themselves by the
indirect course they took to shake off the yoke of
the king of Assyria, (v. 4.) Had the king and peo-
ple of Israel applied themselves to God, made their
peace with him, and their prayers to him, they
might have recovered their liberty, ease, and hon-
our; but they withheld their tribute, and trusted
to the king of Egypt to assist them in their revolt,
which, if it had taken effect, had been but to change
their oppressors. But Egypt became to them the staff
of a broken reed. This provoked the king of Assyria
to proceed against them with more than ordinary
zeal. More get not into the net, (v. 5.) More go,
with the net, but entangle themselves the more.

V. That it was an utter destruction that came
upon them.

1. The king of Israel was made a prisoner; he
was shut up and bound; being, it is probable, taken
by surprise, before Samaria was besieged.

2. The land of Israel was made a prey. The
army of the king of Assyria came up through all
the land, and made themselves masters of it,
(v. 5.) and used them as traitors punished with the
sword of justice, rather than as fair enemies.

3. The royal city of Israel was besieged, and
left, taken. Three years it held out, after the
country was conquered, and, no doubt, a great deal
of misery they endured in that time, which is not
particularly recorded; but the very brevity of the
story, and the passing of this matter over lightly,
unto me, intimate that they were abandoned of
God, and he did not now regard the affliction of
Israel, as sometimes he had done.

4. The people of Israel were carried captives
into Assyria, (v. 6.) The generality of the people,
those of any note, were forced away into the
conqueror's country, to be slaves and beggars
there. (1.) Thus he was pleased to exercise a do-
mition over them, and to show that they were en-
tirely at his disposal. (2.) By depriving them of
their possessions and estates, real and personal, and
exposing them to all the hardships and reproaches
of a removal to a strange country, under the power
of an imperious army, he chastised them for their
rebellion, and their endeavour to shake off his
yoke. (3.) Thus he effectually prevented all such
attempts for the future, and secured their own
country to himself. (4.) Thus he got the benefit
of their service in his own country, as Pharaoh did
that of their fathers; and so this unworthy people
were lost, as they were found, and ended, as they
began, in servitude, and under oppression. 

Thus he made room for those of his own country,
that had little, and little to do, at home, to settle in
a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey.
All these several ways, he served himself by this
captivity of the ten tribes. We are here told in
what places of his kingdom he disposed of them;
Halah and Hormor, in places, we may suppose,
far distant from each other, lest they should keep
up a correspondence, incorporate again, and become
formidable. There, we have reason to think, after
some time, they were so mingled with the nations,
that they were lost, and the name of Israel was no
more in remembrance. They that forgot God,
were themselves forgotten; they that studied to be
like the nations, were buried among them; and they
that would not serve God in their own land, were
made to serve their enemies in a strange land. It
is probable that they were the men of honour and
estates, who were carried captive, and that many
of the meaner sort of people, were left behind;
many of every tribe, who either went over to Ju-
dah, or became subject to the Assyrian colonies,
and their posterity were Galileans, or Samarianes.
But thus ended Israel as a nation; now they became
Lo-ammi, not a people; and Lo-ruhamah, unpitied.

Now Canaan spued them out. When we read
their entry under Hoshea the son of Nun, whom
would have thought that such as this should have
been their exit under Hoshea the son of Elah? Thus
Rome's glory in Augustus, sunk, many years after,
under Augustus. Providence so ordered the
eclipsing of the honour of the 10 tribes, that the
honour of Judah the royal tribe, and Levi the holy
tribe, which yet remained, might shine the bright-
er. Yet we find a number sealed of each of the 12
tribes, (Rev. 7.) except Dan. James writes to the
12 tribes scattered abroad, (Jam. 1. 1.) and Paul
speaks of his love to them, and of the law being a
day and night, Acts 26. 7. So that though we
never read of the return of those that were carried
captive, nor have any reason to credit the conjec-
ture of some, that they yet remain a distinct body
in some remote corner of the world; yet a remnant
of them did escape, to keep up the name of Israel,
till it came to be worn by the gospel-church, the
spiritual Israel, in which it will ever remain, Gal.
6. 16.

7. For so it was, that the children of Is-
rael had sinned against the Lord their God, which
had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from
under the hand of Pha-

raoh king of Egypt, and had feared other
gods. 8. And walked in the statutes of the heathen,
whom the Lord cast out from be-
fore the children of Israel, and of the kings
of Israel, which they had made. 9. And
the children of Israel did secretly those
things that were not right against the Lord
their God, and they built them high places
in all their cities, from the tower of the
watchmen to the fenced city. 10. And
they set them up images and groves in
every high hill, and under every green tree:
11. And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger: 12. For they served idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. 13. Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. 14. Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God. 15. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them, that they should not do like them. 16. And they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. 17. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. 18. Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. 19. Also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. 20. And the Lord rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. 21. For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, king: and Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin. 22. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; 23. Until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

Though the destruction of the kingdom of the 10 tribes was but briefly related, it is in these verses largely commented upon by our historian, and the reasons of it assigned, not taken from the second causes, the weakness of Israel, their impolitic manage-
of their atheism, as that they thought what was done in them was from under the eye of God himself, and would not be required. Again, they wrought wicked things in such a direct contradiction to the divine law, that it seemed as if it were done on purpose to provoke the Lord to anger, (v. 11.) in contempt of his authority, and defiance of his justice. They rejected God's statutes, and his covenant; (v. 15.) would not be bound up either by his command, or the consent they themselves had given to the covenant, but threw them off of both, and therefore God justly rejected them, v. 20. See Hos. 4. 6. They left all the commandments of the Lord their God, (v. 16.) left the way, left the work, which those commandments prescribed them, and directed them in; nay, lastly, they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, that is, they wholly addicted themselves to sin, as slaves to the service of those to whom they are sold, and, by their obstinate persisting in sin, so hardened their own hearts, that, at length, it was become morally impossible for them to recover themselves, as one that has sold himself has put his liberty past recall.

2. In particular; though they were guilty (no doubt) of many immoderacies, and violated all the commands of the second table, yet nothing is here specified, but their idolatry; that is the sin that did most easily beset them, that was, of all others, most fatal, it was, from its nature, the sin that broke the marriage-covenant, and was the inlet of all other wickedness; this is again and again mentioned here as the sin that ruined them. (1.) They feared other gods, (v. 7.) that is, worshipped them, and paid their homage to them, as if they feared their displeasure. (2.) They walked in the statutes of the heathen, which were contrary to God's statutes; (v. 8.) did as did the heathen; (v. 11.) went after the heathen that were round about them, (v. 15.) so prostituting the honour of their peculiarity, and defeating God's design concerning them, which was, that they should be distinguished from the heathen. Must they that were taught of God, go school to the heathen? They that were appropriated to God, take their measures from the nations that were abandoned by him? (3.) They walked in the statutes of the idolatrous kings of Israel, (v. 8.) in the kings of Jerusalem's bowing down. Why? Because their kings assumed a power to alter, and to add to, the divine institutions, they submitted to them, and thought the command of their kings would bear them out, in disobedience to the command of their God. (4.) They built them high places in all their cities; (v. 9.) if it were but the tower of the watchmen, a country-town, that had no walls, but only a tower to shelter the watch in time of danger, or but a lodge for shepherds, it must be honoured with a high place, and that with an altar; if it were a fenced city, it must be further fortified with a high place; having forsaken God's holy place, they knew no end of high places, in which every man followed his own fancy, and directed his devotion to what god he pleased; sacred things were hereby profaned and laid common, when their altars were as heaps in the furrows of the field, Hos. 12. 11. (5.) They set them up immediately in their own houses: so some think that should be rendered, which we translate groves; or Asherah, so others, (v. 10.) directly contrary to the second commandment. They served idols, (v. 12.) the works of their own hands, and creatures of their own fancy, though God had warned them particularly not to do this thing. (6.) They burnt incense in all the high places, to the honour of strange gods, for it went to the dishonour of the true God, v. 11. (7.) They followed vanity; idols are called so, because they could do neither good nor evil, but were the most insignificant things that were; and the way they worshipped them, were like unto them, and therefore became vain and good for nothing; (v. 16.) vain in their devotions, which were brutish and ridiculous, and so became vain in their whole conversation. (8.) Beside the molten images, even the two calves, they worshipped all the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, for it is not meant of the heavenly host of angels, they could not rise so far above sensible things as to think of them; and withal, they served Baal, the denied heroes of the Gentiles, v. 16. (9.) They caused their children to pass through the fire, in token of their dedicating of them to their idols; and lastly, they used diversations and enchantments, that they might receive directions from the gods to whom they paid their devotions.

III. What means God used with them, to bring them off from their idolatries, and to how little purpose; he testified against them, showed them their sins, and warned them of the fatal consequences of them by all the prophets, and all the seers, (for so the prophets had been formerly called,) and had pressed them to turn from their evil ways, v. 13. We have read of the prophets, more or less in every reign; though they had forsaken God's family of priests, he did not leave them without a succession of prophets, who made it their business to teach them the good knowledge of the Lord, and to live in those spiritual ways, which broke the marriage-covenant, and was the inlet of all other wickedness; this is again and again mentioned here as the sin that ruined them. (1.) They feared other gods, (v. 7.) that is, worshipped them, and paid their homage to them, as if they feared their displeasure. (2.) They walked in the statutes of the heathen, which were contrary to God's statutes; (v. 8.) did as did the heathen; (v. 11.) went after the heathen that were round about them, (v. 15.) so prostituting the honour of their peculiarity, and defeating God's design concerning them, which was, that they should be distinguished from the heathen. Must they that were taught of God, go school to the heathen? They that were appropriated to God, take their measures from the nations that were abandoned by him? (3.) They walked in the statutes of the idolatrous kings of Israel, (v. 8.) in the kings of Jerusalem's bowing down. Why? Because their kings assumed a power to alter, and to add to, the divine institutions, they submitted to them, and thought the command of their kings would bear them out, in disobedience to the command of their God. (4.) They built them high places in all their cities; (v. 9.) if it were but the tower of the watchmen, a country-town, that had no walls, but only a tower to shelter the watch in time of danger, or but a lodge for shepherds, it must be honoured with a high place, and that with an altar; if it were a fenced city, it must be further fortified with a high place; having forsaken God's holy place, they knew no end of high places, in which every man followed his own fancy, and directed his devotion to what god he pleased; sacred things were hereby profaned and laid common, when their altars were as heaps in the furrows of the field, Hos. 12. 11. (5.) They set them up immediately in their own houses: so some think that should be rendered, which we translate groves; or Asherah, so others, (v. 10.) directly contrary to the second commandment. They served idols, (v. 12.) the works of their own hands, and creatures of their own fancy, though God had warned them particularly not to do this thing. (6.) They burnt incense in all the high places, to the honour of strange gods, for it went to the dishonour of the true God, v. 11. (7.) They followed vanity; idols are called so, because they could do neither good nor evil, but were the most insignificant things that were; and the way they worshipped them, were like unto them, and therefore became vain and good for nothing; (v. 16.) vain in their devotions, which were brutish and ridiculous, and so became vain in their whole conversation. (8.) Beside the molten images, even the two calves, they worshipped all the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, for it is not meant of the heavenly host of angels, they could not rise so far above sensible things as to think of them; and withal, they served Baal, the denied heroes of the Gentiles, v. 16. (9.) They caused their children to pass through the fire, in token of their dedicating of them to their idols; and lastly, they used diversations and enchantments, that they might receive directions from the gods to whom they paid their devotions.

IV. How God punished them for their sins; he was very angry with them; (v. 18.) for, in the matter of his worship, he is a jealous God, and receives nothing more deeply than giving that honour to any creature, which is due to him only. He afflicted them, (v. 20.) and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, in the days of the judges and of Saul, and afterward, in the days of most of their kings, to see if they would be awakened by the judgments of God to consider and amend their ways, but when all these corrections did not succeed, to drive out the folly, God first rent Israel from the house of David, under which they might have been happy. As Judah was hereby weakened, so Israel was hereby corrupted; for they made king a man who drove them from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin, v. 21. This was a national judgment, and the punishment of their former idolatries; and, at length, he removed them quite out of his sight, (v. 19.) without giving them any hopes of a return out of their captivity.

Lastly, Here is a complaint against Judah in the midst of all; (v. 19.) Also Judah kept not the commandments of God; though they were not as yet quite so bad as Israel, yet they walked in the statutes of Israel; and this aggravated the sin of Israel, that they communicated the infection of it to Judah; see Ezek. 25. 11. Those that bring sin into a community, bring a plague upon it, and will have to answer for all the mischief that follows.

24. And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Avv, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the
cities thereof. 25. And so it was, at the begin-
ing of their dwelling there, that they feared not the Lord; therefore the Lord sent lions among them, which slew some of
them. 26. Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they knew not the manner of the God of the land. 27. Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry ther- ther one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land. 28. Then one of the priests, whom they had carried away from Samaria, came and dwelt in Beth-el, and taught them how they should fear the Lord. 29. Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt. 30. And the men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima. 31. And the Avites made Nabaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammlech, the gods of Sepharvaim. 32. So they feared the Lord, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sac-
crificed for them in the houses of the high places. 33. They feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence. 34. Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the Lord, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the Lord com-
manded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel; 35. With whom the Lord had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them: 36. But the Lord, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and a stretched-out hand, him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice. 37. And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, which he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore; and ye shall not fear other gods. 38. And the covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget, neither shall ye fear other gods. 39. But the Lord your

God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies. 40. Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner. 41. So these nations feared the Lord, and served their graven images, both their children and their children's children: as did their fathers, so
do they unto this day.

Never was land lost, (we say,) for want of an heir. When the children of Israel were dispossessed, and turned out of Canaan, the king of Assyria soon trans-
planted the supernumeraries of his own country, such as it could well spare, who should be servants to him, and masters to the Israelites that remained; and here we have an account of these new inhabitants, whose story is related here, that we may take our leave of Samaria, as also of the Israelites that were carried captive into Assyria.

I. Concerning the Assyrians that were brought into the land of Israel, we are told,

1. That they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof, v. 24. It is common for lands to change their owners, but sad that the holy land should be-
come a heathen land again; see what work sin makes.

2. That at their first coming God sent lions among them. They were probably insufficient to people the country; which occasioned the beast of the field to multiply against them; (Exod. 23. 29.) yet, be-
side the natural cause, there was a manifest hand of God in it, who is Lord of hosts, of all the creatures, and can serve his own purposes by which he pleases, small or great, lice or lions. God ordered them this rough welcome, to check their pride and insolence, and to let them know that though they had conquered Israel, the God of Israel had power enough to deal with them, that he could have pre-
vented the settling here, by ordering lions into the service of Israel, and that he permitted it, not for their righteousness, but the wickedness of his own people, and that they were now under his visitation: they had lived without God in their own land, and were not plagued with lions; but if they do so in this land, it is at their peril.

3. That they sent a remonstrance of this grievance to the king their master, setting forth, it is likely, the loss their infested colony had sustained by the lions, and the continual fear and suspense, which they looked upon it to be a judgment upon them for not worshipping the God of the land, which they could not, because they knew not how, v. 26. The God of Israel was the God of the whole world, but they ignorantly call him the God of the land, appre-
hending themselves therefore within his reach, and concerned to be upon good terms with him; wherein they signalized the Israelites, who were not so ready to hear the voice of God's judgments as they were, and who had not served the God of that land, though he was the God of their fathers, and their great Benefactor, and though they were well in-
structed in the manner of his worship. Assyrians beg to be taught that which Israelites hated to be tought.

4. That the king of Assyria took care to have them taught the manner of the God of the land, (v. 27, 28.) not out of any affection to that God, but to save his subjects from the lions. On this errand he sent back one of the priests whom he had carried away captive: a prophet would have done them more good, for this was but one of the priests of the calves, and therefore chose to dwell at Beth-el for old ac-
quaintance-sake, and though he might teach them to do better than they did, he was not likely to teach them to do well, unless he had taught his own people better; however, he came and dwelt among them,
to teach them how they should fear the Lord; whether he taught them out of the book of the law, or only by word of mouth, is uncertain.

That, being thus taught, and made a mongrel religion of the God of Israel for fear, and their own idols for love; (v. 33.) They feared the Lord, but they served their own gods; they all agreed to worship the God of the land, according to the manner to observe the Jewish festivals and rites of sacrificing, but every nation made gods of their own besides, not only for their private use in their own families, but to be put in the houses of their high places, v. 29. The idols of each country are here named, v. 30, 31. The learned are at a loss for the signification of several of these names, and cannot agree by what representations these gods were worshipped. If we may credit the traditions of the Jewish doctors, they tell us, that Succoth-Benoth was worshipped in a hen and chickens, Nergal in a cock, Ashlima in a smooth goat, Nibiazu in a dog, Tartak in an ass, Adrammelech in a peacock, Anammelech in a pheasant. Our own tell us, more probably, That Succoth-Benoth, signifying the tent of the daughters, was Venuts; Nergal, being worshipped by the Cuthites or Persians, was the fire; Adrammelech and Anammelech were only distinctions of Moloch; see how vain idolaters were in their imaginations, and wonder at their sottishness. Our very ignorance concerning these idols teaches us the accomplishment of that word which God had spoken should not perish; (Jer. 10. 11.) they are all buried in oblivion, while the name of the true God shall continue for ever.

This medley superstition is here said to continue until this day, (v. 41.) till the time when this book was written, and long after, above 300 years in all, till the time of Alexander the Great, when Manasse, brother to Jaddus the high priest of the Jews, having married the daughters of Samballat, governor of the Samaritans, went over to them, got leave of Alexander to build a temple in mount Gerizim, drew over many of the Jews to him, and prevailed with the Samaritans to cast away all their idols, and to worship the God of Israel only; yet their worship was mixed with so much such superstition, that our Saviour tells them they knew not what they worshipped, John 4. 24.

II. Concerning the Israelites that were carried into the land of Assyria; the historian has occasion to speak of them, v. 33. showing that their successors in the land did as they had done, (after the manner of the nations whom they carried away,) they worshipped both the God of Israel and those other gods; but what did the captives do in the land of their affliction? Were they reformed, and brought to repentance, by their troubles? No, they did as the former manner, v. 34. When the two tribes were afterward carried into Babylon, they were cured by it of their idolatry, and therefore, after 70 years, they were brought back with joy; but the 10 tribes were hardened in the furnace, and therefore were justly lost in it, and left to perish.

This obstinacy of their is here aggravated by the consideration, 1. Of the honour God had put upon them, as the seed of Jacob, whom he named Israel, and from him they were so named, but were a reproach to that worthy name by which they were called. 2. Of the covenant he made with them, and the charge he gave them upon that covenant, which is here very fully recited, that they should fear and serve the Lord Jehovah only, who had brought them up out of Egypt: (v. 36.) that, having received his statutes and his laws, in writing, they should observe to do them for evermore, (v. 37.) and never forget that covenant which God had made with them, the promises and conditions of that cove

nent, especially that great article of it which is here thrice repeated, because it had been so often inculcated, and so much insisted on, that they should not fear other gods. He had told them that if they kept close to him, he would deliver them out of the hand of all their enemies; (v. 39,) yet, when they were in the hand of their enemies, and stood in need of deliverance, they were so stupid, and had so little sense of their own interest, that they did after the former manner, (v. 40.) they served both the true God, and false gods, as if they knew no difference. Ephraim is joined to idolatry, let him alone; so did they, and so did the nations that succeeded them: Are we better than they? No, in no wise, for both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin. Rom. 3. 9.

CHAP. XVIII.

When the prophet had condemned Ephraim for lies and deceit, he comforted himself with this, that Judah yet ruled with God, and was faithful with the most holy. Hos. 11. 12. It was a very melancholy view which the last chapter gave us of the desolations of Israel; but this chapter shows us the affairs of Judah in a good posture at the same time, that it may appear God has not quite cast off the seed of Abraham, Rom. 11. 1. Hezekiah is here upon the throne, I. Reforming his kingdom, v. 1.-6. II. Proclaiming all his uncleanness, (v. 7., &c.) and this, at the same time when the ten tribes were led captive, v. 9.-12. III. Yet invaded by Sennacherib, the king of Asyria, v. 13. His country put under contribution, v. 14. &c. Jerusalem besieged, v. 17. God blasphemed, himself reviled, and his people solicited to revolt, in a traitorous speech made by Rab-shakeh, v. 18. &c. 37. But how well it ended, and how much to the honour and comfort of our great reformer, we shall find in the next chapter.

1. NOW it came to pass, in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. 2. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah. 3. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did. 4. He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nebushtan. 5. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. 6. For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses. 7. And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth; and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not. 8. He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.
ness then, when the measure of his father's iniquity should be full. Here is,
I. His great piety, which was the more wonderful, for his father was very wicked and vile, one of the worst of the kings, yet he one of the best, which may intimate to us, 1. That what good there is in any, is not of nature, but of grace, free grace, sovereign grace, which, contrary to nature, grafts into man's nature, 2. Rom. 11. 24. 2. That grace gets over the greatest difficulties and disadvantages: Ahaz, it is likely, gave his son a bad education as well as a bad example; Urijah, his priest, perhaps, had the tuition of him; his attendants and companions, we may suppose, were such as were addicted to idolatry; and yet Hezekiah became eminently good: when God's grace will work, what can hinder it?

[1.] He was of a family very tried, who had a great many degenerate ones, v. 3. He did that which was right, according to all that David his father did, with whom the covenant was made, and therefore he was entitled to the benefit of it. We have read of some of them, who did that which was right, but not like David; (ch. 14. 3.) they did not love God's ordinances, nor cleave to them, so as he did; but Hezekiah was a second David, had such a love for God's word, and God's cause, as he had.

Let us not be frightened with an apprehension of the continual decay of virtue, as if, when times and men are bad, they must needs, of course, grow worse and worse; that does not follow, for, after many bad kings, God raised up one that was like David himself.

(2.) He was a zealous reformer of his kingdom, and, as he found, (2 Chron. 29. 3.) he began betimes to do so, fell to work as soon as ever he came to the crown, and lost no time; he found his kingdom very corrupt, the people in all things too superstitious; they had always been so, but in the last reign worse than ever, by the influence of his wicked father; a deluge of idolatry had overspread the land, his spirit was stirred against it, we may suppose, as Paul's at Athens, while his father lived, and therefore, as soon as ever he had power in his hands, he set himself to reform it. In considering how the people were wedded to it, he might think it could not be done without opposition.

[1.] The images and the groves were downright idolatrous, and of heathenish original; those he brake and destroyed; though his own father had set them up, and showed an affection for them, that should not protect them. We must never dishonour God, in our estates.

[2.] He did the high places, though they had sometimes been used by the prophets upon special occasions, and had been hitherto connived at by the good kings, yet, (because they were an affront to the temple, and a breach of the law which required them to worship there only, and being from under the inspection of the priests, gave opportunity for the introducing of idolatrous usages,) Hezekiah, who made God's word his rule, and God's house his heart, and his predecessors, removed them, made a law for the removal of them, the demolishing of the chapels, tabernacles, and altars, there erected, and the suppressing of the use of them, which law was put in execution with vigour: and, it is probable, the terrible judgments, which the kingdom of Israel was now under for their idolatry, made Hezekiah the more zealous, and the people the more willing to comply with his wise advice, as well, when our neighbours harms are our warnings.

[3.] The brazen serpent was originally of divine institution, and yet, because it had been abused to idolatry, he brake it to pieces. The children of Israel had brought that with them to Canaan; where they set it up we are not told, but it seems it had been care-

fully preserved, as a memorial of God's goodness to their fathers in the wilderness, and a traditional evidence of the truth of that story, Num. 21. 9. for the encouragement of the sick to apply themselves to God for a cure, and of penitent sinners to apply themselves to him for mercy. But, in process of time, when they began to worship the creature more than the Creator, they that would not worship images showed from their natures. But the brazen images, made by the art of cunning men, were in some sort instrumen
ta of incense to the brazen serpent, because that was made by order from God himself, and had been an instrument of good to them. But Hezekiah, in his pious zeal for God's honour, not only forbade the people to worship it, but, that it might never be so abused any more, he showed the people that it was Nehushtan, nothing else but a piece of brass, and that therefore no worship was due to it, neither was there any thing to it; he then brake it to pieces; that is, as Bishop Patrick expounds it, ground it to powder, which he scattered in the air, so that not a fragment of it might remain. If any think that the just honour of the brazen serpent was hereby diminished, they will find it abundantly made up again, John 3. 14. where our Saviour makes it a type of himself; good things, when idolized, are better parted with than kept.

(3.) Hezekiah was the patron of the temple, and the kings of Judah were like him, either before or after him. Two things he was eminent for, in his reformation; [1.] Courage and confidence in God: in abolishing idolatry, there was danger of dissolving his subjects, and provoking them to rebel; but he trusted in the Lord God of Israel to bear him out in what he did, and save him from harm: a firm belief of God's all-sufficiency to protect and reward those who sincerely seek his glory. But the more our pious prosperity, bold, and vigorous, in the way of our duty, like Hezekiah; when he came to the crown, he found his kingdom compassed with enemies, but he did not seek for succour to foreign aids, as his father did, but trusted the God of Israel to be the keeper of Israel. [2.] Constancy and perseverance in his duty; for this, there was none like him, that he clave to the Lord with a fixed resolution, and never departed from him, the same which use it, to be the surest way to liberty, bold, and vigorous, in the way of our duty, like Hezekiah; when he came to the crown, he found his kingdom compassed with enemies, but he did not seek for succour to foreign aids, as his father did, but trusted the Lord fully: he not only abolished all idolatrous usages, but kept God's commandments, and, in every thing, made conscience of his duty.

II. His great prosperity; (v. 7, 8.) he was with God, and then God was with him, and, having the special presence of God with him, he prospered wheresoever he turned himself. The surest way to liberty, bold, and vigorous, in the way of our duty, is, to see God, 2. He made a vigorous attack upon the Philistines, and smote them even unto Gaza, both the country-villages and the fortified towns, the tower of the watchmen, and the fenced cities, reducing those places which they had made themselves masters of in his father's time, 2 Chron. 28. 18. When he had purged out the corruptions his
9. And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. 10. And at the end of three years they took it, even in the sixth year of Hezekiah (that is, the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel) Samaria was taken. 11. And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes: 12. Because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them. 13. Now, in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. 14. And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to La-chish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. 15. And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house. 16. At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

The kingdom of Assyria was now grown considerable, though we never read of it till the last reign; such changes there are in the affairs of nations and families: those that have been despicable, become formidable, and those, on the contrary, are brought low, that have made a great noise and figure. We have here an account.

I. Of the success of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, against Israel; his besieging Samaria, (v. 9.) taking it, (v. 10.) and carrying the people into captivity; (v. 11.) with the reason why God brought this judgment upon them, (v. 12.) Because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God. This was related more largely in the chapter before, but it is here repeated. 1. As that which stirred up Hezekiah and his people to purge out idolatry with so much zeal, because they saw the ruin which it brought upon Israel: when their neighbour's house was on fire, and their own in danger, it was time to cast away the accursed thing. 2. As that which Hezekiah much lamented, but had not strength to prevent: though the 10 tribes had revolted from, and often been vexations to, the house of David, no longer ago than in his father's reign, yet being of the seed of Israel, he could not be glad at their calamities.

3. As that which laid Hezekiah and his kingdom open to the king of Assyria, and made it much more easy for him to invade him; it is said of the 10 tribes here, that they would neither hear God's commandments, nor do them, v. 12. Many will be content to give God the hearing, that will give him no more, (Ezek. 33. 31.) but these, being resolved not to do their duty, did not care to hear of it.

II. Of the attempt of Sennacherib, the succeeding king of Assyria, against Judah, in which he was encouraged by his predecessor's success against Israel, whose honours he would vie with, and whose victories he would push forward. The description made upon Judah was a great calamity to that kingdom, by which God would try the faith of Hezekiah, and chastise the people, who are called a hypocritical nation, (Isa. 10. 6.) because they did not heartily comply with Hezekiah's reformation, nor willingly part with their idols, but kept them up in their hearts, and, perhaps, in their houses, though their high places were removed. Even times of reformation may prove a occasion for calamity, to those that oppose it, and then the blame is laid upon the reformers; this calamity will appear great upon Hezekiah, if we consider,

1. How much he lost of his country, v. 13. The king of Assyria took all, or most, of the fenced cities of Judah, the frontier-towns, and the garrisons; and then all the rest fell into his hands, of course; the confusion which the country was put into by this Mission, is described by the prophet, Isaiah 10. 28-32.

2. How dear he paid for his peace; he saw Jerusalem itself in danger of falling into the enemies hand, as Samaria had done, and was willing to purchase its safety at the expense, (1.) Of a mean submission: " I have offended in denying the usual tribute, and am ready to make satisfaction as shall be demanded," v. 14. Where was Hezekiah's courage? Where his confidence in God? Why did he not advise with Isaiah before he sent this crowching message? (2.) Of a vast sum of money: 300 talents of silver, and 30 of gold; not to be paid annually, but as a present ransom, above 200,000 pounds: to raise this sum, he was forced not only to empty the public treasures, (v. 15.) but to take the gold plates off from the doors of the temple, and from the pillars, v. 16. Though the temple sanctified, the temple treasure profane, the temple vessels spoils, yet this necessity being urgent, he thought that he might make as bold with that as his father David (whom he took for his pattern) did with the show-bread, and that it was neither impious nor imprudent to give a part for the preservation of the whole; his father Ahaz had plundered the temple in contempt of it; (2 Chron. 28. 24.) he had repaid with interest what his father took, and not only kept, but revived and increased: the Lord had been displeased with his father's desecration, and he himself was more careful against it; and yet no less determined to save the temple, if he could.

17. And the king of Assyria sent Tartan, and Rabsaris, and Rab-shakeh, from La-chish to king Hezekiah, with a great host against Jerusalem: and they went up, and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the highway of the fuller's field. 18. And when they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the house-hold, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder. 19. And Rab-shakeh said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus
sath the great king, the king of Assyria,
What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? 20. Thou sayest (but they are but vain words,) I have counsel and strength for the war. Now, on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? 21. Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean it will go into his hand and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him. 22. But if ye say unto me, We trust in the Lord our God: is not that he whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away; and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem? 23. Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. 24. How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 25. Am I now come up without the Lord against this place to destroy it? The Lord said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it. 26. Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rab-shakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and talk not with us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall. 27. But Rab-shakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss, with you? 28. Then Rab-shakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria: 29. Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand: 30. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. 31. Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern: 32. Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land; a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil-olive and of honey, that ye may live and not die: and hearken not unto Heze-
quest, and agreeable to the custom of treaties, which is, that the plenipotentiaries should settle matters between themselves, before any thing be made public; but Eliakim did not consider what an unreasonable man he had to deal with, else he would not have made this request, for it did but exasperate Rab-shakeh, and make him the more rude and insolent, v. 27. Against all the rules of decency and honour, instead of treating with the commissioners, he menaces the soldiery, persuades them to desert or mutiny, threatens if they held out to reduce them to the last extremities of famine, and then goes on with his discourse, the scope of which, is, to persuade Hezekiah, and his princes and people, to surrender the city. Observe how, in order to this

He magnifies his master the king of Assyria; once and again he calls him, The great king, the king of Assyria, v. 19, 28. What an idol did he make of that prince whose creature he was! God is the great King, but Sennacherib was, in his eye, a little god, and he would possess them with the same veneration for him that he had, and thereby frighten them into a submission to him; but to those who, by faith, see the King of kings in his power and glory, he is the King of kings and the great King; and little. What are the greatest of men, when either they come to compare with God, or God comes to contend with them? Ps. 82, 6, 7.

2. He endeavours to make them believe that it would be much for their advantage to surrender; if they held out, they must expect no other than to eat the refuse of all herbs, by reason of the want of provisions, which would be entirely cut off from them by the besiegers; but if they would capitulate and seek his favour with a present, and cast themselves upon his mercy, he would give them very good treatment, v. 31. I wonder with what face Rab-shakeh could speak of making an agreement with a present, when his master had so lately broken the agreement Hezekiah made with him, with that great present, v. 14. Can those expect to be trusted, that have been so grossly pernicious? But, Ad populum phaleras—But gild the chain, and the vulgar will let you bind them. He thinks to soothe up all with a promise, that if they would surrender upon discretion, though they must expect to be prisoners and captives, yet it would really be happy for them to be so. One would wonder he should ever think to prevail by such gross suggestions as these, but that the Devil does thus impose upon sinners by his temptations. He who needs persuade them, (1.) That their imprisonment would be to their advantage, for they should eat every man of his own vine, v. 31. Though the property of their estates would be vested in the conquerors, yet they should have the free use of them; but he does not explain it now to them as he would afterward, that it must be understood just as much, and just as long, as the conqueror pleases. (2.) He adds, that if they betray him, he would do more to their advantage, I will take you away to a land like your own land; and what the better would they be for that, when they must have nothing in it to call their own?

3. That which he aims at, especially, is, to convince them that it was to no purpose for them to stand it out; What confidence is therein where thou trustest in? Hezekiah, v. 19. To the people he says, (v. 29.) "Let not Hezekiah deceive you into your own ruin, for he shall not be able to deliver you, you must either bend or break." It were well, if sinners would submit to the force of this argument, in making their peace with God—That it is therefore our wisdom to yield to him, because it is in vain to contend with him: what confidence is that which those trust in, who stand it out against him? Are we stronger than he? Or what shall we get by setting briers and thorns before a consuming fire? But Hezekiah was not so helpless and defenceless as Rab-shakeh would here represent him.

Three things he supposes Hezekiah might trust to, and he endeavours to make out the insufficiency of each.

(1.) His own military preparations; Thou sayest, I have counsel and strength for the war; and we find that so he had, 2 Chron. 32. 3. But this Rab-shakeh turns off with a slight, "They are but vain words, thou art an unequal match for us," v. 20. With the greatest heightness and disdain imagable, he challenges him to produce 2000 men of all his people that knew how to manage a horse, and will tell him, that he can furnish him with ten thousand of them, and therefore insinuates that he had no men, or none fit to be soldiers; (v. 23.) thus he thinks to run him down with confidence and banter, and will lay him any wager that one captain of the least of his master's servants is able to baffle him and all his forces.

(2.) His alliance with Egypt; he supposes that he trusted to Egypt for chariots and horsemen, (v. 24.) because the king of Israel had done so, and of the Egyptians he could boast. But, he truly says, (v. 21.) it will not only fail a man when he leans on it, and expects it to bear his weight, but it will run into his hand and pierce it, and rend his shoulder, as the prophet further illustrates this similitude, with application to Egypt; (Ezek. 29, 6, 7.) so is the king of Egypt, says he, and truly so had the king of Assyria been to Ahaz, who trusted in him, but he disdained him, and strengthened him not; 2 Chron. 28. 20. They that trust to any arm of flesh, will find it no better than a broken reed; but God is the Rock of ages.

(3.) His interest in God, and relation to him; this was indeed the confidence in which Hezekiah trusted; (v. 22.) he supported himself by depending on the power and promise of God, with this he encouraged himself and his people; (v. 30.) The Lord will surely deliver us; (and again, v. 32.) this, he was sensible, was their great stay, and therefore he is most large in his endeavours to shake this, as David's enemies, who used all the arts they had, to drive him from his confidence in God; (Ps. 3. 2.—11. 1.) and thus did Christ's enemies, Matth. 27. 43.

Three things Rab-shakeh suggests to discourage their confidence in God, and they are all false.

[1.] That Hezekiah had forsook God, and thrown himself out of it, by destroying the high places and the altars, v. 22. Here he measures the God of Israel by the gods of the heathen, who delighted in the multitude of altars and temples, and concludes that Hezekiah had given a great offence to the God of Israel, in obliging his people to offer at one altar: this is one of the best deeds he ever did in his life, misconstrued as improper. Rab-shakeh, but he says, I did not; or would not, know the law of the God of Israel; if that be represented by ignorant and malicious men as evil and a provocation to God, which is really good and pleasing to him, we must not think it strange; if this was to be sacrilegious, Hezekiah would ever be so.

[2.] That God had given orders for the destruction of Jerusalem, at the time this, v. 25. Am I now turned up to destroy the Lord? This is all an empty boast; he did not himself think he had any commission from God to do what he did, (by whom should he have it?) but he makes this pretence, to amuse and terrify the people that were on the wall. If he had any colour at all for what he said, it might be taken from the notice which, perhaps, he had had, by the writings of the prophets, of the hand of God,
in the destruction of the 10 tribes, and he thought he had as good a warrant for the seizing of Jerusalem as of Samaria; many that have fought against God, have pretended commissions from him. 

[3.] That if Jehovah, the God of Israel, should undertake to protect them from the king of Assyria, yet he was not able to do it; with this blasphemy he concludes his speech, (v. 33.-35.) comparing the God of Israel with the gods of the nations whom he had conquered, and putting him upon a level with them, and concluding that because they could not defend and deliver their worshippers, the God of Israel could not defend and deliver his. See here, First, His pride; when he conquered a city, he reckoned himself to have conquered its gods, and valued himself mightily upon it; his high opinion of the idols, made him have a high opinion of himself as too hard for them. Secondly, His profane daring of God: he was not afraid to say, the God of the whole earth, the only living and true God, the Ancient of days, and who had often proved himself to be above all gods; yet he makes no more of Him than of the upstart fictitious gods of Hamath and Arpad, unfairly arguing that the gods (as some now say the priests) of all religions are the same, and himself above them all. The tradition of the Jews is, that Rab-shakeh was an apostate and a rebel, which appears not uncommon in the language; if so, his ignorance of the God of Israel was the less excusable, and his enmity the less strange, for apostates are commonly the most bitter and spiteful enemies, witness Julian. A great deal of art and management, it must be owned, there is in this speech of Rab-shakeh, but, withal, a great deal of pride, malice, falsehood, and blasphemy; one grain of sincerity would have been worth all this round rhetoric.

Lastly, We are told what the commissioners on Hezekiah's part did. 1. They held their peace; not for want of something to say both on God's behalf and Hezekiah's, they might easily and justly have upbraided him with his master's treachery, and breach of faith, and have asked him, What religion encourages you to hope that that will prosper? At least, they might have given him that grave and solemn answer which Ahithophel gave to Absalom's demands; (Lev. 10. ) 'Let not him that girdeth on the harness, boast as though he had put it off;' but the king had commanded them not to answer him, and they observed their instructions. There is a time to keep silence, as well as a time to speak, and there are those to whom to offer anything religious or rational, is to cast pearls before swine. What can be said to a madman? It is probable that their silence made Rab-shakeh yet more proud and secure, and so his heart was lifted up and hardened to his destruction. 2. They rent their clothes, in detestation of his blasphemy, and in grief for the despised afflicted condition of Jerusalem, the reproach of which was a burthen to them. 3. They faithfully reported the matter to the king, their master, and told him the words of Rab-shakeh, that he might consider what he was to do, what course they should take, and what answer they should return to Rab-shakeh's summons.

CHAP. XIX.

Jerusalem's great distress we read of in the foregoing chapter, and left it besieged, insulted, threatened, terrified, and just ready to be swallowed up, by the Assyrian army. But in this chapter, we have an account of its glorious deliverance, not by sword or bow, but by prayer and prophecy, and by the hand of an angel. I. Hezekiah, in a great concern, sent to the prophet Isaiah, to desire his prayers, (v. 1. -5. ) and received from him an answer of peace, v. 6.-7. II. Sennacherib sent a letter to Hezekiah to frighten him into a surrender, v. 8.-15. Hezekiah, thereupon, by a very solemn prayer, recommended his case to God, the righteous Judge, and begged help from him, v. 14., 19. IV. God, by Isaiah, sent him a very comfortable message, assuring him of deliverance, v. 20.-34. V. The army of the Assyrians was all cut off by an angel, and Sennacherib himself slain by his own sons, v. 35.-37. And so God glorified himself, and saved his people.

1. AND it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord. 2. And he sent Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. 3. And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth. 4. It may be the Lord thy God will hear all the words of Rab-shakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God; and will reverse the words which the Lord thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left. 5. So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. 6. And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. 7. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

The contents of Rab-shakeh's speech being brought to Hezekiah, one would have expected (and it is likely Rab-shakeh did expect) that he should have called a council of war, and it should have been debated, whether it was best to capitulate or no. Before the siege, he had taken counsel with his princes, and his mighty men, (2 Chron. 32. 3. ) but that would not do now; his greatest relief is, that he has a God to go to, and what passed between him and His God on this occasion, we have here an account of. I. Hezekiah discovered deep concern at the dis-honour done to God by Rab-shakeh's blasphemy. When he heard it, though at second hand, he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, v. 1. Good men were wont to do so, when they heard of any reproach cast on God's name; and great men must not think it any disparagement to them, to sympathize with the injured honour of the great God. Royal robes are not too good to be rent, nor royal flesh too good to be clothed with sackcloth, in humiliation for indignities done to God, and for the perils and terrors of his Jerusalem. This, God now called to, and was displeased with those who were not thus affected; (Isa. 22. 12. -14. ) Behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, though it was a day of trouble and afraidness in the valley of vision; (v. 5. ) which refers to this very event. The king in sackcloth, but many of his subjects in soft clothing.

II. He went up to the house of the Lord, according to the example of the psalmist, who, when he-
was grieved at the pride and prosperity of the wick-
ed, went into the sanctuary of God, and there un-
derstood their end, Ps. 73. 17. He went to the house of
God, to meditate and pray, and get his spirit in-
to a meditated composed frame, after this agonizing
He was not considering what answer to return to
Rab-shakeh, but refers himself to God, Thou shalt
answer, Lord, for me; Herbert. In the house of
the Lord he found a place both of rest and refuge,
a treasury, a magazine, a council-chamber, and all
he needed, all in God. Note, When the church's
enemies are very daring and threatening, it is the
wisdom and duty of the church's friends to apply
themselves to God, appeal to him, and leave their
cause with him.

III. He sent to the prophet Isaiah, by honour-
able messengers, in token of the great respect he
had for him, to desire his prayers, v. 2. 4. Elia-
kim and Shebna were two of those that had heard
the words of Rab-shakeh, and were the better able
both to possess and to affect Isaiah with the case.
The elders of the priests were themselves to pray
for the people, in the time of trouble, Joel 2. 17, but
they must go to engage Isaiah's prayers, because he
could pray better, and had a better interest in heav-
en. The messengers were to go in sackcloth, be-
cause they were to represent the king, who was so
clothed. Their errand to Isaiah was, Lift up thy
prayer for the remnant that is left, that is, for Ju-
dah, which is but a remnant now that the 10 tribes
are gone; for Jehoahaz, the remnant of the ten
tribes, that the reduced cities of Judah are taken.
Note, 1. It is very desirable, and what we should
be desirous of when we are in trouble, to have the
prayers of our friends for us. In begging it, we ho-
nour God, we honour prayer, and we honour our
brethren. 2. When we desire the prayers of oth-
ers for us, that must not excuse us from praying for
ourselves. When Hezekiah sent to Isaiah; to pray
for him, let himself went into the house of the Lord,
to offer up his own prayers. 3. Those who speak
from God to us, we should in a particular manner
desire to speak to God for us. He is a prophet, and
he shall pray for thee, Gen. 20. 7. The great Pro-
phet is the great Intercessor. 4. Those are likely
to prevail with God, that lift up their prayers, that
is, that lift up their hearts in prayer. 5. When the
interests of God's church are brought very low, so
that there is but a remnant left, few friends, and
those weak, and at a loss, then it is time to lift up
our prayers for that remnant.
Two things are urged to Isaiah, to engage his
prayers for them.
(1.) Their fears of the enemy, v. 3. "He is in-
solent and haughty, it is a day of rebuke and blas-
phemy, we are despised, God is dishonoured, upon
this account it is a day of trouble, never were such
times before. Israel is a name dropped in a trough,
and abroad we are; our soul is exceedingly filled with the
contempt of the proud, and it is a sword in our bones,
to hear them reproach our confidence in God, and
say, Where is now your God? And, which is worst of
all, we see not which way we can help ourselves,
and get clear of the reproach. Our cause is good,
our people are faithful, but we are quite overpow-
ered; the children are brought into the world, now is
the time, the critical moment, when, if ever, we must be
relieved; one successful blow given to the enemy, would accomplish our wishes.
But alas, we are not able to give it; there is not
strength to bring forth. Our case is as deplorable,
and calls for as speedy help, as that of a woman in
travail, that is quite spent with her threes, so
that she cannot, or is not able to bear child with this
Hos. 13. 12. We are ready to perish; if
thou canst do any thing, have compassion upon us,
and help us."

(2.) Their hopes in God. To him they look, on
him they depend, to appear for them; one word
from him will turn the scale, and save the sinking
remnant; if he but reprove the words of Rab-sha-
keh, that is, disprove them, v. 4. And he endeav-
ors to convince and confound the blasphemer, all
will be well. And this they trust he will do, not for
their merit's sake, but for his own honour's sake, be-
cause he has reproached the living God, by levelling
him with dead and dumb idols. They have reason
to think the issue will be good, for they can interest
God in the quarrel; Ps. 74. 22, Arise, O God, plead
thine own cause. "He is the Lord thy God," say
they to Isaiah, v. 5. whose glory thou art con-
cerned for, and whose favour thou art interested in.
He has heard and known the blasphemous words
of Rab-shakeh, and therefore, it may be, he will
hear and rebuke them. We hope he will. Help
us with thy prayers to bring the cause before him,
and then we are content to leave it with him."

IV. God, by Isaiah, sent to Hezekiah, to assure
him that he would glorify himself in the ruin of the
Assyrians. Hezekiah sent to Isaiah, not to inquire
concerning the event, as many did that sent to the
prophets, (Shall I recover? or the like,) but to de-
sire his assistance in his duty. It was this that he
was solicitous about; and therefore God let him
know what the event should be, in a recompense of
his care to do his duty, v. 6, 7. 1. God interests
himself in the cause; They have blasphemed me.
2. He encouraged Hezekiah, who was much the
needful, Be not afraid of the words which they heard: they are but words, (though swelling and
fierce words,) and words are but wind. 3. He pro-
mised to frighten the king of Assyria worse than
Rab-shakeh had frightened him; I will send a blast
upon him, that pestilential breath which killed his
army, upon which, terrors shall seize him, and
drive him into his own country, where death shall
meet him. This short threatening in the underwrite
God, would do execution, when all the impotent
menaces that came from Rab-shakeh's mouth, would
vanish into air.

8. So Rab-shakeh returned, and found the
king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from
Lachish. 9. And when he heard say of
Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is
come out to fight against thee; he sent mes-
sengers again unto Hezekiah, saying, 10.
Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of
Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom
thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusa-
lem shall not be delivered into the hand of
the king of Assyria. 11. Behold, thou hast
heard what the kings of Assyria have done
to all lands, by destroying them utterly; and
shalt thou be delivered? 12. Have the gods
of the nations delivered them which my fa-
thers have destroyed; as Gozan, and Haran,
and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which
were in Thelasar? 13. Where is the king of
Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the
king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena,
and Ivah? 14. And Hezekiah received
the letter of the hand of the messengers, and
read it: and Hezekiah went up into the
house of the Lord, and spread it before the
Lord. 15. And Hezekiah prayed before
the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. 16. Lord, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, Lord, thine eyes, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God. 17. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands. 18. And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them. 19. Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only.

Rab-shakeh, having delivered his message, and received no answer, (which silence, whether he took it for a consent or a slight, does not appear,) left his army before Jerusalem, under the command of the other generals, and went himself, to attend the king his master for further orders. He found him besieging Lachish, a city that had revolted from him. Whether he had conquered it, or no, is not certain; some think he departed from it, because he found the taking of it impracticable, v. 8. However, he was now alarmed with the rumour that the king of the Cushites, who bordered upon the Arabians, was coming out against him with a great army, v. 9. This made him very desirous to gain Jerusalem with all speed. To take it by force, would cost him more time and men than he could well spare, and therefore he renewed his attack upon Hezekiah, to persuade him tamely to surrender it. Having found him an easy man once, ch. 18. 14. when he said, That which thou puttest on me I will bear, he hoped again to frighten him into a submission, but in vain. Here, I. Sennacherib sent a letter to Hezekiah, a railing letter, a blasphemous letter, to persuade him to surrender Jerusalem, because it would be to no purpose for him to think of standing it out. His letter is to the same purport with Rab-shakeh’s speech; there is nothing new offered in it. Rab-shakeh had said to the people, Let not Hezekiah deceive you, ch. 18. 29. Sennacherib writes to Hezekiah, Let not thy God deceive thee, v. 10. Those that have the God of Jacob for their help, and whose hope is in the Lord their God, need not fear being deceived by him, as the heathen were by their gods.

To terrify Hezekiah, and drive him from his anchor, he magnifies himself and his own achievements. See how proudly he boasts, 1. Of the lands he had conquered, (v. 11.) all lands; and destroyed utterly! How are the mole-hills of his victories swollen to mountains? So far was he from destroying all lands, that, at this time, the land of Cush, and Egypt, with all their king, were a terror to him. What vast hyperbole one might expect in proud men’s praises of themselves! 2. Of the gods he had conquered, v. 12. “Each vanquished nation had its gods, which were so far from being able to deliver them, that they fell with them: and shall thy God deliver thee?” 3. Of the kings he had conquered, (v. 13.) the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad. Whether he means the prince or the idol, he means to make himself appear greater than either, and therefore very formidable, and the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

II. Hezekiah encloses this in another letter, a praying letter, a believing letter, and sends it to the King of kings, who judges among the gods. Hezekiah was not so haughty, as not to receive the letter, though we may suppose the superscription did not give him his due titles; when he had received it, he was not so indignant as not to read it; when he had read it, he knew he had in such a letter a provision to write an answer to it in the same provoking language; but he immediately went up to the temple, presented himself, and then spread the letter before the Lord, v. 14. Not as if God needed to have letters shown him, (he knew what was in it before Hezekiah did,) but hereby he signified that he acknowledged God in all his ways, that he desired not to aggravate the injuries his enemies did him, or to make as to write an answer to it in the same provoking language; but he immediately went up to the temple, presented himself, and then spread the letter before the Lord.

In the prayer which Hezekiah prayed over this letter,

1. He adores the God whom Sennacherib had blasphemed; (v. 15.) calls him the God of Israel, because Israel was his peculiar people; and the God that dwelt between the cherubims, because there was the peculiar residence of his glory upon earth; but gives glory to him as the God of the whole earth, and not as Sennacherib fancied him to be, the God Israel only, and confined to the temple. “Let them say what they will, thou art sovereign Lord, for thou art the God, the God of gods; sole Lord, even thou alone; universal Lord of all the kingdoms of the earth; and rightful Lord, for thou hast made heaven and earth. Being Creator of all, by an incontestable title, thou art Owner and Ruler of all.”

2. He appeals to God concerning the insolence and profaneness of Sennacherib, v. 16. “Lord, hear; Lord, see. Here it is under his own hand.” Had Hezekiah only been abused, he would have passed it by; but it is God, the living God, that is reproached, the jealous God. Lord, what will thou do for thy great name?

3. He owns Sennacherib’s triumphs over the gods of the heathen, but distinguishes between them and the God of Israel, v. 17, 18. They have indeed cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, unable either to help themselves or their worshippers, and therefore no wonder that they have destroyed them; and, in destroying them, though they know it not, they really served the justice and jealousy of the God of Israel, who has determined to extinguish all the gods of the heathen. But they are deceived, who think they can therefore be too hard for him. He is none of the gods whom men’s hands have made, he has himself made all things, Ps. 115. 3, 4. Heprayeth not for men, nor in the defeat of Sennacherib, and the deliverance of Jerusalem out of his hands, v. 19. “Now therefore save us; for if we be conquered, as other lands are, they will say that thou art conquered, as the gods of those lands were: but, Lord, distinguish thyself, by distinguishing us, and let all the world know, and be made to confess, that thou art the Lord God, the self-existent, sovereign God, even from the first, and that all pretenders are liars.” Note, The best pleas in prayer are those which are taken from God’s honour: and therefore, the Lord’s prayer begins with Hallowed be thy name, and concludes with Thine is the glory.

20. Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord:
God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard. 21. This is the word that the Lord hath spoken concerning him; The virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. 22. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel. 23. By thy messengers thou hast reproached the Lord, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar-trees thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodging of his borders, and into the forest of his Carmel. 24. I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places. 25. Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps. 26. Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the house-tops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up. 27. But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. 28. Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest. 29. And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof. 30. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. 31. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this. 32. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. 33. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. 34. For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

We have here the gracious copious answer which God gave to Hezekiah's prayer. The message which he sent him by the same hand, v. 6, 7, one would think, had been an answer sufficient to his prayer; but, that he might have strong consolation, he is encouraged by two immutable things, in which he is invincible for God to lie, Heb. 6. 18. In general, God assures him that his prayer was heard, his prayer against Sennacherib, v. 20. Note, The case of those is miserable, that have the prayers of God's people against them. For if the oppressed cry to God against the oppressor, he will hear, Exod. 22. 23. God hears and answers; hears with the saving strength of his right hand, Ps. 20. 6. This message speaks two things: I. Confusion and shame to Sennacherib and his forces. It is here foretold that he should be humbled and broken. The prophet elegantly directs his speech to him, as he does, Isa. 10. 5, O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger. Not that this message was sent to him, but what is here said to him he was made to know by the event; Providence spake it to him with a witness; and perhaps his own heart was made to whisper that thine enemies have more ways than one of speaking to sinners in his wrath, so as to vex them to his sore displeasure, Ps. 2. 5.

Sennacherib is here represented, 1. As the scorn of Jerusalem, v. 21. He thought himself the terror of the daughter of Zion, that chaste and beautiful virgin, and that by his threats he could force her to submit to him; But, being a virgin in her Father's house, and under his protection, rife to thee, despises thee, laughs thee to scorn. Thine impotent malice is ridiculous; he that sits in heaven, laughs at thee, and therefore so do those that abide under his shadow. By this word God intended to silence the fears of Hezekiah and his people. Though to an eye of sense the enemy looked formidable, to an eye of faith he looked despicable. 2. As an enemy to God; and that was enough to make him miserable. Hezekiah pleaded this; "Lord, he has reproached thee," v. 16. He has," saith God, "and I take it as against myself," v. 22. Whom hast thou reproached? Is it not the Holy One of Israel, whose honour is dear to him, and who has power to vindicate it, which the gods of the heathen have not? Nemo me injurare laceret—No one shall provoke me with impunity. 3. As a vain-gloriousfraud, that spake great swelling words of vanity, and boasted of a false gift; by his boasts, as well as by his threats, reproaching the Lord. For, (1.) He magnified his own achievements out of measure, and quite above what really they were, v. 23, 24. This was not in the letter he wrote, but God lets Hezekiah know that he not only saw what was written there, but heard what he said elsewhere, probably the speeches he made to his king, to his officers, to his courtiers, to his armies. Note, God takes notice of the boasts of proud men, and will call them to an account, that he may look upon them, and abase them, Job 40. 11. What a mighty figure does Sennacherib think he makes! Driving his chariots to the tops of the highest mountains, forcing his way through woods and rivers, breaking through all difficulties, making himself master of all, and still advancing to ruin him, or be withheld from him, no hills too high for him to climb, no trees too strong for him to fell, no waters too deep for him to dry up, as if he had the power of a God, to speak and it is done. (2.) He took to himself the glory of doing these great things, whereas they were all the Lord's doing, v. 25, 26. Sennacherib, in his letter, had appealed to what Hezekiah had heard, v. 11, Thou hast heard what
the kings of Assyria have done; but, in answer to that, he is reminded of what God has done for Israel of old, dryings up the Red-sea, leading them through the wilderness, and planting them in Canaan:—

"What are all thy doings to these? And as for the desolations thou hast made in the earth, and particularly in Judah, thou art but the instrument in God's hand, a mere tool: it is I that have brought it to pass; I gave thee thy power, gave thee thy success, and made thee what thou art; raised thee up to lay waste fenced cities, and so to punish them for their wickedness, and I know their inhabitants were of small power."

What a foolish insolent thing was it for him to exalt himself above God, and against God, upon that which he had done by him and under him. Sennacherib's boasts here are expounded, Isa. 10. 13, 14. By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, &c. and they are answered, v. 15. Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? It is surely absurd for the fly upon the wheel to say, What a dust do I make! Or for the sword in the hand to say, What execution do I do! If God be the principal Agent in all that is done, boasting is for ever excluded.

4. As under the check and rebuke of that God whom he blasphemed. All his motions were, (1.) Under the divine cognizance, v. 27. "I know thy abode, and what thou dost secretly devise and design."

(2.) Under the divine correction, v. 28. "I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips; do, and say, Here I am." 2. "My bridle in thy jaws, thou great Behemoth. I will restrain thee, manage thee, turn thee where I please, send thee home, re infecta—disappointed of thy aim." Note, It is a great comfort to all the church's friends, that God has a hook in the nose, and a bridle in the jaws, of all her enemies; can make even their wrath to serve and praise him, and then restrain the remainder of it; Here shall its further progress be stopped and turned back.

II. Salvation and joy to Hezekiah and his people. This shall be a sign to them of God's favour, and that he is reconciled to them, and his anger is turned away; (Isa. 12. 1.) a wonder in their eyes, (for so a sign sometimes signifies,) a token for good, and an earnest of the further mercy God has in store for them, that a good issue shall be put to their present distress in every respect.

All provisions were scarce and dear; and what should they do for food? The fruits of the earth were devoured by the Assyrian army, Isa. 32. 9, 10, &c. Why, they shall not only dwell in the land, but verily they shall be fed. If God save them, he will not starve them, nor let them die by famine, when they had escaped the sword:—Eat ye this year that which growth of itself, and ye shall find enough of that. Did the Assyrians reap what was not sown? Did they reap what they did not sow. But the next year was the sidabatical year, when the land was to rest, and they must neither sow nor reap. What must they do that year? Why, Jehovah-Jireh, The Lord will provide; God's blessing shall save them seed and labour, and, that year too, the voluntary productions of the earth shall serve to maintain them, to remind them that the earth brought forth before there was a man to till it, Gen. 1. 11. And then, the third year, their husbandry should return into its former channel, and they should sow and reap as they used to do.

2. The country was laid waste, families were broken up and scattered, and all was in confusion; how should it be otherwise, when it was overrun by such an army? As to this, it is promised that the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah, that is, of the country people, shall yet again be planted in their own habitations, upon their own estates, shall take root there, shall increase and grow rich, v. 30. See how their prosperity is described; it is taking root downward, and bearing fruit upward, being well fixed, and well provided for their issue, and then doing good to others. Such is the prosperity of the soul; it is taking root downward by faith in Christ, and then being fruitful in fruits of righteousness.

3. The city was shut up, none went out or came in; but now the remnant in Jerusalem and Zion shall go forth freely, and there shall be none to hinder them, or make them afraid, v. 31. Great destruction had been made both in city and country, but in both there was a remnant that escaped, which typified the saved remnant of Israelites indeed, as appears by comparing Isa. 10. 22, 23. (which speaks of this very event.) with Rom. 9. 27, 28 they shall go forth into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

4. The Assyrians were advancing toward Jerusalem, and would, in a little time, besiege it in form, and it was in great danger of falling into their hands. But it is here promised that the siege they feared should be prevented; though the enemies were now (as it should seem) encamped before the city, yet they were never to come into the city, no, nor so much as to shoot an arrow into it, v. 32, 33. He shall be forced to retire with shame, and, a thousand times, to repent his undertaking. God himself undertakes to defend the city, (v. 34.) and that person, that place, cannot but be safe, which he undertakes the protection of.

5. The honour and truth of God are engaged for the doing of all this. These are great things, but how will they be effected? Why, the seal of the Lord of hosts shall do this, v. 31. He is Lord of hosts, has all creatures at his beck, therefore he is able to do it; he is jealous for Jerusalem with great jealousy; (Zech. 1. 14.) having espoused her a chaste virgin to himself, he will not suffer her to be abused, v. 21. If you have reason to think your own forces unworthy then, all great things should be done for you; but God's own seal will do it." His seal, (1.) For his own honour: (v. 34.) I will do it for my own sake, to make me an everlasting name. God's reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself. (2.) For his own truth: "I will do it for my servant David's sake; not for the sake of his merit, but the promise made to him, and the covenant made with him, those sure mercies of David." Thus all the deliverances of the church are wrought for the sake of Christ, the son of David.

35. And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. 36. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveli. 37. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the
of Armenia. And Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

Sometimes it is long ere prophecies were accomplished, and promises performed; but here the word was no sooner spoken than the work was done.

The army of Assyria was entirely routed. That night which immediately followed the sending of this message to Hezekiah, when the enemy was just set down before the city, and were preparing (as we now say) to open the trenches, that night was the main body of their army slain upon the spot by an angel, v. 35. Hezekiah had not force sufficient to sally out upon them, and attack their camp, nor would God do it by the sword or bow; but he sent his angel, destroying angels, in the midst of the night, to make an assault upon them, which their sentinels, though ever so wakeful, could neither discover nor resist. It was not by the sword of a mighty man, or of a mean man, that is, not of any man at all, but of an angel, that the Assyrian army was to fall, Isa. 31. 8. such an angel as slew the first-born of Egypt. Josephus says it was done by a pestilential disease, which was instant death to them. The number of them was 185,000, and Rab-shakeh, it is likely, among the rest. When the besieged arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpuses, scarcely a living man among them. Some think the 76th Psalm was penned on this occasion, where we read that the stout-hearted were spoiled, and slept their sleep, their last, their long sleep, v. 5. See how great, in power and might, the holy angels are, when one angel, in one night, could make so great a slaughter. See how weak the mightiest of men are before almighty God: who ever hardened himself against him, and prospered? The pride and blasphemy of the king are punished by the destruction of his army. All these lives are sacrificed to God's glory, and Zion's safety. The prophet shows that therefore God suffered this vast rendevous to be made, that they might be gathered as sheaves into the floor; Mic. 4. 12, 13.

II. The king of Assyria was hereby put into the utmost confusion; ashamed to see himself, after all his proud boasts, thus defeated, and disabled to pursue his conquests, and secure what he had, (for this, we may suppose, was the flower of his army,) and continually afraid of falling under the like stroke himself; he departed, and went, and returned. The prophet of the expansion intimates, the great disorder and distraction of mind he was in; (v. 36.) and it was not long before God cut him off too, by the hands of two of his own sons; v. 37. 1. They that did it, were very wicked, to kill their own father, (whom they were bound to protect,) and in the act of his devotion; monstrous villainy! But, 2. God was righteous in it. Justly are the sons suffered to rebel against their father that begat them, when he was in rebellion against the God that made him. They whose children are undutiful to them, ought to consider, whether they have not been so to their Father in heaven. The God of Israel had done enough to convince him that he was the only true God, whom therefore he ought to worship; yet he persists in his idolatry, and seeks to his false god for protection against a God of irresistible power. Justly is his blood mingled with his sacrifices, who will not be convinced by such a plain and dear-bought demonstration of his folly in worshipping idols.

His sons that murdered him were suffered to escape, and no pursuit made after them; his subjects perhaps being weary of the government of so proud a man, and thinking themselves well rid of him, and his sons would be looked upon as the more excusable in what they had done, if it be true (as Bishop Patrick suggests) that he was now voicing to sacrifice them to his god, so that it was for their own preservation that they sacrificed him. His successor was another son, Esar-haddon, who (as it should seem) did not aim, like his father, to enlarge his conquests, but rather to improve them; for he it was that first sent colonies of Assyrians to inhabit the country of Samaria, though it is mentioned before, ch. 17. 24. as appears, Ezra 4. 2. where the Samaritans say it was Esar-haddon that brought them thither.

CHAP. XX.

In this chapter, we have, I. Hezekiah's sickness, and his recovery from that, in answer to prayer, in performance of a promise, in the use of means, and confirmed with a sign, v. 1-11. II. Hezekiah's sin, and his recovery from that, v. 12-19. In both these, Isaiah was God's messenger to him. III. The conclusion of his reign, v. 20, 21.

1. IN those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. 2. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, saying, 3. I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. 4. And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 5. Turn again, and tell Hezekiah, the captain of my people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee; on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. 6. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. 7. And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. 8. And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the Lord the third day? 9. And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing that he hath spoken: Shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees? 10. And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees. 11. And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the Lord; and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

The historian, having showed us blasphemous Sennacherib destroyed in the midst of the prospect
of life, here shows us praying Hezekiah delivered in the midst of the prospects of death, the days of the former shortened, of the latter prolonged.

I. Here is Hezekiah's sickness. In those days, that is, in the same year in which the king of Assyria besieged Jerusalem, for he reigning, in all, 29 years, and surviving this, 13 years, this must be in his 14th year, and so was that, ch. 18. 13. Some think it was at the time that the Assyrian army was besieging the city, or preparing for it, because God promises, v. 6, I will defend the city, which promise was afterwards repeated, when the danger came to be most imminent, ch. 19. 34. Others think it was soon after the defeat of Sennacherib; and then it shows us the uncertainty of all our comforts in this world: Hezekiah, in the midst of his triumphs in the favor of God, and over the forces of his enemies, is seized with sickness, and under the arrest of death. Warning brought him to prepare for death; it is brought by God, and therefore always. The same disease which was killing to the Assyrians, was trying to him; God took it from him, and put it upon his enemies. Neither greatness nor goodness can exempt from sickness, from sore and mortal sicknesses. Hezekiah, lately favoured of heaven above men, yet is sick unto death, in the midst of his day: God promises of his death; he is dying; and perhaps he was the more apprehensive of its being fatal to him, because his father died when he was about his age, 2 or 3 years younger; "In the midst of life we are in death." II. Warning brought him to prepare for death; it is brought by Isaiah, who had been twice, in the former chapter, a messenger of good tidings to him; who here expect to receive from God's prophets any other than what they have received from the Lord, and we must welcome that, be it pleasing or unpleasing; he tells him, 1. That his disease was mortal, and, if he were not recovered by a miracle of mercy, would be certainly fatal; Thou shalt die, and not live. 2. That therefore he must, with all speed, get ready for death; this we should feel lightly concerned to do, when we are in health, but are most loudly called to do, when we come to be sick. Set the heart in order by renewed acts of repentance, and faith, and resignation to God, with cheerful farewells to this world, and welcomes to another; and if it be not done before, (which is the best and wisest course,) set the house in order, make thy will, settle thy estate, put thine affairs in the best posture thou canst, for the ease of those that shall come after thee. Isaiah speaks not to Hezekiah, but to David, being a prophet, had authority to appoint what he should reign after him, but other kings did not pretend to bequeath their crowns as part of their goods and chattels. III. His prayer, hereupon; He prayed unto the Lord, v. 2. Is any sick? Let him be prayed for, let him be prayed with, and let him pray. Hezekiah's prayer is found in the foregoing chapter, that it was not in vain to wait upon God, but that the prayers of faith bring in answers of peace; therefore will he call upon God as long as he lives. Happy returns of prayer are engagements and encouragements to continue instant in prayer; he had now received the sentence of death within himself, and, 1. If it were reversible, it must be reversed by prayer. When God purposes mercy, he will, for this, be insinuated; Ezek. 33. 37. We have not, if we ask not, or ask amiss. 2. If not reversible, let us prepare for it with the best preparations for death, because by it we fetch in strength and grace from God to enable us to finish well. Observe, (1.) The circumstances of this prayer. [1.] He turned his face to the wall, probably, as he lay in his bed; this he did, perhaps, for privacy; he could not retire to his closet as he used to do, but he retired as well as he could, turned from the company that were about him, to converse with God. When we cannot be so private as we would be, in our devotion, nor perform them with the usual outward expressions of reverence and solemnity, yet we must not therefore omit them, but compose ourselves to them as well as we can; or, as some think, he turned his face toward the temple, to show how willingly he would have come up likewise to pray this prayer, (as he did, ch. 19. 1, 14.) if he had been able, and remembering what encouragements were given to all the prayers that should be made in or toward that house. Christ is our Temple; to him we must have an eye in all our prayers, for no man, no service, comes to the Father but by him. [2.] He wept sore; some gather from hence that he was unwilling to die; it is in the nature of man to have some dread of the separation of soul and body; yet it was not strange, if the Old Testament saints, to whom another world was but darkly revealed, were not so willing to leave this as St. Paul and other New Testament saints were; there was also something peculiar in Hezekiah's case, he was now in the midst of his usefulness, had begun a good work of reformation, which he feared, if he should die, through the weakness of others, would fall to the ground; if this was before the defeat of the Assyrians, as some think, he might therefore be loath to die, because his kingdom was in imminent danger of being ruined; however, it does not appear that he had now any son, Manasseh, that succeeded him, was not born till three years after, and if he die childless, both the peace of the kingdom, and the promise to David, would be in danger; but perhaps there were other reasons why he was loth to die, such as his affection to his kingdom, and made supplication, and our blessed Saviour, though most willing to die, yet offered up strong cries and tears, to him whom he knew to be able to save him, Heb. 5. 7. Let Hezekiah's prayer interpret his tears, and in that we find nothing that intimates he had been under any of that fear of death, which has either bondage or torment.

III. The prayer Petition, "Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth; and either spare me to live, that I may continue thus to walk, or, if my work be done, receive me to that glory which thou hast prepared for those that have thus walked." Observe, [1.] The description of Hezekiah's piety; he had had his conversations in the world with right intentions, "I have walked before thee, as under thine eye, and with thine eye ever toward thee; find a right principle, in truth, and with an upright heart, and by a right rule, I have done that which is good in thy sight." [2.] The comfort he now had in reflection upon it; it made his sick bed easy. Note, The testimony of conscience for us, that we have walked with God in our integrity, will be much our support and rejicicing when we come to look death in the face, 2 Cor. 1. 7. [3.] The humble mention he makes of it in God, Lord, remember it now; not as God is pleased to be put in mind of any thing by us, he is greater than our hearts, and knows all things; or, as if the reward were of debt, and might be demanded as due; it is Christ's righteousness only that is the purchase of mercy and grace; but our own sincerity may be pleaded as the condition of the covenant which God has wrought in us; "It is the work of thine own hands, Lord, own it," Hezekiah does not pray, "Lord spare me;" or, "Lord, take me, God's will be done;" but, Lord, remember me, whether I live or die, let me be thine. IV. The answer which God immediately gave to this prayer of Hezekiah's; the prophet was got but
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to the middle court, when he was sent back with another message to Hezekiah, (v. 4, 5.) to tell him that he should recover: not that there is with God yea or nay, or that he ever says and assuys; but, upon Hezekiah’s prayer, which he foresaw, and which his Spirit inclined him to, God did that for him, which otherwise he would not have done. God here calls Hezekiah the captain of his people, to intimate that he would send more of his people to take, because, in this time of war, they could ill spare such a captain: he calls himself the God of David, to intimate that he would preserve him, out of a regard to the covenant made with David, and the promise that he would always ordain a lamp for him.

In this answer, God honours his prayers by the notice he takes of them, and the reference he has to them in this message, I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears; prayers that have much life and affection in them, are, in a special manner, pleasing to God. 2. God exceeds his prayers; he only begged that God would remember his integrity, but God here promises, (1.) To recover him from his illness, I will heal thee: diseases are his servants; as they go whither he sends them, so they come when he sends them, Matth. 8, 9, 9. I am the Lord that healeth thee, Exod. 15:26. God has such a regard of health, that, on the third day, he should go up to the house of the Lord, to return thanks; God knew Hezekiah’s heart, how dearly he loved the habitation of God’s house, and the place where his honour dwelt, and that as soon as he was well, he would go to attend on public ordinances; thitherward he turned his face when he was sick, and thitherward he would turn his feet when he was recovered; and therefore, because this thing would please him, when he promised him this, Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; the man whom Christ healed, was, soon after, found in the temple, John 5. 14. (3.) To add 15 years to his life would not bring him to be an old man, it would reach but to 54 or 55: yet that was longer than he had lately expected to live. His lease was renewed, which he thought was expiring; we have not the instance of any other, that was told beforehand just as all should have been. It was not done, but made a good use of it, but God has wisely kept us at uncertainties, that we may be always ready. (4.) To deliver Jerusalem from the king of Assyria, v. 6. This was the thing which Hezekiah’s heart was upon as much as his own recovery, and therefore the promise of this is here repeated; if this was after the raising of the siege, yet there was cause to fear Sennacherib’s rallying again; No, says God, I will defend this city.

V. The means which were to be used for his recovery, v. 7. Isaiah was his physician; he ordered an outward application, a very cheap and common thing, Lay a lump of figs to the boil, to ripen it, and bring it to a head, that the matter of the disease may be discharged that way; this might contribute something to the cure, and yet, considering to what a height the disease was come, and how sudden it was checked, the cure was no less than miraculous. Note, 1. It is our duty, when we are sick, to make use of such means as are proper to help nature, else we do not trust God, but tempt him. 2. Plain and ordinary medicines must not be despised, for many such God has graciously made serviceable to man, in consideration of the poor. 3. What God appoints, he will succeed and make effectual.

VI. The signs which were given the encouragement of his faith. 1. He begged it; not in any distrust of the power or promise of God, or as if he staggered at that, but because he looked upon the things promised to be very great things, and worthy to be so confirmed, and because it had been usual with God thus to glorify himself, and favour his people; and he remembered how much God was displeased with his father for refusing to ask a sign, Isa. 7. 10-12. Observe, Hezekiah asked, What is the sign, not that I shall go up to the thrones of judgment, or up to the gate, but up to the house of the Lord; therefore he desired to recover, that he might glorify God in the gates of the daughter of Zion. It is not worth while to live for any other purpose than to serve God. 2. It was left to his choice, whether the sun should go back or go forward, for it was equal to Omniscience, and it would be the more likely to confirm his faith, if he chose that which he thought the more difficult of the two; perhaps, to this, that of this prophet may refer, Isa. 45. 11, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. It is supposed that the degrees were half hours, and that it was just noon when the proposal was made, and the question is, Shall the sun go back to its place at seven in the morning, or forward to its place at five in the evening? 3. He humbly desired the sun might go back 10 degrees, because, though either would be a great miracle, yet, it being the natural course of the sun to go forward, its going back would seem more strange, and it would be more significant of Hezekiah’s returning to the days of his youth, Job 33. 25. and the lengthening out of the days of his life. It was accordingly done, upon the prayer of Isaiah, (v. 11.) he cried unto the Lord by special warrant and direction, and God brought the sun back 10 degrees, which appeared to Hezekiah, (for the sign was intended for him,) by the going back of the shadow upon the dial of Ahaz, which, it is likely, he could see through his chamber window: and the same was observed upon all other dials, even in Byblos, 2, Chronicles. 21. Whether this retrograde motion of the sun was gradual, or per saltum—suddenly; whether it went back at the same pace that it used to go forward, which would make the day 10 hours longer than usual; or whether it darted back on a sudden, and, after continuing a little while, was restored again to its usual pace, so that no change was made in the state of the heavenly bodies, (as the learned bishop Burnet) supposes; it is probable this work of wonder shows the power of God in heaven as well as on earth, the great notice he takes of prayer, and the great favour he bears to his chosen. The most plausible idolatry of the heathen was theirs: that worshipped the sun, yet that was hereby convicted of the most egregious folly and absurdity, for by this it appeared that their god was under the check of the God of Israel. Dr. Lightfoot suggests that the 15 songs of degrees, Ps. 120, 8c. might, perhaps, be so called, because selected by Hezekiah to be sung to his stringed instrument, Isa. 38. 20. in remembrance of the degrees on the dial which the sun went back, and the 15 years added to his life; and he observes how much of these psalms is applicable to Jerusalem’s distress and deliverance, and Hezekiah’s sickness and recovery.

12. At that time Berodach-baladan, the son of Baladan king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. 13. And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house
nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not. 14. Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon. 15. And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them. 16. And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord. 17. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried unto Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. 18. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, whom thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. 19. Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days? 20. And of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? 21. And Hezekiah slept with his fathers: and Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

Here is,

I. An embassy sent to Hezekiah by the king of Babylon, to congratulate him on his recovery, v. 12. The kings of Babylon had hitherto been only deputies and tributaries to the kings of Assyria, and Nineveh was the royal city: we find Babylon subject to the king of Assyria, ch. 17. 24. But this king of Babylon began to set up for himself, and, by degrees, things were so changed, that Assyria became subject to the kings of Babylon. This king of Babylon sent to compliment Hezekiah, and ingratiate himself with him upon a double account,

1. Upon the account of religion. The Babyloni-ans worshipped the sun, and, perceiving what honour their god had done to Hezekiah, in going back for his sake, they thought themselves obliged to do honour to him likewise. It is good having those our friends, whom we perceive to be the favourites of Heaven. 2. Upon the account of civil interest. If the king of Babylon was now meditating a revolt from the king of Assyria, it was policy to get Hezekiah into his interest, in answer to whose prayers, and for whose protection, Heaven had given that fatal blow to the king of Assyria. He found himself obliged to Hezekiah, and his God, for the weakening of the Assyrian forces, and had reason to think he could not have a more powerful and valuable ally, than one that had so good an interest in the upper world. He therefore made his court to him with all possible respect, by ambassadors, letters, and a present.

II. The kind entertainment Hezekiah gave to these ambassadors, v. 13. It was his duty to be civil to them, and receive them with the respect due to ambassadors; but he exceeded, and did it to a fault. 1. He was too fond of them. He hearten ed unto them. Though they were idolaters, yet he became intimate with them, was forward to come into a confederacy with the king their master, and granted them all they came for. He was more open and free than he should have been, and stood not so much upon his guard. What reason had he that they were in alliance with him, when they were at an alliance with a heathen prince, or to value himself at all upon his respectful notice? What honour could this embassy add to one whom God had so highly favoured, that he should please himself so much with it? 2. He was too fond of showing them his palace, his treasures, and his magazines, that they might see, and might report to their master, what a great king he was, and how well worthy of the honour their master did him. It is not said that he showed them the temple, the book of the law, and the manner of his worship, that he might proselyte them to the true religion, which he had now a fair opportunity of doing; but, in compliment to them, lest that should affront them, he waved that, and showed them the rich furniture of his closet, that house of his precious things, the wealth he had heaped up since the king of Assyria had emptied his house of all his silver, gold, and riches. All the valuable things he had, he showed them, either himself or by his officers. And what harm was there in this? What is more common, and (as we think) more innocently, done, than to show strangers the riches and rarities of a country? To show our friends our houses and their furniture, our gardens, stables, and libraries? But if we do this in the pride of our hearts, as Hezekiah did, to gain applause from men, and not giving praise to God, it turns to our disadvantage.

III. The examination of Hezekiah concerning this matter, v. 14, 15. Isaiah, who had often been his comforter, is now his reprover. The blessed Spirit is both, John 16. 7, 8. Ministers must be both, as there is occasion. Isaiah spake in God’s name, and therefore called him to account as one having authority: “Who are these? Whence come they? What have they to do with your business? ...” Hezekiah had only submitted to their inter- nation, (did not ask him, “Why should you concern yourself, and question me about this affair?”) but made an ingenuous confession, There is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them. Why then did he not bring them to Isaiah, and show him to them, who was, without doubt, the best treasure he had in his dominions, and who, by his prayers and prophecies, had been instrumental in all those wonders, which these ambassadors came to inquire into? I hope Hezekiah had the same value for Isaiah now, that he had in his distress; but it had become him to show it, by bringing these ambassadors to him in the first place, which might have prevented the false step he took.

IV. The sentence passed upon him for his pride and vanity, and the true great reliash had of true things of the world, after that intimate acquaintance he had so lately been admitted into with divine things. The sentence is, (v. 17, 18.) 1. That the treasures he was so proud of, should hereafter become a prey, and his family should be robbed of them all. It is just with God, to take that from us, which we make the matter of our pride, and in which we put our confidence. 2. That the king of Babylon, he was so fond of, and so great, should be the enemy that should make a prey of them. Not that it was for this sin, that that judgment should be brought upon them: the sins of Manasseh, his idolatries and murders, were the cause of that calamity; but it is now foretold to Hezekiah, to
II. KINGS, XXI.

In this chapter, we have a short but sad account of the reigns of two of the kings of Judah, Manasseh and Amon 1. Concerning Manasseh, all the accounts have of him here, is, 1. That he devoted himself to sin, to all manner of wickedness, idolatry and murder, v. 1. &c. and 9. and 16. 2. That therefore God devoted him, and Jerusalem for his sake, to ruin, v. 10. &c. In the book of Chronicles, we have an account of his troubles, and his repentance. II. Concerning Amon we are only told that he lived in sin, v. 19. &c. Died quickly by the sword, and left good Josiah his successor, v. 22. &c. By these two sons Jerusalem was much debauched, and much weakened, and so hastened apace toward its destruction, which slumbered not.

1. MANASSEH was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hephzi-bah. 2. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. 3. For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. 4. And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name. 5. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. 6. And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. 7. And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: 8. Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them. 9. But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel.

How delightful were our meditations on the last reign! How many pleasing views had we of Zion in its glory, that is, in its purity and in its triumphs, of the king in his beauty! For the reference (Isa. 33. 17.) is to Hezekiah, and as it follows there, v. 20. Jerusalem was a quiet habitation, because a city of righteousness, Isa. 1. 26. But now we have melancholy work upon our hands, unpleasant ground to travel, and cannot but drive heavily.
gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed!

The beauty of Jerusalem is stained, and all her glory, all her joy, sunk and gone. These verses give the account of this reign, as make it, in all respects, the reverse of the last, and, in a manner, the ruin of it.

I. Manasseh began young. He was but 12 years old when he began to reign, (v. 1.) born when his father was about 42 years old, three years after his sickness. If he had sons before, either they were dead, or set by as promising. As yet, they knew of nothing bad in him, and they hoped he would prove good; but he proved very bad, as it was the custom of kings that their coming to the crown so young might help to make it so, which yet will by no means excuse him, for his grandson Josiah came to it younger than he, and yet acted well. But being young, 1. He was puffed up with his honour, and proud of it; and, thinking himself very wise, because he was very great, valued himself upon his undoing what his father had done. It is too common for novices to be lifted up with pride, and so to fall into the condemnation of the Devil. 2. He was easily wrought upon and drawn aside by seducers, that lay in wait to deceive. They that were enemies to Hezekiah's reformation, and retained an affection for the old idolatries, flattered him, and so gained his ear, and used his power at their pleasure. Many have been undone by coming too soon to their honours and offices.

II. He reigned long, longest of any of the kings of Judah, 55 years. This was the only very bad reign that was a long one; Joram's was but 6 years, and Ahaz's 16; as for Manasseh's, we hope that in the beginning of his reign, for some time, affairs continued to move in the course that his father left them in; and that in the latter end of his reign, after his repentance, religion got head again; and, no doubt, both of them might have been much better, if God had his remnant that kept their integrity. Though he reigned long, yet, some of this time, he was a prisoner in Babylon, which may well be looked upon as a drawback from these years, though they are reckoned in the number, because then he repented, and began to reform.

III. He reigned very ill. 1. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; and which, having done, would have been known to all, knew was so; (v. 2.) he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord, as if on purpose to provoke him to anger, v. 6. 2. He did after the abominations of the heathen, (v. 2.) and as did Ahab, (v. 3.) not taking warning by the destruction both of the nations of Canaan, and the house of Ahab, for their idolatry; nay, (v. 9.) he did more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed. When the holy seed of the people, are commonly worse than the worst of the profane.

More particularly, (1.) He rebuilt the high places which his father had destroyed, v. 3. Thus did he trample upon the dust, and affront the memory, of his worthy father, though he knew how much he was favoured of God, and honoured of men. He concurred, it is probable, with Rab-shakeh's sentiments, (ch. 19. 22.) that Hezekiah had done ill in destroying the high places, and pretended the honour of God, and the edification and convenience of the people, in rebuilding them. This he began with, but proceeded to that which was much worse: for, (2.) He set up other gods, Baal, and Ashtaroth, (which we translate a grove,) and all the host of heaven, the sun and moon, the other planets, and the constellations; these he worshipped and served, (v. 5.) gave their names to the images he made, and then did homage to them, and prayed for help from them. To these he built altars, (v. 5.) and offered sacrifices, no doubt, on these altars. (5.) He made his son pass through the fire, by which he dedicated him a votary to Moloch, in contempt of the seal of circumcision by which he had been dedicated to God. Did God turn away, and, in contempt both of Urim and prophecy, he used enchantments and dealt with familiar spirits, (v. 6.) like Saul. Conjurers and fortune-tellers, who pretended, by the stars or the clouds, lucky and unlucky days, good and bad omens, the flight of birds, or the entrails of beasts, to foretell things to come, were great men with him, his intimates, his confidants; their arts pleased his fancy, and gained his belief, and his counsels were under their direction. (5.) We find afterward, (v. 16.) that he shed innocent blood very much in gratification of his own passion and revenge; some, perhaps, were secretly murdered, others taken off by colour of law. Probably, much of the blood he shed was their's that opposed idolatry, and witnessed against it, that would not bow the knee to Baal. The blood of the prophets is, in a particular manner, charged upon Jerusalem, and it is probable that he put to death many of them. The tradition of the Jews is, that he caused the prophet Isaiah to be sawn asunder; and many think the apostle refers to that, Heb. 11. 57. where he speaks of those that had so suffered.

Three things are here mentioned as aggravations of Manasseh's idolatry. [1.] That he set up his images and altars in the house of the Lord, (v. 4.) in the two courts of the temple, the house of which God had said to Solomon, Here will I put my name, v. 7. Thus he defied God to his face, and impudently affronted him with his rivals immediately under his eye, as one that was neither afraid of God's wrath, nor ashamed of his own folly and wickedness. Thus he desecrated what had been consecrated to God, and did, in effect, turn God out of his own house, and put the rebels in possession of it. 2. That the fainthearted worshipers of God came to the place he had appointed for the performance of their duty to him, they found, to their great grief and terror, other gods ready to receive their offerings. God had said that here he would record his name, here he would put it for ever, and here it was, accordingly, preserved, while the idolatrous altars were kept at a distance: but Manasseh, by bringing them into God's house, did what his counsels were under the direction of, and make the name of the God of Israel to be no more in remembrance. [2.] That hereby he put a great slight upon the word of God, and his covenant with Israel. Observe the favour he had showed to that people, in putting his name among them—the kindness he intended them, never to make them move out of that good land—and the reasonableness of his expectations from them, only if they would observe to do according to all that the Lord commanded them, v. 7, 8. Upon these good terms did Israel stand with God, and had as fair a prospect of being happy as any people could have: but they heartened not, v. 9. They would not be kept close to God, either by his precepts or by his promises, both were cast behind their back. [3.] That hereby he seduced the people of God, debauched them, and drew them into the worship of the nations, and into sin, (v. 11.) as Jeroboam had made Israel to sin. His very example was enough to corrupt the generality of unthinking people, who would do as their king did, right or wrong. All that aimed at pre- ferment, would do as the court did; and others thought it safest to comply, for fear of making their king their enemy. Thus, one way or other, the holy city became a harlot, and Manasseh made her so. These will have a great deal to answer for, that not only are wicked themselves, but help to make others so.
10. And the Lord spake by his servants the prophets, saying, 11. Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols; 12. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. 13. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down. 14. And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies; 15. Because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day. 16. Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. 17. Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? 18. And Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

Here is the doom of Judah and Jerusalem read, and it is a heavy doom. The prophets were sent, in the first place, to teach them the knowledge of God, to remind them of their duty, and direct them in it: if they succeeded not in that, their next work was to reprove them for their sins, and to set them in view before them, that they might repent and reform, and return to their duty: if in this they prevailed not, but sinners went on forwardly, their next work was to foretell the judgments of God, that the terror of them might awaken those to repentance, who would not be made sensible of the obligations of his love, or else that the execution of them, in their season, might be a demonstration of the divine mission of the prophets that foretold them. The prophets were deputed judges to those that would not hear and receive them as teachers.

We have here,

I. A recital of the crime: the impiety is read, upon which the judgment is grounded, v. 11. Manasseh has done wickedly himself, though he knew better things, has even justified the Amorites, whose copy he wrote after, by outdoing them in impiety, and debauched the people of God, whom he has taught to sin, and forced to sin; and beside that, (though that was bad enough,) he has filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, (v. 16.) has multiplied his murders in every corner of the city, and filled the measure of Jerusalem’s blood-guiltiness (Matth. 23. 32.) up to the brim, and all this, against the crown and dignity of the King of kings, the peace of his kingdom, and the statutes in these cases made and provided.

II. A prediction of the judgment God would bring upon them for this. They have done that which was evil, and therefore I am bringing evil upon them; (v. 12.) it will come, and it is not far off. The judgment should be, 1. Very terrible and astounding, the very report of it should make men’s ears to tingle, (v. 12.) that is, their hearts to tremble. It shall make a great awe upon the world, and occasion many speculations. 2. It should be copied out (as the sins of Jerusalem had been) from Samaria, and the house of Ahab, v. 13. When God lays righteousness to the line, it shall be the line of Samaria, measuring out to Jerusalem that which had been the lot of Samaria; when he lays judgment to the plummet, it shall be the plummet of the house of Ahab, marking out for the same ruin to which that wicked and despicable was devoted. See Isa. 28. 17. Note, Those who resemble and imitate others in their sins, must expect to fare as they fared. 3. That it should be an utter destruction: I will wipe it as a man wipeth a dish. This intimates, (1.) That every thing should be put into disorder, and their state subverted; they should be turned upside down, and all their foundations put out of course. (2.) That the city should be emptied of its inhabitants, which had been as a dish is emptied when it is wiped: they shall all be carried captive, the land shall enjoy her sabbaths, and be laid by as a dish when it is wiped. See the comparison of the boiled pot, not much unlike this, Ezek. 24. 1. 14. (3.) That yet this should be in order to the purifying, not the destroying of Jerusalem. The dish shall not be dropped, not broken to pieces, or melted down, but only wiped. This shall be done by those, the taking away of the sinners first, and then of the sin. 4. That therefore they should be destroyed, because they should be desolated; (v. 14.) I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance. Justly are those that forsake God, forsaken of him; nor does he ever leave any, till they have first left him: but when God has forsaken a people, their defence is departed, and they become a prey, an easy prey, to all their enemies. Sin is spoken of here as the alpha and omega of their miseries. (1.) Old guilt came in remembrance, as that which began to fill the measure; (v. 15.) They have provoked me to anger from their conception and birth as a people, since the day their fathers came out of Egypt. The men of this generation, treading in their fathers’ steps, are justly reckoned with for their fathers’ sins. (2.) The guilt of blood was that which filled the measure, v. 16. Nothing has a louder cry, nor brings a sorcer vengeance, than that. This is all we have here of Manasseh; he stands convicted and condemned; but we hope in the book of Chronicles to hear of his repentance, and acceptance with God. Mean time, we must be content, in this place, to have only one intimation of his repentance, (for so we are willing to take it.) He was buried, it is likely by his own order, in the garden of his own house; (v. 18.) for, being truly humbled for his sins, he judged himself no more worthy to be called a son, a son of David, and therefore not worthy to have even his dead body buried in the sepultures of his fathers. True penitents take shame to themselves, not honour; yet, having lost the credit of an innocent, the credit of a penitent was the next best; he was capable of; and better it is, and more honourable, for a sinner to die repenting, and be buried in a garden, than to die impenitent, and be buried in the abbey.

19. Amon was twenty and two years old.
when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Meshullemeth, the daughter of Haruz of Jothab. 20. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh did. 21. And he walked in all the ways that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them: 22. And he forsook the Lord God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of the Lord. 23. And the servants of Amon conspired against him, and slew the king in his own house. 24. And the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead. 25. Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? 26. And he was buried in his sepulchre, in the garden of Uzza: and Josiah his son reigned in his stead.

Here is a short account of the short and inglorious reign of Amon, the son of Manasseh. Whether Manasseh, in his blind and brutish zeal for his idols, had sacrificed his other sons; or whether, having been dedicated to his idols, they were refused by the people, so it was, that his successor was a son not born till he was 45 years old. And of him we are here told,

1. That his reign was very wicked. He forsook the God of his fathers, v. 22, disobeyed the commands given to his fathers, and disregarded the covenant made with his fathers, and walked not in the way of the Lord, but in all the ways which his father walked in, v. 20, 21. He trod in the steps of his father's idolatry, and revived that which he, in the latter end of his days, had put down. Note, Those who set bad examples, though they may repent themselves, yet cannot be sure that those whom they have drawn into sin by their example, will repent, it is often otherwise.

2. That his end was very tragical. He having rebelled against God, his own servants conspired against him, and slew him; probably, upon some personal disgust, when he had reigned but 2 years, v. 23. His servants, who should have guarded him, murdered him; his own house that should have been his castle of defence, was the place of his execution. He had profaned God's house with his idols, and now God suffered his own house to be polluted with his blood. How unrighteous sower they were that did it, God was righteous who suffered it to be done.

Two things the people of the land did, by their representatives, hereupon. (1.) They did justice on the traitors that had slain the king, and put them to death; for though he was a bad king, he was their king, and it was a part of their allegiance to him, to perform those tender duties, and from having any hand in the crime, and did what was incumbent on them to deter others from the like villainous practices. (2.) They did a kindness to themselves, in making Josiah his son king in his stead, whom probably, the conspirators had a design to put by: but the people stood by him, and settled him in the throne; encouraged, it may be, by the indications he gave, even in his early days, of a good disposition. Now they made a happy change from one of the worst, to one of the best, of all the kings of Judah. "Once more," says God, "they shall be tried with a reformation; and if that succeed, well; if not, then after that, I will cut them down." Amon was buried in the same garden where his father was, v. 26. If his father put himself under that humiliation, the people will put him under it.

CHAP. XXII.

This chapter begins the story of the reign of good king Josiah, whose goodness shines the brighter, because it came just after so much wickedness, which he had the honour to reform; and just before so great a destruction, which yet he had not the honour to prevent. Here, after his general character, v. 1-2, we have a particular account of the respect he paid, 1. To God's house, which he repaired, v. 3-7. 11. To God's book, which he was much affected with the reading of, v. 8-11. 11. To God's messengers, whom he, therefore, consulted, v. 12, 14. And by whom he received from God, an answer, threatening Jerusalem's destruction, 15., 17., but promising favour to him, v. 18., 20. Upon which, he set about that glorious work of reformation, which we have an account of in the next chapter.

1. Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscastle. 2. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. 3. And it came to pass, in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam the scribe to the house of the Lord, saying, 4. Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the Lord, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people: 5. And let them deliver it into the hand of the doers of the work, that have the oversight of the house of the Lord: and let them give it to the doers of the work which is in the house of the Lord, to repair the breaches of the house. 6. Unto carpenters, and builders, and masons, and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. 7. Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand, because they dealt faithfully. 8. And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. 9. And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the book word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the Lord. 10. And Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.
Concerning Josiah we are here told,
1. That he was very young, when he began to reign, v. 1. but eight years old. Solomon says, 
Woe unto thee, O land, when thy king is a child; but happily art thou, O land, when thy king is such a child. Our English Israel had once a king that was such a child, Edward VI. Josiah, being young, had not received any bad impressions from the example of evil land governors, but soon saw their errors, and God gave him grace to take warning by them. See Ezek. 18. 14, &c.

II. That he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, v. 2. See the sovereignty of divine grace: the father passed by and left to perish in his sin; the son a chosen vessel. See the triumphs of that grace; Josiah born of a wicked father; no good education, nor good example given him, but many which is, even mentioned to him, the east in his father's steps, and few that gave him any good counsel; and yet the grace of God makes him an eminent saint, cuts him off from the wild olive, and grafts him into the good olive, Rom. 1. 24. Nothing is too hard for that grace to do. He walked in a good way, and turned not aside (as some of his predecessors had done who began well) to the right hand or to the left: there are such as both hands, but none in the right way, he fell not either into superstition or profaneness.

III. That he took care for the repair of the temple. This he did in the 18th year of his reign, v. 3. compare 2 Chron. 34. 8. He began much sooner to seek the Lord, as appears, 2 Chron. 34. 3. but it is to be feared, the work of reformation went slowly on, and met with much opposition, so that he could not effect what he desired and designed, till his predecessor was carried away by corruption. The consumption of the time we unavoidably lost in our minority should quicken us, when we come to years, to act with so much the more vigour in the service of God. Having begun late, we had need work hard; he sent Shaphan, the secretary of state, to Hilkiah the High Priest, to take an account of the money that was collected for this use by the door-keepers, v. 4. for, it seems, they took much the same way of raising it as was designed that Josiah took, ch. 12. 9. When people gave by a little at a time, the burthen was insensible, and the contribution being voluntary, it was not complained of. This money, so collected, he ordered him to lay out for the repair of the temple, v. 5, 6. And now, it seems, the workmen (as in the days of Josiah) acquitted themselves so well, that there was no reckoning made with them, v. 7. which, as I have since mentioned to them, was the triumph of the workmen, that they gained such a reputation for honesty, but whether to the praise of those that employed them I know not; a man should count money, (we say,) after his own father; it had not been amiss to have reckoned with the workmen, that others also might be satisfied of their honesty.

IV. That in the repairing of the temple, the book of the law was happily found and brought to the king; the thing most needful, if you have the original manuscript, of the five books of Moses, under his own hand; others think it was only an ancient and authentic copy; most likely it was that which, by the command of Moses, was laid up in the most holy place, Deut. 31. 24, &c.

1. It seems, this book of the law was lost and missing; either it was carelessly mislaid and neglected, was thrown away, (as some think was the case in our common Bibles,) by those that knew not the value of it, and forgotten there; or, it was maliciously concealed by some of the idolatrous kings, or their agents, who were restrained by the providence of God, or their own consciences, from burning and destroying it, but buried it, in hopes it would never see the light again; or, (as some think,) it was carefully laid up by some of his friends, lest it should fall into the hands of its enemies: whoever were the instruments of its preservation, we ought to acknowledge the hand of God in it; if this was the only authentic copy of the Pentateuch then in being, which had (as I may say) so narrow a turn for its life, and was so near perishing, I wonder the hearts of all good people did not tremble for that sacred treasure, as Eli's for the ark of God, and surely, at least, very few have so fully seen and owned the care and hand of God, upon our knees, for that happy providence by which Hilkiah had found this book at this time, found it when he sought it not, Isa. 65. 1. If the holy scriptures had not been of God, they had not been in being at this day; God's care of the Bible, is a plain indication of his interest in it.

2. Whether this was the only authentic copy in being or no, it seems, the things contained in it were new to the king himself and to the high priest, for the king, upon the reading of it, rent his clothes; we have reason to think the command for the king's writing a copy of the law, and that for the public reading of the law every 7th year, Deut. 17. 18. 31. 10. 11. had neither of them been observed of a long time, and when the instituted means of keeping up religion are neglected, religion itself will soon go to decay; yet on the other hand, the king's own interest was to the utmost the determinant what rule Josiah went by in doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and how the priest and people kept up the rites of their religion: I am apt to think that the people generally took up with abstracts of the law, like our abridgments of the statutes, which the priests to save themselves the trouble of writing, and the people of reading, the book at large, had furnished them with; a sort of natural, as it were, according to the customs and observances of their religion, but leaving out what they thought fit, and particularly the promises and threatenings, Lev. 26. and Deut. 28. &c. for I observe, that those were the portions of the law which Josiah was so much affected with, v. 13. for those were new to him; no summaries, extracts, or collections, out of the Bible, (though they may have their use,) can be effectual to convey and preserve the knowledge and his soul, like the Bible itself; it was no marvel that the people were so corrupt, when the book of the law was such a scarce thing among them; where that vision is not, the people perish; they that endeavoured to debase them, no doubt, used all the arts they could to get that book out of their hands; the Church of Rome could not keep up the use of images, but by forbidding the use of the scripture.

3. It was a great instance of God's favour, and a token for good to Josiah and his people, that the book of the law was thus seasonably brought to light, to direct and quicken that blessed reformation which Josiah had begun; it is a sign that God has mercy in store for a people, when he magnifies his law among them, and makes that honourable, and furnishes them with means for the increase of it; the translation of the difficult passages into vulgar tongues, was the glory, strength, and joy of the Reformation from Popery. It is observable, that they were about a good work, repairing the temple, when they found the book of the law; they that do their duty, according to their knowledge, shall have their knowledge increased; to him that has, shall be given; the book of the law was an ornament, and a defence for all their care and cost about the repair of the temple.
fore him; he walks in the way of David his father, and if he be like him, he will love the book of the law, and bid that welcome, that will be his delight and his counselor.

11. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. 12. And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying, 13. Go ye, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us. 14. So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her. 15. And she said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, 16. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof; even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: 17. Because they have forsaken me, and have burnt incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. 18. But to the king of Judah, which sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard; 19. Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord. 20. Behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

We hear no more of the repairing of the temple; no doubt, that good work went on well, but the book of the law that was found in it, occupies us now, and well it may: it is not laid up in the king's cabinet as a piece of antiquity, a rarity to be admired, but it is read before the king: those put the truest honour upon their Bibles, that study them, and converse with them, daily, feed on that bread, and walk by that light; men of honour and business must look upon an acquaintance with God's word to be their best business and honour.

Now here we have,

I. The impressions which the reading of the law made upon Josiah; he rent his clothes, as one ashamed of the sin of his people, and afraid of the wrath of God; he had long thought the case of his kingdom bad, by reason of the idolatries and impurities that had been found among them, but he never thought it so bad as he perceived it to be, by the book of the law now read to him; the rending of his clothes signified the rending of his heart for the dishonour done to God, and the ruin he saw coming upon his people.

II. The application he made to God, hereupon, Go, inquire of the Lord for me, v. 13. Inquire, 1. What we shall do; what course we shall take to turn away God's wrath, and prevent the judgments which our sins have deserved. Convictions of sin and wrath should put us upon this inquiry, What shall we do to be saved? Wherein shall we come before the Lord? If ye will thus inquire, inquire quickly, before it be too late. 2. "What we may expect, and must provide for." He acknowledges, Our fathers have not hearkened to the words of this book; if this be the rule of right, certainly our fathers have been much in the wrong. Now the commandment of God is an abominable sin; in the glass of the law, he saw the sins of his people more numerous and more heinous than he had before seen them, and more exceeding sinful. He infers hence certainly, Great is the wrath that is kindled against us; if this be the word of God, as, no doubt, it is, and he will be true to his word, as, no doubt, he will be, we are all undone, I never thought the threatenings of the law so severe, and the severity of the covenant so terrible, as now I find them to be; it is time to look about us, if these be in force against us. Note, Those who are truly apprehensive of the weight of God's wrath, cannot but be very solicitous to obtain his favour, and inquisitive how they may make their peace with him; magistrates should inquire for their people, and study how to prevent the judgments of God that they see hanging over them. 3. In his inquiry he was sent by the king. By some of his great men, who are named v. 12, and again, v. 14. Thus he put an honour upon the oracle, by employing those of the first rank to attend it. (2.) To Huldah the prophetess, v. 14. The spirit of prophecy, that inestimable treasure, was sometimes put not only into earthen vessels, but into the weaker vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God. Miriam had helped to lead Israel out of Egypt, Mic. viii. 15. And Huldah and Zephaniah were gathered into the number of the prophets who prophesied at this time, yet the king's messengers made Huldah their oracle, probably because her husband having a place at court, (for he was keeper of the wardrobe,) they had had more and longer acquaintance with her; and greater assurances of her commission than of any other; they had, it is likely, consulted her upon other occasions, and had found that the word of God in her mouth was truth; she was near, for she dwelt at Jerusalem, in a place called Mishneh, the second rank of buildings from the royal palace; the Jews say that
she prophesied among the women, the court ladies, being herself one of them, who, it is probable, had their apartments in that place; happy the court that had a prophetess within the verge of it, and knew to value her.

III. The answer he received from God to his inquiry; Huldah returned it not in the language of a courtier, "Pray give my humble service to his majesty, and let him know that this is the message I have for him from the God of Israel;" but in the dialect of a prophetess speaking from Him before whom all stand upon the same level, Tell the man that sent you to me, v. 15. Even kings, though gods to us, are men to God, and shall so be dealt with, for with Him there is no respect of persons.

1. She lets him know what judgments God had in store for Judah and Jerusalem, v. 16, 17. My wrath shall be kindled against this place; and what is sin in itself, but the fire of God's wrath kindled against sinners? Observe the degree and duration of it; it is so kindled, that it shall not be quenched, the decree is gone forth, it is too late now to think of preventing it, the iniquity of Jerusalem shall not be purged with sacrifice or offering. Hell is unquenchable fire: it has reference, (1.) To their sins; "They have committed them, as it were, with design, and on purpose to provoke me to anger, it is a fire sent from Heaven, to be the anger of God, with whom they were so provoking andŜavag.' (2.) To God's threatenings; "The evil I bring is according to the words of the book which the king of Judah has read, the scripture is fulfilled in it, they that would not be bound by the precept, shall be bound by the penalty." God will be found no less terrible to impenitent sinners, than his word makes him to be.

2. She lets him know what mercy God has in store for him and his kingdom. Notice is taken of his great tenderness and concern for the glory of God, and the welfare of his kingdom, v. 19. Thine heart was tender. Note, God will distinguish those that distinguish themselves. The generality of the people were hardened, and their hearts unhumbled, so were the wicked kings his predecessors; but Josiah's heart was tender, he received the impressions of God's word, trembled at it, and yielded to it; he was exalted for the dishonour done to God by the sins of his fathers, and of his people; he was afraid of the judgments of God, which he saw coming upon Jerusalem, and earnestly deprecated them; this is tenderness of heart, and thus he humbled himself before the Lord, and expressed these pious affections by rendering his clothes, and weeping before God, probably, in his closet; but that scene, says it was before him, and he heard it, and put every tear of tenderness into his hot tears. Note, Those that most fear God's wrath, are least likely to feel it; if should seem that those words, Lev. 26. 32. much affected Josiah, I will bring the land into desolation; for when he heard of the desolation and of the curse, that is, that God would forsake them, and separate them to evil, (for till it came to that they were neither desolate nor accursed,) then he rent his clothes, that is, wept over his heart. (2.) A reproof is granted till after his death, v. 20. I will gather thee to thy fathers. The saints then, no doubt, had a comfortable prospect of happiness on the other side death, else, being gathered to their fathers, would not have been so often made the matter of a promise as we find it was. Josiah could not prevail to prevent the judgment itself, but God promised him he should not live to see it, which (especially considering that he died in the midst of his days, before he was 40 years old) would have been but a small reward for his eminence piety, if there were not another world in which he should be abundantly recompensed, Heb. 11. 16. When the righteous is taken away from evil to come, he enters into peace, Isa. 37. 1, 2. This is promised to Josiah here, Thou shalt go to thy grave in peace, which refers not to the manner of his death, for he was killed in a battle, but to the time of it, it was a little before the captivity in Babylon, that great trouble, in comparison with which the rest were as nothing, so that he might be truly said to die in peace, that did not live to share in that; he died in the love and favour of God, which secure such a peace as no circumstances of dying, no, not dying in the field of war, could alter the nature of, or break in upon.

CHAP. XXIII.

We have here, 1. The happy continuance of the goodness of Josiah's reign, and the progress of the reformation he began; reading the law, v. 1, 2. renewing the covenant, v. 5. cleansing the temple, v. 4. and rooting out idols and idolatry, with making the things sacred, a diligent preparation for his power reached, v. 5. 20. keeping a solemn passover, v. 21. 23. and clearing the country of witches, v. 24. and, in all this, acting with extraordinary vigour, v. 25. II. The unhappy conclusion of it in his untimely death, as a token of the continuance of God's wrath against Jerusalem, v. 26. 30. III. The more unhappy consequences of his death, in the bad reigns of his two sons Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, that came after him, v. 31. 39.

A ND the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. 2. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord. 3. And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes, with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book: and all the people stood to the covenant.

Josiah had received a message from God, that there was no preventing the ruin of Jerusalem, but that he only should deliver his own soul; yet he does not therefore sit down in despair, and resolve to do nothing for his country, because he cannot do all he would; no, he will do his duty, and then leave the event to God; a public reformation is the thing resolved on, if any thing prevent the threatened ruin, it must be that, and here we have the preparations for that reformation.

1. He summoned a general assembly of the states, the elders, the magistrates, or representatives, of Judah and Jerusalem, the priests and prophets, the ordinary and extraordinary ministers, that they all joining in it, might become a national act, and so be the more likely to prevent national judgments; they were all called to attend, v. 1, 2. that the business might be done with the more solemnity, that they might all advise and assist in it, and that those who were against it, might be discouraged from making any opposition; parliaments are no diminution at all to the honour and power of good princes, but a great support to it.

2. Instead of making a speech to this convention, he ordered the book of the law to be read to them; now, it should seem he read it himself, v. 2. as one
much affected with it, and desirous that they should be so too. Josiah thinks it not below him to be a reader, any more than Solomon did to be a preacher, nay, and David himself to be a door-keeper, in the house of God. Beside the convention of the great men, he had a congregation of the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to hear the law read: it is really the interest of princes to promote the knowledge of the scriptures in their dominions. If the people be but as steadfastly resolved to obey by law, as he is to govern by law, the kingdom will be happy; all people are concerned to know the scripture, and all in authority to spread the knowledge of it.

3. Instead of proposing laws for the confirming of them in their duty, he proposed an association, by which they should all jointly engage themselves to Gen. v. 3. The book of the law was the book of the covenant, that if they would be to God a people, he would be to them a God: they here engage themselves to do their part, not doubting but that then God would do his. (1.) The covenant was, that they should walk after the Lord, in compliance with his will, in his ordinances and providences, should answer all his calls, and attend all his motions; that they should make conscience of all his commandments, moral, ceremonial, and judicial, and should carefully observe them with all their heart and all their soul, with all possible care and caution, sincerity, vigour, courage and resolution, and so fulfill the conditions of this covenant, in dependence upon the promises of it. (2.) The covenanters were, the king himself in the first place, who stood by his pillar, ch. 11. 14. and publicly declared his consent to this covenant, to set them an example, and to assure them not only of his protection, but of his presidency, and all the farther his power could give them in their obedience; it is no abridgment of the liberty even of princes themselves to be in bonds to God; all the people likewise stood to the covenant, that is, they signified their consent to it, and promised to abide by it: it is of good use, with all possible solemnity, to oblige ourselves to our duty, and it is especially seasonable after notorious backslidings to sin, and decays in that which is good; he that bears an honest mind, does not shrink from positive engagements; find, bind, fast find.

4. And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven; and he burnt them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Beth-el. 5. And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burnt incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven. 6. And he brought out the grove from the house of the Lord, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burnt it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people. 7. And he brake down the houses of the Sodomites, that were by the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the grove. 8. And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burnt incense, from Geba to Beer-sheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that were in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on a man's left hand at the gate of the city. 9. Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren. 10. And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech. 11. And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the Lord, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burnt the chariots of the sun with fire. 12. And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron. 13. And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of Corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile. 14. And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men. 15. Moreover, the altar that was at Beth-el, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burnt the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burnt the grove. 16. And as Josiah turned himself; he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burnt them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the Lord, which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. 17. Then he said, What title is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Beth-el. 18. And he said, Let him alone;
II. KINGS, XXIII.

Let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria. 19. And all the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Beth-el. 20. And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burnt men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem. 21. And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the LORD your God, as it is written in the book of the covenant. 22. Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; 23. But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, wherein this passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem. 24. Moreover, the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

We have here an account of such a reformation as we have not met with in all the history of the kings of Judah, such thorough riddance made of all the abominable things, and such foundations laid of a glorious good work; and here I cannot but wonder at two things, 1. That so many wicked things should be got in, and kept standing so long, as we find here removed. 2. That notwithstanding the removal of these wicked things, and the hopeful prospects here given of a happy settlement, yet, within a few years, Jerusalem was utterly destroyed, and even this did not save it, for the generality of the people, after all, hated to be reformed. The founder melteth in vain, and therefore, reprobate silver shall men call them, Jer. 6. 29, 30.

Let us here observe,

1. What abundance of wickedness there was, and had been, in Judah and Jerusalem; one would not have believed it possible that in Judah, where God was known, in Israel, where his name was great, in Salem, in Sion, where his dwelling-place was, such abominations should be found as here we have an account of. Josiah had now reigned 18 years, and had himself set the people a good example, and kept up religion according to law; and yet, when he came to make inquisition for idolatry, the depth and extent of the dunghill he had to carry away, are almost incredible.

1. Even in the house of the Lord, that sacred temple which Solomon had built, and dedicated to the honour, and for the worship of the God of Israel there found vessels, all manner of utensils, for the worship of Baal, and of the grove, (or Asheroth, and of all the host of heaven, v. 4. Though Josiah had suppressed the worship of idols, yet the provisions made for that worship were all carefully preserved, even in the temple itself, to be used again, whenever the present restraint be taken off; nay, even in the grove itself, the image of it, was yet standing in the temple, v. 6. some make it the image of Venus, the same with Ash-toreth.

2. Just at the entering in of the house of the Lord was a stable for horses kept (would you think it?) for a stable for horses, they were given to the sun, v. 11. as if he needed them, who rejecteth as a strong man to run a race, Ps. 19. 5. or rather, they would thus represent to themselves the swiftness of his motion, which they much admired, making their religion to conform to the poetical fictions of the chariot of the sun, the follies of which, even a little philosophy, without any divinity, would have exposed and made them ashamed of. Some of those horses were holy horses, as those before be in pomp, every morning, to meet the rising sun; others, that the worshippers of the sun rode out upon them to adore the rising sun, it should seem that they drew the chariots of the sun, which the people worshipped: strange that ever men who had the written word of God among them, should be thus vain in their imaginations.

3. Hard by the house of the Lord there were houses of the Sodomites, where all manner of lewdness and filthiness, even that which was most unnatural, was practised, and under pretence of religion, in honour of their impure deities; corporal and spiritual whoredom went together, and the vile affections which they were given up to, were the punishment of their vain imaginations; they that disowned their God, were justly left thus to dishonour themselves, Rom. 1. 24, &c.

There were found in this house hangings for the grove, v. 7. tents which encompassed the image of Venus, where the worshippers committed all manner of lewdness, and this in the house of the Lord; they did ill, that made our Father's house a house of merchandise, they did worse, that made it a den of thieves, but these did worst of all that made it (Horrendum dicae—Horrible to relate!) a brothel, in an impious defiance of the holiness of God and his temple; well might the apostle call them abominable idolatries.

4. There were many idolatrous altars found, v. 12. some in the palace, on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz; the roofs of their houses being flat, they made them their high places, and set up altars upon them, Jer. 19. 13. Zeph. 1. 5. domestic altars; the kings of Judah did so; and though Josiah never used them, yet to this time they remained there. Manasseh had built altars for his idols in the house of the Lord, when he repented, he removed them, and cast them out of the city, 2 Chron. 33. 15. but, not destroying them, his son Amon, it seems, had brought them again into the courts of the temple, there Josiah found them, and thence he brake them down, v. 12.

5. There was Tophet, in the valley of the son of Hinnom, very near Jerusalem, where the image of Venus (or God of unnatural cruelty, as others were of unnatural uncleanness) was kept, to which some sacrificed their children, burning them in the fire, others dedicated them, making them to pass through the fire, v. 10. labouring in the very fire, Hab. 2. 13. It is supposed to have been called Tophet, from top, a drum, because they beat drums at the burning of the children, that their shrieks might be heard.

6. There were high places before Jerusalem, which Solomon had built, v. 15. The altars and images on those high places, we may suppose, had been taken away by some of the preceding godly kings, or, perhaps, Solomon himself had removed them when he became a penitent, but the buildings, or some parts of them, remained, with other high
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places, till Josiah's time. They that introduce corruptions into religion, know not how far they will reach, nor how long they will last; antiquity is no certain proof of verity: there were also high places all the kingdom over, from Geba to Beer-sheba, v. 8. and high places of the gates, in the entering in of the gate of the governor; in those high places (Babylonian words) they went together to those tutelar gods, to adore their idolatrous kings had committed the protection of their city; and, probably, the governor of the city had a private altar for his Penates—his household-gods.

7. There were idolatrous priests, that officiated at all these idolatrous altars, v. 5. Chemarim, black men, or that wore black; see Zeph. 1. 4. They that sacrificed to Osiris, or that went for Tammuz, Ezek. 8. 4. served not the Lord, but worshiped the inernal deities, put on black garments as mourners. Those idolatrous priests, the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places; they were, it should seem, priests of the house of Aaron, who thus profaned their dignity, and there were others also who had no right at all to the priesthood, who burnt incense to Baal.

8. There were conjurers and wizards, and such as did sorcery, v. 24. When they worshipped the devil as their god, no marvel that they consulted him as their oracle.

II. What a full destruction good Josiah made of all those relics of idolatry; such is his zeal for the Lord of hosts, and his holy indignation against all that is displeasing to him, that nothing shall stand before him; the law was, that the monuments of the Canaanites' idolatry must be all destroyed, Deut. 7. 5. much more of the idolatry of the Israelites, in whom it was much more impious, profane, and pernicious.

1. He orders Hilkiah, and the other priests, to clear the temple, that was their province, v. 4. Away with all the vessels that were made for Baal. They must never be employed in the service of God, no, nor reserved for any common use, they must all be burnt, and the ashes of them carried to Beth-el; that place had been the common source of idolatry, for there was set up one of the calves, and that lying next to Judah, thence the infection had spread into that kingdom, and therefore now he makes it the lay-stall of idolatry, the dunghill to which he carries the fifth and off-scouring of all things, that, if possible, it might be made loathsome to those that had been fond of it.

2. The idolatrous priests were all put down: those of them that were not of the house of Aaron, or had sacrificed to Baal, or other false gods, he put to death, according to the law, v. 20, he slew them upon their own altars, the most acceptable sacrifice that ever had been offered upon them, a sacrifice to the justice of God; those that were descendants from Aaron, and yet had burnt incense in the high places, but to the true God only, he forbade; except the name of the Lord, they had forfeited that honour, v. 9. he brought them out of the cities of Judah, v. 8. that they might not do mischief in the country by secretly keeping up their old idolatrous usages; but he allowed them to eat of the unleavened bread, (the bread of the meat-offering, Lev. 2. 4. 5.) among their brethren, with whom they were to reside, that being under their eye, they might be kept from doing hurt, and Satan using them no worse than bread, (heavy and unpleasant as it was,) was better than they deserved, and that would serve to keep them alive; but whether they were permitted to eat of all the sacrifices, as blemished priests were, Lev. 21. 22. which is called, in general, the bread of their God, may be justly questioned.

3. All the images were broken to pieces, and burnt; the image of the grove, v. 6. some goddess or other, was reduced to ashes, and the ashes cast upon the graves of the common people, v. 6. the common burying-place of the city; by the law, a ceremonial uncleanness was contracted by the touch of a grave, so that in casting them here, he declared them most impure, and none could touch them without making themselves unclean by it: he took it into the Chaldee, intending that he would have all idolatry brought out of his sight, as a loathsome thing, and forgotten, as dead men are out of mind, v. 14. he filled the places of the groves with the bones of men; as he carried the images of the groves to the graves, to mingle them with dead men's bones, so he carried dead men's bones, to the places where the images had been, and put them in the room of them, that, both ways, idolatry might be remembered loathsome; and the people kept both from the dust of the images, and from the ruins of the places where they had been worshipped; dead men, and dead gods, were much alike, and fittest to go together.

4. All the wicked houses were suppressed, those nests of impiety that harboured idolaters, the houses of the Sodomites, v. 7. (down with them, v. 9.) all down with them, raise them to the foundations; the high places were thus like that mountains were, that stood, and levelled with the ground, v. 8. even that which belonged to the governor of the city, for no man's greatness or power may protect him in idolatry or profaneness; let governors be obliged, in the first place, to reform, and then the governed will be the sooner influenced; he defiled the high places, v. 8. and again, v. 13. did all he could to render them abominable, and put the people out of conceit with them, as Jehovah had, when he made the house of Baal a draught-house, 2 Kings 10. 27. Topheh, which, contrary to other places of idolatry, was in a valley, whereas they were on hills or high places, was likewise defiled, v. 10. was made the burying-place of the city; concerning this we have a whole sermon, Jer. 19. 1. 2. &c. where it is said, They shall bury in Topheh, and the whole of the city is threatened to be made like Topheh.

5. The horses that had been given to the sun, were taken away, and put to common use, and so were delivered from the vanity to which they were made subject; and the chariot of the sun (What a pity it was that those horses and chariots should be kept as the chariots and horsemen of Israel!) he burned with fire; and if the sun be a flame, they never resembled him so as they did when they were chariots of renown.

6. The workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, were put away, v. 24. Those of them that were convicted of witchcraft, it is likely, he put to death, and so deterred others from those diabolical practices; in all this, he had a sincere regard to the words of the law which were written in the book lately found, v. 24. he made that his rule, and kept that in his eye throughout this reformation.

II. How he brought an end to idolatry in the cities of Israel that were within his reach; the 10 tribes were carried captive, the Assyrian colonies did not fully people the country, so that, it is likely, many cities had put themselves under the protection of the kings of Judah, 2 Chron. 30. 1. 34. These he here visits, to carry on his reformation; as far as our influence goes, our endeavours should go to do good, and bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end.

1. He defiled and demolished Jeroboam's altar at Beth-el, with the high places and the grove that belonged to it, v. 15. 16. The golden calf, it should seem, was gone, (Thy calf, O Samaria, hast cast thee off,) but the altar was there, which those that were wedded to their old idolatries, made use of
still; this was, (1.) Defiled, v. 16. Josiah, in his pious zeal, was ransacking the old seats of idolatry, and spied the sepulchres in the mount, in which, probably, the idolatrous priests were buried, not far from the altar at which they had officiated, and which they were so fond of, that they were desirous to lay their bones by it: these he opened, took out the bones, and cast them down upon the altar, that thus he would have done by the priests themselves, if they had been alive, as he did by those whom he found alive, v. 20. thus he polluted the altar, he desecrated it, and made it odious. It is threatened against idolaters, Jer. 8, 1, 2, that their bones shall be spread before the sun; that which is there threatened, and this which is here executed, (bespeaking their ingenuity to be upon their bones;) Ez. 22, 27. are an intimation of a punishment after death, reserved for those that live and die impotent in that or any other sin; the burning of the bones, if that were all, is a small matter, but if it signify the torment of the soul in a worse flame, Luke 16, 24. it is very dreadful. This, as it was Josiah's act, seems to be the result of a very sudden resolve; he had not done it, but that he happened to turn himself, and spy the sepulchres, and yet it was foetidly, 350 years before, when this altar was first built by Jeroboam, 1 Kings 13, 2. God always foresees, and has sometimes foretold as certain, that which yet to us seems most contingent; the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; king Josiah's was so, and he turned it, (or ever he himself was aware, Cant. 6, 12.) to do this; no word of God shall fall to the ground. (2.) It was demolished; he brake down the altar and all its appurtenances, v. 15. burnt what was combustible, and since an idol is nothing in the world, he went as far toward the annihilating of it as he could, for he stamped it small to powder, and made it as dust before the wind.

2. He destroyed all the houses of the high places, all those synagogues of Satan that were in the cities of Samaria, v. 19. These the kings of Israel built, and God raised up this king of Judah to pull them down, for the honour of the ancient house of David, from which the 10 tribes had revolted; the priests he justly made sacrifices upon their own altars, v. 20.

3. He carefully preserved the sepulchre of that man of God, who came from Judah to foretell this, which now a king who came from Judah executed; this was that good prophet who proclaimed these things against the altar of Beth-el, and yet was himself slain by a lion for disobeying the word of the Lord, but to show that God's displeasure against him went no further than his death, but ended there, God so ordered it, that when all the graves about his were disturbed, his was safe, v. 17, 18. and no man moved his bones, he was entered into peace; and therefore shall rest in his bed, Isa. 57, 2. The old lying prophet, who desired to be buried as near him as might be, it should seem, knew what he did, for his dust also being mingled with that of the good prophet, was preserved for his sake; see Numb. 23, 10.

Lastly, We are here told what a solemn passover Josiah and his people kept, after all this. When they had cleared the country of the old leaven, then they applied themselves to the keeping of the feast; when Jehu had destroyed the worship of Baal, yet he took no heed to walk in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, but Josiah did; and Josiah, and the sacred gift of it, must learn to do well, and not only cease to do evil, and that the way to keep out all abominable customs, is to keep up all instituted ordinances; (see Lev. 18, 30.) and therefore he commanded all the people to keep the passover, which was not only a memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt, but a token of their dedication to him that brought them out, and their communion with him: this he found written in the book of the law, here called the book of the covenant; for though the divine authority may deal with us in a way of absolute command, divine grace condescends to federal transactions, and therefore he observed it. We have not such a book upon the laws of nature as the passover. But this was Josiah's time, 2 Chron. 30. but, in general, that there was not holden such a passover in any of the foregoing reigns, no not from the days of the judges, v. 22. which, by the way, intimates that though the account which the book of Judges gives of the state of Israel under that dynasty, looks but melancholy, yet there were then some golden days. This passover, it seems, was extraordinary for the number and devotion of the communicants, their sacrifices and offerings, and their exact observance of the laws of the feast; and it was not now, as in Hezekiah's passover, when many communicated, that were not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary, and the Levites were permitted to do the priests' work. We have reason to think that during all the remainder of Josiah's reign, religion flourished, and the feasts of the Lord were very much observed; but in this passover, the satisfaction they took in the covenant lately renewed, the reformation in pursuance of it, and the revival of an ordinance which they had lately found the divine original of in the book of the law, and which had long been neglected or carelessly kept, put them into transports of holy joy; and God was pleased to recompose their zeal in destroying idolatry with uncommon tokens of his presence and favour; all this concurred to make it a distinguished passover.

25. And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him. 26. Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. 27. And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there. 28. Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? 29. In his days Pharaoh-nechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him. 30. And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead.

Upon the reading of these verses, we must say Lord, though thy righteousness be as the great mountains, evident, conspicuous, and past dispute, yet thy judgements are a deep, unfathomable, and
past finding out, Ps. 36. 6. What shall we say to this?

I. It is here owned that Josiah was one of the best kings that ever sat upon the throne of David, v. 25. As Heshiah was a none-such for faith and dependence upon God in straits, ch. 18. 5. so Josiah was a none-such for sincerity and zeal in carrying on a work of reformation. For this, there was none like him. 1. That he turned to the Lord from whom his fathers had revolted. It is true religion to turn to God as one we have chosen and love. He did what he could to turn his kingdom also to the Lord. 2. That he did this with his heart and soul; his affections and aims were right in what he did. Those make nothing of their religion, that do not make heart work of it. 3. That he did it with all his heart, and all his soul, and all his might; with vigour, and courage and resolution: he could not otherwise have broken through the difficulties he had to grapple with. What great things may we bring to pass in the service of God, if we be but lively and hearty in it! 4. That he did this, according to all the laws of Moses; in an exact observance of that law, and with an actual regard to it. His zeal did not transport him into any irregularities, but in all he did, he walked by rule.

II. Notwithstanding this, he was cut off by a violent death, in the midst of his days, and his kingdom was ruined within a few years after. Consequent upon such a reformation as this, one would have expected nothing but the prosperity and glory both of king and kingdom; but, quite contrary, we find both under a cloud.

1. Even the reformed kingdom continues marked for ruin. For this, v. 26, The Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath. That is certainly true, which God spake by the prophet, Jer. 18. 7, 8. That if a nation, doomed to destruction, turn from the evil of sin, God will repent of the evil of his purpose; but we may conclude that Josiah's people, though they submitted to Josiah's power, did not heartyly imitate Josiah's principles. They were turned by force, they did not voluntarily turn from their evil way, but still continued their affection for their idols; and therefore he that knows men's hearts, would not recall the sentence, which was, That Judah should be removed, as Israel had been, and Jerusalem itself cast off, v. 27. Yet even this addition to what we had before, of Josiah's further zeal and the commencement of his reformation; so that we may say, not only that the criminals had filled their measure, and were ripe for ruin, but also that the disease was coming to a crisis, and was ready for a cure; and this shall be all the fruit, even the taking away of sin.

2. As an evidence of this, even the reforming king is cut off in the midst of his usefulness, in mercy to him, that he might not see the evil which was coming on him. His kingdom, his kingdom and his name, for his death was an inlet to their desolations. The king of Egypt waged war, it seems, with the king of Assyria, (so the king of Babylon is now called,) Josiah's kingdom lay between them; he therefore thought himself concerned to oppose the king of Egypt, and check the growing, threatening, greatness of his power; for though, at this time, he proceeded that he had no design against Josiah, yet if he should prevail to unite the river of Egypt and the Euphrates, the land of Judah would soon be overflowed between them; therefore Josiah went against him, and was killed in the first engagement, v. 29, 30. Here, (1.) We cannot justify Josiah's conduct; he had no clear call to engage in this war, nor do we find that he asked counsel of God by Urim, or prophets, concerning it. What had he to do, to appear and act as a friend and ally to the king of Assyria? Should he help the ungodly, and turn his hand that hate the Lord? If the kings of Egypt and Assyria quarrelled, he had reason to think God would bring good out of it to him and his people, and make them instrumental to weaken one another. Some understand the promise made to him, (That he should come in a grave in peace,) in a sense in which it was not performed, because, by his miscarriage in this matter, he forfeited the benefit of it. God has promised to keep us in all our ways; but if we go out of our way, we throw ourselves out of his protection. I understand the promise so, as that I believe it was fulfilled, for he died in peace with God and his own conscience, and saw not, nor had any immediate prospect of, the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; yet I understand the providence to be a rebuke to him for his rashness.

(2.) We must adore God's righteousness, in taking away such a jewel from an unthankful people that knew not how to value it. They greatly lamented his death, 2 Chron. 35. 25. urged it by Jeremiah, who told them the meaning of it, and what a threatening omen it was; but they had not made a due improvement of the mercies they enjoyed by his life, of which God taught them the worth by the want.

31. Jehohaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 32. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done. 33. And Pharaoh-nechoh put him in bands at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of a hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold. 34. And Pharaoh-nechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehohaz away; and he came to Egypt, and died there. 35. And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaoh-nechoh. 36. Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. 37. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done.

Jerusalem saw not a good day after Josiah was laid in his grave, but one trouble came after another, till within 22 years, it was quite destroyed. Of the reign of two of his sons here is a short account; the former we find here, a prisoner, and the latter a tributary, to the king of Egypt, and both in the very beginning of their reign. The king of Egypt having slain Josiah, though he had not any design upon Judah, yet, being provoked by the opposition which Josiah gave him, now it should seem, he bent all his force against his family and kingdom. If Josiah's sons had trodden in his steps, they would have fared the better for his piety; but deviating from them, they fared worse for his rashness.
I. Jehoahaz, a younger son, was first made king by the people of the land; probably, because he was observed to be of a more active warlike genius than his elder brother, and likely to make head against the king of Egypt, and to avenge his father's death, which perhaps the people were more solicitous about, in point of honour, than the keeping up and carrying on his father's reformation; and the issue was accordingly.

1. He did ill, v. 32. Though he had a good education, and a good example, given him, and many a good man to pray for him, yet he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and it is to be feared, began to do so in his father's lifetime, for his reign was so short, that he could not, in that, show much of his character. He did according to all that his wicked fathers had done. Though he had not time to do much, yet he had chosen his patterns, and showed whom he intended to be like: God was left out, and the world set up to trample on him; and, having done this, he is here reckoned to have done according to all the evil which they did, whom he proposed to imitate. The choice of persons whom the young take for their example, is of serious consequence; an error in this choice is fatal. Phil. 3. 17, 18.

2. Doing ill, no wonder that he fared ill. He was but 3 months a prince, and was then made a prisoner, and lived and died a servant. The king of Egypt seized him, and put him in bands, v. 33. fear lest he should give him disturbance, and carried him to Egypt, where he died soon after, v. 34. This Jehoahaz is that young lion whom Ezekiel speaks of in his lamentation for the princes of Israel, that learned to catch the prey, and devour men, (that was the evil which he did in the sight of the Lord,) but the nations heard of him, he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains into the land of Egypt, Ezek. 19. 1-4. See Jer. 22. 10-12.

II. Eliakim, another son of Josiah, was made king by the king of Egypt; it is not said in the room of Jehoahaz, (his reign was so short, that it was scarcely worth taking notice of,) but in the room of Josiah. The crown of Judah had, hither to, always descended from a father to a son, and never, till now, from one brother to another; once, the succession had so happened at the house of Ahaz, but never, till now, in the house of David. The king of Egypt, having used his power in making him king, further showed it in changing his name, he called him Jehoiakim, a name that has reference to Jehovah, for he had no design to make him renounce, or forget, the religion of his country; all people will walk in the name of their God, and let him do so. The king of Babylon did not do so by those whose names he changed.

Of this Jehoiakim we are here told, 1. That the king of Egypt made him poor, exacted from him a vast tribute of 100 talents of silver, and a talent of gold, v. 33. which with much difficulty, he squeezed out of his subjects, and gave to Pharaoh, v. 35. Formerly, the Israelites had spoiled the Egyptians, now the Egyptians spoil Israel; see what woful changes the wrong of the sixth month brings. 2. That which made him poor, yet did not make him good; notwithstanding the rebukes of Providence he was under, by which he should have been convinced, humbled, and reformed, he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, v. 37. and so prepared against himself greater judgments; for such God will send, if lesser do not do the work for which they are sent.

CHAP. XXIV.
Things are here ripening for, and hastening toward, the utter destruction of Jerusalem. We left Jehoiakim on the throne, placed there by the king of Egypt; now here we have, 1. The troubles of his reign, how he was brought into subjection by the king of Babylon, and severely chastised for attempting to shake off the yoke, v. 1... and how Egypt also was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, v. 7. 11. The desolations of his son's reign, which continued but 3 months; and then he, and all his great men, being forced to surrender at discretion, were carried captives to Babylon, v. 8... 16. 111. The preparatives of the next reign, (which was the last of all,) for the utter ruin of Jerusalem, which the next chapter will give us an account of, v. 17... 20.

1. In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years; then he turned and rebelled against him. 2. And the Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servants the prophets. 3. Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; 4. And also for the innocent blood that he shed, (for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood,) which the Lord would not pardon. 5. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? 6. So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.

And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken, from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates, all that pertained to the king of Egypt.

We have here the first mention of a name which makes a great figure both in the histories, and in the prophecies of the Old Testament; it is that of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, v. 1. This is a name filled with gold. A potent prince, and one that was a terror of the mighty in the land of the living; and yet his name had not been known in sacred writ, if it had not been employed in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of the Jews.

I. He made Jehoiakim his tributary, and kept him in subjection three years, v. 1. Nebuchadnezzar began his reign in the fourth year of Jehoiakim; in his eighth year he made him his prisoner, but restored him, upon his promise of faithfulness to him; that promise he kept about three years, but then rebelled, probably, in hopes of assistance from the king of Egypt. If Jehoiakim had served his God as he should have done, he had not been servant to the king of Babylon; but God would thus make him know the difference between his service and the service of the kings of the countries, 2. Chron. 12. 8. If he had been content with his servitude, and true to his word, his condition had been no worse; but, rebelling against the king of Babylon, he plunged himself into more trouble.

II. When he rebelled, he sent his forces against him to destroy his country, bands of Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, Ammonites, who were all now in the service and pay of the king of Babylon, v. 2. and withal retained, and now showed, their ancient enmity to the Israel of God. Yet no mention is here made of their commission from the king of Babylon.
but only of that from the King of kings. The Lord sent against him all these bands. And again, v. 3. Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, else the commandment of Nebuchadnezzar could not have brought it. Many are serving God's purposes, who are not aware of it.

Two things God intended in suffering Judah to be thus reassured. The first was to punish them for the sins of Manasseh, which God now visited upon the third and fourth generation. So long he waited before he visited them, to see if the nation would repent; but they continued impenitent, notwithstanding Josiah's endeavours to reform them, and ready to re-lapse, upon the first turn, into their former idolatries; now that the old bond was put in suit, they were called up, upon the former judgment; that was received, which God had laid up in store, and sealed among his treasures, Deut. 25. 34. Job 14. 17, and in remembrance of that, he removed Judah out of his sight, and let the world know that time will not wear out the guilt of sin, and that reprobes are not pardons. All that Manasseh did, was called to mind, but especially the innocent blood that he shed, much of which, we may suppose, was the blood of God's witnesses and worshippers, which the Lord spared not. was there any sin but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? This is meant of the remitting of the temporal punishment; though Manasseh repented, and we have reason to think that even the persecutions and murders he was guilty of, were pardoned, so that he was delivered from the wrath to come; yet, as they were national sins, they lay still charged upon the land, crying for national judgments. Perhaps, some were now living who were aiding and abetting and the present king was guilty of innocent blood, as appears, Jer. 22. 17. See what a provoking sin murder is, how loud it cries, and how long! See what need nations have to lament the sins of their fathers, lest they smart for them. 2. God intended hereby the accomplishment of the prophecies; it was according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servants the prophets. Rather shall Judah be removed out of his sight, than brother shall heave and earth pass away, than any word of God fall to the ground. Threatenings will be fulfilled as certainly as promises, if the sinner's repentance prevent not.

III. The king of Egypt was likewise subdued by the king of Babylon, and a great part of his country taken from him, v. 7. It was but lately that he had oppressed Israel, ch. 23. 33. now he is himself brought down, and disinclined to attempt any thing for the recovery of his losses, or the assistance of his allies; he does not come any more out of his land. Afterward, he attempted to give Zedekiah some relief, but was obliged to retire, Jer. 37. 7.

IV. Jehoiakim, seeing his country laid waste, and himself ready to fall into the enemy's hand, as it should seem, died of a broken heart, in the midst of his days, v. 6. So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers, but part. Did they then burn with wrath? O, no, for, no doubt, the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled, that he should not be lamented, as his father was, but buried with the burial of an ass, Jer. 22. 18, 19. and his dead body cast out, Jer. 36. 30.

8. Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign; and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name was Nehushta, the daughter of Elhanan of Jerusalem. 9. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father had done. 10. At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. 11. And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. 12. And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers; and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. 13. And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasure of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord, as the Lord had said. 14. And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all theB, andsmiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. 15. And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his offic- ers, and the mighty of the land: those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. 16. And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand; all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon. 17. And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah. 18. Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Hamu- tal, the daughter of Jeremias of Libnah. 19. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiachin had done. 20. For through the anger of the Lord it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

This should have been the history of king Jehoi- achin's reign, but, alas, it is only the history of King Jehoiachin's captivity, as it is called, Ezek. 1. 2. He came to the crown, not to have the honour of wearing it, but the shame of losing it; Ideo tantum venerat, ut exiret—He came in only to go out.

I. His reign was short and inconsiderable; he reigned but three months, and then was removed and carried captive to Babylon, as his father, it is likely, would have been, if he had lived but so much longer. What an unhappy young prince was this, that was thrust into a falling house, a sinking throne! What an unnatural father had he, who begat him to suffer for him; and by his own sin and folly had left himself nothing to bequeath to his son but his own miseries? Yet this young prince reigned long enough to show that he justly smarted for his fathers' sins, for he tried in their steps, v. 9. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as they had done; he did nothing to cut off the entail of the curse, to discharge the encumbrance of his crown,
and therefore (Transit cum onere—The encumbrance descends with the crown) with his own iniquity that of his fathers shall come into the account. 

II. The calamities that came upon him, and his family, and people, in the very beginning of his reign, were grievous.

1. Jerusalem besieged by the king of Babylon, v. 10. 11. He had sent his forces to ravage the country, v. 2. now he came himself, and laid siege to the city. Now the word of God was fulfilled, Deut. 28. 49, &c. The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, of fierce countenance, that shall first eat the fruit of the land, and then besiege thee in all thy gates.

2. Jehoiachin immediately surrendered at discretion. As soon as he heard the king of Babylon was come in person against the city, his name being, at this time, become very formidable, he beat a par- tury, and went out to him, v. 12. Had he made his peace with God, and taken the method Zedekiah did in the like case, he needed not to have feared the king of Babylon, but might have held out with courage, honour, and success; (one should have chased a thousand;) but, wanting the faith and piety of an elder son, and hoping not for the protection of a sword, of a prince, He and his royal family, his mother and wives, his servants and princes, delivered themselves up prisoners of war; this was the consequence of their being servants of sin.

3. Nebuchadnezzar rified the treasures both of the church and of the state, and carried away the silver and gold of both, v. 13. Now the word of God, by Isaiah, was fulfilled, ch. 20. 17. All that is in thine house shall be carried to Babylon. Even the vessels of the temple which Solomon had made, and laid up in store to be used as the old ones were worn out, he cut off from the temple, and began to cut them in pieces, but, upon second thoughts, reserved them for his own use, for we find Belshazzar drinking wine in them, Dan. 5. 2, 3.

4. He carried away a great part of Jerusalem into captivity, to weaken it, that he might effectually secure to himself the dominion of it, and prevent its revolt, and to enrich himself with the wealth or service of those he took away; there had been some carried away, 8 years before this, in the 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar, and the 3d of Jehoiakim, among them were Daniel and his fellows. See Dan. 1. 1, 2. They had approved themselves so well, that this political prince coveted more of them. Now he car- ried them away.

(1.) The young king himself, and his family, v. 15. and we find, ch. 25. 27. 29. that for 37 years, he continued a close prisoner. (2.) All the great men, the princes and officers, whose riches were kept for the owners thereof to their hurt, Eccl. 5. 13. tempting the enemies to make a prey of them first. (3.) All the military men, the mighty men of valour, v. 14. the mighty of the land, v. 15. the men of counsel, v. 16. that were strong and apt for war, v. 16. These could not defend themselves, and the conqueror would not leave them to defend their country, but took them away, to be employed in his service. (4.) All the craftsmen and smiths who made weapons of war; in taking them, he did, in effect, disarm the city, according to the Philin- sines' policy, 1 Sam. 13. 19. In this captivity, Ezekiel the prophet was carried away, Ezek. 1. 1. and Malachi, Esth. 2. 6. This Jehoiachin was also called Jechoniah, 1 Chron. 3. 16. and, in contempt, Coniah, Jer. 22. 24. where his captivity is foretold.

III. The successor whom the king of Babylon ap- pointed in the room of Jehoiachin. God had written him childless, Jer. 22. 30. and therefore his uncle was intrusted with the government. The king of Babylon made Mattaniah King, the son of Josiah, and to remind him, and let all the world know, that he was his creature, he changed his name, and called him Zedekiah, v. 17. God had sometimes charged it upon his people, They have set up kings, but not by me, Hos. 8. 4. and now, to punish them for that, the king of Babylon shall have the setting up of the kings therein. Those who, in the exercise of their liberty, that use it, and insist upon it, against God's authority. This Zedekiah was the last of the kings of Judah: the name which the king of Babylon gave him, signifies, The justice of the Lord, which was a presage of the glorifying of God's justice in his ruin.

1. See how impious this Zedekiah was. Though the judgments of God upon his three immediate predecessors, might have been a warning to him not to tread in their steps, yet he did that which was evil, like all the rest, v. 19.

2. See how impolitic he was. As his predecessors lost his courage, so he his conduct, with his religion, for he rebelled against the king of Babylon, v. 20. whose tributary he was, and so, provoked him whom he was utterly unable to contend with, and who, if he had continued true to him, would have protected him; which was the most foolish thing that he could do, and hastened the ruin of a third of his king- dom. This came to pass through the anger of the Lord, that he might cast them out from his presence.

Note, When those who are intrusted with the counsels of a nation, act unwisely and against their true interest, we ought to take notice of the displeasure of God in it. It is for the sins of a people, that God removes the speech of the truth, and takes away the understanding of the aged, and hides from them the things that belong to the public peace. Whom God will destroy, he infat- uates.

CHAP. XXV.

Ever since David's time, Jerusalem had been a celebrated place; beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth from the book of psalms last, that name will sound great. In the New Testament, we read much of it, when it was, as here, ripening again for its ruin. In the close of the Bible, we read of a new Jerusalem; every thing therefore that concerneth Jerusalem, is worthy our regard. In this chapter, we have, I. The utter de- struction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; the city be- sieged and taken, v. 1. 4. the houses burned, v. 8. 9. the wall broken down, v. 10. and the inhabitants carried away into captivity, v. 11. 12. The glory of Jerusalem was, 1. That it was the royal city, there were set the thrones of the house of David; but that glory is here de- parted, for the prince is made a most miserable man, and the seed royal destroyed, v. 5. 7. and the principal offi- cers put to death, v. 18. 21. That it was the holy city there was the testimony of Israel; but that glory is de- parted, for Solomon's temple is burnt to the ground, v. 9. and the sacred vessels that remained, are carried away to Babylon, v. 13. 17. Thus is Jerusalem become as a widow, Lam. 1. 1. Ichabod, Where is the glory? 11. The destruction and dispersion of the remnant that was left in Judah under Gedaliah, v. 22. 26. III. The coun- tenance which, after 37 years' imprisonment, was given to Jehoiachin the captive king of Judah, v. 27. 30.

1. And it came to pass, in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchad- nezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about. 2. And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. 3. And on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land. 4. And the city was broken up, and all the
men of war fled by night, by the way of the gate, between two walls, which is by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees were against the city round about:) and the king went the way toward the plain. 5. And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him. 6. So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. 7. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

We left king Zedekiah in rebellion against the king of Babylon, ch. 24. 20. contriving and endeavouring to shake off his yoke, when he was no way able to do it, nor took the right method by making God his friend first. Now here we have an account of the fatal consequences of that attempt.

1. The king of Babylon's army laid siege to Jerusalem, v. 1. What should hinder them when the king was in possess of God? They built forts against the city round about, whence, by such arts of war as they then had, they battered it; sent into it instruments of death, and kept out of it the necessary supports of life. Formerly, Jerusalem had been compassed with the favour of God as with a shield, but now their defence was departed from them, and their enemies surrounded them on every side. Those that by sin have offended God to leave them, will find the innumerable evils will compass them about. Two years this siege lasted; at first, the army retired, for fear of the king of Egypt, Jer. 37. 11. but, finding him not so powerful as they thought, they soon returned, with a resolution not to quit the city till they had made themselves masters of it.

II. During this siege, the famine prevailed, v. 3. so that, for a long time, they ate their bread by weight, Ezek. 4. 16, 17. They were punished for their gluttony and excess, their fulness of bread, and feeding themselves without fear; at length, there was no bread for the people of the land, that is, the common people, the soldiers, whereby they were weakened, and rendered unfit for service; now they ate their own children for want of food; see this foretold by one prophet, Ezek. 5. 10. and by another, Lam. 4. 3. 8c. Jeremiah earnestly persuaded the king to surrender, Jer. 38. 17. but his heart was hardened, to his destruction.

III. At length, the city was taken by storm, it was broken up, v. 4. the besiegers made a breach in the wall, at which they forced their way into it; the besieged, unable any longer to defend it, endeavoured to quit it, and make the best of their way; many, no doubt, were put to the sword, the victorious army being much exasperated by their obstinacy.

IV. The king, his family, and all his great men, made their escape in the night, by some secret passages which the besiegers either had not discovered, or did not keep their eye upon, v. 4. But those as much deceive themselves, who think to escape God's judgments, as those who think to brave them; the fear of him that flees from them, will pursue him still as the hands of him that fights against them; when God judges, he will overcome. Intelligence was given to the Chaldeans of the king's flight, and which way he was gone, so that they soon overtook him, v. 5. His guards were scattered from him, every man shifting for his own safety. Had he put himself under God's protection, that would not have failed him now: he presently fell into the enemies' hands, and here we are told what they did with him.

1. He was brought to the king of Babylon, and tried by a council of war, for rebelling against him who set him up, and to whom he had sworn fidelity; God and man had a quarrel with him for this; see Ezek. 17. 16, 8c. The king of Babylon now lay at Riblah, (which lay between Judah and Babylon,) that he might be ready to give orders both to his court at home and his army abroad.

2. His sons were slain before his eyes, though children, that this dolorous spectacle, the last his eyes were to behold, might leave an impression of grief and horror upon his spirit as long as he lived; in slaying his sons, they showed their indignation at his falsehood, and, in effect, declared that neither he, nor any of his, were fit to be trusted, and therefore that they were not fit to live.

3. His eyes were put out, by which he was deprived of that common comfort of human life, which is given even to those that are in misery, and to the poor in spirit. He saw himself shipwrecked in Babylon, and was also disabled for any service. He dreaded being mocked, and therefore would not be persuaded to yield, Jer. 38. 19. but that which he feared, came upon him with a witness, and, in doubt, added much more to his misery; for as they that are deaf, suspect that every body talks of them, so they that are blind, suspect that every body laughs at them; by this, two prophecies that seemed to contradict one another, were both fulfilled. Jeremiah prophesied that Zedekiah should be brought to Babylon, Jer. 32. 5.—34. 3. Ezekiel prophesied that he should not see Babylon, Ezek. 12. 13. He was brought thither, but, his eyes being put out, he did not see it; thus he ended his days, before he ended his life.

4. He was bound in fetters of brass, and so carried to Babylon; he that was blind needed not be bound, (his blindness fettered him,) but, for his greater disgrace, they led him bound: only, whereas as common malefactors are laid in iron, (Ps. 105. 18.—107. 10.) he, being a prince, was bound with fetters of brass; but, that the mettle was somewhat nobler and lighter, was little comfort, while still he was in fetters; let it not seem strange, if those that have been held in the cords of iniquity, come to be thus held in the cords of affliction, Job 36. 8.

8. And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, (which is the fourteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,) came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: 9. And he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire. 10. And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about. 11. Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, carry away. 12. But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vine-dressers and husbandmen.
And the pillars of brass that were in the house of the Lord, and the bases, and the brazen sea that was in the house of the Lord, did the Chaldees break in pieces, and carried the brass of them to Babylon.

14. And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass, wherewith they ministered, took they away. 15. And the fire-pans, and the bowls, and such things as were of gold, in gold, and of silver, in silver, the captain of the guard took away. 16. The two pillars, one sea, and the bases, which Solomon had made for the house of the Lord; the brass of all these vessels was without weight.

17. The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and the chapter upon it was brass: and the height of the chapter three cubits; and the wreathen work, and pomegranates upon the chapter round about, all of brass: and like unto these had the second pillar with wreathen work. 18. And the captain of the guard took Seraijah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door: 19. And out of the city he took an officer that was set over the men of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which were found in the city; and the principal scribe of the host, which mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people of the land that were found in the city:

20. And Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah. 21. And the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah, in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land.

I have reason to think that the army of the Chaldeans were much enraged against the city for holding out with so much stubborness, yet they did not therefore put all to fire: and sword as soon as they had taken the city, (which is too commonly done in such cases,) but, about a month after, (compare v. 8. with v. 3.) Nebuzar-adan was sent with orders to complete the destruction of Jerusalem; this space God gave them to repent, after all the following days of his patience, but in vain, their hearts (for aught that appears) were still hardened, and therefore execution was awarded to the utmost.

1. The city and temple are burnt, v. 9. It does not appear that the king of Babylon designed to send any colonies to people Jerusalem, and therefore he ordered it to be laid in ashes, as a nest of rebels. At the burning of the king's house, and the houses of the great men, one cannot so much wonder; (the inhabitants had, by their sins, made them combustible,) but that the house of the Lord should perish in these flames, that that holy and beautiful house should be burnt with fire, Isa. 64. 11. is very strange, that house which David prepared for, and which Solomon built, at such a vast expense; that house which had the eye and heart of God perpetually upon it, 1 Kings. 9. 3. might not that have been snatched as a brand out of the burning? No, it must not be fire-proof against God's judgments; this stately structure must be turned into ashes, and it is probable, the ark in it, for the enemies, having heard how dear the Philistines paid for the abusing of it, durst not seize that, nor did any of its friends take care to preserve it, for then we should have heard of it again in the second temple; one of the apocryphal writers does indeed tell us that the prophet Daniel got it out of the city, and hid it in a cave in mount Nebo on the other side Jordan, and hid it there, 2 Macc. 2. 4. 5. but that could not be, for Jeremiah was a close prisoner at that time. By the burning of the temple God would show how little he cares for the external pomp of his worship, when the life and power of religion are neglected; the people trusted to the temple, as if that would protect them in their sins, Jer. 7. 4. but God has profaned it, and they that have profaned it, they would find it but a refuge of lies. This temple had stood about 420, some say, 450 years; the people having forfitted the promises made concerning it, those promises must be understood of the gospel-temple, which is God's rest for ever. It is observable that the second temple was burnt by the Romans, the same month, and the same day of the month, that the first temple was burnt by the Chaldeans, which, Josephus says, was the 10th of August.

2. The walls of Jerusalem are demolished, v. 10. as if the victorious army would be revenged on them that had kept them out so long, or, at least, prevent the like opposition another time; sin unsulls a people, and takes away their defence: these walls were never repaired till Nehemiah did it.

3. The residue of the people were carried away captive to Babylon, v. 11. Most of the inhabitants had perished by sword or famine, or had made their escape when the king did, (for it is said, v. 5. His army was scattered from him,) so that there were very few left, who, with the deserters, making in all but 832 persons, (as appears, Jer. 52. 29.) were carried away into captivity; only the poor of the land were left behind, v. 12. to till the ground, and dress the vineyards, for the Chaldeans. Sometimes armies and great armies, have been defeated by a handful of men; they that have nothing, have nothing to lose. When the rich Jews, who had been oppressive to the poor, were made strangers, nay, prisoners, in an enemy's country, the poor, whom they had despised and oppressed, had liberty and peace in their own country; thus Providence sometimes remarkably humbles the proud, and favours them of low degree.

4. The brazen vessels, and other appartenances of the temple, are carried away, these of silver and gold being most of them gone before: those two famous columns of brass, Jachin and Boaz, which signified the strength and stability of the house of God, were broken to pieces, and the brass of them carried to Babylon, v. 13. When the things signified were sinned away, what should the signs stand there for? Ahaz had profanely cut off the borders of the earth, and God put the brazen sea wherein they were without weight, v. 16. I carry making away of the vessels wherewith they ministered, v. 14. put an end to ministration. It was a righteous thing with God to deprive those of the benefit of his worship, who had slighted it so long, and preferred false worship before it; they that would have many altars, now shall have none.
5. Several of the great men are slain in cold blood; Seraiah the chief priest, who was the father of Ezra, (as appears, Ezra 7.1.) the second priest, who, when there was occasion, officiated for him, and three door-keepers of the temple, v. 18. the general of the army, five privy-counsellors (afterward, they made them up seven,) Jer. 32. 25. the secretary of war, or pay-master of the army, and sixty country-gentlemen who had concealed themselves in the city; these being persons of some rank, were brought to the king of Babylon, v. 19, 20. who ordered them to be all put to death, v. 21. when, in reason, they might have hoped that surely the bitterness of death was past. These the king of Babylon's regency looked upon as most active in opposing him; but Divine Justice, we may suppose, looked upon them as ringleaders in that idolatry and iniquity which were punished by these desolations. This completed the calamity: so Judith was carried away out of their land, about 860 years after they were put in possession of it by Joshua; now the scripture was fulfilled, The Lord shall bring thee, and the king which thou shalt set over thee, into a nation which thou hast not known, Deut. 28. 36. Sin kept their fathers forty years out of Canaan, and now turned them out: the Lord is known by those judgments, which he executes, and makes good that word which he has spoken, Amos 3.2. only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

22. And as for the people that remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, ruler. 23. And when all the captains of the armies, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor, there came to Gedaliah, to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Caresh, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men. 24. And Gedaliah sware to them, and to their men, and said unto them, Fear not to be the servants of the Chaldees: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. 25. But it came to pass, in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and the Chaldees that were with him at Mizpah. 26. And all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the armies, arose, and came to Egypt: for they were afraid of the Chaldees. 27. And it came to pass, in the seventh and thirteenth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison; 28. And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings' that were with him in Babylon; 29. And changed his prison garments: and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life. 30. And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life.

In these verses, we have,
1. The dispersion of the remaining people, the city of Jerusalem was quite laid waste; some people there were in the land of Judah, v. 22. that had weathered the storm, and (which was no small favour at this time,) Jer. 43.21. had their lives given them for a prey. Now see,
1. What a good posture they were put into; the king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah, one of themselves, to be their governor and protector under him, a very good man, and one that would make the best of the bad, v. 22. his father Ahikam was one that commended and protected Jeremiah, when the princes had availed to have taken his life. Jer. 26. 24. It is probable that this Gedaliah, by the advice of Jeremiah, had gone over to the Chaldeans, and had approved himself so well, that the king of Babylon intrusted him with the government; he resided not at Jerusalem; but at Mizpah, in the land of Benjamin, a place famous in Samuel's time; thither those came, who had fled from Zedekiah, v. 4. and put themselves under his protection, v. 23. which he assured them of, if they dealt justly and peaceably under the government of the king of Babylon, v. 24. Gedaliah, though he had not the pomp and power of a sovereign prince, yet might have been a greater blessing to them than many of their kings had been, especially having such a privy-counsellor as Jeremiah, who was now with them and interested himself in their affairs, Jer. 40. 4. 6. 2. What a fatal breach was made upon them, soon afterward, by the death of Gedaliah, v. 26. two months after he entered upon his government. The utter extirpation of the Jews, for the present, was determined, and therefore it is in vain for them to think of taking root again; the whole land must be plucked up, Jer. 45. 4. yet this hopeful settlement is dashed to pieces, not by the Chaldeans, but by some of themselves: the things of their peace were so hidden from their eyes, that they knew not when they were well off, nor would believe when they were told.

(1.) They had a good governor of their own, and him they slew, out of spite to the Chaldeans, because he was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, v. 25. Ishmael, who was of the royal family, envying Gedaliah's advancement, and the happy settlement of the people under him, though he could not propose to set up himself, resolved to ruin him, and basely slew him and all the friends of the Chaldeans: Nebuchadnezzar would not, could not, have been a more mischievous enemy to their peace, than this degenerate branch of the house of David was.

(2.) They were as yet in their own good land, but they forsook it, and went to Egypt for fear of the Chaldees, v. 26. The Chaldeans had reason enough to be offended at the murder of Gedaliah; but if their that he had, he boldly remonstrated, alleging that it was only the act of Ishmael and his party, we may suppose that they who were innocent of it, may, who suffered greatly by it, would not have been punished for it; but, under pretence of this apprehension, contrary to the counsel of Jeremiah, they all went to Egypt, where it is probable they mixed with the Egyptians by degrees, and were never heard of more as Israelites. Thus was there a full end made of them by their own folly and disobedience, and Egypt had the last of them, that the last verse of that chapter of threatenings might
be fulfilled, after all the rest, Deut. 28. 68. The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again. These events are more largely related by the prophet Jeremiah, ch. 40. to ch. 45. Quæque fœce miser-rima vidit, et quorum fœra magna fuit,—Which scenes he was doomed to behold, and in which he bare a melancholy part.

II. The reviving of the captive prince; of Zede-kiah we hear no more, after he was carried blind to Babylon; it is probable that he did not live long, but that when he died, he was buried with some marks of honour, Jer. 34. 5. Of Jehoiachin, or Je-coniah, who surrendered himself, ch. 24. 12. we are here told, that as soon as Evil-merodach came to the crown, upon the death of his father Nebuchadnezzer, he released him out of prison, (where he had lain 37 years, and was now 55 years old,) spoke kindly unto him, paid more respect to him than to any other of the kings his father had left in captivity, v. 28. gave him princely clothing instead of his prison-garments, maintained him in his own palace, v. 29. and allowed him a pension for himself and his family, in some measure, corresponding to his rank, a daily rate for every day as long as he lived. Consider this, 1. As a very happy change of Jehoiachin's condition: to have honour and liberty, after he had been so long in confinement and disgrace, the plenty and pleasure of a court, after he had been so long accustomed to the straits and miseries of a prison, was like the return of the morning after a very dark and tedious night. Let none say that they shall never see good again, because they have long seen little but evil; the most miserable know not what blessed turn Providence may yet give to their affairs, nor what comforts they are reserved for, according to the days wherein they have been afflicted, Ps. 90. 15. However, the death of afflicted saints is to them such a change as this here was to Jehoi-achin: it will release them out of their prison, shake off the body, that prison-garment, and open the way to their advancement; will send them to the throne, to the table, of the King of kings, the glorious liberty of God's children.

2. As a very generous act of Evil-merodach's; he thought that his father made the yoke of his captives too heavy, and therefore, with the tenderness of a man, and the honour of a prince, made it lighter; it should seem, all the kings he had in his power, were favoured, but Jehoiachin above them all; some think, for the sake of the antiquity of his family, and the honour of his renowned ancestors, David and Solomon; none of the kings of the nations, it is likely, were descended from so long a race of kings in a direct lineal succession, and by a male line, as the king of Judah. The Jews say that this Evil-merodach had been himself imprisoned by his own father, when he returned from his madness, for some mismanagement at that time, and that in prison he contracted a friendship with Jehoiachin, in consequence of which, as soon as he had it in his power, he showed him this kindness as a sufferer, as a fellow-sufferer. Some suggest that Evil-merodach had learned from Daniel and his fellows the principles of the true religion, and was well-affected to them, and, upon that account, favoured Jehoiachin.

3. As a kind dispensation of Providence, for the encouragement of the Jews in captivity, and the support of their faith and hope concerning their enlargement in due time; this happened just about the midnight of their captivity; 36 of the seventy years were now past, and almost as many were yet behind, and now to see their king thus advanced, would be a comfortable earnest to them of their own release in due time, in the set time: unto the upright there thus ariseth light in the darkness, to encourage them to hope, even in the cloudy and dark day, that at evening time it shall be light; when therefore we are perplexed, let us not be in despair.
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE FIRST BOOK OF

CHRONICLES.

In common things, repetition is thought needless and nauseous; but in sacred things, præcept must be upon præcept, and line upon line. To me, says the apostle, to write the same things is not grievous, but for you it is safe, Phil. 3. 1. These books of Chronicles are, in a great measure, repetition; so are much of the second and third of the four evangelists: and yet no tautologies, either here or there, no vain repetitions. We may be ready to think that of all the books of holy scripture, we could best spare these two books of Chronicles. Perhaps we might, and yet we could very ill spare them; for there are many most excellent useful things in them, which we find not elsewhere. And as for what we find here which we have already met with, 1. It might be of great use to those who lived when these books were first published, before the canon of the Old Testament was completed, and the particles of it put together; for it would remind them of what was more fully related in the other books. Abstracts, abridgments, and references, are of use in divinity as well as law. That, perhaps, may not be said in vain, which yet has been said before. 2. It is still of use, that out of the mouth of two witnesses, every word may be established, and that, being inculcated, it may be remembered. The penman of these books is supposed to be Ezra, that ready scribe in the law of the Lord, Ezra 7. 6. It is a groundless story of that apocryphal writer, 2 Esdr. 14. 21., &c. that all the law being burnt, Ezra was divinely inspired to write it all over again, which yet might take rise from the books of Chronicles, where we find, though not all the same story repeated, yet the names of all those who were the subjects of that story. These books are called in the Hebrew words of days; journals, or annals, because, by divine direction, collected out of some public and authentic records. The collection was made after the captivity, and yet the language of the originals, written before, is sometimes retained, as 2 Chron. 5. 9. There is unto this day, which must have been written before the destruction of the temple. The Septuagint calls it a book Θηματολογίων, of things left, or overlooked, by the preceding historians; and several such things there are in it. It is the rearward, the gathering host, of this sacred camp, which gathers up what remained, that nothing might be lost. In this first book, we have, 1. A collection of sacred genealogies, from Adam to David: and they are none of those which the apostle calls endless genealogies, but we have their use and end in Christ, ch. 1. 9. Divers little passages of history are here inserted, which we have not before. II. A repetition of the history of the translation of the kingdom from Saul to David, and of the triumph of David's reign, with large additions, ch. 10. 21. III. An original account of the settlement of David made of the ecclesiastical affairs, and the preparation he made for the building of the temple, ch. 22. 39. These are words of days, of the oldest days, of the best days, of the Old Testament-church. The reigns of kings, and dates of kingdoms, as well as the lives of common persons, are reckoned by days; for a little time often gives a great turn, and yet all time is nothing to eternity.
CHAP. I.

This chapter, and many that follow it, repeat the genealogies we have hitherto met with in sacred history, and put them all together, with considerable additions. We may be tempted, it may be, to think it had been well if they had not been written, because, when they come to be compared with other parallel places, there are differences to be found, which we can scarcely accommodate to our satisfaction; yet we must not therefore stumble at the word, but bless God that the things necessary to salvation are plain enough. And since the wise God has given us the authority of the whole Bible, and even these things, we should not pass them over unread. All scripture is profitable, though not all alike profitable; and we may take occasion for good thoughts and meditations even from those portions that do not abound as much as others do, with profitable remarks. These genealogies, 1. Were then of great use, when they were here preserved, and put into the hands of the Jews after their return from Babylon; for the divinity, like the devil, had put all into confusion, and they, in that dispersion and despair would be in danger of losing the distinctions of their tribes and families. This therefore revives the ancient land-marks even of some of the tribes that were carried captive into Assyria. Perhaps it might invite the Jews to study the sacred writings which had been neglected, to find the names of their ancestors, and the rise of their families in them. 2. They are still of some use for the illustrating of the scripture-story, and especially for the clearing of the pedigrees of the Messiah, that it might appear that our blessed Saviour was, according to the prophecies which went before him, David, the son of Jesse, the son of Abraham, the son of Adam. And now that he is come for whose sake these registers were preserved, the Jews since have so lost all their genealogies, that even that of the priests, the most sacred of all, is forgotten, and they know not of any one man in the world, that can point himself of the house of Aaron. When the building is reared, the scaffolds are removed. When the promised Seed is come, the line that was to lead to him, is cast off.

In this chapter, we have an abstract of all the genealogies in the book of Genesis, till we come to Jacob. I. The descents from Adam to Noah and his sons, out of Gen. 5. 1-32. II. The descents from Noah to the catastrophe, by which the world was confounded, out of Gen. 10. v. 5. 23. III. The descents from Shem to Abraham, out of Gen. 11. v. 24.-28. IV. The posterity of Ishmael and of Abram's sons. V. The posterity of Lot, out of Gen. 19. v. 29. 35. VI. The posterity of Jethro, out of Gen. 36. v. 36. 54. These, it is likely, were passed over lightly in Genesis; and therefore, according to the law of the school, we are made to go that lesson over again, which we did not learn well.

1. Aadam, Seth, Enosh, 2. Kenan, 3. Mahaleel, Jered, 3. Henoch, Methuselah, Lamech, 4. Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 5. The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras. 6. And the sons of Gomer; Ashchenaz, and Ripham, and Togarmah. 7. And the sons of Javan; Elishah, and Tarshish, Kikhem, and Dodanim. 8. The sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizzram, Put, and Canaan. 9. And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabatha, and Raamah, and Sabtecha. And the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan. 10. And Cush begat Nimrod; he began to he mighty upon the earth. 11. And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim. 12. And Pathrusim, and Casluhim, (of whom came the Philistines,) and Caphtorim. 13. And Canaan begat Zidon his first-born, and Heth, 14. The Jebusite also, and the Amorite, and the Girgasite, 15. And the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite, 16. And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. 17. The sons of Shem, Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram, and Uz, and Hul, and Gether, and Meshech. 18. And Arphaxad begat Shelah, and Shelah begat Eber. 19. And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, (because in his days the earth was divided,) and his brother's name was Joktan. 20. And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph, and Hazarvath, and Jerah, and Hadoram also, and Uzal, and Diklah, 22. And Ebal, and Abimael, and Sheba, 23. And Ophir, and Havilah, and Jobab. All these were the sons of Joktan. 24. Shem, Arphaxad, Shelah, 25. Eber, Peleg, Reu, 26. Serug, Nahor, Terah, 27. Abram, the same is Abraham.

This paragraph has Adam for its first word, and Abraham for its last. Between the creation of the former, and the birth of the latter, were 2,000 years; almost the one half of which time Adam himself lived. Adam was the common father of our flesh, Abraham the common father of the faithful. By the breach which the former made of the covenant of innocence, we were made miserable; but kept apart and not of grace made with the latter, we are all, or may be, made happy. We are all, by nature, the seed of Adam, branches of that wild olive. Let us see to it, that, by faith, we become the seed of Abraham, (Rom. 4. 11. 12.) that we be planted into the good olive, and partake of its root and fatness.

I. The four first verses of this paragraph, and the four last, which are linked together by Shem, v. 4. 24. contain the sacred line of Christ from Adam to Abraham, and are inserted in his pedigree; the order, Luke 3. 34. 38. 38. here it descends. This genealogy proves the falsehood of that reproach, As for this man, we know not whence he is, Bishop Patrick well observes here, that a genealogy being to be drawn of the families of the Jews, this appears as the peculiar glory of the Jewish nation, that they alone were able to trace their pedigree from the first man that God created, which no other nation pretended to, but abused themselves and their posterity with fabulous accounts of their originals; the Arcadians fancying that they were before the moon: the people of Thessaly that they sprang from stones; the Athenians that they grew out of the earth; much like the vain imaginations which sprang from some of the philosophers. There is a great deal of the origin of this universe, which the holy scripture gives both of the creation of the world and the rise of nations, carries with it as clear evidences of its own truth, as those idle traditions do of their own vanity and falsehoods.

II. All the verses between, repeat the account of the replenishing of the earth by the sons of Noah after the flood. 1. He begins with those who were strangers to the church, the Canaanites, which dwelled on the islands of the Gentiles, those western parts of the world, the countries of Europe. Of these he gives a short account, v. 5. 7. because with these the Jews had hitherto had little or no dealings. 2. He proceeds to those, many of whom had been enemies to the church, the sons of Ham, who moved southwards towards Africa, and
those parts of Asia which lay that way. Nimrod
son of Cush began to be an oppressor, probably, to
the people of God in his time. But Mizraim, from
whom came the Egyptians, and Canaan, from whom came the Canaanites, are both of them names of
great note in the Jewish story; for with their de-
scendants, the Israel of God had severe struggles
to get out of the land of Egypt, and into the land of
Canaan, and therefore the branches of Mizraim are
particularly recorded. 30. And of Shem were
Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram. 31.
Kenaz, Kenath, and Kenath. 32. And of Japhet
were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, and Tu-
bau. 33. These sons of Japhet were the ancient
tribes of Europe. 34. And These were the
sons of Zibeon; Aiah, and Anah. 35. The
sons of Anah; Dishon. And the sons of
Dishon; Amram, and Ethban, and Ithran, and
Cheran. 36. The sons of Ezer; Bil-
han, and Zavan, and Jakan. The sons of
Dishan; Uz, and Aran. 43. Now these
are the kings that reigned in the land of
Edom, before any king reigned over the
children of Israel; Bela the son of Beor:
and the name of his city was Duhabhah.
44. And when Bela was dead, Jobab
the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his
stead. 45. And when Jobab was dead, Husham
of the land of the Temanites reigned in his
stead. 46. And when Husham was dead,
Hadad the son of Bedad, (which smote
Midian in the field of Moab,) reigned in his
stead: and the name of his city was Avith.
47. And when Hadad was dead, Samlah
of Masrekah reigned in his stead. 48. And
when Samlah was dead, Shaul of Rehoboth
by the river reigned in his stead. 49.
And when Shaul was dead, Baal-hanan the
son of Achbor reigned in his stead. 50.
And when Baal-hanan was dead, Hadad reigned
in his stead: and the name of his city was Pail:
and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the
daughter of Matred, the daughter of
Mezahah. 51. Hadad died also. And the
dukes of Edom were; duke Timnah, duke
Aliah, duke Jetheth, 52. Duke Aholibamah,
duke Elah, duke Pinon, 53. Duke Kenaz, duke
Teman, duke Mibzar, 54. Duke Magdiel, duke Haram. These are the
dukes of Edom.

All nations, but the seed of Abraham, are already
shaken off from this genealogy, they have no part
or lot in this matter. The Lord's portion is his peo-
ple, the he keeps account of, and knows by name;
but those who are strangers to him, he beholds afar
off. Not that we are to conclude that therefore no
particular persons of any other nation, but the seed
of Abraham, found favour with God. It was a truth
before Peter perceived it, that in every nation he
that feared God, and wrought righteousness, was
accepted of him. Multitudes will be brought to
heaven out of all nations, (Rev. 7. 9.) and we are
willing to hope there were many, very many, good
people in the world, that lay out of the pale
of God's covenant of peculiarity with Abraham, whose
names were in the book of life, though not descend-
ced from any of the following families written in this
book, The Lord knows them that are his. But Is-
rael was a chosen nation, elect in type; and no other
nation, in its national capacity, was so digni-
fied and privileged as the Jewish nation was.
That is the holy nation, which is the subject of the
sacred story; and therefore we are next to shake
off all the seed of Abraham, but the posterity of Ja-
ob only, which were all incorporated into one na-
tion, and joined to the Lord, while the other de-
cendants from Abraham, for aught that appears,
were estranged both from God, and from one an-
other.

I. We shall have little to say to the Is-
raelites, they were the sons of the bond-woman, that were to
be cast out, and not to be heirs with the child of the promise; and their case was to represent that of the unbelieving Jews, who were rejected, (Gal. 4. 23, &c.) and therefore there is little notice taken of that nation, or those sons, as opposed here, (v. 29-31.) to show the performance of the promise, God made to Abraham, in answer to his prayer for him, that, for Abraham’s sake, he should beget a great nation, and particularly that he should beget twelve princes, Gen. 17. 20.

II. We shall have little to say to the Midianites, who descended from Abraham’s children by Keturah; they were children of the east, (probably Job was one of them,) and were dismissed from Isaac, the heir of the promise, Gen. 25. 6. and therefore they are only named here, v. 32. The sons of Jokshan, the son of Keturah, are named also, and the sons of Midian, v. 32, 33. who became most eminent, and perhaps gave denomination to all these families, as Judah to the Jews.

III. We shall not have much to say to the Edomites; they had an invertebrate enmity to God’s Israel; yet, because they descended from Esau the son of Isaac, we have here an account of their families, and the names of some of their famous men, v. 35. to the end. Some slight differences there are between some of the names here, and as we had them, Gen. 36. whence this whole account is taken. Three or four names that were written with a Fau there, are written with a Jod here; probably, the pronunciation being altered, as is usual in other languages. Some of these names are longer than many words very differently from what they were written but 200 years ago.

Let us take occasion, from the reading of these genealogies, to think, 1. Of the multitudes that have gone through this world, have acted their part in it, and then quitted it. Job, even in his early day, saw not only every man drawing after him, but innumerable before him, Job 21. 33. All these, and all their works, had their day, many of them made a mighty noise, and figure in the world; but their day came to an end, and their place knew them no more. The paths of death are trodden paths, but Vestigia nulla retrorsum—none can retrace their steps. 2. Of the providence of God, which keeps up the generations of men, and so preserves that degenerate race, though guilty, and obnoxious, in being upon earth. How easily could he cut it off without either a dehiscing or a confusion! Write but all the children of men children, and some were gone; but the earth shall be eased of its burden when it groans; but the divine patience lets the trees that cumber the ground, not only grow, but prospers. As one generation, even of sinful men, passes away, another comes, (Eccl. 1. 4. Numb. 32. 14.) and will do so while the earth remains. Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it.

CHAP. II.

We are now come to what was principally intended, the register of the children of Israel, that distinguished people, that were to dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations. Here is, 1. The names of the twelve sons of Israel, v. 1. And then, 2. An account of the tribe of Judah, which has the precedence, not so much for the sake of David, as for the sake of the Son of David, our Lord, who sprung out of Judah, Heb. 7. 14. 1. The first descendant from Judah, down to Jesse, v. 3. 12. The children of Jesse, v. 13. 17. 3. The posterity of Hezron, not only through Ram, from whom David came, but through Caleb, v. 18. 20. Segub, v. 21. 24. Jearaham, v. 24. 49. with the family of Caleb the son of Hur, v. 50. 55. The best exposition we can give of this and the following chapters, and which will give the clearest view of them, is, those genealogical tables which were published with some of the first impressions of the last English Bible about a hundred years ago, and continued for some time; and it is pity but they were revised in some of our latter editions; for they are of great use to those who diligently search the scriptures. They are said to be drawn up by that great master in scripture learning, Mr. Hugh Broughton. We meet with them sometimes in old Bibles.

1. THESE are the sons of Israel; Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, 2. Dan, Joseph, and Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

3. The sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah; which three were born unto him of the daughter of Shua the Canaanitess. And Er, the first-born of Judah, was evil in the sight of the Lord; and he slew him. 4. And Tamar his daughter-in-law bare him Pharez and Zerah. All the sons of Judah were five. 5. The sons of Pharez; Hezron, and Hamul. 6. And the sons of Zerah; Zimri, and Ethan, and Heman, and Calcol, and Dara: five of them in all. 7. And the sons of Carmi; Achar the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the thing accused. 8. And the sons of Ethan; Azariah. 9. The sons also of Hezron, that were born unto him; Jerahmeel, and Ram, and Chelubai. 10. And Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon, prince of the children of Judah; 11. And Nahshon begat Salmon, and Salmon begat Boaz, 12. And Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse. 13. And Jesse begat his first born Eliab, and Abinadab the second, and Shimma the third, 14. Nethaneel the fourth, Raddai the fifth, 15. Ozem the sixth, David the seventh: 16. Whose sisters were Zeruiah, and Abigail. And the sons of Zeruiah; Abishai, and Joab, and Asahel, three. 17. And Abigail bare Amasa: and the father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmeelite.

Here is,

1. The family of Jacob. His twelve sons are here named, that illustrious number so often celebrated almost throughout the whole Bible, from the first to the last book of it. At every turn, we meet with the twelve tribes that descended from these twelve patriarchs. The personal character of several of them was none of the best, (the four first were much blemished) and yet the covenant was entailed on their seed: for it was of grace, free grace, that it was said, Jacob have I loved: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

2. The family of Judah. That tribe was most praised, most increased, and most dignified, of any of the tribes, and therefore the genealogy of it is the first and largest of them all. In the account here given of the first branches of that illustrious tree, which Christ was to be the top-branch of, we meet, (1.) With some that were very bad. Here is Er, Judah’s eldest son, that was evil in the sight of the Lord, and was cut off in the beginning of his days, by a stroke of divine vengeance; the Lord slew him, v. 3. His next brother, Onan, was no better; and fared no better. Here is Tamar, with whom Judah, her father-in-law, committed incest, v. 4. And here is Achan, called Achar, a troubler, that troubled Israel by taking of the accursed thing,
And Jonathan; and Jether died without children. 33. And the sons of Jonathan; Peleth, and Zaza. These were the sons of Jerahmeel. 34. Now Sheshan had no sons, but daughters: and Sheshan had a servant, an Egyptian, whose name was Jarha. 35. And Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant to wife, and she bare him Attai. 36. And Attai begat Nathan, and Nathan begat Zabad, 37. And Zabad begat Ephlal, and Ephlal begat Obed, 38. And Obed begat Jehu, and Jehu begat Azariah, 39. And Azariah begat Helez, and Helez begat Eleasah, 40. And Eleasah begat Sismai, and Sismai begat Shallum, 41. And Shallum begat Jehoshek, and Jehoshek begat Elishama. 42. Now the sons of Caleb, the brother of Jerahmeel, were Meshed his first-born, which was the father of Ziph; and the sons of Maresiah, the father of Hebron. 43. And the sons of Hebron; Korah, and Tappuah, and Rekem, and Shema. 44. And Shema begat Raham the father of Jorkaim; and Rekem begat Shammai. 45. And the son of Shammai was Maon; and Maon was the father of Beth-zur. 46. And Ephah, Caleb's concubine, bare Haran, and Moza, and Gazez; and Haran begat Gazez. 47. And the sons of Jahdai; Regem, and Jotham, and Geshan, and Pelet, and Ephah, and Shaaph. 48. Maachah, Caleb's concubine, bare Sherib, and Tirhanah. 49. She bare also Shaaph the father of Madmannah, Sheva the father of Machbenah, and the father of Gibea: and the daughter of Caleb was Achsa. 50. These were the sons of Caleb, the son of Hur, the first-born of Ephratah; Shobal the father of Kirjath-jearim, 51. Salma the father of Beth-lehem, Hareph the father of Beth-gader. 52. And Shobal the father of Kirjath-jearim had sons; Haroeh, and half of the Manahethites. 53. And the families of Kirjath-jearim; the Ithrites, and the Puhites, and the Shvumathites, and the Mishreites: of them came the Zareahites, and the Eshtaulites. 54. The sons of Salma; Beth-lehem, and the Netophathites, Ataroth, the house of Joab, and half of the Manahethites, the Zorites. 55. And the families of the scribes which dwelt at Jabez; the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and Suchathites. These are the Kenites that came of Hez math, the father of the house of Rechab.

The persons mentioned in the first seventeen verses, are most of them such as we read of, and most of them such as we read much of, in other scriptures. But there are very few of those here, that are mentioned any where else. It should seem, the tribe of Judah were more full and exact in their genealogies than any other of the tribes; in
which we must acknowledge a special providence, for the clearing of the genealogies of Christ.

1. Here we find Bezaleel, who was head-workman in building of the tabernacle, Exod. 31. 2.

2. Hezron, who was the son of Pharez, v. 5. is the father of all this progeny; his sons, Caleb and Jerahmeel, being very fruitful, and he himself likewise, even in his old age, for he left his wife pregnant, when he died, v. 23. This son of Pharez was the eldest of the seven, who went down with Jacob into Egypt, Gen. 46. 12. there his family thus increased, as the other expressed families there did. We cannot but suppose that he died during the Israelites' bondage in Egypt; and yet it is here said, he died in Caleb-ephrahath, that is, Beth-lehem in the land of Canaan, v. 24. Perhaps, though the body of the people continued in Egypt, yet some that were more active than the rest, at least, before their bondage came to be examined, visited Canaan sometimes, and got footing there, through afterwards they lost it. The achievements of Jair, here mentioned, v. 22, 23. we had an account of, Numb. 32. 41. and, it is supposed, were long after the conquest of Canaan. The Jews say, Hezron married his third wife when he was sixty years old, v. 21. and another after, v. 24. because he had a great desire of posterity in the land of Canaan, of whom the Messiah was to descend. Here is mention of one that died without children, v. 30. and another, v. 32. and of one that had no sons, but daughters, v. 34. Let not those that are either of these ways afflicted, not think their case new or singular. Providence orders these affairs of families by an incontestable sovereignty, as pleaseth him, giving children, or withholding them, or giving all of one sort, or part of the family, and will please us, but we are bound to acquiesce in his good pleasure. To those that love him, he will himself be better than ten sons, and give them in his house a place and a name better than of sons and daughters. Let not them therefore that are written childless, envy the families that are built up and replenished. Shall our eye be evil, because God's is good? Here is mention of one who had an only daughter, and married her to one of his servants, out of Egypt, v. 34, 35. If he mentioned to his praise, we must suppose that this Egyptian was proselyted to the Jewish religion, and that he was very eminent for wisdom and virtue; else he had not become a true-born Israelite to match a daughter to him, especially an only daughter. If Egyptians become converts, and servants do worthily, neither their parentage, nor their servitude, should be a bar to their preferment. Such a one this Egyptian servant, he who married him, might live as happy with him, as if she had married one of the rulers of her tribe. The pedigree of several of these terminate, not in a person, but in a place or country; as one is said to be the father of Kirjath-jearim, v. 50. another of Beth-lehem, v. 51. which was afterwards David's city; because these places fell to the lot of them in the land of Canaan.

Lastly, Here are some that are said to be families of scribes, v. 55. such as kept up learning in their family, especially scripture-learning, and taught the people the good knowledge of God. Among all these great families, we are glad to find some that were families of scribes. Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophet! All the families of Israel families of scribes, well instructed in the knowledge of heaven, and able to bring out of their treasury things new and old!

CHAP. III.

Of all the families of Israel, none was so illustrous as the family of David. That is the family which was mentioned in the chapter before, v. 15. Here we have a full account of it. 1. David's sons, v. 1-9. II. His successors in the throne as long as the kingdom continued, v. 10-16. III. The remains of his family in, and after, the captivity, v. 17-24. From this family, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. 1.

NOW these were the sons of David, which were born unto him in Hebron; the first-born, Amnon, of Abinoam the Jezreelites; the second, Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelites: 2. The third, Absalom, the son of Maachah, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; the fourth, Adonijah, the son of Haggit; 3. The fifth, Shephatiah, of Abital; the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah his wife. 4. These six were born unto him in Hebron; and there he reigned seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years. 5. And these were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shimea, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, four, of Bath-shua the daughter of Ammiel: 6. Ibar also, and Elisama, and Eliphelet, 7. And Noah, and Nepheg, and Japhia, 8. And Elisama, and Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine. 9. These were all the sons of David, besides the sons of the concubines, and Tamar their sister.

We had an account of David's sons, 2 Sam. 3. 2, &c. and 5. 14, &c. 1. He had many sons; and, no doubt, wrote as he thought, Ps. 127. 5. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of these arrows. 2. Some of them were a grief to him, as Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah. And we do not read of any of them, that imitated his piety and devotion, except Solomon, and he came far short of it. 3. One of them, which Bath-shua brye to him, he called Nathan, probably, in honour of Nathan the prophet, who reproved him for his sin in that matter, and was instrumental to bring him to repentance. It seems, he loved him the better for it as long as he lived. It is wisdom to esteem those our best friends, that deal faithfully with us. From this son of David our Lord Jesus descended, as appears, Luke 3. 31. 4. Here are two Elishamas, and two Eliphelets, v. 6, 8. Probably, the two former were dead, and therefore David called the other more by their names; which he would not have done, if there had been any ill omen in it, as some fancy. 5. David had many concubines; but their children are not named, as not worthy of the honour, v. 2. the rather, because the concubines had dealt treacherously with David in the affair of Ab- salon. 6. Of all David's sons, Solomon was chosen to succeed him; perhaps not for any personal merits, (his wisdom was God's gift,) but so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee.

10. And Solomon's son was Rehoboam; Abia his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son, 11. Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, 12. Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son, 13. Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, 14. Ammon his son, Josiah his son. 15. And the sons of Josiah were, the first-born Johanan, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum. 16.
I. CHRONICLES, IV.

And the sons of Jehonakim; Jecohiaiah his son, Zedekiah his son. 17. And the sons of Jeconiah; Assir, Salathiel his son. 18. Malchiram also, and Pedaiah, and Shenaazzar, Jecamiah, Hoshanna, and Nedabiah. 19. And the sons of Pedaiah were Zerubbabel, and Shimei; and the sons of Zerubbabel; Meshullam, and Hananiah, and Shelomith their sister: 20. And Hashubah, and Ohel, and Berechiah, and Hasadiah, Jushab-hesed, five. 21. And the sons of Hananiah; Pelatiah, and Jesaiah: the sons of Rephaiah, the sons of Arnaon, the sons of Obadiah, the sons of Shecaniah. 22. And the sons of Shecaniah; Shemaiah: and the sons of Shemaiah; Hatshuiah, and Igeal, and Bariah, and Neariah, and Shaphat, six. 23. And the sons of Neariah; Elioenai, and Hezekiah, and Azrikam, three. 24. And the sons of Elioenai were Hodaiah, and Eliashib, and Pelaiah, and Akkub, and Johanan, and Daliah, and Anani, seven.

David having 19 sons, we may suppose them to have raised many noble families in Israel, whom we never hear of in the history. But the scripture gives us an account only of the descendants of Solomon here, and of Nathan, Luke 3. The rest had the honour to be the sons of David; but these only had the honour to be related to the Messiah. The sons of Nathan were his fathers, as man; the sons of Solomon his predecessors, as king. We have here,

1. The great and celebrated names by which the line of David is drawn down to the captivity; the kings of Judah in a lineal succession; the history of whom we have had at large in the two books of Kings, and shall meet with again in the second book of Chronicles. Seldom has a crown gone in a direct line from father to son for 17 descents together, as here. This was the recompense of David's piety. About the captivity, the lineal descent was interrupted, and the crown went from one brother to another, and from a nephew to an uncle; which was a presage of the eclipsing of the glory of that house.

2. The less famous, and most of them very obscure, names, in which the house of David subsisted after the captivity. The only famous man of that house, that we meet with at their return from captivity, was, Zerubbabel, elsewhere called the son of Salathiel, but appearing here to be his grandson, v. 17-19, which is usual in scripture. Belshazzar is called Nebuchadnezzar's son, but was his grandson. Salathiel is said to be the son of Jeconiah, because adopted by him, and because, as some think, he succeeded him in the dignity to which he was restored by Evil-merodach; otherwise Jeconiah was written childless: he was the signet God plucked from his right hand, Jer. 22. 24. and in his room Zerubbabel was placed; and the God of Solomon with him, Hag. 2. 23. I would make thee as a signet. The posterity of Zerubbabel here bear not the same names that they do in the genealogies, Matt. 1. or Luke 3. but these, no doubt, were taken from the then herald's office, the public registers which the priests kept of all the families of Judah, especially that of David.

The last person named in this chapter, is, Anani; of whom Bishop Patrick says that the Targum adds these words, he is the king Messiah, who is to be revealed; and some of the Jewish writers give this reason, because it is said, Dan 7. 13. The son of man came gnm gnmani—will the clouds of heaven. The reason indeed is very foreign and far-fetched; but that learned man thinks it may be made use of as an evidence that their minds were always full of the thoughts of the Messiah, and that they expected it would not be very long after the days of Zerubbabel, before the set time of his approach would come.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, we have, 1. A further account of the genealogies of the tribe of Judah, the most numerous, and most famous, of all the tribes. The posterity of Shobal the son of Hur, v. 1-4. Of Ashur the posthumous son of Hezron, who was mentioned, ch. 2. 24. with something particular concerning Jabez, v. 5. 10. Of Cheleb, and others, v. 11-20. Of Shelah, v. 21-23. II. An account of the posterity and cities of Simeon, their conquest of Gedor, and of the Amalekites in mount Seir, v. 24. 43.

1. THE sons of Judah; Pharez, Hezron, and Carmi, and Hur, and Shobal. 2. And Reaiah the son of Shobal begat Jahath; and Jahath begat Ahumai and Lahad. These are the families of the Zorathites. 3. And these were of the father of Etam; Zeareel, and Ishma, and Idash: and the name of their sister was Hazeleponi: 4. And Penuel the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These are the sons of Hur, the first-born of Ephratah, the father of Beth-lehem. 5. And Ashur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah. 6. And Naarah bare him Ahuzam, and Hepher, and Temeni, and Haahashtari. These were the sons of Naarah. 7. And the sons of Helah were, Zereth, and Jezeor, and Ethnan. 8. And Coz begat Anub, and Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel the son of Harum. 9. And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. 10. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.

One reason, no doubt, why Ezra is here the most particular in the register of the tribe of Judah, is, because that tribe was it which, with its appendages, Simeon, Benjamim, and Levi, made up the kingdom of Judah; which not only long survived the other tribes in Canaan, but, in process of time, now, when this was written, returned out of captivity, when the generality of the other tribes were lost in the Kingdom of Assyria.

The most remarkable person in this paragraph, is, Jabez. It is not said whose son he was; nor does it appear in what age he lived; but, it should seen, he was the founder of one of the families of Aharhel, mentioned v. 8.
Here is,

I. The reason of his name: his mother gave him the name with this reason, Because I bare him with sorrow, v. 9. All children are born with sorrow; for the sentence upon the woman is, In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children: but some with much more sorrow than others. Usually, the sorrow in bearing, is afterwards forgotten, for joy that the child is born; but here, it seems, it was so extraordinary, that it was remembered when the child came to be circumcised, and care taken to perpetuate the remembrance of it while he lived. Perhaps, the mother called him Jabez, as Rachel called her children, to prevent a sorrow. Or, if she recovered it, yet thus she recorded it, 1. That it might be a continual memorandum to herself, to be thankful to God as long as she lived, for supporting her under, and bringing her through, that sorrow. It may be of use to be often reminded of our sorrows, that we may always have such thoughts of things as we had in the day of our affliction, and may learn to rejoice with trembling. 2. That it might likewise be a memorandum to him, in this world, into which she bare him, a vale of tears, in which he must expect few days and full of trouble. The sorrow he carried in his name, might help to put a seriousness upon his spirit. It might also remind him to love and honour his mother, and labour, in every thing, to be a comfort to her who brought him into the world with so much sorrow. It is piety in children thus to requite their parents. 1 Tim. 5. 4.

II. The eminency of his character: he was more honourable than his brethren, qualified above them by the divine grace, and dignified above them by the divine providence; they did virtuously, but he excelled them all. Now the sorrow with which his mother bare him, was abundantly recompensed. That son which of all the rest cost her most dear, shews his happiness, and was made glad according to the affliction, Ps. 90. 15. We are not told upon what account he was more honourable than his brethren; whether because he raised a greater estate, or was preferred to the magistracy, or signalized himself in war; we have most reason to think it was upon the account of his learning and piety; not only because these, above any thing, put honour upon a man, but because we have reason to think that in these Jabez was eminent; and prepared accordingly to the affliction; because we find that the families of the scribes dwelt at Jabez, ch. 2. 55. a city which, it is likely, took its name from this name. The Jews say that he was a famous doctor of the law, and left many disciples behind him. And it should seem by the mentioning of him so abruptly here, that his name was well known, when Ezra wrote this. 2. In piety; because we find here that he was a praying man, and desired to do himself honourable; and by prayer he obtained those blessings from God, which added much to his honour. The way to be truly great, is to be truly good, and to pray much.

III. The prayer he made, probably, like Solomon's prayer for wisdom, just when he was setting out in the world: he set himself to acknowledge God in all his ways, put himself under the divine blessing, and direct himself accordingly. Perhaps, these were the heads on which he enlarged in his daily prayers; for this purpose, it was his constant practice to pray alone, and with his family, as Daniel. Some think that it was upon some particular occasion, when he was straitened and threatened by his enemies, that he prayed this prayer. Observe,

1. To whom he prayed. Not to any of the gods of the Gentiles: no, he called on the God of Israel, the living and true God, who alone can hear and answer prayer; and, in prayer, had an eye to him as the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, the God with whom Jacob wrestled and prevailed, and was then called Israel.

2. What was the prayer, (1.) As the margin reads it, it was a solemn vow, If thou wilt bless me indeed, &c. and then the sense is imperfect, but may easily be filled up from Jacob's vow, or some such like, then thou shalt be my God. He does not express his promise, but leaves it to be understood; either because he was afraid to promise in his own strength, or because he resolved to devote himself entirely to God. He does as it were, give God a blank paper, let him fill it, and add the prayers: "Lord, if thou wilt bless me and keep me, do what thou wilt with me, I will be at thy command and disposal, for ever." (2.) As the text reads it, it was the language of a most ardent and affectionate desire, O that thou wouldst bless me! 3. What was the matter of his prayer. Four things he prayed for. (1.) That God would bless him indeed. "That blessing, thou wilt bless me; bless me greatly with manifold and abundant blessings." Perhaps, he had an eye to the promise of God made to Abraham, Gen. 22. 17, In blessing, I will bless thee. "Let that blessing of Abraham come upon me." Spiritual blessings are the best blessings; and those are blessed indeed, who are blessed with them. God's blessings are real things, and produce real effects. We can but wish a blessing, he commands it: those whom he blesses are blessed indeed. (2.) That he would enlarge his coast; that he would prosper his endeavours for the increase of what fell to his lot, either by work or war. That God would enlarge our hearts, and so enlarge our portion in himself, and in the heavenly Canaan, ought to be our desire and prayer. (3.) That God's hand might be with him. The prayer of Moses for this tribe of Judah, was, that his own hands might be sufficient for him, Deut. 33. 7. but Jabez expects not that, unless he have God's hand with him, and the presence of his power. God's hand with us, to lead us, protect us, strengthen us, and to work all our works in us and for us, is indeed a hand sufficient for us, all-sufficient. (4.) That he would keep him from evil; the evil of sin, the evil of trouble, all the evil designs of his enemies, that they might not hurt, nor grieve him, nor make him a Jabez indeed, a man of sorrows. In the original there is an allusion to his name, Father in heaven, deliver me from evil.

4. What was the success of his prayer. God granted him that which he requested; prospered him remarkably, and gave him success in his undertakings, in his studies, in his worldly business, in his conflicts with the Canaanites; and so he became more honourable than his brethren. God was of old ready to hear prayer, and his ear is not yet heavy.

11. And Chelub the brother of Shua begat Mehir, which was the father of Eshton. 12. And Eshton begat Beth-rapha, and Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Irnahash. These are the men of Rechah. 13. And the sons of Kenaz; Othniel and Seraiah: and the sons of Othniel; Hathath. 14. And Meonothai begat Ophrah: and Seraiah begat Joab, the father of the valley of Charashim; for they were craftsmen. 15. And the sons of Caleb the son of Jephuneh; Iru, Elah, and Naam: and the sons of Elah, even Kenaz. 16. And the sons
of Jehaleelel; Ziph, and Zippah, Tiria, and Asarel. 17. And the sons of Ezra were Jether and Mered, and Ephra, and Jalon: and she bare Miriam, and Shammai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa. 18. And his wife Jehudijah bare Jered the father of Gedôr, and Heber the father of Socho, and Jehuel the father of Zanoah. And these are the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, which Mered took. 19. And the sons of his wife Hodiah the sister of Naham, the father of Keilah the Garmite, and Eshtemoa the Maachathite. 20. And the sons of Shimon were, Amnon, and Rinnah, Ben-hanan, and Tilon. And the sons of Ishi were, Zoheth, and Ben-zoheth. 21. The sons of Shelah the son of Judah were, Er the father of Lecah, and Laadah the father of Maresah, and the families of the house of them that wrought fine linen, of the house of Ashbea. 22. And Jokim, and the men of Chozeba, and Joash, and Saraph, who had the dominion in Moab, and Jashubilehem. And these are ancient things. 23. These were the potters, and those that dwelt among plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work.

We may observe in these verses, 1. That here is a whole family of craftsmen, handcraft-tradesmen, that applied themselves to all sorts of manufactures, in which they were ingenious and industrious above their neighbours, v. 14. There was a valley where they lived, which was, from them, called The valley of craftsmen. They that are craftsmen, are not therefore to be looked upon as mean men. These craftsmen, though two of a trade often disagree, yet chose to live together, for the improving of arts by comparing notes, and that they might support one another's reputation. 2. That one of these married Pharaoh's daughter, v. 18. that was the common name of the kings of Egypt. If an Israelite in Egypt, before the bondage began, while Joseph's merits were yet fresh in mind, was preferred to be the king's son-in-law, it is not to be thought strange: few Israelites could, like Moses, refuse an alliance with the court. 3. That another is said to be the father of the house of them that wrought fine linen, v. 21. It is inserted in their genealogy as their honour, that they were the best weavers in the kingdom, and they brought up their children, from one generation to another, to the same business, not aiming to make them gentlemen. This Laadah is said to be the father of them that wrought fine linen; as, before the flood, Jubal is said to be the father of musicians, and Jabaël of shepherds, &c. His posterity inhabited the city of Maresah, the manufacture or staple-commodity of which place, was, linen-cloth, with which both their wives and priests were clothed. 4. That another family had had dominion in Moab, but were now in servitude in Babylon, v. 22, 23. (1.) It was found among the ancient things, that they had the dominion in Moab; probably, in David's time, when that country was conquered, they transplanted themselves thither, and were put in places of power there, which they held for several generations; but this was a great while ago, time out of mind. (2.) Their posterity were now potters and gardeners, as is supposed, in Babylon, where they dwelt with the king for his work: got a good livelihood by their industry, and therefore cared not for returning with their brethren to their own land, after the years of captivity were expired. They that now have dominion, know not what their posterity may be reduced to, nor what mean employments they may be glad to take up with. But they were unworthy the name of Israelites, that would dwell among plants and hedges, rather than be at the pains to return to Canaan.

24. The sons of Simeon were, Nemuel, and Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, and Shaul: 25. Shammah his son, Mibsam his son, Mishma his son. 26. And the sons of Mishma; Hamuel his son, Zaccur his son, Shimei his son. 27. And Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brethren had not many children, neither did all their family multiply, like to the children of Judah. 28. And they dwelt at Beer-sheba, and Moladah, and Hazar-sual, 29. And at Bilhah, and at Ezem, and at Tolad, 30. And at Bethuel, and at Hormah, and at Ziklag, 31. And at Beth-nakабboth, and Hazarsusin, and at Beth-birei, and at Shaaraim. These were their cities unto the reign of David. 32. And their villages were, Elam, and Ain, Rimmon, and Tochen, and Ashan, five cities; 33. And all their villages that were round about the same cities, unto Baal. These were their habitations, and their genealogy. 34. And Meshobab, and Jamlech, and Josiah the son of Amaziah, 35. And Joel, and Jekamiah the son of Josibiah, the son of Seraiah, the son of Asiel, 36. And Elioenai, and Jaakobah, and Jeshohaiab, and Asaiah, and Adiel, and Jesimiel, and Bealiah; 37. And Ziza the son of Shiphii, the son of Allon, the son of Jedaiab, the son of Shimri, the son of Shemaiah: 38. These mentioned by their names were princes in their families; and the house of their fathers increased greatly. 39. And they went to the entrance of Gedôr, even unto the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks. 40. And they found fat pasture and good, and the land was wide, and quiet, and peaceable; for they of Ham had dwelt there of old. 41. And these written by name came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and smote their tents, and the habitations that were found there, and destroyed them utterly unto this day, and dwelt in their rooms: because there was pasture there for their flocks. 42. And some of them, even of the sons of Simeon, five hundred men, went to mount Seir, having for their captains Pelatiah, and Neariah, and Rephaiah and Uziziel, the sons of Ishi. 43. And they smote the rest of the Amalekites
I. CHRONICLES, V.

This chapter gives us some account of the two tribes of Reuben and Simeon, and a half that were seated on the other side Jordan. I. Of Reuben, v. 1-10. II. Of Gad, v. 11-17. III. Of the half tribe of Manasseh, v. 23, 24. IV. Concerning all three acting in conjunction, we are told, 1. How they conquered the Hagarites, v. 18-22. 2. How they were, at length, themselves conquered, and made captives, by the king of Assyria, because they had forsaken God, v. 25, 26.

NOW the sons of Reuben the first-born of Israel, (for he was the first-born; but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. 2. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's;) 3. The sons, I say, of Reuben the first-born of Israel, were, Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. 4. The sons of Joel; Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimhi his son, 5. Micah his son, Reaa his son, Baal his son, 6. Beerah his son, whom Togath-pinesar king of Assyria carried away captive: he was prince of the Reubenites. 7. And his brethren by their families, (when the genealogy of their generations was reckoned,) were the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah, 8. And Bela the son of Azaz, the son of Sheba, the son of Joel, who dwelt in Aror, even unto Nebo and Baal-moon: 9. And eastward he inhabited unto the entering in of the wilderness from the river Euphrates; because their cattle were multiplied in the land of Gilead. 10. And in the days of Saul they made war with the Hagarites, who fell by their hand: and they dwelt in their tents throughout all the east land of Gilead. 11. And the children of Gad dwelt over against them, in the land of Bashan, unto Salcah: 12. Joel the chief, and Shapham the next, and Jaamai, and Shaphat in Bashan. 13. And their brethren of the house of their fathers were Michael, and Meshullam, and Sheba, and Jorai, and Jachan, and Zia, and Heber, seven. 14. These are the children of Abibiail the son of Huri, the son of Jaroah, the son of Gilead, the son of Michael, the son of Jeshishai, the son of Jaahda, the son of Buz; 15. Abi the son of Abdiel, the son of Guni, chief of the house of their fathers. 16. And they dwelt in Gilead in Bashan, and in her towns, and in all the suburbs of Sharon, upon their borders. 17. All these were reckoned by genealogies in the days of Joatham king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel.

We have here an extract out of the genealogies. I. Of the tribe of Reuben. Where we have,

(1.) The reason why this tribe is thus postponed. It is confessed that he was the first-born of Israel, and, upon that account, might challenge the precedence: but he forfeited his birth-right by defiling his father's concubine, and was for that sentenced to be expelled, Gen. xlix. 4. Sm. lessens men, throws them down from their excellency. Seventh commandment-sins especially, leave an indelible stain upon men's names and families, a reproach which time shall not wipe away. Reuben's seed, to the last, bear the disgrace of Reuben's sin. Yet though that tribe was degraded, it was not discarded or disinherited. The sullying of the honour of an Israelite, is not the losing of his happiness. Reuben loses his birth-right, yet it does not devolve upon Simeon, the next in order; for it was typical; and
therefore must attend, not the course of nature, but the choice of grace. The advantages of the birth-right were doubled, and a double portion. Reuben having forfeited these, it was thought too much that both should be transferred to any one, and therefore they were divided. [1.] Joseph had the double portion; for two tribes descended from him, Ephraim and Manasseh, each of whom had a child’s part: for so Jacob by faith blessed them, Heb. 11. 21. Gen. 48. 15. 22. and each of those two was as considerable, and made as good a figure, as any one of the twelve, except Joseph. But Judah had the dominion; on him the dying patriarch entailed the sceptre, Gen. 49. 10. Of him came the chief ruler, David first, and, in fulness of time, Messiah the Prince, Mic. 5. 2. This honour was secured to Judah; though the birth-right was Joseph's: and, having this, he needed not envy him the double portion.

(2.) The genealogy of the princes of this tribe, the chief family of it, (many, no doubt, being omitted,) to Beerah, who was head of this clan when the king of Assyria carried them captive, v. 4-6. Perhaps he is mentioned as prince of the Reubenites at that time, because he did not do his part to prevent it.

They increasing, and their cattle being multiplied, they crowded out their neighbours the Hagarites, and their cattle increased on the same coasts, though not to the river Euphrates, yet to the wilderness, which abutted upon that river, v. 9, 10. Thus God did for his people as he promised them; he cast out the enemy from before them by little and little, and gave them their land as they had occasion for it, Exod. 23. 30.

Of the tribe of Gad. Some great families of that tribe are here named, v. 12. Seven, that were the children of Abihail, whose pedigree is carried upward one from the son to the father, v. 14, 15. as that, v. 4, 5, is brought downward from father to son. These genealogies were perfected in the days of Jotham king of Judah, but were begun some years before, in the reign of Jeroboam II. king of Israel. What particular reason there was for taking these accounts then, does not appear; but it was just before they were carried away captive by the Assyrians; as appears, 2 Kings 15. 29, 32. When the judgment came, it fell upon them first, as it was for their wicked degeneracy and apostasy, then were they priding themselves in their genealogies, that they were the children of the covenant; as the Jews, in our Saviour's time, who, when they were ripe for ruin, boasted, We have Abraham to our father. Or, there might be a special providence in it, and a favourable intimation that though they were, for the present, cast out, they were not cast off for ever. What we design to call for hereafter, we keep an inventory of.

18. The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, were four and forty thousand seven hundred and threescore, that went out to the war. 19. And they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephish, and Nodab. 20. And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was entreated of them: because they put their trust in him. 21. And they took away their cattle: of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand, and of men a hundred thousand. 22. For there fell down many slain, because the war was of God. And they dwelt in their steads until the captivity. 23. And the children of the half tribe of Manasseh dwelt in the land: they increased from Bashan unto Baal-hermon, and Senir, and unto mount Hermon.

And these were the heads of the house of their fathers, even Epher, and Ishi, and Eliel, and Azriel, and Hodaiah, and Jahdidi, mighty men of valour, famous men, and heads of the house of their fathers. 25. And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them. 26. And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, (even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh,) and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Harah, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.

The heads of the half tribe of Manasseh, that were seated on the other side Jordan, are named here, v. 25. Their head, Abihu, was in Bashan, but afterward they increased so much in wealth and power, that they spread far north, even unto Hermon.

Two things only are here recorded concerning these tribes on the other side Jordan, in which they were all concerned. They all shared, 1. In a glorious victory over the Ishmaelites; so the Ishmaelites were now called, to remind them that they were the sons of the bond-woman, that was cast out. We are not told when this victory was obtained: whether it be the same with that of the Reubenites, which is said, v. 10. to be in the days of Saul; or whether that success of one of these tribes animated and excited the other two to join with them in another expedition, is not certain. It seems, though in Saul’s time the common interests of the kingdom were weak and low, some of the tribes that acted separately, did well for themselves. We are here told, (1.) What a brave army these frontier-tribes brought into the field against the Hagarites, 44,000 men and upward, all strong and stout, and skilful in war; so many effective men, that knew how to manage their weapons, v. 18. How much more considerable might Israel have been than they were in the time of the judges, if all the tribes had acted in conjunction! (2.) What consequence they took to engage God for them: they cried to God, and put their trust in him, v. 20. Now they acted as Israelites indeed. [1.] As the seed of believing Abraham, they put their trust in God. Though they had a powerful army, they relied not on that, but on the divine power. They depended on the commission they had from God to wage war with their neighbours for the enlarging of their coasts, if there be a commission, even with those that were very far off, beside the devoted nations. See Deut. 20. 15. They depended on God’s providence to give them success. [2.] As the seed of praying Jacob, they cried unto God, especially in
the battle, when, perhaps, at first, they were in danger of being overpowered. See the like done, 2 Chron. 13. 14. In distress, God expects we should cry to him; he distrusts upon us for this tribute, this rent. In our spiritual conflicts, we must look up to Heaven for strength: and it is the believing part of the advice that was the prevailing prayer. (3.) We are told what success they had: God gave them credit of them, though need drive them to him; so ready is he to hear and answer prayer. They were helped against their enemies; for God never yet failed any that trusted in him. And then they routed the enemy's army, though far superior in number to their's, slew many, v. 22. took 100,000 prisoners, enriched themselves greatly with the spoil, and settled themselves in their country, v. 22, 23. And all this, because the war was of God, undertaken in his fear, and carried on in a dependence upon him. If the battle be the Lord's, there is reason to hope it will be successful. Then we may expect to prosper in any enterprise, and then only, when we take God along with us.

2. They shared, at length, in an inglorious captivity. Had they kept close to God and their duty, they had continued to enjoy both their ancient lot and their new conquests; but they transgressed against the God of their fathers, v. 25. They lay upon the borders, and conversed most with the neighbouring nations, by which means they learned their idolatrous usages, and transmitted the infection to the other tribe; for this, God had a controversy with them. He was a husband to them, and no marvel that his jealousy burnt like fire, when they went a whoring after other gods. Justly is it said to the adulterers, they set up the spirit of the kings of Assyria, first one, and then another, against them, served his own purposes by the designs of those ambitious monarchs, employed them to operate these revolts first, and when that reduced them not, then wholly to root them out, v. 26. These tribes were first placed, and they were first displaced. They would have the best land, not considering that it lay more northward. But those who are governed more by sense than by reason or faith in their choices, may expect to fare accordingly.

CHAP. VI.

Though Joseph and Judah shared between them the forfeited honours of the birthright, yet Levi was first of all the tribes, dignified and distinguished with an honour more valuable than either precedence or the double portion; and that was the priesthood. The tribe God set apart for himself, it was Moses's tribe, and perhaps for his sake was thus favoured. Of that tribe we have an account in this chapter. I. Their Pedigree; the first fathers of the tribe, v. 1-3. the line of the priests, from Aaron to the captives, v. 4. 13. and of some other of their families, v. 16. 30. II. Their wars and conquests, v. 14-27. to the Levites, v. 31. 48. of the priests, v. 49. 53. III. The cities appointed them in the land of Canaan, v. 54. 61.

1. THE sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 2. And the sons of Kohath; Amram, Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel. 3. And the children of Amram; Aaron, and Moses, and Miriam. The sons also of Aaron; Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. 4. Eleazar begat Phinehas, Phinehas begat Abishua, 5. And Abishua begat Bukki, and Bukki begat Uzzi. 6. And Uzzi begat Zeriahiah, and Zerariah begat Zerariah, 7. Merariot begat Amariah, and Amariah begat Ahitub, 8. And Ahitub begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Ahimaaz, 9. And Ahimaaz begat Azariah, and Azariah begat Johanan, 10. And Johanan begat Azariah, (he it is that executed the priest's office in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem,) 11. And Azariah begat Amariah, and Amariah begat Ahitub, 12. And Ahitub begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Shallum, 13. And Shallum begat Hilkiah, and Hilkiah begat Azariah, 14. And Azariah begat Seraijah, and Seraiah begat Jehozadak, 15. And Jehozadak went into captivity, when the Lord carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. 16. The sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 17. And these be the names of the sons of Gershon; Libni, and Shimei. 18. And the sons of Kohath were, Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel. 19. The sons of Merari; Mahli and Mushii. And these are the families of the Levites, according to their fathers. 20. Of Gershon; Libni his son, Jahath his son, Zimmah his son, 21. Joel his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, Jeaterai his son. 22. The sons of Kohath; Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son, 23. Elkanah his son, and Ebiaiah his son, and Assir his son, 24. Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uzziah his son, and Shaul his son. 25. And the sons of Elkanah; Amasai, and Ahinoam. 26. As for Elkanah; the sons of Elkanah; Zophai his son, and Nahath his son, 27. Eliaib his son, Jeroham his son, Elkanah his son. 28. And the sons of Samuel; the first-born Vashni, and Abia. 29. The sons of Merari; Mahli, Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzza his son, 30. Shimea his son, Haggiah his son, Asaiah his son.

The priests and Levites were more concerned than any other Israelites, to preserve their pedigree clear, and to be able to prove it; because all the honours and privileges of their office depended upon their descent. And we read of those, who, though perhaps they really were children of the priests, yet, because they could not find the register of their genealogies, nor make out their descent by any authentic record, were, as polluted, put from the priesthood, and forbidden to eat of the holy things, Ezra 2. 62, 63.

It is but very little that is here recorded of the genealogies of this sacred tribe.

1. The first fathers of it are here named twice, v. 1, 16. Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, are three names which we were very conversant with in the book of Numbers, when the families of the Levites were marshalled, and had their work assigned them. Aaron, and Moses, and Miriam, we have known much more of than their names, and cannot pass them over here without remembering that this was that Moses and Aaron whom God honoured in making them the instruments of Israel's deliverance and settlement, and figures of him that was to come; Moses as a prophet, and Aaron as a priest. And the mention of Nadab and Abihu (though,
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having no children, there was no occasion to bring them into the genealogy) cannot but remind us of the terrors of that divine justice, which they were made monuments of for offering strange fire, that we may always fear before him.

2. The line of Eleazar, the successor of Aaron, is here drawn down to the time of the captivity, v. 4-15. It begins with Eleazar, who came out of the house of bondage in Egypt; and ends with Jehozadak, who went into the house of bondage in Babylon. Thus, for their sins, they were left as they were found; which might also intimate that the Levitical priesthood made nothing perfect; that was to be done by the bringing in of a better hope. All these here named, were not High Priests; for, in the time of the judges, that dignity was, upon some occasion or other, brought into the family of Ithamar, of which Eli was; but in Zadok it returned again to the right line. Of Azariah it is here said, v. 10, He it is that executed the priest's office in the tent that Solomon built. It is supposed that this was that Azariah who bravely opposed the presumption of king Uzziah when he invaded the priests' office, 2 Chron. 26. 17. though he ventured his neck by it. This was done like a priest, like one that was truly zealous for his God. He that thus boldly maintained and defended the priest's office, and made good its barriers against such a daring insult, may well be said to execute it; and this honour is put upon him for it; while Urijah, one of his successors, for a base compliance with king Ahaz, in building him an idolatrous altar, has the disgrace put upon him of being left out of this genealogy; as perhaps some others are. But some think that this remark upon this Azariah, should have been added to his grandfather of the same name, v. 9. who was the son of Ahimaaz; and that that was he who first officiated in Solomon's temple.

3. Of the families of the Levites are here accounted for. One of the families of Gershom (that of Libni) is here drawn down as far as Samuel, who had the honour of a prophet added to that of a Levite. One of the families of Merari (that of Mahli,) is likewise drawn down for some descents, v. 29, 30.

31. And these are they whom David set over the service of song in the house of the Lord, after that the ark had rested. 32. And they ministered before the dwelling-place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the Lord in Jerusalem; and then they waited on their office according to their order. 33. And these are they that waited, with their children. Of the sons of the Kohathites; Heman a singer, the son of Joel, the son of Sasah, 34. The son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elieel, the son of Toah, 35. The son of Zuph, the son of Elkanah, the son of Mahath, the son of Amasai. 36. The son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah. 37. The son of Tahath, the son of Assir, the son of Ebiaiah, the son of Korah, 38. The son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel: 39. And his brother Asaph, (who stood on his right hand,) even Asaph, the son of Bezechiah, the son of Shimea, 40. The son of Michael, the son of Baaseiah, the son of Malchiah, 41. The son of Ethni, the son of Zerah, the son of Adaiah, 42. The son of Ethan, the son of Zimmah, the son of Shimei, 43. The son of Jahath, the son of Gershon, the son of Levi. 44. And their brethren, the sons of Merari, stood on the left hand: Ethan the son of Kish, the son of Abdi, the son of Malluch, 45. The son of Hashabiah, the son of Amaziah, the son of Hilkiah, 46. The son of Amzi, the son of Bani, the son of Shamer, 47. The son of Mahli, the son of Mushii, the son of Merari, the son of Levi. 48. Their brethren also the Levites were appointed unto all manner of service of the tabernacle of the house of God. 49. But Aaron and his sons offered upon the altar of the burnt-offering, and on the altar of incense, and were appointed for all the work of the place most holy, and to make an atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded. 50. And these are the sons of Aaron; Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son, 51. Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son, 52. Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son, 53. Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son.

When the Levites were first ordained in the wilderness, much of the work then appointed them, lay in carrying, and taking care of, the tabernacle and the utensils of it, while they were in their march through the wilderness. In David's time, their number was increased; and, though the greater part of them were dispersed all the nation over, to teach the people the good knowledge of the Lord; yet of those that attended the house of God, there was not constant work for them all; and therefore David, by special commission and direction from God, new modelled the Levites, as we shall find in the latter part of this book. Here we are told what the work was, which he assigned them.

1. Singing work, v. 51. David was raised up on high to be the sweet psalmist of Israel, 2 Sam. 23. 1. not only to pen psalms, but to appoint the singing of them in the house of the Lord; (not so much because he was musical, as because he was devout:) and this he did after that the ark had rested. While that was in captivity, obscure, and unsettled, the harps were hung upon the willow-trees: singing was then thought unseasonable; (when the bridegroom is taken away they shall fast;) but the harps being resumed, and the songs revived, at the bringing up of the ark, 40. were continued afterward; for we should rejoice as much, in the prolonging of our spiritual privileges, as in the restoring of them. When the service of the ark was superseded by its rest, they had other work cut out for them. (for Levites should never be idle,) and were employed in the service of song. Thus when the people of God come to the rest which remains for them above, they shall take leave of all their burdens, and be deployed in everlasting songs. These singers kept up that service in the tabernacle, till the temple was built, and then they waited on their office there. v. 32. When they came to that stately magnificent house, they kept as close, both to their office and to their order, as they had done in the tabernacle. It is a pity that the preferment of the Levites should ever make them remiss in their business.
We have here an account of the three great masters who were employed in the service of the sacred song, with their respective families; for they waited with their children, that is, such as descended from them, or were allied to them, v. 33. Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were the three that were appointed to this service; one of each of the three houses of the Levites, that there might be an equality in the distribution of this work and honour; and each might know his post; such an admirable order was there in this choir-service.

1. Of the house of Kohath, was Heman with his family, v. 33. a man of a sorrowful spirit, if it be the same Heman that penned the 88th psalm, and yet a singer. He was the grandson of Samuel the prophet, the son of Joel, of whom it is said, that he walked not in the ways of Samuel, 1 Sam. 8: 2, 3, but, it seems, though the son did not, the grandson did. Thus does the blessing entailed on the seed of that bright, sometimes pass over one generation, and fasten upon the next. And this Heman, though the grandson of that mighty prince, did not think it below him to be a precentor in the house of God. David himself was willing to have been a door-keeper. Rather, we may look upon this preferment of the grandson in the church, as a recompense for the humble modest resignation which the grandmother made of his authority in the state. Mankind, in their state, have no idea what God has of making up his people's losses, and balancing their disgraces. Perhaps David, in making Heman the chief, had some respect to his old friend Samuel.

2. Of the house of Gershom, was Asaph, called his brother, because in the same office, and of the same tribe, though of another family. He was posted on Heman's right hand in the choir, v. 39. Several of the psalms bear Asaph's name, either as sung by him, or tuned by him, as the chief musician. It is plain that he was the penman of some psalms; for we read of those that praised the Lord in the words of David, and of Asaph; for he was a seer, as well as a singer, 2 Chron. 29. 30. His pedigree is run up here through names utterly unknown, as high as Levi, v. 39-43.

3. Of the house of Merari, was Ethan, v. 44. who was appointed to Heman's left hand. His pedigree is run up to Levi, v. 47. If these were the Heman and Ethan that penned the 88th and 89th psalms, there appears no reason here why they should be called Ezrathites, (see the titles of those Psalms,) as there does why those should be called so, who are mentioned ch. 2. 6. and who were the sons of Zerah.

II. There was serving work, abundance of service to be done in the tabernacle of the house of God, v. 48. to provide water and fuel; to wash and sweep, and carry out ashes: to kill and slay, and boil the sacrifices; and to all such services there were Levites appointed, those of other families, or perhaps those that were not fit to be singers, that had neither good voice, or no good ear. As every one hath received the gift, so let him minister. They that could not sing, must not therefore be laid aside as good for nothing; though they were not fit for that service, there was other service they might be useful in.

III. There was sacrificing-work, and that was to be done by the priest only, v. 49. They only were to sprinkle the blood, and burn the incense; as for the work of the place most holy, that was to be done by the High Priest only. Each had his work, and they who succeeded one another, and both helped one another in it. Concerning the work of the priests, we are here told, 1. What was the end that they were to have in their eye; they were to make an atonement for Israel, to mediate between the people and God; not to magnify and enrich themselves, but to serve the public. They were ordained for men, 2. What was the rule they were to have in their eye; they presided in God's house, yet must do as they were bidden, according to all that God commanded. That law the highest are subject to.

54. Now these are their dwelling-places throughout their castles in their coasts, of the sons of Aaron, of the families of the Kohathites; for theirs was the lot. 35. And they gave them Hebron in the land of Judah, and the suburbs thereof round about it. 56. But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 57. And to the sons of Aaron they gave the cities of Judah, namely, Hebron, the city of refuge, and Libnah with her suburbs, and Jattir, and Eshtemoa, with their suburbs, 58. And Hilen with her suburbs, Debir with her suburbs, 59. And Ashan with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs: 60. And out of the tribe of Benjamin; Geba with her suburbs, and Alemeth with her suburbs, and Anathoth with her suburbs. All their cities, throughout their families, were thirteen cities. 61. And unto the sons of Kohath, which were left of the family of that tribe, were cities given out of the half tribe, namely, out of the half tribe of Manasseh, by lot, ten cities. 62. And to the sons of Gershom, throughout their families, out of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities. 63. Unto the sons of Merari were given by lot, throughout their families, out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities. 64. And the children of Israel gave to the Levites these cities with their suburbs. 65. And they gave by lot, out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, and out of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, these cities which are called by their names. 66. And the residue of the families of the sons of Kohath had cities of their coasts out of the tribe of Ephraim. 67. And they gave unto them, of the cities of refuge, Shechem in mount Ephraim with her suburbs; they gave also Gezer with her suburbs, 68. And Jokneam with her suburbs, and Beth-horon with her suburbs, 69. And Ajalon with her suburbs, and Gath-rimon with her suburbs: 70. And out of the half tribe of Manasseh; Anath with her suburbs, and Bileam with her suburbs, for the family of the remnant of the sons of Kohath. 71. Unto the sons of Gershon were given out of the family of the half tribe of Manasseh, Golan in Bashan with
her suburbs, and Ashtaroth with her suburbs: 72. And out of the tribe of Issachar; Kedesh with her suburbs, Daberath with her suburbs, 73. And Ramoth with her suburbs, and Anem with her suburbs: 74. And out of the tribe of Asher; Mashal with her suburbs, and Abdon with her suburbs, 75. And Hukok with her suburbs, and Rechob with her suburbs: 76. And out of the tribe of Naphtali; Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, and Hammon with her suburbs, and Kirjathaim with her suburbs. 77. Unto the rest of the children of Merari were given, out of the tribe of Zebulun, Rimmon with her suburbs, Tabor with her suburbs: 78. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho, on the east side of Jordan, were given them out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer, in the wilderness with her suburbs, and Jahzah with her suburbs, 79. Kedemoth also with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs: 80. And out of the tribe of Gad; Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs, and Mahanaim with her suburbs, 81. And Heshbon with her suburbs, and Jazer with her suburbs.

We have here an account of the Levites' cities; they are here called their castles, v. 54. not only because walled and fortified, and well-guarded by the country; for it is the interest of every nation to protect its ministers; but because they and their possessions were, in a particular manner, the care of the Divine providence; as God was their portion, so God was their protection; and a cottage will be a castle to those that abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

This account is much the same with that which we had, Josh. 21. We need not be critical in comparing them; (What good will it do us?) nor will it do any hurt to the credit of the holy scripture; if the names of some of the places be not just the same here that they were there. We know it is common for cities to have several names, Sarum and Salisbury, Salop, and Shrewsbury, are more unlike than Helen, v. 58. and Hellen, Josh. 21. 15. Ashan, v. 59. and Ain, Josh. 21. 16. Alemeth, v. 60. and Almon, Josh. 21. 18. And time changes names.

We are only to observe, that in this appointment of cities for the Levites, God took care, 1. For the accomplishment of dying Jacob's prediction concerning this tribe, that it should be scattered in Israel, Gen. 49. 7. 2. For the diffusing of the knowledge of himself and his law in all parts of the land of Israel; every tribe had Levites' cities in it; and so every room was furnished with a candle, so that none could be ignorant of his duty, but it was either his own fault, or the Levites'. 3. For a comfortable maintenance for those that ministered in holy things. Beside their tithes and offerings, they had glebe lands, and cities of their own to dwell in. Some of the most considerable cities of Israel fell to the Levites' lot. Every tribe had benefit by the Levites; and therefore every tribe must contribute to their support. Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth, and do it cheerfully.

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, we have some account of the genealogies, I. Of Issachar, v. 1. 5. II Of Benjamin, v. 6. 12.

III. Of Naphtali, v. 13. IV. Of Manasseh, v. 14. 19. V. Of Ephraim, v. 20. 29. VI. Of Asher, v. 30. 46. Here is no account either of Zebulun or Dan. Why they only should be omitted, we can assign no reason; only it is the disgrace of the tribe of Dan, that idolatry began in that country of the Danites, which fixed in Laish, and called it Dan, and there one of the golden calves was set up by Jeroboam. Dan is omitted, R. 7.

1. Now the sons of Issachar were Tola, and Puah, Jashub, and Shimron, four. 2. And the sons of Tola; Uzi, and Rephaiah, and Jeriel, and Jahmiel, and Jibriam, and Shemuel, heads of their father's house, to wit, of Tola; they were valiant men of might in their generations; whose number was, in the days of David, two and twenty thousand and six hundred. 3. And the sons of Uzi; Izrahiah: and the sons of Izrahiah; Michael, and Obadiah, and Joel, Ishiah, five: all of them chief men. 4. And with them, by their generations, after the house of their fathers, were bands of soldiers for war, six and thirty thousand men: for they had many wives and sons. 5. And their brethren, among all the families of Issachar, were men of might, reckoned in all, by their genealogies, fourscore and seven thousand. 6. The sons of Benjamin; Bela, and Becher, and Jediael, three. 7. And the sons of Bela; Ezbon, and Uzi, and Uzziel, and Jerimoth, and Iri, five; heads of the house of their fathers, mighty men of valour, and were reckoned, by their genealogies, twenty and two thousand and thirty and four. 8. And the sons of Becher; Zemira, and Joash, and Eliezer, and Elionai, and Omri, and Jerimoth, and Abia, and Anathoth, and Alameth. All these are the sons of Becher. 9. And the number of them, after their genealogy by their generations, heads of the house of their fathers, mighty men of valour, were twenty thousand and two hundred. 10. The sons also of Jediael; Bilhan: and the sons of Bilhan; Jeush, and Benjamin, and Ehud, and Chenaanah, and Zethan, and Tharshish, and Ahijah. 11. All these, the sons of Jediael, by the heads of their fathers, mighty men of valour, were seventeen thousand and two hundred soldiers, fit to go out for war and battle. 12. Shuppim also, and Huppim, the children of Ir, and Hushim, the sons of Aher. 13. The sons of Naphtali; Jahziel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shallum, the sons of Bilhah. 14. The sons of Manasseh; Ashriel, whom she bare; (but his concubine the Aramites bare Machir the father of Gilead. 15. And Machir took to wife the sister of Huppim and Shuppim, whose sister's name was Maacah;) and the name of the second was Zelophehad: and Zelophehad had daughters. 16. And Maacah the wife of Machir bare
20. And the sons of Ephraim; Shuthelah, and Bered his son, and Tahath his son, and Eldad his son, and Tahath his son, 21 And Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer, and Eliad, whom the men of Gath that were born in that land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. 22 And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him. 23 And when he went in to his wife, she conceived and bare a son, and he called his name Beriah, because it went evil with his house. 24. (And his daughter was Sherah, who built Beth-horon the ne- ther, and the upper, and Uzzen-sheerah.) 25. And Rephah was his son, also Resheph, and Telah his son, and Tahan his son, 26. Laadan his son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son, 27. Non his son, Jehoshua his son. 28. And their possessions and habi- tations were Beth-el and the towns thereof, and eastward Naaran, and westward Ge- zer with the towns thereof, Shechem also and the towns thereof, unto Gaza and the towns thereof: 29. And by the borders of the children of Manasseh, Beth-shean and her towns, Taanach and her towns, Megiddo and her towns, Dor and her towns. In these dwelt the children of Joseph the son of Israel. 30. The sons of Asher; Imnah, and Ishuah, and Ishai, and Beriah, and Se- rah their sister. 31. And the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel, who is the father of Birzavith. 32. And Heber begat Japhlet, and Shomer, and Hotham, and Shua their sister. 33. And the sons of Japhlet; Pa- sach, and Binah, and Ashvath: these are the children of Japhlet. 34. And the sons of Shomer; Ahi, and Rohgah, Jehubbah, and Aram. 35. And the sons of his brother Helem; Zophah, and Imna, and Shelesh, and Amal. 36. The sons of Zophah; Suah, and Harneph, and Shual, and Beri, and Imrah. 37. Bezer, and Hod, and Shamma, and Shilshah, and Ithran, and Beera. 38. And the sons of Jether; Jephunneh, and Pispah, and Arna. 39. And the sons of Ul- la; Arah, and Haniel, and Reziah. 40. All these were the children of Asher, heads of their father’s house, choice and mighty men of valour, chief of the princes. And the num- ber, throughout the genealogy of them that were apt to the war and to battle, was twen- ty and six thousand men.

We have here an account,

I. Of the tribe of Ephraim. Great things we read of that tribe, when it came to maturity. Here we have an account of the disasters of its infancy, while it was in Egypt as it should seem; for Ephraim himself was alive when these things were done; which yet is hard to imagine, if it were, as is
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here computed, seven generations off. Therefore I am apt to think that either it was another Ephraim, or that those who were slain, were the immediate sons of that Ephraim that was the son of Joseph. In this passage, which is here only related, we have

1. The great breach that was made upon the family of Ephraim. The men of Gath, Philistines, giants slew many of the sons of that family, because they came down to take away their cattle, v. 21. It is uncertain who were the aggressors here. (1.) Some make the men of Gath the aggressors, men born in the land of Egypt, but now resident in Gath, that they came down into the cities of the Ephraimites' possession, to take their cattle, and slew the owners, because they stood up in the defence of them. Many a man's life has been exposed and betrayed by his wealth; so far is it from being a strong city. (2.) Others think that the Ephraimites made a descent upon the men of Gath to plunder them, presuming that the time was come when they should be put in possession of Canaan; but they paid dear for their rashness and precipitation. They that will not wait God's time cannot expect God's blessing. I rather think that the men of Gath came down upon the Ephraimites; because the Israelites in Egypt were shepherds, not soldiers; abounded in cattle of their own, and therefore were not likely to venture their lives for their neighbours' cattle: and the words may be read, The men of Gath slew them, for they came down to take away their cattle. Zabad the son of Ephraim, Shilh, and Shuthelah, and Ezer, and Eldad, his grand-children, were, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks, the men that were slain. Jacob had foretold that the seed of Ephraim should become a multitude of nations, Gen. 48. 19. and yet that plant is thus ripped in the bud. God's providences often seem to contradict his promises; but when they do so, they really magnify the promise, and make the performance of it, notwithstanding, so much the more illustrious. The Ephraimites were the posterity of Joseph, and yet his power could not protect them, though some thing he was yet living. The sword devours one as well as another. 1. The great grief which oppressed the father of the family, hereupon; Ephraim mourned many days. Nothing brings the aged to the grave with more sorrow, than their following the young that descend from them to the grave first; especially if in God's providence he should find that he is old, that he may see those that he has been old, that they see those go before them, of whom they said, These same shall comfort us. It was a brotherly, friendly office, which his brethren did, when they came to comfort him under this great affliction, to express their sympathy with him, and concern for him, and to suggest that to him, which would support and quiet him under this sad Providence. Probably, they reminded him of his house, of those that have the blessing of God, blessed him, when he laid his right hand upon his head. Although his house was not so with God as he hoped, but a house of mourning, a scattered family, yet that promise was sure, 2 Sam. 23. 5. 3. The repair of this breach, in some measure, by the addition of another son to his family in his old age, v. 23. like Seth, another seed instead of that of Abel whom Cain slew, Gen. 4. 25. When God's people are tried, and have had to bear sorrow and trouble, it is not for lack of compassion, but to make them stronger for the conflict, to make glad according to the days wherein he afflicted, setting the mercies over against the crosses, we ought therein to take notice of the kindness and tenderness of Divine Providence: it is as if it repeated God concerning his servants, Ps. 90. 13, 15. Yet, joy that a man was born into his family, could not make him forget his grief; for he gives a melancholy name to his son, Beriah, in trouble; for he was born when the family was mourning, when it went evil with his house. It is good to have in remembrance the affliction and the misery, the wormwood and the gall, that our souls may be humbled with us, Lam. 3. 19. What name could be proper for man that is born of a woman, than Beriah, because born into a troublesome world? It is added, as a further honour to the house of Ephraim, (1.) That a daughter of that tribe, Sherah by name, at the time of Israel's settling in Canaan, built some cities, either at her own charge, or by her own care; one of them bare her name, Uzzen-serah, v. 24. A virtuous woman may be as great an honour as a blessing to a family, as a mighty man. (2.) That a son of that tribe was employed in the conquest of Canaan, Joshua the son of Nen, v. 27. In this also the breach made on Ephraim's family, was further repaired; and perhaps the resentments of this injury formerly done by the Canaanites to the Ephraimites, might make him more vigorous in the war.

II. Of the tribe of Asher. Some men of note of that tribe are here named. Their militia was not numerous; in comparison with some other tribes, only 26,000 men in all: but their princes were choice and mighty men of valour, chief of the princes, v. 40. and perhaps it was their wisdom, that they coveted not to make their trained bands numberous; but rather to have a few, and those apt to the war, and serviceable men.

CHAP. VIII.

We have some account given us of Benjamin in the foregoing chapter; here we have a larger catalogue of the great men of that tribe. 1. Because of that tribe Saul came, the first king of Israel, to the story of whom Ezer is hastening, ch. 10. 1, 2. Because that tribe clave to Judah, inhabited much of Jerusalem, was one of the two tribes that went into captivity, and returned back; and that story also he has an eye to, ch. 9. 1. Here is, 1. Some of the heads of that tribe named, v. 1. . . . 32. 2. A more particular account of the family of Saul, v. 33. . . . 40.

1. Now Benjamin begat Bela his first-born, Ashbel the second, and Ahah the third, 2. Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth. 3. And the sons of Bela were, Addar, and Gera, and Abibud. 4. And Abishua, and Naaman, and Ahoah, 5. And Gera, and Shephuphan, and Huram. 6. And these are the sons of Ehud: these are the heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Geba, and they removed them to Manahath: 7. And Naaman, and Ahiah, and Gera, he removed them, and begat Uzza, and Abihud. 8. And Shaharaim begat children in the country of Moab, after he had sent them away; Hushim and Baara were his wives. 9. And he begat of Hodesh his wife, Jobab, and Zibia, and Meshal, and Malcham. 10. And Jeuz, and Shachia, and Mirma. These were his sons, heads of the fathers. 11. And of Hushim he begat Ahitub, and Elpaal. 12. The sons of Elpaal; Eber and Misham, and Shemed, who built Ono and Lod, with the towns thereof: 13. Beriah also, and Shema, who were heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Ajalon, who drove away the inhabitants of Gath: 14. And Abiho, Shashak,
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Jeremiah, 15. And Zebadiah, and Arad, and Ader, 16 And Michael, and Ishpah, and Joha, the sons of Beriah; 17. And Zebadiah, and Meshullam, and Hezeki, and Heber, 18. Ishmerai also, and Jeziel, and Jobab, the sons of Elpaal; 19. And Jakim, and Zichri, and Zabdi, 20. And Elienai, and Zilthai, and Eliel, 21. And Adaijah, and Beriah, and Shimrath, the sons of Shimhi; 22. And Ishpan, and Heber, and Eliel, 23. And Abdon, and Zichri, and Hanan, 24. And Hananiah, and Elam, and Antothijah, 25. And Iphedeiah, and Pennu, the sons of Shashak; 26. And Shamsherai, and Shehariah, and Athaliah, 27. And Jarcish, and Elia, and Zichri, the sons of Jeroham. 28. These were heads of the fathers, by their generations, chief men. These dwelt in Jerusalem. 29. And at Gibeah dwelt the father of Gibeon, (whose wife's name was Maachah;) 30. And his first-born son Abdon, and Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Nadab, 31. And Gedor, and Ahio, and Zacher. 32. And Mikloth begat Shimrah. And these also dwelt with their brethren in Jerusalem, over against them.

There is little or nothing of history that occurs in all these verses; we have not therefore much to observe.

1. As to the difficulties that occur in this and the foregoing genealogies, we need not perplex ourselves; I presume and think we shall find them in the books of the kings of Israel and Judah. ch. 9. 1. according as they were given in by the several tribes, each observing what method they thought fit. Hence some ascend, others descend; some have numbers affixed, others places; some have historical remarks intermixed, others have not; some are shorter, others longer; some agree with other records, others differ; some, it is likely, were torn, razed, and blotted, others more legible. Those of Dan and Reuben were entirely lost. This holy man wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost; but there was no necessity for the making up of the defects, no nor for the rectifying of the mistakes, of these genealogies by inspiration; it was sufficient that he copied them out as they came to his hand, or so much of them as was requisite to the present purpose, which was the directing of the returners' captives to settle, as near as they could, with those of their own family, and in the places of their former residence. We may suppose that many things in these genealogies, which to us seem intricate, abrupt, and perplexed, were plain and easy to them then, (who knew how to fill up the deficiencies,) and abundantly answered the intention of the publishing of them.

2. Many and mighty nations were now in being upon earth, and many illustrious men in them, whose names are buried in perpetual oblivion, while the names of multitudes of the Israel of God are here carefully preserved in everlasting remembrance. They are Jasher, Jeshurun, just ones, and the memory of the just is blessed. Many of these, we have reason to fear, came short of everlasting honour, (for even the wicked kings of Judah come into the genealogy,) yet the permutating of their names here, was a figure of the writing of the names of all God's spiritual Israel in the Lamb's book of life.

3. The tribe of Benjamin was once brought to a very low ebb, in the time of the judges, upon the occasion of the iniquity of Gibeon, when only 600 men escaped the sword of justice; and yet, in these genealogies, it makes as good a figure as almost any other of the tribes; for it's the honour of God to help the weakest, and raise up these that are most diminished and abused.

4. Here is mention of one Ehud, v. 6. In the verse before, of one Gera, v. 5. and v. 8. of one that descended from him, that begat children in the country of Moab; which inclines me to think it was that Ehud, who was the second of the judges of Israel; for he is said to be the son of Gera, and a Benjamite, Judg. 3. 15. and he delivered Israel from the oppression of the Moabites, by killing the king of Moab, which might give him a greater sway in the country of Moab than we find evidence of in his history, and might occasion some of his posterity to settle there.

5. Here is mention of some of the Benjamites that drove away the inhabitants of Gath, v. 13. Per haps, those that had slain the Ephraimites, ch. 7. 28. for their posterity, by the artifice of some of them that did this piece of justice, was named Beriah, too, that name in which the memorial of that injury was preserved.

6. Particular notice is taken of them that dwelt in Jerusalem, v. 28. and again, v. 52. that they whose ancestors had had their residence there, might thereby be induced, at their return from captivity, to settle there too; which for aught that appears, few were willing to do, because it was the post of danger; and therefore we find, Neh. 11. 2. The people blessed those that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem, the greater part being inclined to prefer the cities of Judah. They whose godly parents had their conversation in the new Jerusalem, should thereby be engaged to set their faces thitherward, and pursue the way thither, whatever it cost them.

33. And Ner begat Kish, and Kish begat Saul, and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchi-shua, and Abinadab, and Esh-baal. 34. And the son of Jonathan was Merib-baal; and Merib-baal begat Micah. 35. And the sons of Micah were, Pithon, and Melech, and Tarea, and Ahaz. 36. And Ahaz begat Jehoaddah; and Jehoaddah begat Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begat Moza. 37. And Moza begat Binea: Rapha was his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son. 38. And Azel had six sons, whose names are these, Azrikam, Bocheru, and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadjah, and Hanan. All these were the sons of Azel. 39. And the sons of Eshek his brother were, Ulam his first-born, Jehush the second, and Eliphelet the third. 40. And the sons of Ulam were mighty men of valour, archers, and had many sons, and sons' sons, a hundred and fifty. All these are the sons of Benjamin.

It is observable, that among all the genealogies of the tribes, there is no mention of any of the kings of Israel after their defection from the house of David, much less of their families; yet a word
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of Jeroboam's house, or Baasha's, or Omri's, or Jehu's; for they were all idolaters. But the family of Saul, which was the royal family before the elevation of David, we have here a particular account of.

1. Before Saul, Kish and Ner only are named, his father and grandfather, v. 33. His pedigree is carried higher, 1 Sam. 9. 1. and there, Kish is said to be the son of Abiel, here, of Ner. He was, in truth, the son of Ner, but the grandson of Abiel, as appears by 1 Sam. 14. 51. where it is said that Ner was the son of Abiel, and that Abner, who was the son of Ner, was Saul's uncle, that is, his father's brother; therefore his father was also the son of Ner. It is common, in all languages, to put sons for grandsons, and other descendants, much more in the scanty language of the Hebrews.

2. After Saul, divers of his sons are named, but the posterity of none of them, save Jonathan only, who was blessed with a numerous issue, and those honoured with a place in the sacred genealogies, for the sake of his sincere kindness to David.

The line of Jonathan is drawn down here for about ten generations. Perhaps David was, in a particular manner, careful to preserve that, and assigned it a page by itself, because of the covenant made between his seed and Jonathan's seed for ever, 1 Sam. 20. 17. 18. 42. 44. whose family became famous in the tribe of Benjamin, for the number of its valiant men. Of that one man's posterity there were, as it should seem, at one time, 150 archers brought into the field of battle, that were mighty men of valour, v. 40. That is taken notice of concerning them, which is more a man's praise than his pomp or wealth, is that they were qualified to serve their country.

CHAP. IX.

This chapter intimates to us, that one end of recording all these genealogies, was, to direct the Jews, now that they were returned out of captivity, with whom to intermarry, and where to reside; for here we have an account of those who first took possession of Jerusalem, after their return from Babylon, and began the rebuilding of it upon the old foundation. The Israelites, v. 1. 2. 9. 11. The Levites and other Nethinims. IV. Here is the particular charge of some of the priests and Levites, v. 27. 34. V. A repetition of the genealogy of king Saul, v. 33. 44.

1. So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and, behold, they were written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, who were carried away to Babylon, for their transgression. 2. Now the first inhabitants that dwelt in their possessions in their cities were, the Israelites, the priests, the Levites, and the Nethinims. 3. And in Jerusalem dwelt the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim, and Manasseh; 4. Uthai the son of Ammihud, the son of Omri, the son of Inri, the son of Bani, of the children of Pharez the son of Judah, 5. And of the Shilonites; Asaiah the firstborn, and his sons. 6. And of the sons of Zerah; Jeuel, and their brethren, six hundred and ninety. 7. And of the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Hodaviah, the son of Hasenuah, 8. And Ibneiah the son of Jeroham, and Elah the son of Uzzi, the son of Michni, and Mesullam the son of Shephatiah, the son of Neel, the son of Ibnijah; 9. And their brethren, according to their generations, nine hundred and fifty and six. All these men were chief of the fathers in the house of their fathers. 10. And of the priests; Jedaiah, and Jeshobab, and Jachin, 11. And Azariah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Mesullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the ruler of the house of God; 12. And Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchijah, and Maasiain the son of Adiel, the son of Jahzerah, the son of Mesullam, the son of Meshillemith, the son of Immer; 13. And their brethren, heads of the house of their fathers, a thousand and seven hundred and threescore; very able men for the work of the service of the house of God.

The first verse looks back upon the foregoing genealogies, and tells us they were gathered out of the books of the kings of Israel and Judah; not the which we have in the Canon of scripture, but another civil register, which was under the king's books with us. Mentioning Israel and Judah, he takes notice of their being carried away to Babylon for their transgression. Let that judgment never be forgotten, but ever be remembered for warning to posterity, to take heed of those sins that brought it upon them. Whenever we speak of any calamity that has befallen us, it is good to add this, "It was for our transgression" that God may be justified, and clear, when he judges.

Then follows an account of the first inhabitants, after their return from captivity, that dwelt in their cities, especially in Jerusalem.

1. The Israelites. The general name is used, v. 2. because with those of Judah and Benjamin there were many of Ephraim and Manasseh, and the other ten tribes, v. 3. such as had escaped to Judah when the body of the ten tribes were carried captive, or returned to Judah upon the revolution in Assyria, and so went into captivity with them, or met them when they were in Babylon, associated with them, and so shared in the benefit of their enlargement. It was foretold that the children of Judah and of Israel should be gathered together, and come up out of the land, Hos. 1. 11. and that they should be one nation again, Ezek. 37. 22. Trouble drives those tribes, that have been at variance; and the pieces of metal that had been separated, when melted in the same crucible, will run together again. Many, both of Judah and Israel, staid behind in captivity; but some of both, whose spirits God stirred up, inquired the way to Zion again. Divers are here named, and many more numbered, who were chief of the fathers, v. 9. who ought to be remembered with favour, as Israelites indeed.

2. The priests. v. 10. It was their praise, that they came with the first. Who should lead in a good work, if the priests, the Lord's ministers, do not? It was the people's praise that they would not come without them; for who but the priests should keep knowledge? Who but the priests should bless them in the name of the Lord? (1.) It is of one that he is the son of the house of God, v. 11. Not the chief ruler, for Joshua was then the High Priest; but the Sagan, the next under him, his deputy, who, perhaps, applied himself more to the business than the High Priest himself. In the house of God, it is requisite
that there be rulers, not to make new laws, but to
take care that the laws of God be duly observed
by priests as well as people. (2.) It is said of
many of them, that they were very able men for
the service of the house of God, v. 13. In the
house of God, there is service to be done, constant
service; and it is well for the church, when those
are employed in that service, who are able for it;
able ministers of the New Testament, 2 Cor. 3. 6.
The service of the temple was such as required, at
times, especially in this critical juncture, when they
were newly come out of Babylon, great cour-
rage and vigour of mind, as well as strength of
body; and therefore they are praised as mighty men
of valour.

14. And of the Levites; Shemariah the
son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the
son of Hashabiah, of the sons of Merari;
15. And Bakbakkar, Heresh, and Galal,
and Mattaniah the son of Micah, the son
of Zichri, the son of Asaph; 16. And
Obadiah the son of Shemariah, the son of
Galal, the son of Jeduthun; and Berechiah
the son of Asa, the son of Elkanah, that
dwelt in the villages of the Netophathites.
17. And the porters were, Shallum, and
Akub, and Talmon, and Ahiman, and
their brethren: Shallum was the chief; 18.
(Who lietherto waited in the king's gate
eward:') they were porters in the compa-
nies of the children of Levi. 19. And
Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebia-
saph, the son of Korah, and his brethren,
(of the house of his father,) the Korahites,
were over the work of the service, keepers
of the gates of the tabernacle: and their
fathers, being over the host of the Lord,
were keepers of the entry. 20. And Phine-
has the son of Eleazar was the ruler over
them in time past, and the Lord was with
him. 21. And Zechariah the son of Me-
shelemiah was porter of the door of the
tabernacle of the congregation. 22. All
these, which were chosen to be porters in
the gates, were two hundred and twelve.
These were reckoned by their genealogy in their
villages; whom David and Samuel the
seer did ordain in their set office. 23. So
they and their children had the oversight of
the gates of the house of the Lord, namely,
the house of the tabernacle, by wards. 24.
In four quarters were the porters, toward
the east, west, north, and south. 25. And
their brethren, which were in their villages,
were to come after seven days from time to
time with them. 26. For these Levites,
the four chief porters, were in their set office,
and were over the chambers and treasuries
of the house of God. 27. And they lodged
round about the house of God, because the
charge was upon them, and the opening
thereof every morning pertained to them.

28. And certain of them had the charge of
the ministering vessels, that they should
bring them in and out by tale. 29. Some
of them also were appointed to oversee
the vessels, and all the instruments of the sanctu-
ary, and the fine flour, and the wine, and
the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices.
30. And some of the sons of the priests
made the ointment of the spices. 31. And
Mattithiah, one of the Levites, who was the
first-born of Shallum the Korahite, had the
set office over the things that were made in
the pans. 32. And other of their brethren,
of the sons of the Kohathites, were over the
show-bread, to prepare it every sabbath.
33. And these are the singers, chief of the
fathers of the Levites, who remaining in the
chambers were free; for they were employ-
ed in that work day and night. 34. These
chief fathers of the Levites were chief
throughout their generations: these dwelt
at Jerusalem.

We have here a further account of the good pos-
ture which the affairs of religion were put into,
immediately upon their return out of Babylon. They
had smelted for their former neglect of ordinances,
and under the late want of ordinances; both these
considerations made them very zealous and forward
in setting up the worship of God among them; and
so they began their work at the right end. In-
stances hereof we have here.

1. Before the house of the Lord was built, they
had the house of the tabernacle; a plain and move-
table tent, in which they made use of in the mean time.
They that cannot yet reach to have a temple, must
not be without a tabernacle; but be thankful for
that, and make the best of it. Never let God's
work be left undone, for want of a place to do it in.

2. In allotting to the priests and Levites their
respective employments, they had an eye to a model
that was drawn up by David, and Samuel the seer,
v. 22. Samuel, in his time, had drawn the scheme
of it, and laid the foundation, though the ark was
then in obscurity; and David afterward finished it;
both by immediate direction of God. Or David,
as soon as he was anointed, had this matter in his
mind, and consulted Samuel about it, though he
was then in his troubles, and the plan was formed
in concert between them. This, perhaps, had been
little regarded for many ages: but now after a long
interruption, it is revived. In dividing the work,
you observe how these things are accordingly
subdivided.

3. The most of them dwelt in Jerusalem, v. 34.
yet there were some that dwelt in the villages, v. 4,
because, it may be, there was not yet room
for them in Jerusalem; but, however, they were
employed in the service of the tabernacle, v. 25.
They were to come after seven days from time to
time. They had their week's attendance in their turns.

4. Many of the Levites were employed as porters
at the gates of the house of God; and hence
the increase of the porters, v. 26, and, under them, to the number of 212, v.
22. They had the oversight of the gates, v. 23.
were keepers of the thresholds, as it is in the mar-
gin, v. 19. and keepers of the entry. This seemed
a mean office; and yet David would rather have it,
than dwell in the tents of wickedness, Ps. 84. 10.
Their office was, (1.) To open the doors of God's
house every morning, v. 27. and shut them at
night. (2.) To keep off the unclean, and hinder
those from thrusting in, that were forbidden by the law. (2.) To direct and introduce into the courts of the Lord, so that they might habitually worship, and to show them whither to go, and what to do, that they might not incur punishment. This required care, and diligence, and constant attendance. Ministers have work to do of this kind.

5. Here is one Phinhas, a son of Eleazar, that is said to be a ruler over them in time past, v. 20. not the famous High Priest of that name; but (as is supposed) an eminent Levite, of whom it is here said, that the Lord was with him; or, as the Chaldee reads it, the Word of the Lord was his helper; the eternal Word, who is Jehovah the mighty one, on whom help is laid.

6. It is said of some of them, that because the charge was upon them, they lodged round about the house of God, v. 27. It is good for ministers to be near their work, that they may give themselves wholly to it. The Levites pitched about the tabernacle, when they marched through the wilderness. Then they were porters in one sense, bearing the bourns of the sanctuary; now, porters in another sense, attending the gates and the doors—in both instances keeping the charge of the sanctuary.

7. Every one knew his charge. Some were intrusted with the plate, the ministering vessels, to bring them in and out by tale, v. 28. Others were appointed to prepare the fine flour, meal, oil, &c. v. 29. Others, that were priests, made up the holy anointing oil, v. 30. Others took care of the meat-offerings, v. 31. Others of the show-bread, v. 32. As in other great houses, so in God's house, the work is likely to be done well, when every one knows the duty of his place, and makes a business of it. God is the God of order; but that which is every body's work, will be nobody's work.

8. The Levites who were called in that work, day and night, v. 33. They were the chief fathers of the Levites, that made a business of it; not mean singing-men, that made a trade of it. They remained in the chambers of the temple, that they might closely and constantly attend it; and were therefore discharged from all other services. It should seem, some companies were continually singing, at least, at stated hours, both day and night. Thus was God continually praised, as it is fit he should be, who is continually doing good. Thus devout people might, at any hour, have assistance in their devotions. Thus was that temple a figure of the heavenly one, where they rest not day or night, from praising God, Rev. 4. 8. Blessed are they that dwell in shine house, they will be still praising thee.

35. And in Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon, Jehiel, whose wife's name was Maachah: 36. And his first-born son Abdon, then Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Ner, and Nadab, 37. And Gedor, and Ahio, and Zechariah, and Mikloth. 38. And Mikloth begat Shimain. And they also dwelt with their brethren at Jerusalem, over against their brethren. 39. And Ner begat Kish; and Kish begat Saul; and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchi-shua, and Abinadab, and Esh-baal. 40. And the son of Jonathan was Merib-baal: and Merib-baal begat Micah. 41. And the sons of Micah were, Pithon, and Melech, and Tahrea, and Ahaz. 42. And Ahaz begat Jarah; and Jarah begat Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri: and Zimri begat Moza; 43. And Moza begat Binea; and Rephaiah his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son. 44. And Azel had six sons, whose names are these, Azrikam, Bocheru, and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadiah, and Hanan. These were the sons of Azel.

These verses are the very same with ch. 8. 29-38. giving an account of the ancestors of Saul, and the posterity of Jonathan. There, it is the conclusion of the genealogy of Benjamin; here, it is an introduction to the story of Saul. We take the repetition as we find it; but if we admit that there are in the originals, especially in these books, some errors of the transcribers, I should be tempted to think this repetition arose from a blunder. Some one, in copying out these genealogies, having written these words, v. 34. (These dwelt in Jerusalem,) cast his eye on the same words, ch. 8. 28. (These dwelt in Jerusalem,) and so went on with what followed there; and, when he perceived his mistake, was thenceforth to make a blunder in his book, and so let it stand. We have a rule in our law, Redundans non nocet—Redundancies do no harm.

CHAP. X.

The design of Ezra, in these books of the Chronicles, was, to preserve the records of the house of David, which, though much sunk and lessened, in a common eye, by the captivity, yet grew more and more illustrious in the eyes of those that lived by faith, by the nearer approach of the Son of David. And therefore he repeats, not the history of Saul's reign, but only of his death, by which way was made for David to the throne. In this chapter, we have, I. The fatal rout which the Philistines gave to Saul's army, and the fatal stroke which he gave himself, v. 1-17. II. The Philistines' triumph therein, v. 8-10. III. The respect which the men of Jabin-gilead showed the royal corpse, v. 11, 12. IV. The reason of Saul's rejection, v. 13, 14.

1. NOW the Philistines fought against Israel, and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. 2. And the Philistines followed hard after Saul, and after his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchi-shua, the sons of Saul. 3. And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers. 4. Then said Saul to his armour-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith, lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me. But his armour-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. 5. And when his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise on the sword, and died. 6. So Saul died, and his three sons, and all his house died together. 7. And when all the men of Israel that were in the valley saw that they fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, then they forsook their cities and fled: and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

This account of Saul's death, is the same with that which we had, 1 Sam. 31, 1, &c. We need not repeat the exposition of it. Only let us observe, 1. Princes sin, and the people suffer for it. It
was a hard time with Israel, when they fled before the Philistines, and fell down slain, v. 1. when they quitted their cities, and the Philistines came, and dwelt in them, v. 7. We do not find that they were, at this time, guilty of idolatry, as they had been before, in the days of the judges, and were after, in the days of the kings. Samuel had reformed them, and they were reformed: and yet they are thus given to the spoil, and to the robbers. No doubt, there was enough in them to deserve it; but that which Divine Justice had chiefly an eye to, was the sin of Saul. Note, Princes and great men should, in a special manner, take heed of provoking God's wrath; for if they kindle that fire, they know not how many may be consumed by it for their sakes.

2. Parents sin, and the children suffer for it. When the measures of Saul's iniquity was full, and his day came to fall, (which David foresaw, 1 Sam. 26. 10.) he not only descended into battle, and perished himself, but his sons (all but Ish-bosheth) perished with him, and Jonathan among the rest, that gracious, generous, man; for all things come alike to all. Thus was the iniquity of the fathers visited upon the children; and they fell as parts of the condemned father. Note, They that love their seed, must leave their sins, lest they perish not alone in their iniquity, but bring ruin on their families with themselves, or entail a curse upon them when they are gone.

3. Sinners sin, and, at length, suffer for it themselves, though they be long reprobated; for though sentence be not executed speedily, it will be executed. It was so upon Saul; and the manner of his fall was such, as, in divers particulars, answered to his sin. (1.) He had thrown a javelin more than once at David, and missed him; but the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers. (2.) He had commanded Doeg to slay the priests of the Lord; and now, in secret, he commands his armour-bearer to draw his sword, and thrust him through. (3.) Him that had disobeyed the command of God, in not destroying the Amalekites, his armour-bearer disobeys, in not destroying him. (4.) He that was the murderer of the priests, is justly left to himself to be his own murderer; and his family is cut off, who cut off the city of the priests. See, and say, The Lord is righteous.

8. And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen in mount Gibbon. 9. And when they had stripped him, they took his head, and his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to carry tidings unto their idols, and to the people. 10. And they put his armour in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. 11. And when all Jabesh-gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul, 12. They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days. 13. So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; 14. And inquired not of the Lord: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.

Here. 1. From the triumph of the Philistines over the body of Saul, we may learn, (1.) That the greater dignity men are advanced to, the greater disgrace they are in danger of falling into. Saul's dead body, because he was a king, was abused more than any other of the slain. Advancement makes men a mark for malice. (2.) That if we give not to God the glory of our successes, even the Philistines will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us; for when they had obtained a victory over Saul, they sent tidings to their idols. Poor idols, that knew not what was done a few miles off, till the tidings were brought them; nor then neither! They also put Saul's armour in the house of their Gods, v. 10. Shall Dagon have so great a room in their triumphs, and the true and living God be forgotten in our? 2. From the triumph of the men of Jabesh-gilead in the rescue of the bodies of Saul and his sons, we learn that there is a respect owing to the remains of the deceased, especially of dead princes. We are not to inquire concerning the eternal state; that must be left to God: but we must treat the dead body, as those who remember it has been united to an immortal soul, and must he so again. 3. From the triumphs of Divine Justice in the ruin of Saul, we may learn, (1.) That the sin of sinners will certainly find them out, sooner or later; Saul died for his transgressions. (2.) That no man's greatness can exempt him from the judgments of God. (3.) That disobedience is a killing thing. Saul died for not keeping the word of the Lord, by which he was ordered to destroy the Amalekites. (4.) Consulting with witches is a sin that fills the measure of iniquity as soon as any thing. Saul inquired of one that had a familiar spirit, and inquired not of the Lord, therefore he slew him, v. 13, 14. Saul slew himself, and yet it is said, God slew him. What is done by wicked hands, is yet done by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. They that abandon themselves to the Devil, shall be abandoned to him; so shall their doom be. It is said, 1 Sam. 28. 6, Saul did inquire of the Lord, and he answered him not: but here it is said, Saul did not inquire of God; for he did not till he was brought to the last extremity; and then it was too late.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter, is repeated. 1. The elevation of David to the throne, immediately upon the death of Saul, by common consent, v. 1. 3. 11. His gaining the castle of Zion out of the hands of the Jebusites, v. 4. 9. 11. The catalogue of his Worthies, and the great men of his kingdom, v. 10. 47.

1. THEN all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. 2. And, moreover, in time past, even when Saul was king, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the Lord thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel. 3. Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the Lord; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the Lord by Samuel. 4. And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus:
where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land. And the inhabitants of Je- bus said to David, Thou shalt not come hither. Nevertheless David took the castle of Zion, which is the city of David. 6. And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain. So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief. 7. And David dwelt in the castle; therefore they called it The city of Da- vid. 8. And he built the city round about, even from Millo round about: and Joab repaired the rest of the city. 9. So David waxed greater and greater: for the Lord of hosts was with him.

David is here brought to the possession,

1. Of the throne of Israel, after he had reigned 7 years in Hebron, over Judah only. In consideration of his relation to them, v. 1. his former good services, and especially the divine designation, v. 2. they anointed him their king; he covenanted to protect them, and they to bear faith and true allegiance to him, v. 3. Observe, (1.) God's counsels will be fulfilled at last, whatever difficulties lie in the way. If God have said, David shall rule, it is in vain to oppose it. (2.) Men that have long stood in their old ways, and have long worn themselves with their lying vanities, it is to be hoped, will understand the things that belong to their peace, and return to their own mercies. (3.) Between prince and people there is an original contract, which both ought religiously to observe. If ever any prince might have claimed an absolute despotic power, David might, and might as safely as any have been intrusted with it; yet he made a covenant with the people, and took the coronation-oath, to rule by law.

2. Of the strong hold of Zion, which was held by the Jebusites till David's time. Whether God had a particular eye upon it as a place fit to make a royal city, or whether he had a promise of it from God, it seems that one or his first exploits was to make himself master of that fort; and when he had it, he called it the city of David, v. 7. To this reference is had, Ps. 2. 6. I have set my King; from my holy hill of Zion. See here what quickens and engages resolution in great undertakings. (1.) Opposition. When the Jebusites set David at defiance, and said, Thou shalt not come hither, he resolved to force it, whatever it cost him. (2.) Prospect of preferment. When David proposed to give the general's place to him that would lead the attack upon the castle of Zion, Joab was fired with the proposal, and he went up first and was chief. It has been said, "Take away honour out of the soldier's eye, and you cut off the spurs from his heels."

10. These also are the chief of the mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, and with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the Lord concerning Israel. 11. And this is the number of the mighty men whom David had; Jashobeam a Hachmonite, the chief of the captains: he lifted up his spear against three hundred, slain by him at one time. 12. And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, who was one of the three mighty.
I. Chronicles, XI.

31. Ithai the son of Ribai of Gibeath, that pertained to the children of Benjamin, Be- nannah the Pirathonite, 32. Hurai of the brooks of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite, 33. Azmaveth the Baharuimite, Eliaha the Shaalbionite, 34. The sons of Hashem the Gizonite, Jonathan the son of Shage the Hararite, 35. Ahiam the son of Sacar the Hararite, Eliphal the son of Ur, 36. He- phner the Mercherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite, 37. Hezro the Carmelite, Naarai the son of Ezban, 38. Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar the son of Haggeri, 39. Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Berothite, the armour-bearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah, 40. Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, 41. Uriah the Hittite, Zabad the son of Ahlai, 42. Adina the son of Shiza the Reubenite, a captain of the Reubenites, and thirty with him. 43. Hanan the son of Maachah, and Joshaphat the Mithnite, 44. Uzza the Asherathite, Shama and Jehiel the sons of Hothan the Aroerite, 45. Jedidiel the son of Shimri, and Joha his brother, the Tizite, 46. Eliel the Mahavite, and Jeribai and Joshibiah, the sons of Elnaam, and Ithmah the Moabite, 47. Eliel, and Obed, and Jasiel the Mesobaite.

We have here an account of David's worthies, the great men of his time that served him, and were preferred by him. The first edition of this catalogue was, 2 Sam. 21. 8, 9 &c. This is much the same, only that those named here, from v. 41. to the end, are added. Observe,

1. The connexion of this catalogue with that which is said concerning David, v. 9. (1.) David waxed greater and greater, and these were his mighty men. Much of the strength and honour of great men is borrowed from their servants, and depends upon them, which cannot but somewhat diminish their power, in the opinion of those that are wise. David is great, because he has great men about him; take these away, and he is where he was. (2.) The Lord of hosts was with him, and these were the mighty men which he had. God was with him, and wrought for him, but by men and means, and the use of second causes. By this it appeared that God was with him, that he inclined the hearts of those to come over to him, that he were able to serve his interest. As if God be for us, none can be against us; so if God be for us, all shall be for us, that we have occasion for. Yet David ascribed his success and increase, not to the hosts he had, but to the Lord of hosts; not to the mighty men that were with him, but to the mighty God, whose presence with us is all in all.

2. The title of this catalogue, v. 10. These are the mighty men that actually owned themselves with him. In strengthening them, they strengthened themselves, and their own interest; for his advancement was theirs. What we do in our places for the support of the kingdom of the Son of David, we shall be gainers by. In strengthening it, we strengthen ourselves. It may be read, They held strongly with him and with all Israel. Note, When God has work to do, he will not want fit instruments to do it with. If it be work that requires mighty men, mighty men shall be either found, or made, to effect it, according to the word of the Lord.

3. That which made all these men honourable, was, the good service that they did to their king and country; they helped to make David king, v. 10. A good work! They slew the Philistines, and made Jerusalem a public place, v. 11. and they saved Israel. Note, The way to be great, is, to do good. Nor did they gain this honour without labour, and the hazard of their lives. The honours of Christ's kingdom are prepared for those that fight the good fight of faith, that labour and suffer, and are willing to venture all, even life itself, for Christ and a good conscience. It is by a patient continuance in well-doing, that we must seek for glory, and honour and immortality; and they that are faithful to the Son of David, shall find their names registered and enrolled much more to their honour than these are in the records of fame.

4. Among all the great exploits of David's mighty men, here is nothing great mentioned concerning David himself, but his pouring out water before the Lord, which he had longed for, v. 18, 19. Four very honourable dispositions of David appeared in that action, which, for aught I know, make it as great as any of the achievements of those worthies. (1.) Repentance for his own weakness. It is really an honour to a man, when he is made sensible that he has said or done anything unadvisedly, to unsay it, and undo it again by repentance; as it is a shame to a man, when he had said or done amiss, to stand to it. (2.) Denial of his own appetite. He longed for the water of the well of Beth-lehem; but when he had it, he would not drink it, because he would not so far humour himself and gratify a foolish fancy. He that has such a rule as this over his own spirit, is better than the mighty. It is an honour to a man to have the command of himself; but he that will command himself, must sometimes cross himself. (3.) Devotion toward God. That water which he thought too good, too precious, for his own drinking, he poured out to the Lord, for a drink-offering. If we have any thing better than another, let God be honoured with it, who is the best, and should have the best. (4.) Tenderness of his servants. It put him into the greatest confusion imaginable, to think that three brave men should hazard their lives, to fetch water for him. In his account, it turns the water into blood. It is the honour of great men not to be prodigal of the blood of those they employ, but, in all the commandments thereby, to put their own souls into their souls' stead.

5. In the wonderful achievements of these heroes, the power of God must be acknowledged. How could one slay 300, and another the same number, v. 11, 20. another two lion-like men, v. 22. and another an Egyptian giant, v. 23. if they had not had the extraordinary presence of God with them, according to that promise, Josh. 23. 16. One man of you shall slay a thousand, for the Lord your God fighteth for you.

One of these worthies is said to be an Ammonite, v. 39. another a Moabite, v. 46; and yet the law was, that an Ammonite, and a Moabite, should not enter into the congregation of the Lord, Deut. 23. 3. These, it is likely, had approved themselves so hearty for the interest of Israel, that in their case it was thought fit to dispense with that law, and the rule, because it was indication that the Son of David would have worthies among the Gentiles: with him there is neither Greek nor Jew.

Chapter XII.

What the mighty men did toward making David king, we read in the foregoing chapter. Here we are told what the many did toward it. It was not all at once, but gradually, that David ascended the throne. His kingdom
was to last; and, therefore, like fruits that keep longest, is ripened slowly. After he had long waited for the
vacancy of the throne, it was at 2 steps, and those above
7 years distant, that he ascended it. Now we are here
told, I. What help came in to him, to Ziklag, to make
him king of Judah, v. 1. 2-22. II. What help came in to
him, in Hebron, to make him king over all Israel, above
7 years after, v. 23. 40.

1. NOW these are they that came to
David to Ziklag, while he yet kept
himself close, because of Saul the son of
Kish: and they were among the mighty
men, helpers of the war. 2. They were
armed with bows, and could use both the
right hand and the left in hurling stones and
shooting arrows out of a bow, even of
Saul’s brethren of Benjamin. 3. The chief
was Ahiezer, then Joash, the sons of She-
maah the Gibeathite; and Jeziel and Pelet,
the sons of Azmaveth; and Berachah, and
Jehu the Antothite. 4. And Ismaiah the
Gibeonite, a mighty man among the thirty,
and over the thirty; and Jeremiah, and Ja-
haziel, and Johanan, and Josabah the Ge-
derathite. 5. Eluzai, and Jerimoth, and
Bealiah, and Shemariah, and Shephatiah
the Haruphite, 6. Elkanah, and Jessiah,
and Azarel, and Joezer, and Jashobeam,
the Korhites. 7. And Johel, and Zebad-
diah, the sons of Jéromah of Gedor. 8.
And of the Gadites there separated them-
elves unto David, into the hold to the wild-
erness, men of might, and men of war fit
for the battle, that could handle shield and
buckler, whose faces were like the faces of
lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the
mountains; 9. Ezer the first, Obadiah the
second, Eliah the third, 10. Mishmannah the
fourth, Jeremiah the fifth, 11. Attai the
sixth, Eliel the seventh, 12. Johanan
the eighth, Elzabad the ninth, 13. Jere-
miah the tenth, Machbannai the eleventh, 14.
These were of the sons of Gad, captains
of the host: one of the least was over a hun-
dred, and the greatest over a thousand.
15. These are they that went over Jordan
in the first month, when it had overflowed
all his banks; and they put to flight all
them of the valleys, both toward the east and
toward the west. 16. And there came of
the children of Benjamin and Judah to the
hold unto David. 17. And David went
out to meet them, and answered and said
unto them, If ye be come peaceably unto
me to help me, my heart shall be knit unto
you: but if ye be come to betray me to mine
enemies, seeing there is no wrong in my
hands, the God of our fathers look thereon,
and rebuke it. 18. Then the spirit came
upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains,
and he said, Thine are we, David, and on
thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be
unto thee, and peace be to thy helpers; for
thy God helpeth thee. Then David re-
ceived them, and made them captains of
the band. 19. And there fell some of Ma-
nessch to David, when he came with the
Philistines against Saul to battle; but they
helped them not: for the lords of the Philis-
tines, upon advisement, sent him away,
saying, He will fall to his master Saul, to
the jeopardy of our heads. 20. As he went
to Ziklag, there fell to him of Manasseh,
Adnah, and Joazabah, and Jedial, and Mi-
achel, and Jozabad, and Elihu, and Zilthai,
captains of the thousands that were of Ma-
nessch. 21. And they helped David against
the band of the rovers: for they were all
mighty men of valour, and were captains in
the host. 22. For at that time, day by day,
there came to David to help him, until it
was a great host, like the host of God.

We have here an account of them that appear-
ed and acted as David’s friends, upon the death
of Saul, to bring about the revolution. All the
forces he had, while he was persecuted, was but
600 men, those served for his guards; but when the
time was come that he must begin to act offensiv-
ely, Providence brought in more to his assistance.
Even while he kept himself close, because of Saul,
— 1. he did not appear to invite or encourage his
friends, and well-wishers, to come in to him, not
foreseeing that the death of Saul was so near.
God was inclining and preparing them to come over
to him with seasonable succours. They that trust God
to do his work for them in his own way and time,
shall find his providence outdoing all their forecast and
contrivance. The war was God’s, and he found out
helpers of the war, whose forwardness to act for
the man God designed for the government, is here
recorded to their honour.

I. Some, even of Saul’s brethren, of the tribe of
Benjamin, and akin to him, came over to David,
v. 2. What moved them to it, we are not told;
probably, a generous indignation at the base treat-
ment which Saul, one of their tribe, gave him, an-
imated them to appear the more vigorously for him,
that the guilt and reproach of it might not lie upon
them. These Benjamites are described to be men
of great dexterity, that were trained up in shooting
and slingling, and used both hands; ingenuous,
active, men; a few of these might do David a great
deal of service. Several of the leading men of them
are here named. See Judges 20. 16.

II. Some of the tribe of Gad, though seated on
the other side Jordan, had such a conviction of Da-
viv’s title to, and fitness for, the government, that
they separated themselves from their brethren, (a
laudable separation it was,) to go to David, though
he was in the hold in the wilderness, v. 8. probably,
some of his strong holds in the wilderness of En-
gedi; they were but few, eleven, in all, here named,
but they added much to David’s strength. Those
that had hitherto come in to his assistance, were
most of them men of broken fortunes, distressed,
discontented, and soldiers of fortune, that came to
him rather for protection, than to do him any serv-
c, 1 Sam. 22. 2. But these Gadites were brave
men, men of war, and fit for the battle, v. 8. For
1. They were able-bodied men, men of incredible
swiftness, not to fly from, but to fly upon, the ene-
my, and to pursue the scattered forces; in this they

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were as swift as the rams upon the mountains, so that no man could run from them; and yet they had faces like the faces of lions, so that no man could out-fight them. 2. They were disciplined men, trained up to military exercise; they could handle shield and buckler, use both offensive and defensive weapons. 3. They were officers of the militia in their own tribe, v. 14, so that though they did not bring soldiers with them, they had them at command, hundreds, thousands. 4. They were daring men, that could break through the greatest difficulties. Upon some expedition or other, perhaps this to David, they swam over Jordan, when it overflowed all its banks, v. 15. These are fit to be employed in the cause of God, that venture thus in a dependence upon the divine protection. 5. They were men that would go through with the business they engaged in. What enemies were they that were met with in the valleys, when they had passed Jordan, that did not appear; but they put them to flight with their lion-like faces, and pursued them with matchless fury, both toward the east and toward the west; which way soever they turned, they followed the blow, and did not do their work by halves.

III. Of Judah and Benjamin came to him, v. 16. Their leader was Amasai; whether the same with that Amasai that afterward sided with Absalom, 2 Sam. 17. 23.) or no, does not appear. Now here we have,

1. David's prudent treaty with them, v. 17. He was surprised to see them, and could not but conceive some jealousy of the intentions of their coming, having been so often in danger by the treachery of the men of Ziph, and the men of Keilah, who yet were all men of Judah. He might well be timorous, whose life was so much struck at; might well be suspicious, who had been treated in so singular a deal as he said, in his haste, All men are liars. No marvel that he meets these men of Judah with caution. Observe how he puts the matter to themselves, how fairly he deals with them. As they are, they shall find 'him; so shall all that deal with the son of David. (1.) If they be faithful and honourable, he will be their rewarder. "If ye be come peaceably unto me, to help me, though ye come late, and have left the westward way, and lost the valley of Aijalon, while a strong force with you to turn the scale for me, yet I will thankfully accept your good-will, and my heart shall be knit unto you; I will love you and honour you, and do you all the kindness I can." Affection, respect, and service, that are cordial and sincere, will find favour with a good man, as they do with a good God, though clogged with infirmities, and turning to no great account. But, (2.) If they be false, and come to betray him into the hands of Saul, under colour of friendship, he leaves them to God to be their Avenger, as he is, and will be, of every thing that is treacherous and perfidious. Never was man more violently run down, than David was, (except the Son of David himself,) and yet he had the testimony of his conscience, that there was no wrong in his hands. He meant no harm to any man, which was his rejoicing in the day of evil, and enabled him, when he feared treachery, to commit his cause to him that judges righteously. He will not be judge in his own cause, though a wise man; nor avenge himself, though a man of valour; but let the righteous God, who hath said, Vengeance is mine, do both. The God of our fathers looketh thereon, and rebuke it. Observe, in this appeal, [1.] He calls God, the God of our fathers, both his fathers and his son, that he should do both with him; for they were both descendants from the same patriarchs; they both were dependents on the same God. Thus he encourages himself to believe that God would right him, if he were abused; for he was the God of his fathers, and therefore a blessing was entailed on him; and a God to all Israel, and therefore not only a Judge to all the earth, but particularly concerned in determining controversies between conflicting Israelites. [2.] He does not imprecate any fearful judgment upon them, though they should deal treacherously, but very modestly refers himself to the divine wisdom and justice; The Lord look thereon, and judge as he sees, (for he sees men's hearts,) and rebuke it. It becomes those that appeal to God, to express themselves with great temper and moderation; for the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God.

2. Their hearty closure with him, v. 18. Amasai was their spokesman, on whom the Spirit of the Lord came; not a spirit of prophecy, but a spirit of wisdom and resolution, according to the occasion, putting words into his mouth, unpreameditated, which were proper both to give David satisfaction, and to assure to Amasai, and his associates, nothing could be said finer, more lively, or more pertinent to the occasion. For himself and all his associates, (1.) He professes a very cordial adherence to David, and his interest, against all that opposed him, and a resolution to stand by him with the hazard of all that was dear to him. Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse. In calling him son of Jesse, they remind themselves of the kindness of Jesse to David, when they were despised and forsaken by all, and they mention Solomon, who, in their days, were princes of the tribe of Judah. Saul called him so in disdain, 1 Sam. 20. 27.—22. 7. but they look upon it as his honour. They were convinced that he was on God's side, and that God was on his side; and therefore Thine are we, David, and on thy side. It is good, if we must side, to side with those that side with God, and have God with them. (2.) He wishes prosperity to David, and his brothers, and friends, and to all the well-wishers, Peace, peace, be unto thee, all the good thy heart desires, and peace be to thine helpers, among whom we desire to be reckoned, that peace may be on us." (3.) He assures him of help from heaven; "For thy God helpeth thee; therefore we wish peace may be, and therefore we doubt not that peace shall be, to thee and thy helpers. Our God, who is a man of war, and that God of hosts, doubt, have him for their Helper in every time of need and danger." From these expressions of Amasai, we may take instruction how to testify our affection and allegiance to the Lord Jesus; his we must be without reservation, or power of revocation; on his side we must be forward to appear and act; to his interest we must be hearty well-wishers. He shall have prosperity to his gospel and kingdom; for his God be with him, and will, till he have put down all opposing rule, principality and power.

3. David's cheerful acceptance of them into his interest and friendship. Charity and honour teach us to let fall our jealousies, as soon as satisfaction is given us; David received them, and preferred them to be captains of the band.

IV. Some of Manasseh likewise joined in with him, v. 18. Providence gave them a fair opportunity to do it, when he and his men marched through their country, upon this occasion. Achish took David with him, when he went out to fight with Saul; but the lords of the Philistines obliged him to withdraw. We have the story, 1 Sam. 29. 4, &c. In his return, some great men of Manasseh, who had no heart to join with Saul against the Philistines, struck in with David, and very seasonably, to help him against the Amalekites and the Ziklagites, who plundered Ziklag; they were not many, but they were all mighty men, and did David good service on that occasion, 1 Sam. 30. See how Providence provides. David's interest grew strangely, just then when he had occasion to make use of it, v. 22
Auxiliary forces flocked in daily, till he had a great host. When the promise comes to the birth, leave it to God to find strength to bring forth.

23. And these are the numbers of the bands that were ready armed to the war, and came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the Lord. 24. The children of Judah that bare shield and spear were six thousand and eight hundred, ready armed to the war. 25. Of the children of Simeon, mighty men of valour for the war, seven thousand and one hundred. 26. Of the children of Levi, four thousand and six hundred. 27. And Jehoiada was the leader of the Aaronites, and with him were three thousand and seven hundred; 28. And Zadok, a young man mighty of valour, and of his father's house twenty and two captains. 29. And of the children of Benjamin, the kindred of Saul, three thousand: for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul. 30. And of the children of Ephraim, twenty thousand and eight hundred, mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers. 31. And of the half tribe of Manasseh eighteen thousand, which were expressed by name, to come and make David king. 32. And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred, and all their brethren were at their commandment. 33. Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart. 34. And of Naphtali a thousand captains, and with them, with shield and spear, thirty and seven thousand. 35. And of the Danites, expert in war, twenty and eight thousand and six hundred. 36. And of Asher, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, forty thousand. 37. And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war for the battle, a hundred and twenty thousand. 38. All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king. 39. And there they were with David three days, eating and drinking: for their brethren had prepared for them. 40. Moreover, they that were nigh them, even unto Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought bread on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen; and meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly: for there was joy in Israel.

We have here an account of those who were active in perfecting the settlement of David upon the throne, after the death of Ish-bosheth. We read, ch. 11. 1 and before, 2 Sam. 5. 1. that all the tribes of Israel came, either themselves, or by their representatives, to Hebron, to make David king; now, here we have an account of the quota which every tribe brought in ready armed to war, in case there should have been any opposition, v. 23. We may observe here:

1. That those tribes that lived nearest, brought in the fewest; Judah but 6800, v. 24. Simeon but 7100, v. 25. whereas Zebulun, that lay remote, brought 50,000, Asher, 40,000, and the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan, 120,000. Not as if the next adjacent tribes were cold in the cause; but they showed as much of their prudence in bringing few, since all the rest lay so near within call, as the Lebanon did, yet the expense would have been great to bring so many. The men of Judah had enough to do, to entertain those that came from afar.

2. The Levites themselves, and the priests, called here the Aaronites, appeared very hearty in this cause; and were ready, if there were occasion, to fight for David, as well as pray for him; because they knew he was called of God to the government, v. 26.-28.

3. Even some of the kindred of Saul came over to David, v. 29. not so many as of the other tribes; because a foolish affection for their own tribe, and a jealousy for the honour of it, kept many of them long in the sinking interest of Saul's family. Kindred should never overrule conscience. Call no man Father, to this extent, but God only.

4. It is said of most of those, that they were mighty men of valour, v. 25, 28, 30. of others, that they were expert in war, v. 35, 36. and of them all, that they could keep rank, v. 38. They had a great deal of martial fire, and yet were governable, and subject to the rules of order; warm hearts but cool heads.

5. Some were so considerate as to bring with them arms, and all instruments for war, v. 24, 33, 57. for how could they think that David should be able to furnish them.

6. The men of Issachar were the fewest of all, but 200; and yet as serviceable to David's interest, as those that brought in the greatest numbers; these few being, in effect, the whole tribe. For, (1.) They were men of great conduct, above any of their neighbours; men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do. They understood the natural times, could discern the face of the sky, were weather-wise, could advise their neighbours in the proper times for ploughing, sowing, reaping, &c.; the ceremonial times, the times appointed for the solemn feasts; therefore they are said to call the people to the mountain, Deut. 33. 19.; for almanacks were not then so common as now. Or, rather, the political times, they understood public affairs, the temper of the nation, and the tendencies of the present events. It is the periphrasis of statesmen, that they know the times, Esth. 1. 13. Those of that tribe were greatly in tent on public affairs, and had good intelligence from abroad: and they made a good use of it; they knew what Israel ought to do: from their observation and experience, they learned both their own and others' duty and interest. In this critical juncture, they knew Israel ought to make David king. It was not only expedient, but necessary; the present posture of affairs called for it. The men of Issachar dealt mostly in country-business, and dii
not much intermeddled in public affairs; which gave them an opportunity of observing others, and conversing with themselves. A stranger by sees sometimes more than a gnostic. (2.) They were men of great interest; for all their brethren were at their commandment. The commonality of that tribe having bowed their shoulders to bear, (Gen. 49. 15.) the great men had them at their beck. Hence we read of the princes of Issachar, Judg. 5. 15. They knew how to rule, and the rest knew how to obey. It is happy indeed, when those that should lead, are intelligent and judicious; and those who are to follow moderate and obscure.

7. It is said of them all, that they engaged in this enterprise, with a perfect heart, v. 38, and particularly of the men of Zebulun, that they were not of double heart, v. 33. They were, in this matter, Israelites indeed, in whom was no guile. And this was their perfection, that they were of one heart in it, v. 38. None had any separate interests, but all for the public good.

Lastly, The men of Judah, and others of the adjacent tribes, prepared for the victualling of their respective camps, when they came to Hebron, v. 39, 40. They that were at the least pains in travelling to this convention or congress of the states, thought themselves obliged to be at so much the more charge in entertaining the rest, that there might be something of an equality. A noble feast was made, (was made for laughter, Excl. 10. 19.) upon this occasion, for there was joy in Israel, v. 40. And good reason; for when the righteous rule, the city rejoices. Thus, when the throne of Christ is set up in a soul, there is, ought to be, great joy in that soul: and provision is made for the feasting of it; not as here, for two or three days, but for the whole life, nay, for eternity.

CHAP. XIII.

In the foregoing chapter, we have David made king, by which the civil government was happily settled. In this chapter, care is taken about religion. I. David consults with the representatives of the people about bringing up the ark out of its obscurity into a public place; and it is resolved on, v. 1. - 4. II. With a great deal of solemnity and joy, it is carried from Kirjath-jearim, v. 5. - 8. III. Uzza is struck dead for touching it; which, for the present, spoils the solemnity, and stops the proceedings, v. 9. - 14.

1. AND David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader. 2. And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the Lord our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us: 3. And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul. 4. And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. 5. So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim. 6. And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalath, that is, to Kirjath-jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the Lord, that dwelleth between the cherubims, whose name is called on it. 7. And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart. 8. And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.

Here is, 1. David's pious proposal to bring up the ark of God to Jerusalem, that the royal city might be the holy city, v. 1. - 3. This part of the story we had not in Samuel. We may observe in this proposal, 1. That as soon as David was well seated on his throne, he had thoughts concerning the Ark of God: Let us bring that to us, v. 3. Two things he aimed at herein. (1.) To do honour to God, by showing respect to his ark, the token of his presence. As soon as he had power in his hand, he would use it for the advancement and encouragement of religion. Note, It ought to be the first and greatest care of those that are enriched and preferred, to honour God with their honours, and to serve him, and the interests of his kingdom among men, with their wealth and power. David said not, "What pompous thing shall I do now?" Or, "What pleasant thing?" But, "What pious thing, to have the comfort and benefit of that sacred oracle. Let us bring it to us, not only that we may be a credit to it, but that it may be a blessing to us." They that honour God, profit themselves. Note, It is the wisdom of those who are setting out in the world, to take God's ark with them, and to make his oracles their counsellors, and his laws their rule. These are likely to proceed in the favour of God, who thus begin in the fear of God.

2. That he consulted with the leaders of the people about it, v. 1. Though it was, without doubt, a very good work, and, being king, he had authority to command the doing of it: yet he chose rather to do it by consultation. (1.) That he might show respect to the great men of the kingdom, and put honour upon them. Though they made him king, yet he would not rule with a high hand; saying, "We will and command, and it is our royal pleasure that you do so and so; and we will be obeyed;" but, "If it seem good to you, and you think that it may be a blessing to us," They that honour God, profit themselves. Note, It is wisdom to make use of the wisdom of others. (2.) That they joining in it, it might pass the better for a national act, and so might procure a national blessing.

3. That he would have all the people summoned to attend on this occasion, both to the honour of the ark, and for the people's satisfaction and edification, v. 4. Observe, (1.) He made the arcade brethren, which speaks his humility and condescension, (notwithstanding his advancement,) and the tender concern he had for them. Thus our Lord Jesus is not ashamed to call his people brethren, Heb. 2. 11. (1.) He speaks of the people as a remnant that was escaped: our brethren that are left in all the land of Israel. They had been under scattering providences. Their wars with the Phi-
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histines, and with the house of Saul, had wasted the country, and cut off many. We now hope to see an end of these troubles: let them that are left, be quickened by late judgments, and present mercies, to seek unto God. (3.) He takes care that the priests and Levites, especially, should be summoned to attend the ark; for it was their province in a particular manner. Thus Christian magistrates should stir up ministers to do their duty, when they see them remiss. (4.) That all this is upon supposition, that it is of the Lord their God. Though it should seem good to you and me; yet, if it be not of the Lord our God, we will not do it. Whatever we undertake, this must be our inquiry; "Is it of the Lord; Is it agreeable to his mind? Can we approve ourselves to him in it? May we expect that he will own us?" (5.) That thus it was requisite they should amend what had been amiss in the last reign, and, as it were, atone for their neglect: "For we inquired not at it in the days of Saul; and that was the reason things went on so ill with us: let that original error be amended, and then we may hope to see our affairs in a better posture. Observe, David makes no peevish reflections upon Saul. He does not say, "Saul never cared for the ark, at least, in the latter end of his reign." but, in general, We inquired not at it; making himself with others guilty of the neglect. It better becomes us to judge ourselves than others. Humble, good men lament their own share in national guilt, and take shame to themselves, Dan. 9. 5, &c.

II. The people's ready agreement to this proposal, v. 4. The thing was right in the eyes of all the people. No body could say to the contrary, but that it was a very good work, and very seasonable; so that it was resolved, nemine contradicente—unanimously, that they would so do. They that prudently propose a good work, and lead in it, will perhaps find a more ready concurrence in it than they expected. Great men know not what a great deal of good they are capable of doing by their influence on others.

3. The solemnity of bringing up the ark, v. 5, &c. which we read before, 2 Sam. 6. 1, &c. and let us observe, (1.) That it is worth while to travel far, to attend the ark of God. They came out of all parts of the country, from the river of Egypt, the utmost part south, to the entering of Hamath, which lay furthest north, v. 5. to grace this solemnity. (2.) That we have reason greatly to rejoice in the revival of neglected ordinances, and the return of the token of God's presence. When the light of religion shines out of obscurity, when it is openly and freely professed, is brought into reputation, and crowned with good men's and great ones, it is such a happy omen to a people, as is worthy to be welcomed with all possible expressions of joy. (3.) When, after long disuse, or being desecrated, it is restored, or too common for even wise and good men to make some mistakes. Who would have thought that David would have committed such an error as this, to carry the ark upon a cart? v. 7. Because the Philistines so carried it, and a special providence drove the cart, 1 Sam. 6. 12. he thought they might do so too. But we must walk by rule, not by example, when it varies from the rule; even these examples which Providence has owned, are not to be followed, in violation of the rule.

9. And when they came unto the threshing-floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. 10. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God. 11. And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza: wherefore that place is called Perez-uzza to this day. 12. And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me? 13. So David brought not the ark home to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obad-edom the Gittite. 14. And the ark of God remained with the family of Obad-edom in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obad-edom, and all that he had.

This breach upon Uzza, which caused all the joy to cease, we had an account of, 2 Sam. 6. 6, &c. 1. Let the sin of Uzza warn us all to take heed of presumptions and impudent confidence, in dealing about holy things, v. 9. and not to think that a good intention will justify a bad action. In our communion with God, we must carefully watch over our own hearts, lest familiarity breed contempt, and we think God is any way beholden to us.

2. Let the punishment of Uzza convince us that the God with whom we have to do, is a jealous God. His death, like that of Nadab and Abihu, proclaims aloud that God will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him, Lev. 10. 3. and that the nearer they are to him, the more displeased he is with their presumptions. Let us not dare to come near God with our approaches to him; and yet let us, through Christ, come boldly to a throne of grace; for we are under the dispensation of liberty and grace, not of bondage and terror.

3. Let the damps this gave to the joy of Israel, be a memorandum to us, always to rejoice with trembling, and to serve the Lord with fear, even then when we serve him with gladness.

4. Let David's displeasure, upon this occasion, caution us to take heed to our spirits, when we are under divine rebukes, lest, instead of submitting to God, we quarrel with him. If God be angry with us, shall we dare be angry with him?

5. Let the stop thus put to the solemnity, caution us not to be driven off from our duty by those providences which are only intended to drive us from our sins. David should have gone on with this work, notwithstanding the breach made upon Uzza; so might the breach have been made up.

Lastly, Let the blessing which the ark brought with it to the house of Obad-edom, encourage us to welcome God's ordinances into our house, as those that believe the ark is a guest nobody shall house him by; nor let it be thought less precious to us, for its being to some a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. If the gospel be to some a savour of death unto death, as the ark was to Uzza; yet let us receive it in the love of it, and it will be to us a savour of life unto life.

CHAP. XIV.

In this chapter, we have, I. David's kingdom established. II. His family built up, v. 5. 7. III. His enemies, the Philistines, routed in two campaigns, v. 8-15. This is repeated here from 2 Sam. 5. 11, &c.

1. NOW Hiram king of Tyre sent mens-angers to David, and timber of cedarls, with masons and carpenters to build
him a house. 2. And David perceived that the Lord had confirmed him king over Israel; for his kingdom was lifted up on high, because of his people Israel. 3. And David took more wives at Jerusalem: and David begat more sons and daughters. 4. Now these are the names of his children which he had in Jerusalem; Shammua, and Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon. 5. And Ibhar, and Elishua, and Elpalet, 6. And Nepheg, and Japhia. 7. And Elishama, and Beeliada, and Eliphalet.

We may observe here,
1. There is no man that has such a sufficiency in himself, but he has need of his neighbours, and has reason to be thankful for their help. David had a very large kingdom, Hiram a very little one; yet David cannot build him a house to his mind, unless Hiram furnish him both workmen and materials, v. 1. which is a reason why we should despise none, but, as we have opportunity, be obliging to all.
2. It is a great satisfaction to a wise man, to be settled, and to a good man, to see the special providence of God in his settlement. The people had made David king; but he could not be easy, nor think himself happy, till he perceived that the Lord had confirmed him king over Israel, v. 1. Who shall undo me, if God hath fixed me?
3. We must look upon all our advancements as designed for our usefulness. David's kingdom was lift up on high, not for his own sake, that he might look great; but because of his people Israel, that he might be a guide and protector to them. We are therefore blessed, that we may be blessings. See Gen. 12. 2. We are not born, nor do we live, for ourselves.
4. It is hard to thrive, and not grow secure and indulgent to the flesh. It was David's infirmity, that when he was settled in his kingdom, he took more wives, v. 3. yet the numerous issue he had, added to his honour and strength, Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord. We had an account of David's children, not only in Samuel, but in this book, ch. 3. 1, &c. and now here again; for it was their honour to have such a father.

3. And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David: and David heard of it, and went out against them. 9. And the Philistines came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. 10. And David inquired of God, saying, Shall I go up against the Philistines? and will thou deliver them into my hand? And the Lord said unto him, Go up; for I will deliver them into thy hand. 11. So they came up to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there. Then David said, God hath broken in upon mine enemies by my hand, like the breaking forth of waters: therefore they called the name of that place Baal-perazim. 12. And when they had left their gods there, David gave a commandment, and they were burnt with fire. 13. And the Philistines yet again spread themselves abroad in the valley. 14. Therefore David inquired again of God; and God said unto him, Go not up after them; turn away from them, and come upon them over against the mulberry-trees. 15. And it shall be, when thou shalt hear a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that then thou shalt go out to battle: for God is gone forth before thee to smite the host of the Philistines. 16. David therefore did as God commanded him: and they smote the host of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gazer. 17. And the fame of David went out into all lands; and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations.

This narrative of David's triumph over the Philistines, is much the same with that, 2 Sam. 5. 17, &c.
1. Let the attack which the Philistines made upon David, forbid us to be secure in any settlement or advancement, and engage us to expect molestation in this world. When we are most easy, something or other may come to be a terror or vexation to us. Christ's kingdom will thus be insulted by the serpent's seed, especially when it makes any advances.
2. Let David's inquiry of God, once, and again, upon occasion of the Philistines invading him, direct us in all our ways to acknowledge him, in distress, to fly to him, when we are wronged, to appeal to him, and when we know not what to do, to ask counsel at his oracles, to put ourselves under his conduct, and to beg of him to show us the right way.
3. Let David's success encourage us to resist our spiritual enemies, in observance of divine directions, and in dependence on divine strength. Resist the devil, and he shall fly as the Philistines did before David.
4. Let the sound of the going in the top of the mulberry trees, direct us to attend God's motion, both in his providence and in the influence of his Spirit. When we perceive God to go before, let us gird up our loins, gird on our armour, and follow him.
5. Let David's burning the gods of the Philistines, when they fell into his hands, teach us a holy indignation against idolatry, and all the remains of it.
6. Let David's thankful acknowledgment of the hand of God in his successes, direct us to bring all our sacrifices of praise to God's altar. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory. Lastly, Let the name of David, not only in his own kingdom, but among his neighbours, be looked upon as a type, an figure of the exalted honour of the Son of David, v. 17. The fame of David went out into all lands: he was generally talked of, and admired by all people, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations. All looked upon him as a formidable enemy, and a desirable ally. Thus has God highly exalted our Redeemer, and given him a name above every name.

CHAP. XV.

The bringing in of the ark to the city of David, was a very good work; it was resolved upon, ch. 13. 3. and attempted, but not perfected: it lay by the way in the house of Obed-edom. Now this chapter gives us an account of the completing of that good work. 1. How it was done more regularly than before. 1. A place was prepared for it, v. 1. 2. The priests were ordered to carry it, v. 2. 15. 3. The Levites had their offices assigned them in attending on it, 16. 24. 11. How it was done more successfully than before, v. 25. 1. The Levites made no mistake in their work, v. 26. 2. David and the people
AND David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. 2. Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever. 3. And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the Lord unto his place which he had prepared for it. 4. And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites: 5. Of the sons of Kohath; Uriel the chief, and his brethren, a hundred and twenty. 6. Of the sons of Merari; Asaiah the chief, and his brethren, two hundred and twenty. 7. Of the sons of Gershom; Joel the chief, and his brethren, a hundred and thirty. 8. Of the sons of Elizaphan; Shemaiath the chief, and his brethren, two hundred. 9. Of the sons of Hebron; Eliel the chief, and his brethren, fourscore. 10. Of the sons of Uzziel; Amminadab the chief, and his brethren, a hundred and twelve. 11. And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Semaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab. 12. And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. 13. For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order. 14. So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel. 15. And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders, with the staves thereof, as Moses commanded, according to the word of the Lord. 16. And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music, psalters, and harps, and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy. 17. So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel; and of his brethren, Asaph the son of Berechiah; and of the sons of Merari their brethren, Ethan the son of Kushaiah; 18. And with them their brethren of the second degree, Zechariah, Ben, and Jaaziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Umni, Eliah, and Benaiath, and Maaseiah, and Mattithia, and Elipheleth, and Mikneiah; and Obed-edom and Jeiel the porters. 19. So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were appointed to sound with cymbals of brass; 20. And Zcechariah, and Aziel, and Sheniramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, and Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Beniah, with psalteries on Alamoth; 21. And Matithia, and Elipheleth, and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, and Azaziah, with harps on the Sheminith to excel. 22. And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was for song: he instructed about the song, because he was skilful. 23. And Berechiah and Elkanah were door-keepers for the ark. 24. And Shebaniath, and Jehosaphat, and Nethaneel, and Amasai, and Zechariah, and Benaiath, and Eliezer, the priests, did blow with the trumpets before the ark of God; and Obed-edom and Jehia were doorkeepers for the ark.

Preparation is here made for the bringing of the ark home to the city of David, from the house of Obed-edom. It is here owned that in the former attempt, though it was a very good work, and in it they sought God, yet they sought him not after the due order. We may do many things for God, and yet not do them as we should, so as to be acceptable to him; we may do them after our own way, and so go wrong. We must therefore seek God in a due ordinance, and so we shall be acceptable unto him. Then is the voice of all to go up to God who have been acceptable to him. Such being the case, David now prepared a place for the reception of the ark, before he brought it to him; and thus he sought in the due order. He had not time to build a house, but he pitched a tent, for it, v. 1. probably, according to the pattern showed to Moses in the mount, or as near it as might be, of curtains and boards. Observe, When he made houses for himself in the city of David, he prepared a place for the ark. Note, Wherever we build for ourselves, we must be sure to make room for God's ark, for a church in the house.

2. David now ordered that the Levites or priests should carry the ark upon their shoulders. Now he thought himself of that which he could not but know before, that none ought to carry the ark but the Levites, v. 2. The Kohathites carried it in their ordinary marches, and therefore had no waggons allotted them, because their work was to bear upon their shoulders, Numb. 7. 9. But, upon extraordinary occasions, as when they passed Jordan, and compassed Jericho, the priests carried it. This rule was express, and yet David himself forgot it, and put the ark upon a cart. Note, Even they that are very knowing in the word of God, yet have it not always so ready to them as were to be wished, when they have occasion to use it. Wise and good men may be guilty of an oversight, which as soon as they are aware of, they will correct. David does not go about to justify what had been done amiss, nor to lay the blame on others, but owns himself guilty, with others, of not seeking God in a due order, and now takes care not only to summon the Levites to the solemnity, as he did all Israel, v. 3. and had done before, ch. 13. 2. but to see that they were assembled, v. 4. especially the sons of Aaron, v. 11. To them he gave the chief of the singers, v. 19. Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites, therefore bring up the ark of the Lord. Note, It is expected that those who are advanced above others in dignity, go before others in duty; "You are the chief, and therefore more is expected from you than from
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3. The Levites and priests were sanctified themselves, v. 14, and were ready to carry the ark on their shoulders, according to the law, v. 15. Note, Many that are very remiss in their duty, if they were but faithfully told of it, would reform, and do better. When God made the priests more careful to sanctify themselves, that is, to cleanse themselves from all ceremonial pollution, and to compose themselves for the solemn service of God, so as to strike a reverence upon the people. Some are made examples, that others may be made exemplary and very cautious.

4. Officers were appointed to be ready to bid the ark welcome, with all possible expressions of joy, v. 16. David offered the chief of the Levites to nominate those that knew they were proficients, for this service. Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were now first appointed, v. 17. They undertook to sound with cymbals, v. 19. others with psalteries, v. 20. others with harps, on the Sheminith, or eighth, eight notes higher or lower than the rest, according to the rules of concert, v. 21. Some that were priests, blew with the trumpet, v. 24. as was usual at the removal of the ark, and, as to our memory, 11. and at solemn feasts, Ps. 81. 3. And one was appointed for song, v. 22. for he was skilful in it, could sing well himself, and instruct others. Note, As every man has received the gift, so he ought to minister the same, 1 Pet. 4. 10. And those that excel in any endowment, should not only use it for the common good themselves, but teach others also, and not grudge to make others as wise as themselves. This way of praising God by musical instruments had not hitherto been in use: but David, being a prophet, instituted it by divine direction, and added it to the other cardinal ordinances of that dispensation, as the apostle calls them, Heb. 9. 10. The New Testament keeps up singing of psalms, but has not appointed church music. Some were appointed to be porters, v. 18. others door-keepers for the ark, v. 23. 24. and one of them was Obed-edom, who reckoned it, no doubt, a piece of honour, and accepted it as a recompense for the entertainment he had given to the ark. He had been, for three months, housekeeper to the ark, and indeed its landlord. But when he might not be so any longer, such an affection had he for it, that he was glad to be its door-keeper.

25. So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-edom with joy. 26. And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams. 27. And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen. 28. Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps. 29. And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came to the city of David, that Michael, the daughter of Saul, looking out at a window, saw king David dancing and playing; and she despised him in her heart.

All things being got ready for the carrying of the ark to the city of David, and its reception there, we have here an account of the solemnity of this conveyance thither from the house of Obed-edom:

1. God helped the Levites that carried it. The ark was no very great burden, that they who carried it, needed any extraordinary help. But, (1.) It is good to take notice of the assistance of the Divine Providence, even in those things that fall within the compass of our natural powers: if God did not help us, we could not stir a step. (2.) In all our religious exercises, we must particularly derive help from Heaven. See Acts 26. 22. All our sufficiency for holy duties is from God. (3.) The Levites, perhaps, remembering the breach upon Uzza, were ready to tremble when they took up the ark; but God helped them, that is, he encouraged them to it, silenced their fears, and strengthened their faith. (4.) God helped them to do it decently and well, and without making any mistake. If we perform any religious duties, so as to escape a breach, and come off with our lives, we must own it was God that helped us; for had we been left to ourselves, we should have been guilty of some fatal miscarriages. God's ministers that bear the vessels of the Lord, have special need of divine help in their ministrations, that God in them may be glorified, and his church edified. And if God help the Levites, the people have the benefit of it.

2. When they experienced the tokens of God's presence with them, they offered sacrifices of praise to him, v. 26. This also he helped them to do. They offered these bullocks and rams, perhaps, by way of atonement for the former error, that that might not now be remembered against them, as well as by way of acknowledgment for the help now received.

3. There were great expressions of rejoicing used; the sacred music played, David danced, the singers sang, and the common people shouted, v. 27. 28. This we had before, 2 Sam. 6. 14. 15. Learn hence, (1.) That we serve a good Master, who delights to have his servants sing at their work. (2.) That times of public reformation are, and should be, times of public rejoicing. Those are unworthy of the ark, that are not glad of it. (3.) It is morefitting for the ministers of God to show themselves zealous in the acts of devotion, than to despise them. Michael indeed despised David, v. 29; but her despising him did not make him all despicable; he did not regard it himself, nor did any that were wise and good, (and why should we covet the esteem of any but such?) think the worse of him.

CHAP. XVI.

This chapter concludes that great affair of the settlement of the ark in the royal city, and with it, the settlement of the public worship of God during the reign of king David. Here is. 1. The solemnity with which the ark was fixed, v. 1, 6. 2. The psalm David gave to be sung on this occasion, v. 7, 12. 3. The setting of the constant worship of God in order, thenceforward, v. 37. 48.

1. So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that
David had pitched for it: and they offered burnt-sacrifices and peace-offerings before God. 2. And when David had made an end of offering the burnt-offerings and the peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord. 3. And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. 4. And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel: 5. Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, Jeiel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Mattithiah, and Eliab, and Benaiah, and Obed-edom; and Jeiel with psalteries and with harps; but Asaph made a sound with cymbals; 6. Benaiah also and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God.

It was a glorious day when the ark of God was safely lodged in the tent David had pitched for it. That good man had his heart much upon it, could not sleep contentedly till it was done, Ps. 152, 4. The circumstances of the ark were now, 1. Better than what they had been. It had been obscure in a country-town, in the fields of the wood; now it is removed to a public place, to the royal city, where all might have resort to it. It had been neglected, as a despised broken vessel; now it is attended with veneration, and God is inquired of by it. It had been pitched in a room in a private house, which enjoyed by the good-will of an individual; now it has a habitation of its own, entire to itself, is set in the midst of it, and not crowded into a corner. Note, Though God’s word and ordinances may be clouded and eclipsed for a time, they shall, at length, shine out of obscurity. Yet, 2. They were much short of what was intended in the next reign, when the temple was to be built. This was but a tent, a poor mean dwelling, yet this was the tabernacle, the temple, which David, in his psalms, often speaks of with so much affection. David, who pitched a tent for the ark, and continued steadfast to it, did far better than Solomon, who built a temple for it, and yet, in his latter end, turned his back upon it. The church’s poorest times were its purest.

Now David is easy in his mind; the ark is fixed, and fixed near him. Now see how he takes care,

(1.) That God have the glory of it. Two ways, he gives him honour upon this occasion; [1.] By sacrifices; v. 1. burnt-offerings, in adoration of his perfections; peace-offerings, in acknowledgment of his favours. [2.] By songs; he appointed Levites to record this story in a song for the benefit of others, or to celebrate it themselves by thanking and praising the God of Israel, v. 4. All our rejoicings must express themselves in thanksgivings to him from whom all our comfort are received.

(2.) That the people have the joy of it. They shall fare the better for this day’s solemnity; for he gives them all, what was worth coming for, a royal treat, in honour of the day, v. 5.; in which David showed himself generous to his subjects, as he had found God gracious to him. They, whose hearts are enlarged with holy joy, should show it by being open-handed. But (which was far better) he gave them also a blessing in the name of the Lord, as a father, as a prophet, v. 2.; he prayed to God for them, and commended them to his grace. In the name of the Word of the Lord, so the Targum, the essential eternal Word, who is Jehovah, and through whom all blessings come to us.

7. Then on that day David delivered first this psalm, to thank the Lord, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren. 8. Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. 9. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works. 10. Glory ye in his holy name; let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. 11. Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually. 12. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth; 13. O ye seed of Israel his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen ones. 14. He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth. 15. Be ye mindful always of his covenant, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations; 16. Even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac; 17. And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, 18. Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance; 19. When ye were but few, even a few, and strangers in it. 20. And when they went from nation to nation, and from one kingdom to another people; 21. He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reproved kings for their sakes, 22. Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. 23. Sing unto the Lord, all the earth; show forth from day to day his salvation. 24. Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations. 25. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods. 26. For all the gods of the people are idols: but the Lord made the heavens. 27. Glory and honour are in his presence; strength and gladness are in his place. 28. Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. 29. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. 30. Fear before him, all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved. 31. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The Lord reigneth. 32. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; let the fields rejoice, and all that is
33. Then snail the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the Lord, because he cometh to judge the earth. 34. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. 35. And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise. 36. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever. And all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord.

We have here the thanksgiving-psalm which David, by the Spirit, composed, and delivered by the chief musician, to be sung upon occasion of the public entry the ark made into the tent prepared for it; some think he had appointed this hymn to be daily used in the temple-service, as duly as the day came; whatever other psalms they sung, they must not omit this. David had penned many psalms before this, some in the time of his troubles by Saul. This was composed before; but was now first delivered into the hand of Asaph, for the use of the church. It is gathered out of several psalms. From the prayer of 18: 23, it is taken from Ps. 103, 1, &c.; and then, ver. 23. to v. 34. It is the whole 56th psalm, with little variation; v. 34. is taken from Ps. 136, 1. and divers others; and then the two last verses are taken from the close of Ps. 106. which, some think, warrants us to do likewise, to make up hymns out of David's psalms, a part of one, and a part of another, put together, so as may be most proper to express and excite the devotion of christians.

These psalms will be best expounded in their proper places; (if the Lord will) here we take them as they are put together, with a design to thank the Lord, v. 7. a great duty, to which we need to be excited, and in which we need to be assisted.

1. Let God be glorified in our praises, let his honour be the centre in which all the lines meet. Let us glorify him by our thanksgivings, Give thanks to the Lord; by our prayers, Call on his name, v. 8.; by our songs, Sing psalms unto him; by our discourse, Talk of all his wondrous works, v. 9. Glorify him as a great God, and greatly to be praised, v. 25. as supreme God, (above all gods,) as sole God: for all others are idols, v. 26. Glorify him as most bright and blessed in himself, Glory and honour are in his presence, v. 27.; as Creator, The Lord made the heavens, as the Ruler of the whole creation, His judgments are in all the earth, v. 14.; and as our's, He is the Lord our God. Thus must we give unto the Lord the glory due to his name, v. 28, 29. and own it, and much more, his due.

2. Let others be edified and instructed. Make known his deeds among the people, v. 8. Declare his glory among the heathen, v. 24. that those who are strangers to him, may be led into acquaintance with him, allegiance to him, and the adoration of him. Thus must we serve the interests of his kingdom among men, that all the earth may fear before him, v. 30.

3. Let us be ourselves encouraged to triumph and trust in God. They that give glory to God's name, are allowed to glory in it, v. 10. to value themselves upon their relation to God, and venture themselves upon his promise to them. Let the heart of them rejoice, that seek the Lord, much more they that have found him. Seek him, and his strength, and his face; that is, seek him by the ark of his strength, in which he manifests himself.

4. Let the everlasting covenant be the great matter of our joy and praise; v. 15. Be ye mindful of his covenant, says the psalmist; it is, He will be ever mindful of it, Ps. 105. 8. Saying, God will never forget it, we never must. The covenant is said to be commanded; because God has obliged us to obey the conditions of it, and because he has both authority to make the promise, and ability to make it good. This covenant was ancient, yet never to be forgotten. It was made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and was long since dead, v. 16-18. yet still sure to the spiritual seed, and the promises of it pleadable.

5. Let God's former mercies to his people of old, to our ancestors and predecessors in profession, be commemorated by us now, with thankfulness to his praise. Let it be remembered, how God protected the patriachs in their unsettled condition, when they came strangers to Canaan, and were sojourners in it; when they were few, and might easily have been overwhelmed up, when they were continually upon the remove, and so exposed; when there were many that bore them ill-will, and sought to do them mischief: yet no man was suffered to do them wrong; not the Canaanites, Philistines, Egyptians; kings were reproved, and plagued, for their sakes. Pharaoh was so, and Abimelech. They were the anointed of the Lord, sanctified by his grace, sanctified to his glory, and had received the unction of the Spirit. They were represented in the things of God themselves, and commissioned to instruct others; (and prophets are said to be anointed, 1 Kings 19. 16. Isa. 61. 1,) and therefore if any touch them, they touch the apple of God's eye; if any harm them, it is at their peril, v. 19-22.

6. Let the great salvation of the Lord be especially the subject of our praises: v. 23. Show forth from day to day his salvation; that is, (says Bishop Patrick,) his promised salvation by Christ. We have reason to celebrate that, from day to day; for we daily receive the benefit of it, and it is a subject that can never be exhausted.

7. Let God be praised by a due and constant attendance upon him in the ordinances he has appointed; Bring an offering, then, the fruit of the ground, now, the fruit of the lips, of the heart, and the mouth, v. 13. and worship him in the beauty of holiness, in the holy place, and in the holy manner, v. 29. Holiness is the beauty of the Lord, the beauty of all sanctified souls, and all religious performances.

8. Let God's universal monarchy be the fear and joy of all people. Let us reverence it; Fear before him, all the earth. And let us rejoice in it; Let the heavens be glad and rejoice, because the Lord reigns, v. 21. and worship him in the beauty of holiness, in the holy place, and in the holy manner, v. 29. The whole earth is, and must be, under the dominion of God, and under Christ; and we have in that our interest.

9. Let the prospect of the judgment to come, inspire us with an awful pleasure. Let earth and sea, fields and woods, though in the great day of the Lord they will all be consumed, yet rejoice that we are to come and judge the earth, v. 32. 33. The Lord's day is a day of judgment, and that though it be moved, it cannot be removed, nor the measures broken, which Infinite Wisdom has taken in the government of it, v. 30, 31.

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10. In the midst of our present prosperity let us get to pray for the succour and relief of these sighing and bruised, who are in distress; v. 22. Save us, gather us, deliver us from the heathen, those of us that are scattered, and oppressed. When we are rejoicing in God's favours to us, we must remember our afflicted brethren, and pray for their salvation and deliverance as our own. We are members one of another; and therefore when we mean, "Lord, save them," it is not improper to say, "Lord, save us."
Lastly, let us make God the Alpha and Omega of all our praises. He began, v. 8, "Give thanks to the Lord;" he concludes, v. 36, "Blessed be the Lord." And whereas in the place whence this doxology is taken, (Ps. 106. 48.) it is added, "Let all the people say, Amen; Halleluiah," here we find that they did according to that directory: All the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord. When the Levites had finished this psalm of prayer and praise, then, and not till then, the people that attended, signified their consent and concurrence, by saying, Amen. And so they praised the Lord, much affected, no doubt, with this newly instituted way of devotion, which had been hitherto used in the schools of the prophets only, 1 Sam. 10. 5. And if this way of praising God, please the Lord better than an ox or a bullock that has horns and hoofs, the humble shall see it, and be glad, Ps. 69. 31, 32.

37. So he left there, before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, Asaph and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required: 38. And Obed-edom, with their brethren, threescore and eight; Obed-edom also, the son of Jeduthun, and Hosah, to be porters: 39. And Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the Lord in the high place that was at Gibeon, 40. To offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord upon the altar of the burnt-offering continually, morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the law of the Lord, which he commanded Israel: 41. And with them Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest that were chosen, who were expressed by name, to give thanks to the Lord, because his mercy endureth for ever: 42. And with them Heman and Jeduthun, with trumpets and cymbals for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God. And the sons of Jeduthun were porters. 43. And all the people departed, every man to his house: and David returned to bless his house.

The worship of God is not only to be the work of a solemn day now and then, but brought in to grace a triumph; but it ought to be the work of every day. David therefore settles it here for a constancy, puts it into a method, which he obliged those that officiated to observe in their respective posts.

In the tabernacle of Moses, and afterward in the temple of Solomon, the ark and the altar were together; but ever since Eli's time, they had been separated, and still continued so till the temple was built. I cannot conceive what reason there was, why David, who knew the law, and was zealous for it, did not either set up the ark, and put it in the tabernacle and the altar were, or bring them to mount Zion, where the ark was. Perhaps the curtains and hangings of Moses's tabernacle were so worn with time and weather, that they were not fit to be removed, nor fit to be a shelter for the ark; and yet he would not make all new, but only a tent for the ark, because the time was at hand when the temple should be built. Whatever was the reason, all David's time, they were asunder; but he took care that neither of them should be neglected.

1. At Jerusalem where the ark was, Asaph and his brethren were appointed to attend, to minister before the ark continually, with songs of praise, as every day's work required, v. 37. No sacrifices were offered there, nor incense burnt, because the altars were not there; but David's prayers were directed as incense, and the lifting up of his hands as the evening sacrifice, Ps. 141. 2. So early did spiritual worship take place of ceremonial.

2. Yet the ceremonial worship, being of divine institution, must by no means be omitted; and therefore at Gibeon were the altars where the priests attended; for their work was to sacrifice, and pray, and burn incense, and that they did continually, morning and evening, according to the law of Moses, v. 39, 40. These must be kept up, because however in their own nature they were inferior to the moral services of prayer and praise, yet, as they were types of the mediation of Christ, they had a great deal of honour put upon them, and the observance of them was of great consequence. Here Zadok attended, to preside in the service of the altar; as (it is probable) Abiathar settled in Jerusalem, to attend the ark, because he had the breast-plate of judgment, which must be consulted before the ark: this is the reason why we read that in David's time, both Zadok and Abiathar were the priests, 2 Sam. 8. 17—15. 29. one, where the altar was, and the other, where the ark was. At Gibeon, where the altars were, David also appointed singers to give thanks to the Lord; and that all of their all their songs must be, for his mercy endureth for ever, v. 41. They did it with musical instruments of God; such instruments as were appointed and appropriated to this service, not such as they used on other occasions. Between common mirth, and holy joy, there is a vast difference; and the limits and distances between them must be carefully observed and kept up.

Matters being thus settled, and the affairs of religion put into a happy channel, (1.) The people were satisfied, and went home pleased. (2.) David returned to bless his house, resolving to keep up his family-worship still, which public worship must not supersede.

CHAP. XVII.

This excellent chapter is the same with 2 Sam. 7. It will be worth while to look back upon what was there said upon it. We are now told in general how God's gracious acceptance of David's purpose to build him a house, and the promise he made thereupon, v. 1—15. II. David's gracious acceptance of God's good promise to build him a house, and the prayer he made thereupon, v. 16—27.

1. NOW it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in a house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord remaineth under curtains. 2. Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thy heart; for God is with thee. 3. And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, 4. Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not build me a house to dwell in: 5. For I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another. 6. Wherewithsoever I have walked with all Israel, spake I a word to any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my
people, saying, Why have ye not built me a house of cedars? 7. Now therefore thus shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, even from following the sheep, that thou shouldest be ruler over my people Israel; 8. And I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thee, and have made thee a name like the name of the great men that are in the earth. 9. Also I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in their place, and shall be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the beginning. 10. And since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel. Moreover, I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore I tell thee, that the Lord will build thee a house. 11. And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired, that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. 12. He shall build me a house, and I will establish his throne for ever. 13. I will be his father, and he shall be my son; and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee: 14. But I will settle him in my house and in my kingdom for ever; and his throne shall be established for evermore. 15. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David. Let us observe here, I. How desirous and solicitous good people should be, to serve the interests of God's kingdom in the world, to the utmost of their capacity. David could not be easy in a house of cedar, while the ark was lodged within curtains. v. 1. The concerns of the public should always be near our hearts. What pleasure can we take in our own prosperity, if we see not the good of Jerusalem? When David is advanced to wealth and power, see what his cares and projects are. Not, "What shall I do for my children, to get portions for them? What shall I do to fill my coffers, and enlarge my dominions?" But, "What shall I do for God, to serve and honour him?" They that are contriving where to bestow their fruits and their goods, would do well to inquire what condition the ark is in, and whether some may not be well bestowed upon it. II. How ready God's prophets should be to encourage every good purpose. Nathan was no sooner aware of David's good design, than he bare him go, and do all that was within his heart, v. 2. for he had no reason to doubt that God was with him in it. Ministers should stir up the gifts and graces that are in others, as well as in themselves. III. How little God affects external pomp and splendour in his service. His ark was content with a tabernacle, v. 5. and he never so much as mentioned the building of a house for it; no, not when he had fixed his people in great and goodly cities which they builded not, Deut. 6. 10. He commanded the judges to fix his people, but never bid them build him a house, v. 6. We may well be content a while with mean accommodations; God's ark was so. IV. How graciously God accepts his people's good purposes, yea, though he himself prevents the performance of them. David must not build this house, v. 4. He must prepare for it, and must do it; as Moses must bring Israel within sight of Canaan, but must then call his people to rest, Num. 21. 22. The same was the case with David. It is the prerogative of Christ to be both the Author and Finisher of his work. Yet he must not think that, because he was not permitted to build the temple, 1. His pretension was in vain; no, "I took thee from the sheepcote, though not to be a builder of the temple, yet to be ruler over my people Israel; that is honour enough for thee, leave the other to one that shall come after thee," v. 7. 2. Why should one man think to engross all the business, and to bring every good work to perfection; let something be left for them that succeed. God had given him victories, and made him a name, v. 8. and, further, intended by him to establish his people Israel, and secure them against their enemies, v. 9. That must be his work, who is a man of war, and fit for it, and he must let the building of the earthly temple alone for one that was never cut out for a soldier. Nor, 2. Must he think that his good purpose was in vain, and that he should lose the reward of it; no, it being God's act to prevent the execution of it, he shall be as fully recom- pensed as if he had done it. The Lord will build thee a house, and annex the crown of Israel to it, v. 10. If there be a willing mind, it shall not only be accepted, but thus rewarded. Nor, 3. Must he think that because he might not do this good work, therefore it never would be done, and that it was in vain to think of it; no, I will raise up thy seed, and he shall build me a house, v. 11, 12. God's temple shall be built in the time appointed, though we may not have the honour of helping to build it, or the satisfaction of seeing it built. Nor, 4. Must he confine his thoughts to the temporal prosperity of his family, but must entertain himself with the expectations of the kingdom of our Messiah, who should descend from his loins, and whose throne should be established for evermore, v. 14. Solomon was not so settled in God's house, as he should have been, nor was his family settled in the kingdom; "But there shall be one descend from thee whom I will settle in my house, and in my kingdom," which intimates that he should be both a High Priest over the house of God, and should have the sole administration of the affairs of God's kingdom among men, all power both in heaven and in earth, in the house and in the kingdom, in the church, and in the world. He shall be a Priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both, and he shall build the temple of the Lord, Zech. 6. 12, 13. 16. And David the king came and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hither? 17. And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast also spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O Lord God. 18. What can David speak more to thee for the honour of thy servant? for thou knowest thy servant. 19. O Lord, for thy servant's
sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness, in making known all these great things. 20. O Lord, there is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 21. And what one nation in the earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his own people, to make thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before thy people, whom thou hast redeemed out of Egypt? 22. For thy people Israel didst thou make thine own people for ever; and thou, Lord, becamest their God. 23. Therefore now, Lord, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, be established for ever, and do as thou hast said. 24. Let it even be established, that thy name may be magnified for ever, saying, The Lord of hosts is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel: and let the house of David thy servant be established before thee. 25. For thou, O my God, hast told thy servant that thou wilt build him a house; therefore thy servant hath found in his heart to pray before thee. 26. And now, Lord, thou art God, and hast promised this goodness unto thy servant; 27. Now, therefore, let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may be before thee for ever: for thou blessest, O Lord, and it shall be blessed for ever.

We have here David's solemn address to God, in answer to the gracious message he had now received from him. By faith he receives the promises, embraces them, and is persuaded of them, as the patriarchs, Heb. 11. 13. How humbly does he here abase himself, and acknowledge his own unworthiness! How highly does he advance the name of God, and admire his condescending grace and favour! With what devout affection does he magnify the God of Israel, and what a value has he for the Israel of God! With what an assurance does he build upon the promise, and with what a lively faith does he put it in suit! What an example is this to us of humble, believing, fervent, prayers! The Lord enables us all thus to seek him! These things were largely observed, 2 Sam. 7. We shall therefore here observe only those few expressions, in which the prayer, as we find it here, differs from the record of it there, and has something added to it.

1. That which is there expressed by way of question: (Is this the manner of men, O Lord God?) is here an acknowledgment, "Thou hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree. Thou hast made me a great man, and then treated me accordingly." God by the covenant relations into which he admits believers, the titles he gives them, the favours he bestows on them, and the preparations he has made for them, regards them according to the estate of men of high degree, though they are mean and vile. Having himself distinguished them, he treats them as persons of distinction, according to the quality he has been pleased to put upon them. Some give these words here another reading, "Thou hast looked: upon me in the form of a man, who art in the highness of the Lord God; or, Thou hast made me to see, according to the form of a man, the majesty of the Lord God." And so it points at the Messiah; for as Abraham, so David, saw his day, and was glad; saw it by faith, saw him in fashion, as a man, the Word made flesh; and yet saw his glory as that of the only begotten of the Father. And this was it, that God spake concerning his house, for a great while to come, the foresight of which affected him more than the present, and let him be not strange that David should speak so plainly of the two natures of Christ, who in spirit called him Lord, though he knew he was to be his Son, Ps. 110. 1. and foresaw him lower than the angels for a little while, but afterward crowned with glory and honour, Heb. 2. 6, 7.

II. What can David say more unto thee, it is here added, for the honour of thy servant? v. 18. Note, The honour God puts upon his servants, by taking them into covenant and communion with himself, is so great, that they need not, they cannot, desire to be more highly honoured. Were they to sit down and wish, they could not speak more for their own honour, than that which the word of God has spoken.

III. It is very observable that what Samuel is here added, for the honour of thy servant, is here retailed, for the servant's sake, v. 18. Jesus Christ is both the Word of God, Rev. 19. 13. and the Servant of God, Isa. 42. 1. and it is for his sake, upon the score of his mediation, that the promises are both made, and made good, 'to all believers; it is in him, that they are yea and amen. For his sake it is done, for his sake it is made known; to him we owe all this greatness, from him we are to expect all these great things; they are the unsearchable riches of Christ, which, if by faith we see in ourselves, and see in the hand of the Lord Jesus, we cannot but magnify as great things, the only true greatness, and speak honourably of accordingly.

IV. In Samuel, the Lord of hosts is said to be the God over Israel; here he is said to be the God of Israel, even a God to Israel, v. 24. His being the God of Israel, bespeaks his having the name of the God of Israel, his possessing all the attributes and perfections of God. In this latter view of it, the God of Israel, bespeaks his answering to the name, his filling up the relation, and doing all that to them, which might be expected from him. There were those that were called gods of such and such nations, gods of Assyria and Egypt, gods of Hamad and Arpad; but they were no gods to them, for they stood them in no stead at all, were mere ciphers, and nothing but a name; but the God of Israel is a God to Israel; all his attributes and perfections redound to their real benefit and advantage. Happy therefore, thrice happy, in the people whose God is Jehovah, for he will be a God to them, a God all-sufficient.

V. The closing words, in Samuel, are, With thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever. That is the language of a holy desire. But that desire, here, are three words of a most holy prayer; For thy blessing, O Lord, and it shall be blessed for ever, v. 27. 1. He is therefore encouraged to beg a blessing because God had intimated to him that he had blessings in store for him and his family; "Thou blessest, O Lord, and therefore unto thee shall all flesh come for a blessing; unto thee do I come for the blessing promised to me." Promises are intended to excite and excite prayer. Has God said, I will bless? Let our hearts answer, Lord bless me. 2. He is therefore earnest for the blessing, because those whom God blesses, are truly and eternally blessed.
shall be blessed. Men can but beg the blessing, it is God that commands it; what he designs, he effects; what he promises, he performs; saying and doing are not two things with him. Nay, it shall be blessed for ever. His blessings shall not be revoked, cannot be opposed, and the benefits conferred by them, are such as will survive time and days. David's prayer concludes as God's promise did, v. 14. with which it is for ever. God's word looks at things eternal, and so should our desires and hopes.

CHAP. XVIII.

David's pious and his prayer he had an account of in the foregoing chapter; here follows immediately that which which one might reasonably expect, an account of his prosperity; for they that seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, as David did, shall have other things added to them, as far as God sees good for them. Here is, 1. His prosperity abroad. He conquered the Philistines, v. 1. the Moabites, v. 2. the king of Zobah, v. 3. 4. the Syrians, v. 6. 8. made the king of Hamath his tributary, v. 9. 11. and the Edomites, v. 12. 13. II. His prosperity at home. His court and kingdom flourished, v. 14. 17. All this we had an account of before, 2 Sam. 8.

1. \textbf{N}OW after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them, and took Gath and her towns out of the hand of the Philistines. And he smote Moab: and the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts. And David smote Hadarezer king of Zobah unto Hamath, as he went to establish his dominion by the river Euphrates. And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: David also houghed all the chariot-horses, but reserved of them a hundred chariots. And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadarezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men. Then David put garrisons in Syria-damasc; and the Syrians became David's servants, and brought gifts. Thus the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went. And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadarezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. Likewise from Tibhath, and from Chun, cities of Hadarezer, brought David very much brass, wherewith Solomon made the brazen sea, and the pillars, and the vessels of brass.

\textit{After this} it is said, v. 1. David did those great exploits. After the sweet communion he had with God by the word and prayer in the foregoing chapter, he went on in his work with an extraordinary vigour and courage, conquering, and to conquer. Thus Jacob, after his vision, lifted up his feet, Gen. 29. 1. We have taken a view of these victories before, and shall now only observe, 1. Those that have been long enemies to the Israel of God will be brought down at last. The Philistines had, for several generations, been vexatious to Israel, but now David subdued them, v. 1. Thus shall all opposing rule, princedom and power, be, at the end of time, put down by the Son of David, and the most inveterat enemies shall fall before him.

2. Such is the uncertainty of this world, that frequently men lose their wealth and power, their hopes. When they think to confirm it. Hadarezer was smitten as he went to establish his dominion, v. 3. 3. A horse is a vain thing for safety, so David said, Ps. 33. 17. and, it seems, he believed what he said, for he houghed the chariot-horses, v. 4. Being resolved not to trust to them, (Ps. 20. 7.) he would not use them.

4. The enemies of God's church are often made to ruin themselves by helping one another, v. 5. The Syrians of Damascus were smitten when they came to help Hadarezer. When hand thus joins in hand, they shall not only not go unpunished, but thereby they shall be gathered as the sheaves into the floor, Mic. 4. 11, 12.

5. The wealth of the sinner sometimes proves to have been laid up for the just. The Syrians brought gifts, v. 6. Their shields of gold, and their brass, were brought to Jerusalem, v. 7. 8. As the tabernacle was built of the spoils of the Egyptians, so the temple of the spoils of other Gentile nations. The happy presage of the interest the Gentiles should have in the gospel church.

9. Now when Tou king of Hamath heard how David had smitten all the host of Hadarezer king of Zobah, 10. He sent Hadoram his son to king David, to inquire of his welfare, and to congratulate him, because he had fought against Hadarezer, and smitten him; (for Hadarezer had war with Tou;) and with him all manner of vessels of gold and silver and brass. 11. Them also king David dedicated unto the Lord, with the silver and the gold that he brought from all these nations; from Edom and from Moab, and from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines, and from Amalek. 12. Moreover Abishai the son of Zeruiah slew of the Edomites, in the valley of Salt, eighteen thousand. 13. And he put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became David’s servants. Thus the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went. 14. So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people. 15. And Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, recorder. 16. And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Abimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests; and Shavsha was scribe; 17. And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and the sons of David were chief about the king.
earth, and all inferior people too, be thus wise, thus instructed. The presents we are to bring him, are not vessels of gold and silver, as here; (those shall be welcome to him, who have no such presents to bring;) but our hearts and sincere affections, our own selves, our whole selves, we must present to him as living sacrifices.

2. That what God blesses us with, we must honor him with. The presents of his friends, as well as the spoils of his enemies, David dedicated unto the Lord, v. 11. That is, he laid them up toward the building and enriching of the temple. That is most truly and most comfortably our own, which we have consecrated unto the Lord, and which we use for his glory. Let our merchandise and our hire be holiness to the Lord, Isa. 23. 18.

3. That those who take God along with them whithersoever they go, may expect to preserve, or be preserved, whithersoever they go. It was said before, v. 6. and here again, v. 15, that the Lord preserves David whithersoever he went. Those are always under the eye of God, that have God always in their eye.

4. God gives men power, not that they may look great with it, but that they may do good with it. When David reigned over all Israel, he executed judgment and justice among all his people, and so answered the end of his elevation. He was not so intent on his conquests abroad, as to neglect the administration of justice at home. Herein he served the purposes of the kingdom of providence, and of that God who sits in the throne judging right; and was an eminent type of the Messiah, the sceptre of whose kingdom is a right sceptre.

CHAP. XIX.

The story is here repeated of David's war with the Ammonites, and the latter and former alliances and victories he obtained over them, which we read just as it is here related, 2 Sam. 10. Here is 1. David's civility to the king of Ammon, in sending an embassy of condolence to him, on occasion of his father's death, v. 1, 2. 2. His great inequity to David, in the base usage he gave to his ambassadors, v. 3, 4. III. David's just resentment of it, and the war which broke out, thereupon, in which the Ammonites acted politically, in bringing the Syrians to their assistance, v. 6, 7. Joab did bravely, v. 8, 9. and Israel was once and again victorious, v. 14, 15.

I. NOW it came to pass after this, that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon died, and his son reigned in his stead. 2. And David said, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to me. And David sent messengers to comfort him concerning his father. So the servants of David came into the land of the children of Ammon to Hanun, to comfort him. 3. But the princes of the children of Ammon said to Hanun, Think est thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? are not his servants come unto thee for to search, and to overthrow, and to spy out the land? 4. Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved them, and cut off their garments in the midst, hard by their buttocks, and sent them away. 5. Then there went certain, and told David how the men were served. And he sent to meet them; (for the men were greatly ashamed.) And the king said, Tarry at Jezrech until your beards be grown, and then return.

Let us here observe,
1. That it becomes good people to be neighbourly, and especially to be grateful. David will pay respect to Hanun, because he is his neighbour; and religion teaches us to be civil and obliging to all, to honour all men, and to be ready to do all offices of kindness to those we live among; nor must difference in religion be an obstruction to it. But, beside this, David remembers the kindness which his father showed to him. They that have received kindness, must return it, as they have ability and opportunity: they that have received it from the parents, must return it to the children, when they are gone.

2. That, as saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceeds from the wicked, 1 Sam. 24. 13. The vile person will speak villany, and the instruments of the churl will be evil, to destroy those with lying words, that speak right, Isa. 32. 6, 7. They that are base, and design ill themselves, are apt to be jealous, and to suspect ill of others without cause. Hanun's servants suggested that David's ambassadors came as spies; as if so great and mighty a man as David, needed to do so mean a thing. If he had any design upon the Ammonites, he could effect it by open force, and had no occasion for any fraudulent practices; or, as if a man of such virtue and honour would do so base a thing. Yet Hanun hearkened to the suggestion, and, against the law of nations, treated David's ambassadors villanously.

3. Masters ought to protect their servants, and, with the greatest tenderness, to concern themselves for them, if they come by any loss or damage in their service. David did so for his ambassadors, v. 5. Christ will do so for his ministers; and let all masters thus give unto their servants that which is just and equal.

6. And when the children of Ammon saw that they had made themselves odious to David, Hanun and the children of Ammon sent a thousand talents of silver to hire them chariots and horsemen out of Mesopotamia, and out of Syria- Maachah, and out of Zobah. 7. So they hired thirty and two thousand chariots, and the king of Maachah and his people, who came and pitched before Medeba. And the children of Ammon gathered themselves together from their cities, and came to battle. 8. And when David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men. 9. And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array before the gate of the city; and the kings that were come were by themselves in the field. 10. Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him before and behind, he chose out of all the choice of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians. 11. And the rest of the people he delivered unto the hand of Abishai his brother, and they set themselves in array against the children of Ammon. 12. And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will help thee.
13. Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God; and let the Lord do that which is good in his sight. 14. So Joab, and the people that were with him, drew nigh before the Syrians unto the battle; and they fled before him. 15. And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, they likewise fled before Abishai his brother, and entered into the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem. 16. And when the Syrians saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they sent messengers, and drew forth the Syrians that were beyond the river; and Shopphach, the captain of the host of Hadarezer, went before them. 17. And it was told David; and he gathered all Israel, and passed over Jordan, and came upon them, and set the battle in array against them. So when David had put the battle in array against the Syrians, they fought with him. 18. But the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew of the Syrians seven thousand men which fought in chariots, and forty thousand footmen, and killed Shopphach the captain of the host. 19. And when the servants of Hadarezer saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they made peace with David, and became his servants; neither would the Syrians help the children of Ammon any more.

We may see here,

1. How the hearts of sinners that are marked for ruin, are hardened to their destruction. The children of Ammon saw that they had made themselves odious to David, v. 6. and then it had been their wisdom to have desired conditions of peace, to have humbled themselves, and offered any satisfaction for the injury they had done him; the rather, because they had made themselves not only odious to David, but obnoxious to the justice of God, who is King of nations, and will assert the injured rights, and maintain the violated laws of nations. But, instead of this, they prepared for war, and so brought upon themselves, by David's hand, those desolations which he never intended them.

2. How the courage of brave men is heightened and invigorated by difficulties. When Joab saw that the battle was set against him, before and behind, v. 10. instead of meditating a retreat, he doubled his resolution; and though he could not double, he divided his army, and not only spoke, but acted, like a gallant man, that had great presence of mind when he saw himself surrounded. He engaged with his brother for mutual assistance, v. 12. excited himself, and the rest of the officers, to act vigorously in their respective posts, with an eye to God's glory, and the country's good, not to any gain or advantage of their own; and then left the issue to God: Let the Lord do that which is right in his sight.

3. How vain the greatest art and strength are against justice and equity. The Ammonites did their utmost; they brought as good a force into the field, and disposed it with as much policy as possible; yet, having a bad cause, and acting in defence of wrong, it would not do; they were put to the worst. Right will prevail, and triumph at last.

4. To how little purpose is it for those to rally again, and reinforce themselves, that have not God on their side. The Syrians, though no way concerned in the merits of the cause, but serving only as mercenaries, to the Ammonites, when they were beaten, thought themselves concerned to retrieve their honour; and therefore called in the assistance of the Syrians on the other side Ephraim; but to no purpose, still they fled before Israel, v. 18. they lost 7000 men, who are said to be the men of 700 chariots, 2. Sam. 10. 18. For as now, in a man of war for sea-service, they allot ten men to a gun; so then, in land-service, ten men to a chariot.

5. Those who have meddled with strife that be- longs not to them, and have found that they meddled to their own hurt, do well to learn wit at length, and middle not such attempts. Though it be true that Israel was the conquering side, no: only brake off their alliance with the Ammonites, and would help them no more, v. 19, but made peace with David, and became his servants. Let those who have in vain stood it out against God, be thus wise for themselves, and agree with him quickly while they are in the way. Let them become his servants; for they cannot but see themselves undone, if they be his enemies.

CHAP. XX.

Here is a repetition of the story of David's wars. I. With the Ammonites, and the taking of Rabbah, v. 1. 5. II. With the giants of the Philistines, v. 4. 8.

1. AND it came to pass, that after the year was expired, at the time that kings go out to battle, Joab led forth the power of the army, and wasted the country of the children of Ammon, and came and besieged Rabbah; (but David tarried at Jerusalem.) And Joab smote Rabbah, and destroyed it. 2. And David took the crown of their king from off his head, and found it to weigh a talent of gold, and there were precious stones in it: and it was set upon David's head: and he brought also exceeding much spoil out of the city. 3. And he brought out the people that were in it, and cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes: even so dealt Davi with all the cities of the children of Ammon And David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

How the army of the Ammonites, and their allies, were routed in the field, we read in the foregoing chapters. Here we have the destruction of Rab bah, the metropolis of their kingdom, v. 1. the putting of their king's crown upon David's head, v. 2. and the great severity that was used toward the people, v. 3. This we had a more full account of, 2 Sam. 11. and 12. and cannot but remember by this sad token, that while Joab was besieging Rab bah, David fell into that great sin, in the matter of Ur: Is.

But it is observable that though the rest of the story be repeated, that is not; a hint only is given of it in those words, (But David tarried at Jerusalem,) which lie here in a parenthesis. If he had been abroad with his army, he had been out of the way of that temptation; but, indulging his ease, he fell into uncleanness. Now, as the relating of the sin David fell into, is an instance of the impartiality and fidelity of the sacred writers, so the avoiding
of the repetition of it here, when there was a fair occasion given to speak of it again, is designed to teach the reader there may be another just occasion to speak of the faults and miscarriages of others, yet we should not take delight in the repetition of them. That should always be looked upon as an unpleasing subject, which, though sometimes one cannot help falling upon, yet one would not choose to dwell upon, any more than we should love to rake in a dunghill. The persons, or actions, we can say no good of, we had best say nothing of.

4. And it came to pass after this, that there arose war at Gezer with the Philistines, at which time Sibbecai the Hushathite slew Sippai, that was of the children of the giant: and they were subdued. 5. And there was war again with the Philistines; and Elhanan the son of Jair slew Lahmi, the brother of Goliath the Gittite, whose spear's staff was as large as a weaver's beam. 6. And yet again there was war at Gath, where was a man of great stature, whose fingers and toes were four and twenty, six on each hand, and six on each foot: and he also was the son of the giant. 7. But when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea, David's brother, slew him. 8. These were born unto the giant in Gath; and they fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

The Philistines were nearly subdued, ch. 13. 1. but as in the destruction of the Canaanites by Joshua, the sons of Anak were last subdued, Josh. 11. 21. so here in the conquest of the Philistines, the giants of Gath were last brought down. In the conflicts between grace and corruption, there are some sins, which, like these giants, keep their ground a great while, and are not mastered without much difficulty, and a long struggle; but judgment will be brought forth into victory at last.

1. We never read of giants among the Israelites, as we do of giants among the Philistines; the giants of Gath, but not giants of Jerusalem. The growth of God's plants is in usefulness, not in bulk. They who covet to have cubits added to their stature, do not consider that it will but make them more unwieldy. In the balance of the sanctuary, David far outweighs Goliath.

2. The servants of David, though men of ordinary stature, were too hard for the giants of Gath, in every encounter; because they had God on their side, who takes pleasure in abasing lofty looks, and mortifying the giants that are in the earth, as he did of old by the deluge, though they were men of renown. Never let the church's friends be dishartened by the power and pride of the church's enemies. We need not fear great men against us, while we have the grace of God for us. What will a father's love be to such hands? David makes a note more on each foot, in contest with omnipotence?

3. These giants defended Israel, v. 7. and were thus made to pay for their insolence. None are more visibly marked for ruin, than those who reproach God and his Israel. God will do great things, rather than suffer the enemy to behave themselves proudly, Deut. 32. 27. The victories of the Son of David, like those of David himself, are gradual. We see not yet all things put under him; but it will be seen shortly: and death itself, the last enemy, like these giants, triumphed over.

CHAP. XXI.

As this rehearsal makes no mention of David's sin in the matter of Uriah, so neither of the troubles of his family, that followed upon it; not a word of Absalom's rebellion, or Sheba's. But David's sin, in numbering the people, is here related, because, in the atonement made for that sin, an intimation was given of the spot of ground on which the temple should be built. Here is, I. David's sin, in numbering the people, v. 1. 4. II. David's sorrow for what he had done, as soon as he perceived the sinfulness of it, v. 5. 8. III. The sad dilemma (or trilemma rather) he was brought to, when he was put to him to choose how he would be punished for this sin, and what rod he would be beaten with, v. 9. 13. IV. The woe which was made by the pestilence in the country, and the narrow escape which Jerusalem had, from being laid waste by it, v. 16. 16. V. David's repentance and full accounting, upon this occasion, and the staying of the plague thereupon, v. 18. 30. This awful story we met with, and mediated upon, 2 Sam. 24.

1. AND Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. 2. And David said to Joab, and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beer-sheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it. 3. And Joab answered, The Lord make his people a hundred times so many more as they be: but, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel? 4. Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab: wherefore Joab departed, and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem. 5. And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and a hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword. 6. But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them; for the king's word was abominable to Joab.

Numbering the people, one would think, was no bad thing. Why should not the shepherd know the count of his flock? But God sees not as man sees. It is plain it was wrong in David to do it, and a great provocation to God; because he did it in the pride of his heart: and there is no sin that has in it more of contradiction, and therefore more of offence, to God, than pride. The sin was David's, he alone must bear the blame of it: but here we are told,

1. How active the tempter was in it; v. 1. Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to do it. It is said, 2 Sam. 24. 1., that the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David to do it. The rite was the judgment of God to be observed and acknowledged even in the sins and unrighteousness of men. We are sure that God is not the Author of sin, he tempteth no man; and therefore when it is said that he moved David to do it, it must be explained by what is intimated here, that, for wise and holy ends, he permitted the Devil to do it. Here we trace this foul stream to its fountain. 1. That Satan, the enemy of God and all good, should stand up against Israel, is not strange. It is what he aims at, to weaken the strength, diminish the numbers, and eclipse the
glory, of God's Israel, to whom he is a Satan, a sworn adversary. But, 2. That he should influence David, as he tempted Adam. God's heart, to do a wicked thing, may well be wondered at. One would think him one of those whom the wicked one touches not. No, even the best saints, till they come to heaven, are forbidden to think themselves out of the reach of Satan's temptations.

Now, when Satan meant to do Israel a mischief, what course did he take? He did not move God against them to destroy them, as we briefly observe, ch. 23. 1. But he whirled David, the best friend they had, to number them, and so to offend God, and set him against them. Note, (1.) The Devil does us more mischief by tempting us to sin against our God, than he does by accusing us before our God. He destroys none but by their own hands. (2.) The greatest spite he can do the church of God, is, to tempt the rulers of the church to pride; for none can conceive the consequence of that sin in all, especially in church rulers. Ye shall not be so, Luke 22. 36.

II. How passive the instrument was. Joab was the person employed, an active man in public business; but to this he was perfectly forced, and did it with the greatest reluctancy imaginable.

1. He put in a remonstrance against it, before he began it. No man more forward than he in any thing that was to the welfare of the king, or the welfare of the kingdom; but in this matter, he would gladly be excused. For, (1.) It was a needless thing, there was no occasion at all for it. God had promised to multiply them, and he needed not question the accomplishment of that promise: they were all his servants, and he needed not doubt of their loyalty and affection to him. Their number was as much his strength as he could desire. (2.) It was a dæmonial thing. In doing it, he might be a cause of trespass to Israel, and might provoke God against them. This Joab apprehended, and yet David himself did not. The most learned in the laws of God, are not always the most quick-sighted in the application of those laws.

2. He was quite weary of it before he had done it; for the king's word was as unchangeable to Joab, v. 6. There was a reason why whatever king David did, pleased all the people, 2 Sam. 3. 36. But now there was a general disgust at these orders, which confirmed Joab in his dislike of them, so that though the produce of this muster was really very great, yet he had no heart to perfect it, but left two tribes unnumbered, v. 5. 6. two considerable ones, Levi and Benjamin; and, perhaps, was not very exact in numbering the rest, because he did not do it with any pleasure; which might be one occasion of the difference between the sums here and 2 Sam. 24. 9.

7. And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel. 8. And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. 9. And the Lord spake unto Gad, David's seer, saying, 10. Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things: choose thee one of them, that I may do unto thee. 11. So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Choose thee either three years' famine; or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtake thee; or else three days the sword of the Lord, even the pestilence, in the land, and the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now, therefore, advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me. 13. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man. 14. So the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. 15. And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the Lord beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing-floor of Oram the Jebusite. 16. And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem: then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. 17. And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed: but as for these sheep, what have they done? Let thy hand, I pray thee, O Lord my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.

David is here under the rod for numbering the people; that rod of correction, which drives out the foolishness that is bound up in the heart, the foolishness of pride. Let us learn of David, if God's dear children do amiss, they must expect to smart for it. 1. He is given to understand that God is displeased; and that is no small uneasiness to so good a man as David, v. 7. God takes notice of, and is displeased with, the sins of his people; and no sin is more displeasing to him than pride of heart; nor is any thing more humbling, and grieving, and mortifying to a gracious soul, than to see itself under God's displeasure. 2. He is put to his choice, whether he will be punished by war, famine, or pestilence; for punished he must be, and by one of these. Thus, for his further humiliation, he is put into a strait, a great strait; and has the terror of all the three judgments impressed upon his mind, no doubt, to his great amendment, while he is considering which he shall choose. 3. He hears of 70,000 of his subjects, who, in a few hours, were struck dead by the pestilence, v. 14. He was proud of the multitude of his people, but Divine Justice took a course to make them fewer. Justly is that taken from us, weakened, or imbittered to us, which we are proud of. David must have the people numbered: Bring me the number of them, says he, that I may know it. But now God numbers them after another manner, numbers to the sword, Isa. 65. 12. And David had another number of them brought, more to his confusion than that was to his satisfaction, namely, the
number of the slain; a black bill of mortality, which is a drawback to his muster-roll.

4. He sees the destroying angel, with his sword drawn against Jerusalem, v. 16. This could not but be very terrible to him, as it was a visible indication of the anger of Heaven, and threatened the utter destruction of that beloved city. Pestilences make the greatest devastations in the most populous places. The sight of an angel, though coming peaceably, and on a friendly errand, has made even mighty men to tremble; how dreadful then must this sight be, of an angel with a drawn sword in his hand, a flaming sword, like that of the cherubim, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life! While we lie under the wrath of God, the holy angels are armed against us, though we see them not as David did.

II. How he bore the correction.

1. He made a very penitent confession of his sin, and prayed earnestly for the pardon of it, v. 8. Now he owns that he had sinned, had sinned greatly, had done foolishly, very foolishly; and he entreats that however he might be corrected for it, the iniquity of it might be done away.

2. He accepted the punishment of his iniquity; "Let thy hand be on me, and on my father's house. I submit to the rod, only let me be the sufferer, for I am the sinner; mine is the guilty head at which the sword should be pointed."

3. He cast himself upon the mercy of God, (though he knew he was angry with him,) and did not entertain any hard thoughts of him. However it be, Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great, v. 13. Good men, even when God frowns upon them, think well of him; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.

4. He expressed a very tender concern for the people, and it went to his heart to see them plagued for his transgression: These sleek, what have they done?

18. Then the angel of the Lord commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 19. And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the Lord. 20. And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat. 21. And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked, and saw David, and went out of the threshing-floor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground. 22. Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshing-floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the Lord; thou shalt grant it me for the full price, that the plague may be stayed from the people. 23. And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt-offerings, and the threshing-instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat-offering; I give it all. 24. And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price; for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt-offerings without cost. 25. So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. 26. And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and called upon the Lord; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt-offering. 27. And the Lord commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof. 28. At that time, when David saw that the Lord had answered him in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. 29. For the tabernacle of the Lord, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt-offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon: 30. But David could not go before it to inquire of God; for he was afraid, because of the sword of the angel of the Lord.

We have here the controversy concluded, and, upon David's repentance, his peace made with God, Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away. 1. A stop was put to the progress of the execution, v. 15. When David repented him of the sin, God repented of the judgment, and ordered the destroying angel to stay his hand, and sheath his sword, v. 27.

2. Direction was given to David to rear an altar in the threshing-floor of Ornan, v. 18. The angel commanded the prophet Gad to bring David this direction. The same angel that had, in God's name, carried on the war, is here forward to set on foot the treaty of peace; for angels do not desire the woful day. The angel could have given this order to David himself; but he chose to do it by his seer, that he might put an honour upon the prophetical office. Thus the revelation of Jesus Christ was notified by the angel to John, and by him to the churches. The commanding of David to build an altar, was a blessed token of reconciliation; for if God had been pleased to kill him, he would not have appointed, because he would not have accepted, a sacrifice at his hands. 

David immediately made a bargain with Ornan for the threshing-floor; for he would not serve God at other people's charge. Ornan generously offered it him gratis, not only in complaisance to the king, but because he had himself seen the angel, v. 20, which so terrified him, that he and his four sons hid themselves, as unable to bear the brightness of his glory, and afraid of his drawn sword. Under these apprehensions, he was willing to do anything toward making the atonement. Those that are duly sensible of the terrors of the Lord, will do all they can, in their places, to promote religion, and use all the methods of reconciliation for the turning away of God's wrath.

4. God testified his acceptance of David's offerings on this altar; he answered him from heaven by fire, v. 26. To signify that God's anger was turned away from him, the fire that might have fastened upon the sinner, fastened upon the sacrifice, and consumed that and, upon this, the destroying sword was returned into its sheath. Thus Christ was made sin, and a curse, for us, and it pleased the Lord to bruise him, that through him God might be to us, not a consuming Fire, but a reconciled Father.

5. He continued to offer his sacrifices upon this altar. The brazen altar which Moses made, was at Gibeon, v. 29, and there all the sacrifices of Is-
nual were offered: but David was so terrified at the sight of the sword of the angel, that he could not go thither, v. 30. The business required haste, when the plague was begun. Aaron must go quickly, nay, he must go to make atonement, Numb. 16. 46, 47. And the case here was no less urgent that David had not time to go to Gibeon: nor durst he leave the angel, with his sword drawn over Jerusalem, lest the fatal stroke should be given, before he came back. And therefore God, in tenderness to him, bade him build an altar in that place, dispensing with his own law concerning one altar, because of the present distress, and accepting the sacrifices offered on this new altar, which was not set up in opposition to that, but in concurrence with it. The symbols of unity were not so much insisted on, as unity itself. Nay, when the present distress was over, (as it should seem,) David, as long as he lived, sacrificed there, though the altar at Gibeon was still kept up; for God had owned the sacrifices that were here offered, and had testified his acceptance of them, v. 28. On those administered at Gibeon, in reconciliation with those offered on the altar of the temple, rested all assurances of God's presence, and have found that he is with us of a truth, it is good to continue our attendance. "Here God has graciously met me, and therefore I will still expect to meet with him."

CHAP. XXII.

Out of the eater comes forth meat. It was upon occasion of the terrible judgment inflicted on Israel for the sin of David, that God gave this direction of the setting up the other altar, and of the place where he would have the temple to be built; upon which, David was excited with great vigour to make preparation for the great work; wherein, though he had long since designed it, it should seem, he was of late, grown round, till awakened by the alarm of that judgment. The tokens of God's favour he received, after those of his displeasure. I. Directed him to the place, v. 1. II. Encouraged and quickened him to the work. 1. He set himself to prepare for the building, v. 2-5. 2. He instructed Solomon, and gave him a charge concerning this work, v. 6-16. 3. He commanded the princes to assist in it, v. 17-19. There is a great deal of difference between the frames of David's spirit in the beginning of the former chapter, and in the beginning of this. There, in the pride of his heart, he was numbering the people; here, in his humility, preparing for the service of God. There corruption was uppermost, but well of living water in the soul, though it may be muddied, will work itself clear again; grace here has recovered the upper hand.

1. Then David said, This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel. 2. And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel; and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God. 3. And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight; 4. Also cedar-trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar-wood to David. 5. And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceeding magnifici\stars, of fame and of glory throughout all countries; I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death. Here is, 1. The place for the building of the temple, v. 1.

2. What preparation he made: in general: he prepared abundantly, as we shall find afterward; cedar and stones, iron and brass, are here specified in their several sorts. He had found that the Zidonians, The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, Ps. 45. 12. He also got workmen together, the strangers that were in the land of Israel. Some think that he employed them, because they were generally better artists, and more ingenious in manual operations, than the Israelites; or, rather, because he would not employ the free-born Israelites in any thing that looked mean and small. They were delivered from the bondage of making bricks in Egypt, and must not return to hew stone. These strangers were preservates to the Jewish reli
gion, who though not enslaved, yet were not of equal dignity with Israelites.

6. Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build a house for the Lord God of Israel. 7. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house unto the name of the Lord my God: 8. But the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build a house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. 9. Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. 10. He shall build a house for my name, and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever. 11. Now, my son, the Lord be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the Lord thy God, as he hath said of thee. 12. Only the Lord give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the Lord thy God. 13. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the Lord charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed. 14. Now, behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the Lord a hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto. 15. Moreover, there are workmen with thee in abundance, hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work. 16. Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, there is no number. Arise therefore, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee.

Though Solomon was young and tender, he was capable of receiving instructions concerning the work for which he was designed: accordingly, his father here gives him instructions. When David came to the throne, he had many things to do, for the foundations were all out of course; but Solomon had only one thing in charge, and that was, to build a house for the Lord God of Israel, v. 6. Now, 1. He tells him why he did not do it himself. It was in his mind to do it, v. 7. but God forbade him, because he had shed much blood, v. 8. Some think it refers to the blood of Uriah, which fastened such a reproach upon him, as rendered him unworthy the honour of building the temple; but that honour was forbidden him before he had shed that blood: therefore it must be meant, as it is here explained, of the blood he shed in his wars, for he had been a man of war, from his youth; which, though shed for justly and honourably, and in the service of God and Israel, yet made him unfit to be employed in this service, or rather less fit than another that had never been called to such bloody work. God, by assigning this as the reason of laying David aside from this work, showed how precious human life is to him, and intended a type of him who should build the gospel-temple, not by destroying men's lives, but saving them, Luke 9. 56. 2. He gives him the reason why he imposed this task upon him. 1. Because God had designed him for it, nominated him as the man that should do it. A son shall be born to thee, that shall be called Solomon, and he shall build a house for my name, v. 9, 10. Nothing is more powerful to engage us to, and encourage us in, any service for God, than to know that hereunto we are appointed. 2. Because he would have leisure and opportunity to do it. He should be a man of rest, and therefore should not have his time, or thoughts, or wealth, diverted from this business. He should have rest from his enemies abroad, (none of them should invade or threaten him, or give him provocation,) and he should have peace and quietness at home; and therefore let him build the house. Note, Where God gives rest, he expects work. 3. Because God had promised to establish his kingdom. Let this encourage him to honour God in this building, that he may have reason for it; let him build up God's house, and God will build up his throne. Note, God's gracious promises should quicken and invigorate our religious service.

III. He delivers him an account of the vast preparations he had made for this building, v. 14, not in a way of pride or vain-glory, (he speaks of it as a poor thing; I have in my poverty, prepared, magnifying,) but as an encouragement to Solomon to engage cheerfully in the work, for which so solid a foundation was laid. The treasure here mentioned of 100,000 talents of gold, and 1,000,000 talents of silver, amounts to such an incredible sum, that most interpreters either allow an error in the copy, or think the talent here signifies no more than a plate or piece; inquos we call them. I am inclined to suppose that the sum therein mentioned was put for an uncertain, because it is said, v. 16. that the gold and silver, as well as of the brass and iron, there was no number; and that David here includes all the dedicated things, ch. 18. 11. which he designed for the house of the Lord, that is, not only for the building of it, but for the treasure of it; and, putting all together, it might come near what is here spoken of. Hundreds and thousands are numbers which we often use to express that which is very much, when yet we would not be understood strictly.

IV. He charges him to keep God's commandments, and to take heed to his duty in every thing, v. 13. He must not think, by building the temple, to purchase a dispensation to sin; no, on the contrary, his doing that, would not be accepted nor accounted of, if he did not take heed to fulfil the statutes which the Lord charged Moses with, v. 13. Though he was to be king of Israel, he must always remember that he was a subject to the God of Israel.

V. He encourages him to go about this great work, and to go on in it, v. 13, "Be strong, and of good courage; though it is a vast undertaking, thou needest not fear coming under the reproach of the foolish builder, who began to build, and was not able to finish it." In our spiritual work, as well as in our military warfare, we have need of courage and resolution.

VI. He quickens him not to rest in the prepara-
tions. He had made, but to add thereto, v. 14. Those that enter into the labours of others, and build upon their advantages, must still be improving.

Lastly, He prays for him: The Lord give thee wisdom, understanding, and give the charge concerning Israel, v. 12. Whatever charge we have, if we see God giving us the charge, and calling us to it, we may hope he will give us wisdom for the discharge of it. Perhaps Solomon had an eye to this prayer of his father for him, in the prayer he offered for himself, Lord, give me a wise and understanding heart. He concludes, v. 16, Up, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee. Hope of God's presence must not slacken our endeavours: though the Lord be with us, we must rise and be doing, which, if we do, we have reason to believe he is, and will be, with us. Work out your salvation, and God will work in you.

17. David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon his son, saying, 18. Is not the Lord your God with you? and hath he not given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into my hand; and the land is subdued before the Lord, and before his people. 19. Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God: arise, therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the Lord.

David here engages the princes of Israel to assist Solomon in the great work he had to do, and every one to lend him a hand towards the carrying on of it. Those that are in the throne, cannot do the good they would, unless those about the throne, sit in with them. David would therefore have the princes to advise Solomon, and quicken him, and make the work as easy to him as they could, by promoting it every one in his place.

1. He shows them what obligations they lay under to be zealous in this matter, in gratitude to God for the great things he had done for them; he had given them victory, and rest, and a good land for an inheritance, v. 18. The more God has done for us, the more we should study to do for him.

2. He presses that upon them, which should make them zealous in it, v. 19. Set your heart and soul to serve God, place your happiness in his favour, and keep your eye upon his glory; seek him as your chief good and highest end, and this, with your heart and soul, make religion your choice and business; and then you will grudge no pains or cost to promote the building of his sanctuary." Let but the heart be sincerely engaged for God, and the head and hand, the estate and interest, and all, will be cheerfully employed for him.

CHAP. XXIII.

David, having given charge concerning the building of the temple, in this and the following chapters, settels the manner of the service, and the distribution of the offices of it. In the late irregular times, and during the wars in the beginning of his reign, we may suppose that though the Levitical ordinances were kept up, yet it was not in the order, nor with the beauty and exactness, that were desirable. Now David, being a prophet, as well as a prince, by divine warrant and direction, set in order the things that were wanting. In this chapter, I. He declared Solomon to be his successor, v. 1. II. He numbered the Levites, and appointed them to their respective offices, v. 2-5. III. He took an account of the several families of the Levites, v. 6-23. IV. He made a new reckoning of them from twenty years old, and appointed them their work, v. 24-38. And in this he was prepared for the temple, as truly as when he laid up gold and silver for it; for the place is of small account, in comparison with the work.

1. So when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel. 2. And he gathered together all the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites. 3. Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and upward; and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand. 4. Of which, twenty and four thousand were to set forward the work of the house of the Lord; and six thousand were officers and judges. 5. Moreover, four thousand were porters: and four thousand praised the Lord with the instruments which I made (said David) to praise therewith. 6. And David divided them into courses among the sons of Levi, namely, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 7. Of the Gershonites were Laadan and Shimeii. 8. The sons of Laadan: the chief was Jehiel, and Zetham, and Joel, three. 9. The sons of Shimeii; Shelomith, and Haziel, and Haran, three. These were the chief of the fathers of Laadan. 10. And the sons of Shimeii were, Jahath, Zina, and Jeush, and Beriah. These four were the sons of Shimeii. 11. And Jahath was the chief, and Zizah the second; but Jeush and Beriah had not many sons; therefore they were in one reckoning, according to their father's house. 12. The sons of Kohath; Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, four. 13. The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses; and Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever, to burn in cense before the Lord, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name for ever. 14. Now concerning Moses the man of God, his sons were named of the tribe of Levi. 15. The sons of Moses were Gershon and Eliezer. 16. Of the sons of Gershom, Shebuel was the chief. 17. And the sons of Eliezer were, Rehabiah the chief. And Eliezer had none other sons; but the sons of Rehabiah were very many. 18. Of the sons of Izhar; Shelomith the chief. 19. Of the sons of Hebron; Jeriah the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth. 20. Of the sons of Uzziel; Micah the first, and Jesiah the second. 21. The sons of Merari; Mahli and Mushii. The sons of Mahli; Eleazar and Kish. 22. And Eleazar died, and had no sons, but daughters: and their brethren the sons of Kish took them. 23. The sons of
Mushi; Mahli, and Eder, and Jeremoth, three.

Here we have,

I. The crown entailed, according to the divine appointment, v. 1. David made Solomon king, not to reign with him, or reign under him, but only to reign after him. This he did, 1. When he was old and full of days. He was but 70 years old when he died, and yet he was full of days, *satur diemum—satisfied with living* in this world. When he found himself going off, he showed his strong desire for the prosperity of the kingdom, when he should be gone, and pleased himself with the hopeful prospects of a happy settlement, both in church and state. 2. He did it in parliament, in a solemn assembly of the princes of Israel, which made Adonijah’s attempt to break in upon Solomon’s title, and set it aside, notwithstanding this public recognition and establishment of it, the more impudent, impious, and ridiculous. Note, The settling and securing of the crown in the interests of the temple, is a great blessing to a people, and a great satisfaction to those who are themselves leaving the world. The Levites numbering, according to the rule in Moses, from 30 years old to 50, Num. 4, 30.

They number them, 2, 3. Their number, in Moses’s time, by this rule, was 8580, Numb. 4. 47, 48. But now it was increased above four-fold, much more in proportion than the rest of the tribes; for the serviceable men of Levi’s tribe, were now 38,000; unless we suppose that here those were reckoned, who were above 30, which was not the case there. Joab had not numbered the Levites, ch. 21. 6. But David now did; not in pride, but for a good purpose, and then he needed not fear wrath for it.

III. The Levites distributed to their respective posts, v. 4, 5. That every hand might be employed, and of all men, an able Levite makes the worst figure, and that every part of the work might be carefully done. Now, 1. It was for the honour of God, that so great a number of servants attended his house, and the business of it. Much of the state of great men consists in the greatness of their retinue. When God kept house in Israel, see what a great household he had, and all well-fed and well-taught. But what were these to the attendants of his throne above, and the innumerable company of angels? 2. It was the happiness of Israel, that they had among them such a considerable body of men, who were obliged by their office to promote and keep up their religion, and by that means were kept up in the worship of God. When God went to decay in Israel, let it not be said that it was for want of due provision for the support of it, but that they who should have done it, were careless and false.

The work assigned the Levites, was four-fold, (1.) Some, and indeed far the greater number, were to set forward the work of the house of the Lord. The forty-four thousand, almost two-thirds, were appointed for this office, and the rest in the service of killing the sacrifices; slaying them; washing them; cutting them up; burning them; to have the meat-offerings and drink-offerings ready, to carry out dirt, and keep all the vessels and utensils of the temple clean, and every thing in its place, that the service might be performed both with expedition and with exactness. These served a thousand a week on the day of the new moon and on the sabbath. Perhaps, while the temple was in building, some of these were employed to set forward that work, to assist the builders, at least, to quicken them, and keep good order among them, and the decorum which became temple-work. (2.) Others were officers and judges, not in the affairs of the temple, and in controversies that arose there, (for there we may suppose, the priests presided,) but in the country; they were magistrates, to give the laws of God in charge, to resolve difficulties, and to determine controversies that arose upon them. Of these there were 6000 in the several parts of the kingdom, that assisted the princes and elders of every tribe, in the administration of justice. (3.) Others were porters, to guard all the avenues of the house of God, to examine them that desired entrance, and to resist those that neglected their duty, might the more easily be discovered, by calling over the roll, and obliging them to answer to their names, which each family might do for itself. When those of the same family were employed together, it would engage them to love and assist one another. When Christ sent forth his disciples two and two, he put together those that were brethren. Two families were here joined in one house, v. 6. (4.) Of all these, there were innumerable in the temple, and, probably, were armed accordingly. (4.) Others were singers, and players on instruments, whose business it was to keep up that part of the service; this was a new-erected office.

IV. The Levites mustered, and disposed of into their respective families and kindreds, that an account of every family might be kept, and those that neglected their duty, might the more easily be discovered, by calling over the roll, and obliging them to answer to their names, which each family might do for itself. When those of the same family were employed together, it would engage them to love and assist one another. When Christ sent forth his disciples two and two, he put together those that were brethren. Two families were here joined in one house, v. 6. (4.) Of all these, there were innumerable in the temple, and, probably, were armed accordingly. (4.) Others were singers, and players on instruments, whose business it was to keep up that part of the service; this was a new-erected office.

That which is most observable in the account of the families of the Levites, is, that the posterity of Moses (that great man) stood upon the level with common Levites, and had no dignities or privileges at all peculiar to them; while the posterity of Aaron were advanced to the priest’s office, to sanctify the most holy things, v. 13. It is said indeed of the grandson of Moses, Rehabiah, that his sons were highly multiplied, v. 17. margin. When God proposed to him, that if he would let fall his intercession for Israel, he would make of him a great nation, he generously refused it; in recompense for which, his family is here greatly increased, and makes up in number what it wants in figure, in the tribe of Levi. Now, 1. The levelling of Moses’s family with the rest, is an evidence of his self-denial. Such an interest had he both with God and man, that if he had aimed to raise his own family, to dignify and enrich that, he might easily have done it; but he was no self-seeking man, as appears from his leaving to his children no marks of distinction; which was a sign that he had the spirit of God, and not the spirit of the world. 2. The elevation of Aaron’s family above the rest, was a recompense for his self-denial. We (as Moses’s younger brother) was made a god to Pharaoh, and he only his prophet or spokesman, to observe his orders, and do as he was bidden, Aaron never disputed it, nor insisted upon his seniority, but readily took the inferior post God put him in, submitted to Moses, and, upon occasion, called him his Lord; and because he thus submitted himself, in his own person, to the will of God, God highly exalted his family, even above that of Moses himself. Those that are content to stop, are in the fairest way to rise. Before honour is humility.

24. These were the sons of Levi, after the sons of their fathers; even the chief of the fathers, as they were counted by number of names by their polls, that did the work for the service of the house of the Lord, from the age of twenty years and upward. 25. For David said, The Lord God of Israel hath given rest unto his people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem for ever:
also unto the Levites; they shall no more carry the tabernacle, nor any vessels of it for the service thereof. 27. For by the last words of David, the Levites were numbered from twenty years old and above: 28. Because their office was to wait on the sons of Aaron, for the service of the house of the Lord, in the courts, and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, and the work of the service of the house of God; 29. Both for the show-bread, and for the fine flour for meat-offering, and for the unleavened cakes, and for that which is baked in the pan, and for that which is fried, and for all manner of measure and size; 30. And to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at even; 31. And to offer all burnt-sacrifices unto the Lord, in the sabbaths, in the new moons, and on the set feasts, by number, according to the order commanded unto them, continually before the Lord: 32. And that they should keep the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the holy place, and the charge of the sons of Aaron their brethren, in the service of the house of the Lord.

Here is,

I. An alteration made in the computation of the effectual men of the Levites—that, whereas, in Moses's time, they were not enlisted, or taken into service, till they were 30 years old, nor admitted as probationers till 25, (Numb. 8. 24.) David ordered, by direction from God, that they should be numbered for the service of the house of the Lord, from the age of 20 years and upward, v. 24. This order he confirmed by his last words, v. 27. When he put his last hand to the draught of this establishment, he expressly appointed this to be done for ever after; yet not he, but the Lord. 1. Perhaps the young Levites, having no work appointed them till 25 years old, had many years of idleness, or grew addicted to their pleasures, which proved both a blemish to their reputation, and a hindrance to their usefulness afterward; to prevent which inconvenience, they are set to work, and brought under discipline, at 20 years old. Those that will be eminent, must learn to take care, and take pains, betimes. 2. When the work of the Levites was to carry burdens, heavy burdens, the tabernacle and the city, with it, God would not call any to it till they were come to their full strength; for he considers our fame, and, in service as well as sufferings, will lay no more upon us than we are able to bear. But now God had given rest to his people, and made Jerusalem his dwelling-place for ever; so that there was no more occasion to carry the tabernacle and the vessels thereof; the service was much easier; and no doubt he would, now they were workmen, put them over them, if they entered upon it at 20 years old. 3. Now the people of Israel were multiplied, and there was a more general resort to Jerusalem, and would be when the temple was built, than had ever been to Shiloh, or Nob, or Gibeon; it was therefore requisite there should be more hands employed in the temple-service, that every Israelite who brought an offering, might find a Levite ready to assist him. When more work is to be done, it is pity but there should be more workmen fetched in for the doing of it. When the harvest is plenteous, why should the labourers be few?

II. A further account of the Levites' work. What the work of the priests was, we were told, v. 13. To sanctify the most holy things, to burn incense before the Lord, and to bear the most holy vessel. But the Levites were not to meddle with, and yet they had work enough, and good work, according to that which they were appointed, v. 4, 5. 1. Those of them that were to set forward the work of the house of God, v. 4, were therein to wait on the sons of Aaron, v. 28. were to do the drudgery-work (if any work for God is to be called drudgery) of the house of God, to keep the courts, and chambers clean, set things in their places, and have them ready when there was occasion to use them. They were to prepare the show-bread which the priests were set to set on the table, to provide the flour and cakes for the meat-offerings, that the priests might have every thing ready to their hands. 2. Those of them that were judges and officers, had an eye upon all measure and size, v. 29. The standards of all weights and measures were in their sanctuary; and the Levites had the care of them, to see that they were exact, and to try other weights and measures by them when they were appealed to. 3. The work of the singers was, to thank and praise the Lord, v. 30. at the offering of the morning and evening sacrifices, and other oblations on the sabbaths, new moons, &c. v. 31. Moses appointed that they should blow with trumpets over their burnt-offerings, and other sacrifices, and on their solemn days, Numb. 10. 10. The sound of this was awful, and might be affecting to the worshippers, but was not articulate, nor such a reasonable service as this which David appointed, of singing psalms on those occasions. As the Jewish church grew up from its infancy, it grew more and more intelligent in its devotions, till it came, at length, in the gospel, to put away childish things, 1 Cor. 13. 11. Gal. 4. 5, 9. 4. The work of the porters, (v. 3.) was, to keep the charge of the tabernacle, and of the holy place, that none might come nigh but such as were allowed, and those no nearer than was allowed them, v. 32. They were likewise to keep the charge of the sons of Aaron, to be at their beck, and go on their errands, who yet are called their brethren, to be a memorandum to the priests, that though they were not so advanced to the knowledge of the same rock with common Levites, and therefore must not lord it over them, but, in all instances, treat them as brethren.

CHAP. XXIV.

This chapter gives us a more particular account of the distribution of the priests and Levites into their respective classes, for the regular discharge of their offices, according to their families. 1. Of the priests, v. 1—19. 11. Of the Levites, v. 20—31.

1. NOW these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron: Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 2. But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children: therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest's office. 3. And David distributed them, both Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices in their service. 4. And there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar; and thus were they divided: among the sons of Eleazar there
were sixteen chief men of the house of their fathers, and eight among the sons of Ishamar, according to the house of their fathers. 5. Thus were they divided by lot, one sort with another: for the governors of the sanctuary, and governors of the house of God, were of the sons of Eleazar, and of the sons of Ithamar. 6. And Shemaijah the son of Nethaneel the scribe, one of the Levites, wrote them before the king, and the princes, and Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and before the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites: one principal household being taken for Eleazar, and one taken for Ithamar. 7. Now the first lot came forth to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedediah, 8. The third to Harm, the fourth to Seorim, 9. The fifth to Melchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, 10. The seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, 11. The ninth to Jeshuah, the tenth to Shemaijah, 12. The eleventh to Eliaishib, the twelfth to Jakim, 13. The thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, 14. The fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immmer, 15. The seventeenth to Hizir, the eighteenth to Aphases, 16. The nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezekel, 17. The one and twentieth to Jachin, the two and twentieth to Gamul, 18. The three and twentieth to Delaiah, the four and twentieth to Maaziah. 19. These were the orderings of them in their service, to come into the house of the Lord, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the Lord God of Israel had commanded him.

The particular account of these establishments is of little use to us now; but when Ezra published it, it was of great use to direct their church affairs after their return from captivity into the old channel again. The title of this record we have, v. 1. These are the divisions of the sons of Aaron; not by which they divided one from another, or were at variance one with another; (it is pity there should ever be any such divisions among the sons of Israel, but especially among the sons of Aaron;) but the distribution of them, in order to the dividing of their work among themselves; it was a division which God made, and was made for him. 1. This distribution was made for the more regular discharge of their office. God was, and still is, the God of order, and not of confusion; particularly in the things of his worship. Number without order is but a clog, and an occasion of tumult; but when every one has, and knows, and keeps, his place and work, the more the better. In the mystical body, every member has its use, for the good of the whole, Rom. 12:5, 6.

2. It was made by lot, that the disposal thereof might be of the Lord, and so, all quarrels and contentions might be prevented, and no man could be charged with partiality, nor could any say that they had wrong done them. As God is the God of order, so he is the God of peace. Solomon says of the lot, that it causeth content to cease. 3. The lot was cast publicly, and with great solemnity, in the presence of the king, princes, and priests, that there might be no room for any fraudulent practices, or the suspicion of them. The lot is an appeal to God, and ought to be managed with correspondence, reverence, and sincerity. Malachi was chosen to the apostleship by lot, with prayer, Acts 1. 24, 26. and I know not but it might be still used in faith, in parallel cases, as an instituted ordinance. We have here the name of the public lotary that was employed in writing the names, and drawing the lots, v. 6. Shemaijah, one of the Levites.

4. What these priests were chosen to, was, to provide in the affairs of the sanctuary, v. 3. in their several courses and turnings. That which was to be determined by the lot, was only the precedence, not who should serve, (for they chose all the chief men,) but who should serve first, and who next, that every one might know his course, and attend in it. Of the twenty-four chief men of the priests, sixteen were of the house of Eleazar, and eight of Ithamar; for the house of Ithamar might well be supposed to have dwindled since the sentence passed on the family of Eli, who was of that house. The method of drawing the lots is, intimated, v. 6. one chief household being taken for Eleazar, and one for Ithamar. The sixteen chief names of Eleazar, were put in one urn, the eight for Ithamar, in another, and they drew out of them alternately, as long as those for Ithamar lasted, and then out of those only for Eleazar; or two for Eleazar, and then one for Ithamar, throughout.

5. Among these twenty-four courses, the eighth is that of Abijah or Abia, v. 10. which is mentioned, Luke 1. 5. as the course which Zachariah was of, the father of John Baptist; by which it appears that these courses which David now settled, though interrupted perhaps in the bad reigns, and long broken off by the captivity, yet continued in succession till the destruction of the second temple by the Romans. And each course was called by the name of him in whom it was first founded, as the High Priest is here called Aaron, v. 19. because succeeding in his dignity and power, though we read not of any of them, that bore that name. Whoever was High Priest, must be reverenced and observed by the inferior priests as their father, as Aaron their father. Christ is High Priest over the house of God, to whom all believers, being made priests, are to be in subjection.

20. And the rest of the sons of Levi were these: Of the sons of Amram: Shubael: of the sons of Shubael: Jehdeiah. 21. Concerning Rehobiah; of the sons of Rehobiah, the first was Isshiah. 22. Of the Iz Harites; Shelomoth: of the sons of Shelomoth; Jahath. 23. And the sons of Hebron: Jerah the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth. 24. Of the sons of Uzziel; Michah: of the sons of Michah; Shamir. 25. The brother of Michah was Isshiah: of the sons of Isshiah; Zechariah. 26. The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushig: the sons of Jazaziah: Bena. 27. The sons of Merari by Jazaziah; Bena, and Shim, and Zaccur, and Ibri. 28. Of Mahli came Eleazar, who had no sons. 29. Concerning Kish; the son of Kish was Jerahmeel. 30. The sons also of Musli; Mahli, and Eder, and Jeremoth. These were the sons of the Levites, after the house of their fathers. 31. These likewise cast lots over against their brethren the sons of Aaron, in the presence of David the king, and Zadok.
and Ahimelech, and the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites, even the principal fathers, over against their younger brethren.

Most of the Levites here named, were mentioned before, ch. 23. 16, &c. They were of those who were to attend the priests in the service of the house of God. But they are here mentioned again as heads of the twenty-four courses of Levites, (and about so many are here named,) who were to attend the twenty-four courses of the priests: they are therefore said to cast lots over against their brethren, (so they are called, not their lords) the sons of Aaron, who were not to lord it over God's clergy, as the original word is, 1 Pet. 5. 5. And that the whole disposal of the affair might be of the Lord, the principal fathers cast lots over against their younger brethren: that is, those that were of the elder house, came upon the level with those of the younger families, and took their place not by seniority, but as God by the lot directed. Note, In Christ, no difference is made between bond and free, elder and younger. The younger brethren, if they be faithful and sincere, shall be no less acceptable to Christ than the principal fathers.

CHAP. XXV.

David, having settled the courses of these Levites that were to attend the priests in their ministrations, proceeds, in this chapter, to put these into a method, that were appointed to be singers and musicians in the temple. Here is, 1. The persons that were to be employed, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, v. 1. their sons, v. 2., 3, 5. and other skilful persons, v. 7. 2. The order in which they were to attend, determined by lot, v. 8., 9. 1. MOREOVER, David, and the captains of the host, separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals: and the number of the workmen, according to their service, was: 2. Of the sons of Asaph; Zaccur, and Joseph, and Nethaniah, and Asarelah, the sons of Asaph, under the hands of Asaph, which prophesied according to the order of the king. 3. Of Jeduthun: the sons of Jeduthun; Gedaliah, and Zeri, and Jeshaiah, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the hands of his father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the Lord. 4. Of Heman: the sons of Heman; Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, and Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, and Rimamti-over, Joshibehashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth: 5. All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn. And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. 6. All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, according to the king's order to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman. 7. So the number of them with their brethren, that were instructed in the songs of the Lord, even all that were cunning, was two hundred fourscore and eight.

Observe,

1. Singing the praises of God, is here called prophesying, v. 1. not that all those that were employed in this service, were honoured with the visions of God, or could foretell things to come. Heman indeed is said to be the king's seer in the words of God, v. 5. but the psalms they sang, were composed by prophets, and many of them were prophetical; and the edification of the church was intended in it, as well as the glory of God. In Samuel's time, singing the praises of God, went by the name of prophesying, 1 Sam. 10. 5.—19. 20. and perhaps that is intended in what St. Paul calls prophesying, 1 Cor. 14. 4.—14. 24.

II. This is here called a service, and the persons employed in it, workmen, v. 1. Not but that it is the greatest liberty and pleasure to be employed in praising God: what is heaven but that? But it intimates that it is our duty to make a business of it, and stir up all that is within us to it; and that, in our present state of corruption and infirmity, it will not be done, as it should be done, without labour and struggle. The church must take pains with our hearts to bring them, and keep them, to this work, and to engage all that is within us.

III. Here were, in compliance with the temper of that dispensation, a great variety of musical instruments used, harps, psalteries, cymbals, v. 1, 6. and here was one that lifted up the horn, v. 5. that is, used wind-musick. The bringing of such concerts of music into the worship of God now, is what none pretend to; but those who use such concerts for their own entertainment, should feel themselves obliged to preserve them always free from any thing that savours of immorality or profaneness; by this consideration, that time was, when they were sacred; and then they were justly condemned, who brought them into common use: Amos 6. 5. They invented to themselves instruments of music, like David.

IV. To the honour and glory of God were principally intended in all this temple-music, whether vocal or instrumental. It was to give thanks and praise the Lord, that they were employed, v. 3. It was in the songs of the Lord that they were instructed, v. 7. that is, songs in the house of the Lord, v. 6. This agrees with the intention of the perpetuating of psalmody in the gospel-church, which is, to make melody with the heart, in conjunction with the voice, unto the Lord, Eph. 5. 19.

V. The order of the king is likewise taken notice of, v. 2. and again, v. 6. In those matters indeed, David acted as a prophet; but his taking care for the due and regular observance of divine institutions, both ancient and modern, is an example to all in authority to use their power for the promoting of religion, and the enforcing of the laws of Christ. Let them thus be ministers of God, for good.

VI. The fathers presided in this service; Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, v. 1. and the children were under the hands of their father, v. 2. 3. 6. This gives a good example to parents to train up their children, and indeed to all seniors to instruct their juniors, in the service of God, and particularly in praising him, than which there is no part of our work more necessary, or more worthy to be transmitted to the succeeding generations. It gives also an example to the younger to submit themselves to the elder, (whose experience and observation fit them for direction,) and, as far as may be, to do

* It is obvious that Mr. Henry would not express himself thus were he now living.—Ed.
what they do, under their hand. It is probable that Heman, Asaph, and Jeduthun, were bred up under Samuel, and had their education in the schools of the prophets, which he was the founder and president of; then they were pupils, now they came to be masters. Those that would be eminent, must begin early, and take time to prepare themselves. This good work of singing God's praises, Samuel revived and set on foot, but lived not to see it brought to the perfection it appears in here. Solomon perfects what David began, and he adds nothing to what Samuel began. Let all, in their day, do what they can for God and his church, though they cannot carry it so far as they would; when they are gone, God can, out of stones raise up others, who shall build upon their foundation, and bring forth the top stone.

VII. There were others also, beside the sons of these three great men, who were called their brethren, (probably, because they had been wont to join with them in their private concerts,) who were instructed in the songs of the Lord, and were cunning or well skilled therein. They were all Levites, and were in number 288. Now, 1. These were a good number, and a competent number to keep up the service in the house of God; for they were all skilled in the work to which they were called. When David the king was so much addicted to divine poesy and music, many others, all that had a genius for it, applied their studies and endeavours that way. Those do religion a great deal of good service, that bring the exercises of religion into reputation. 2. Yet these were but a small number in comparison with the 4000 whom David appointed thus to praise the Lord, ch. 23. 5. Where were all the rest, when only 288, and those but by 12 in a course, were separated to his service? It is probable that all the rest were divided into as many courses, and were to follow as these led. Or, perhaps, these were for song in the house of the Lord, v. 6, with whom any that worshipped in the courts of that house might join; and the rest were disposed of, all the kingdom over, to preside in the country congregations, in this good work; for though the song was instituted by the hand of Moses, might be offered but at one place, the psalm penned by David, might be sung every where, 1 Tim. 2. 8.

3. And they cast lots, ward against ward, as well the small as the great, the teacher as the scholar. 9. Now, the first lot came forth for Asaph to Joseph; the second to Gedaliah, who with his brethren and sons were twelve: 10. The third to Zaccur, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 11. The fourth to Izri, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 12. The fifth to Nethaniah, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 13. The sixth to Bukkiah, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 14. The seventh to Jesharelah, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 15. The eighth to Jeshiahal, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 16. The ninth to Maittanih, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 17. The tenth to Shimei, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 18. The eleventh to Azarel, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 19. The twelfth to Hashabiah, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 20. The thirteenth to Shubael, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 21. The fourteenth to Mattithiah, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 22. The fifteenth to Jeremith, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 23. The sixteenth to Hananiah, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 24. The seventeenth to Joshbekashah, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 25. The eighteenth to Hanani, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 26. The nineteenth to Mallotli, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 27. The twentieth to Eliathiah, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 28. The one and twentieth to Hothir, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 29. The two and twentieth to Giddalati, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 30. The three and twentieth to Mahazioth, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve: 31. The four and twentieth to Romamizither, he, his sons and his brethren, were twelve.

Twenty-four persons are named in the beginning of this chapter, as sons of these three great men, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun. Ethan was the third, ch. 15. 44; but probably, he was dead before the establishment was perfected, and Jeduthun came in his room. Of these three providence so ordered it, that Asaph had 4 sons, Jeduthun 6, and Heman 14, in all 24, who were named, v. 2-4, who were all qualified for the service, and called to it. But the question was, In what order must they serve? This was determined by lot, to prevent strife for precedence, a sin which most easily be sets many that are otherwise good people.

1. The lot was thrown impartially. They were placed in 24 companies, 12 in a company, in two rows, 12 companies in a row, and so they cast lots, ward against ward, putting them all upon a level, small and great, teacher and scholar; they did not go according to their age, or according to their precedence, or the degrees they had taken in the music-schools; but it was referred to God, v. 8. Small and great teachers and scholars stand alike before God, who goes not according to our rules of distinction and precedence. See Matth. 20. 23.

2. God determined it as he pleased, taking account, it is probable, of the personal merits of the persons, which are much more considerable than seniority of age, or priority of birth. Let us compare them with the preceding catalogue, and we shall find that (1.) Jesharelah, the second of Asaph. (2.) Zaccur, the eldest of Asaph. (3.) Bukkiah, the second of Jeduthun. (5.) Nethaniah, the third of Asaph. (6.) Bukkiah, the eldest of Heman. (7.) Jesharelah, the youngest of Asaph. (8.) Jeshiahal, the third of Jeduthun. (9.) Maittanih, the second of Heman. (10.) Shimei, the eldest of Jeduthun. (11.) Azarel, the third of Heman. (12.) Hashabiah, the fourth of Jeduthun. (13.) Shubael, the fourth of Heman. (14.) Mattithiah, the fifth of Jeduthun. (15.) Jeremoth, the fifth of Heman. (16.) Hananiah, the sixth. (17.) Joshbekashah, the eleventh. (18.) Hanani, the seventh. (19.) Mallothi, the twelfth. (20.) Eliathiah, the eighth. (21.)

* Or, perhaps, Ethan and Jeduthun were two names for the same. — Ep.

† Only 5 are mentioned, v. 3. Shimet, mentioned v. 17 is supposed to have been the sixth. — Ep.
IIothir, the thirteenth. (22.) Giddalti, the ninth. (23.) Mehezioth, the fourteenth. And, lastly, Rekem; for they numbered, as we have seen, some, and preferred the younger before the elder.

3. Each of these had in his chorus the number of 12, called, their sons and their brethren; because they observed them as sons, and concurred with them as brethren. Probably, twelve, some for the voice, and others for the instrument, made up the concert. Let us learn with one mind, and one mouth, to glorify God; and that will be the best concert.

CHAP. XXVI.

We have here an account of the business of the Levites. That tribe had made but a very small figure, all the time of the judges, till Eli and Samuel appeared. But when David revived religion, the Levites were, of all men, in the greatest reputation. And happy it was, that they had Levites who were men of sense, fit to support the honour of their tribe. We have here an account, I. of the Levites that were appointed to be porters, v. 1-19. II. Of those that were appointed to be treasurers and store-keepers, v. 20-28. III. Of those that were officers and judges in the country, and were intrusted with the administration of public affairs, v. 29-32.

1. CONCERNING the divisions of the porters: of the Korhites was Meshelemiah the son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph. 2. And the sons of Meshelemiah were Zechariah the first-born, Jedial the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathmiel the fourth, 3. Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, Elioenai the seventh. 4. Moreover, the sons of Obed-edom were Shemaiah the first-born, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, and Sacar the fourth, and Nethaneel the fifth. 5. Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peulthai the eighth; for God blessed him. 6. Also unto Shemaiah his son were sons born, that ruled throughout the house of their father: for they were mighty men of valour. 7. The sons of Shemaiah; Othni, and Rephael, and Obed, Elzabad, whose brethren were strong men; Elihu, and Semachiah. 8. All these of the sons of Obed-edom; they, and their sons, and their brethren, able men for strength for the service, were threescore and two of Obed-edom. 9. And Meshelemiah had sons and brethren, strong men, eighteen. 10. Also Hosah, of the children of Merari, had sons; Simri the chief, (for though he was not the first-born, yet his father made him the chief,) 11. Hilkiah the second, Tebahiah the third, Zechariah the fourth: all the sons and brethren of Hosah were thirteen. 12. Among these were the divisions of the porters, even among the chief men, having wards one against another, to minister in the house of the Lord. 13. And they cast lots, as well the small as the great, according to the house of their fathers, for every gate. 14. And the lot eastward fell to Shelemiah. Then for Zechariah his son (a wise counsellor) they cast lots, and his lot came out northward. 15. To Obed-edom southward; and to his sons the house of Asuppim. 16. To Shuppim and Hosah the lot came forth westward, with the gate Shallecheth, by the causeway of the going up, ward against ward. 17. Eastward were six Levites, northward four a day, southward four a day, and toward Asuppim two and two. 18. At Parbar westward, four at the causeway, and two at Parbar. 19. These are the divisions of the porters among the sons of Kore, and among the sons of Merari.

Observe. 1. There were porters appointed to attend the temple, who guarded all the avensues that led to it, opened and shut all the outer gates, and attended at them, not only for state, but for service, to direct and instruct those who were going to worship in the courts of the sanctuary, in the conduct they were to observe, to encourage those that were timorous, to send back the strangers and uncen, and to guard against thieves, and others that were enemies to the house of God. In allusion to this office, minister are here typified as the keys of the kingdom of heaven committed to them. Matth. 16. 19. that they may admit, and exclude, according to the law of Christ.

2. Of several of those that were called to this service, it is taken notice of, that they were mighty men of valour, v. 6. strong men, v. 7. able men, v. 8. and of one of them, that he was a wise counsellor, v. 14. who, probably, when he had used this office of a deacon well, and given proofs of more than ordinary wisdom, purchased himself a good degree, and was preferred from the gate to the council-board, 1 Tim. 3. 13. As for those that excelled in strength of body, and courage and resolution of mind, they were thereby qualified for the post assigned them; for whatever service God calls men to, he either finds them fit, or makes them so. 3. The sons of Obed-edom were employed in this office, 62 of that family. This was he that entertained the ark with reverence and cheerfulness; and saw how he was rewarded for it: (1.) He had 8 sons, v. 5. for God blessed him. The increase and building up of families, are owing to the divine blessing; and a great blessing it is to a family to have many children, when they are, as those here, able for, and eminent in, the service of God. (2.) His sons were preferred to places of trust in the sanctuary. They had faithfully attended the ark in their own house, and now were called to attend it in God's house. He that is trusty in little, shall be trusted with more. He that keeps God's ordinances in his own tent, is fit to have the custody of them in God's tabernacle, 1 Tim. 3. 4, 5. I have kept thy law, says David, and this I had, because I kept thy precepts, Ps. 119. 55, 56. 4. It is said of one here, that though he was not the first-born, his father made him the chief, v. 10. either because he was very excellent, or because the elder son was very weak. He was made chief, perhaps not in inheriting the estate, (for that was forbidden by the law, Deut. 21. 16, 17.) but in this service, which required personal qualifications.

5. The porters, as the singers, had their post assigned them by lot; so many at such a gate, and so many at such a one, that every one might know his post, and make it good, v. 13. It is not said that they were cast into 24 courses, as before; but here are the names of about 24, v. 1-11. and the posts assigned are 24, v. 17, 18. We have there-
20. And of the Levites, Ahijah was over the treasures of the house of God, and over the treasures of the dedicated things. 21. As concerning the sons of Laadan: the sons of the Gershonite Laadan, chief fathers, even of Laadan the Gershonite, were Jehiel. 22. The sons of Jehiel; Zetham, and Joel his brother, which were over the treasures of the house of the Lord. 23. Of the Amramites, and the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites: 24. And Shebuel the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, was ruler of the treasures. 25. And his brethren by Eliezer; Rehabiah his son, and Jeshahiah his son, and Joarim his son, and Zichri his son, and Shelomith his son. 26. Which Shelomith and his brethren were over all the treasures of the dedicated things, which David the king, and the chief fathers, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the host, had dedicated. 27. Out of the spoils won in battles did they dedicate to maintain the house of the Lord. 28. And all that Samuel the seer, and Saul the son of Kish, and Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruiah, had dedicated; and whosoever had dedicated any thing, it was under the hand of Shelomith, and of his brethren.

Observe. 1. There were treasures of the house of God. A great house cannot be well kept without stores of all manner of provisions. Much was expended daily upon the altar; flour, wine, oil, salt, fuel, beside the lamps; quantities of these were to be kept beforehand, beside the sacred vestments and utensils. These were the treasures of the house of God. And because money answers all things, doubtless they had an abundance of it, which was received from the people's offerings, wherewith they bought in what they had occasion for. And, perhaps much was laid up for an exigence. These treasures typified the plenty there is in our Heavenly Father's house, enough and to spare. In Christ, the true Temple, are hid treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and unsearchable riches.

2. There were treasures of dedicated things; dedicated mostly out of the spoils won in battle, v. 27. as a grateful acknowledgment of the divine protection. Abraham gave Melchisedec the tenth of the spoils, Heb. 7. 4. In Moses's time, the officers of the army, when they returned victorious, brought, of their spoils, an oblation to the Lord, Numb. 31. 50. Of late, this pious custom had been revived; and not only Samuel and David, but Saul and Abner and Joab, had dedicated of their spoils to the honour and support of the house of God, v. 28. Note, The more God bestows upon us, the more he expects from us, in works of piety and charity. Great successes call for proportionable returns. When we look over our estates, we should consider, "Here are convenient things, rich things, it may be, and fine things; but where are the dedicated things?" Men of war must honour God with their spoils.

3. These treasures had treasurers, those that were over them, v. 20. 26. whose business it was to keep them, that neither moth nor rust might corrupt them, nor thieves break through and steal; to give out as there was occasion, and to see they were not wasted, embezzled, or alienated to any common use; and it is probable that they kept accounts of all that was brought in, and how it was laid out.

29. Of the Izharites, Chenannah and his sons were for the outward business over Israel, for officers and judges. 30. And of the Hebronites, Hashabiah and his brethren, men of valour, a thousand and seven hundred, were officers among them of Israel on this side Jordan westward, in all business of the Lord, and in the service of the king.

31. Among the Hebronites was Jeriah the chief, even among the Hebronites, according to the generations of his fathers. In the fortieth year of the reign of David they were sought for, and there were found among them mighty men of valour at Jazer of Gilead. 32. And his brethren, men of valour, were two thousand and seven hundred chief fathers, whom king David made rulers over the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, for every matter pertaining to God, and affairs of the king.

All the offices of the house of God being well provided with Levites, we have here an account of those that were employed as officers and judges, in the outward business, which must not be neglected, no, not for the temple itself. The magistrate is an ordinance of God for the good of the church, as truly as the ministry is. And here we are told,

1. That the Levites were employed in the administration of justice, in concurrence with the princes and elders of the several tribes, who could not be supposed to understand the law so well as the Levites, who made it their business to study it. None of those Levites who were employed in the service of the sanctuary, none of the singers or porters, were concerned in this outward business; either one was enough to engage the whole man, or it was presumption to undertake both.

2. Their charge was both in all business of the Lord, and in the service of the king, v. 30. and again, v. 32. They managed the affairs of the country, as well ecclesiastical as civil, took care both of God's tithes and the king's taxes; punished offences committed immediately against God and his honour, and those against the government and the public peace; guarded both against idolatry and against injustice; and took care to put the laws in execution against both. Some, it is likely, applied themselves to the affairs of religion, others to secular affairs; and so between both, God and the king were well served. It is happy with a kingdom, when its civil and sacred interests are thus interwoven, and jointly minded and advanced.

3. There were more Levites employed as judges with the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan, than with all the rest of the tribes; there were two thousand seven hundred; whereas on the west side of Jordan, there were but one thousand
seven hundred, v. 30, 32. Either those remote tribes were not so well furnished as the rest with judges of their own; or because they lying furthest from Jerusalem, and on the borders of the neighbouring nations, were most in danger of being infected with idolatry, and most needed the help of Levites to prevent it. The frontiers must be well guarded. 4. This is said to be done (as were all the foregoing settlements) in the fortieth year of the reign of David, v. 31. that was the last year of his reign. We should be so much the more industrious to do good as we see the day approaching. If we live not to enjoy the fruit of our labours, grudge it not to those that shall come after us.

CHAP. XXVII.

In this chapter, we have the civil list, including the military. 1. The twelve captains for every several month of the year, v. 1. 15. 11. The princes of the several tribes, v. 16., 24. 11. The officers of the court, v. 23. 34.

1. NOW the children of Israel after their number, to wit, the chief fathers and captains of thousands and hundreds, and their officers that served the king in any matter of the courses, which came in and went out month by month, throughout all the months of the year, of every course were twenty and four thousand. 2. Over the first course, for the first month, was Jashobeam the son of Zabdiel: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 3. Of the children of Perez was the chief of all the captains of the host for the first month. 4. And over the course of the second month was Dodai an Ahohite, and of his course was Mikloth also the ruler: in his course likewise were twenty and four thousand. 5. The third captain of the host, for the third month, was Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, a chief priest: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 6. This is that Benaiah who was mighty among the thirty, and above the thirty: and in his course was Ammizabad his son. 7. The fourth captain, for the fourth month, was Asahel the brother of Joab, and Zebadiah his son after him: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 3. The fifth captain, for the fifth month, was Shamhuth the Izrahite: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 9. The sixth captain, for the sixth month, was Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 10. The seventh captain, for the seventh month, was Helez the Pelonite, of the children of Ephraim: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 11. The eighth captain, for the eighth month, was Sibbecai the Hushathite, of the Zarthites: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 12. The ninth captain, for the ninth month, was Abiezer the Anathothite, of the Benjamites: and in his course were twenty and four

13. The tenth captain, for the tenth month, was Maharai the Netophathite, of the Zarthites: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 14. The eleventh captain, for the eleventh month, was Benaiah the Pirathonite, of the children of Ephraim: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. 15. The twelfth captain, for the twelfth month, was Heldai the Netophathite, of Othniel: and in his course were twenty and four thousand. We have here an account of the militia of the kingdom, and the regulation of that. David was himself a man of war, and had done great things with the sword; he had brought into the field great armies: now here we are told how he marshalled them, when God had given him rest from all his enemies. He did not keep them all together; for that would have been a hardship on them and the country; yet he did not disdain and disperse them all; then he had left his kingdom naked, and his people would have forgotten the arts of war, where in they had been instructed. He therefore contrives to keep up a constant force, and yet not a standing army. The model is very prudent. 2. He kept 6000 constantly in arms, I suppose, in a body, and disciplined, in one part or other of the kingdom; the freetholders carrying their own arms, and bearing their own charges, while they were up. This was a sufficient strength for the securing of the public peace and safety. Those that are Israelites indeed, must learn war; for we have enemies to grapple with, whom we are concerned constantly to stand upon our guard against. 2. He changed them every month; so that the whole number of militia amounted to 288,000; perhaps about a fifth part of the able men of the kingdom. By being thus distributed into twelve courses, they were all instructed in, and accustomed to, military exercises; and yet none were compelled to be in service, and at expenses, above one month in the year, which they might very well afford, unless it should be for extraordinary occasions; and then they might all be got together quickly. It is the wisdom of governors, and much their praise, while they provide for the public safety, to contrive how to make it effectual, and yet easy, and as little as possible burthen those to the people. 3. Every course had a commander-in-chief over it, beside the subaltern officers that were rulers over thousands, and hundreds, and fifties; there was one general officer to each course or legion. All these 12 great commanders are mentioned among David’s worthies and champions, 2 Sam. 23. and 1 Chron. 11. They had first signalized themselves by their great actions, and then they were advanced to those great preferments. It is well with a kingdom, when honour thus attends merit. Benaiah is here called a chief priest, v. 3. But cben signifies he is a priest, and a prince, it might better be rendered here, a chief ruler, or, (as in the margin) a principal officer. Doda had Mikloth, (v. 4.) either for his substitute when he was absent or in form, or for his successor when he was dead. Benaiah had his son under him, v. 6. Asahel had his son after him, v. 7. and by that, it seems that this plan of the militia was laid in the beginning of David’s reign; for Asahel was killed by Abner, while David reigned in Hebron. When his wars were over, he revived this method, and left the military affairs in this posture, for the peaceable reign of his son Solomon. When we think ourselves most safe, yet, while we are here in the body, we must keep in a
We have here an account,

I. Of the princes of the tribes: something of the ancient order instituted by Moses in the wilderness, was still kept up, that every tribe should have its prince or chief. It is probable that it was kept up all along, either by election or by succession, in the same family; and those are here named, who were found in that office when this account was taken. Elihu, or Eliah, who was prince of Judah, was the eldest son of Jesse, and descended in a right line from Nahshon, the first prince of the tribe in Moses's time. Whether these princes were of the nature of lord-lieutenants that guided them in their military affairs, or chief-justices that presided in their courts of judgment, does not appear. Their power, we may suppose, was much less now that all the tribes were united under one king, than it had been before; and, when, for the most part, they acted separately. Our religious officers are, as it were, a copy of such princes in ancient times. There must be such officers as are mentioned here, to keep the king as supreme, but unto governors under him. 1 Pet. 2. 13, 14. the princes that decree justice. Of Benjamin, was Jaasiel the son of Abner, v. 21. Though Abner was David's enemy, and opposed his coming to the throne, yet, David would not oppose the preferment of his son, but, perhaps, nominated him to this post of honour; which teaches us to consider the wisdom of the ways of God.

II. Of the numbering of the people, v. 23, 24. It is here said, 1. That when David ordered the people to be numbered, he forbade the numbering of those under 20 years old, thinking thereby to save the reflection which what he did might otherwise cast upon the promise, that they should be innumerable; yet it was but a poor salvo; for it had never been customary to number these under 20, and the prince of their number chiefly respected the effective men. 2. That the account which David took of the people, in the pride of his heart, turned to no good account; for it was never perfected, nor done with exactness, nor was it ever recorded as an authentic account: Joab was disgusted with it, and did it by halves: David was ashamed of it, and willing it should be forgotten, because there fell wrath for it against Israel. A good man cannot, in the execution of justice, please himself with that which he knows God is displeased with; cannot make use of that, nor take comfort in that, which is obtained by sin.

III. Of the officers of the court.

1. The rulers of the king's substance, as they are called, v. 31. such as had the oversight and charge of the king's gifts, his vineyards, his olive-yards, his herds, his camels, his asses, his flocks. Here are no officers the state, none but part, no motto of the wardrobe, no master of the horse, no master of the hounds, but all for substance, agreeable to the simplicity and plainness of those times. David was a great soldier, a great scholar, and a great prince, and yet a great husband of his estate, kept a great deal of his ground in his own hand, and stocked it, not for pleasure, but for profit; for, except himself, no one of the kings was a chief Justice. But 9. 9. Those magistrates that would have their subjects industrious, must be themselves examples of industry, and application to business. We find, however, that, afterward, the poor of the land were thought good enough to be vine-dressers and husbandmen, 2 Kings 25. 12. Now David put his great men to preside in these employments. 2. The attendants on the king's person. They were such as were eminent for wisdom, being designed for conversation. His uncle, who was a wise man, and a scribe, not only well-skilled in politics, but well-read in the scriptures, was his counsellor, v. 32. Another, who, no doubt, excelled in learning and prudence, was tutor to his children. Ahithophel, a very cunning man, was

readiness for spiritual conflicts: Let not him that girdeth on the harness, boast as he that putteth it off.

16. Furthermore, over the tribes of Israel; the ruler of the Reubenites was Eliazer the son of Zichri: of the Simeonites, Shephatiah the son of Machah: 17. Of the Levites, Hashabiah the son of Kinnuel: of the Aaroeites, Zadok: 18. Of Judah, Elihu, one of the brethren of David of Issachar, Onri the son of Michael. 19. Of Zebulun, Ishmaiah the son of Obadiah: of Naphtali, Jerimoth the son of Azriel: 20. Of the children of Ephraim, Hoshua the son of Azaziah: of the half tribe of Manasseh, Joel the son of Pedaiah: 21. Of the half tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo the son of Zechariah: of Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner: 22. Of Dan, Azarel the son of Jeroham. These were the princes of the tribes of Israel. 23. But David took not the number of them from twenty years old and under: because the Lord had said he would increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens. 24. Joab the son of Zeruiah began to number, but he finished not, because there fell wrath for it against Israel; neither was the number put in the account of the Chronicles of king David. 25. And over the king's treasures was Azmaveth the son of Adiel: and over the store-houses in the fields, in the cities, and in the villages, and in the castles, was Jehonathan the son of Uzziah: 26. And over them that did the work of the field, for tillage of the ground, was Ezri the son of Chelub: 27. And over the vineyards was Shimei the Ramathite: over the increase of the vineyards for the wine-cellar was Zabdi the Shiphmite: 28. And over the olive-trees, and the sycamore-trees that were in the low plains, was Baalhanan the Gederite: and over the cellars of oil was Joash: 29. And over the herds that fed in Sharon was Shitri the Sharonite: and over the herds that were in the valleys was Shaphat the son of Adlai: 30. Over the camels also was Obil the Ishmaelite: and over the asses was Jehdejah the Meronothite: 31. And over the flocks was Jaziz the Hagrites. All these were the rulers of the substance which was king David's. 32. Also Jonathan, David's uncle, was a cousseller, a wise man, and a scribe: and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni was with the king's sons. 33. And Ahithophel was the king's cousseller: and Hushai the Archite was the king's companion: 34. And after Ahithophel was Jehoiada the son of Benaiah, and Abiathar: and the general of the king's army was Joab.
I. CHRONICLES, XXVIII.

The account we have of David's exit, in the beginning of the first book of Kings, does not make his sun set near so bright as that given in this and the following chapter, where we have his solemn farewell both to his son and his subjects, and must own that he finished well. In this chapter, we have, I. A general convention of the states summoned to meet, v. 1. II. A solemn declaration of the divine entail both of the crown, and of the honour of building the temple, upon Solomon, v. 2.-7. III. An exhortation both to the people, and to Solomon, to make religion their business, v. 8.-10. IV. The model and materials delivered to Solomon for the building of the temple, v. 11.-19. V. Encouragement given him to undertake it, and proceed in it, v. 20, 21.

1. And David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem. 2. Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: As for me, I had in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: 3. But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build a house for my name; because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood. 4. Howbeit the Lord God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for he hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he liked me, to make me king over all Israel: 5. And of all my sons (for the Lord hath given me many sons) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. 6. And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. 7. Moreover, I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day. 8. Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God, that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever. 9. And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. 10. Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build a house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it.

A great deal of service David had done in his day, had served his generation according to the will of God, Acts 13. 36. But not the time draws nigh, that he must die, and, as a type of the Son of David, the nearer he comes to his end, the more busy he is, and does his work with all his might. He is now a little recovered from the bad indisposition mentioned, 1 Kings 1. 1. when they covered him with clothes, and he got no heat; but what cure is there for old age? He therefore improves his recovery, as giving him an opportunity of doing God and his country a little more service. I. He summons all the great men to attend him, that he might take leave of them altogether, v. 1. Thus Moses did, Deut. 31. 28. and Joshua ch. 23. 2.—24. 1. David would not declare the settlement of the crown, but in the presence, and to the satisfaction, of those that were the representatives of the people. II. He addresses them with a great deal of respect and tenderness. He not only by an effort quitted his bed, to give them the meeting, (the occasion putting new spirits into him,) but he rose out of his chair, and stood upon his feet, v. 2. in reverence to God, whose will he was to declare, and in reverence to this solemn assembly of the Israel of God, as if he looked upon himself, though major singulars—greater than any individual among them, yet minor universi—less than the whole of them, and the whole age and interest of Israel; or in the dignity, might well have allowed him to keep his seat; but he would show that he was indeed humbled for the pride of his heart, both in the number of his people, and his dominion over them. Then it was too much his pleasure, that they were all his servants, ch. 21. 3. now he calls them his brethren, whom he loved, his people whom he took care of, not his servants, whom he gave over. Hear me, my brethren and my people. It becomes superiors thus to speak with affection and condescension, even to their inferiors; they will not be the less honoured for it, but the more loved. Thus he engages their attention to what he was about to say. III. He declares the purpose he had formed to build a temple for God, and God's disallowing of that purpose, v. 2. 3. This he had signified to Solomon before, ch. 22. 7, 8. A house of rest for the ark is here said to be a house of rest for the footstool of our God: for heaven is his throne of glory; the earth, and the most magnificent temples that can be built upon it, are but his footstool. So much difference is there between the manifestations of the divine glory in the upper, and the lower world. Angels surround his throne, Isa. 6. 1. We, poor worms, do but worship at his footstool, Ps. 99. 5,—122. 7. As an evidence of the sincerity of his purpose to build the temple, he tells them that he had made ready for it, but that God would not suffer them to proceed, because he had appointed other work for him to do, which was enough for one man, namely, the managing of the wars of Is
rael; he must serve the public with the sword, another must do it with the line and plummet. Times of rest are building times, Acts 9: 31.

IV. He produces his own title first, and then Solomon's, to the crown; both were, undoubtedly, jure divino—divine. They could make out such a title as no monarch on earth can; the Lord God, immediately precedes his accomplishment, not providence, v. 4, 5. No right of primogeniture is pretended; Detur digniori, not seniori—It went by worth, not by age. 1. Judah was not the eldest son of Jacob, yet God chose that tribe to be the ruling tribe; Jacob entailed the sceptre upon it, Gen. 49. 10. 2. It does not appear that the family of Jesse was the senior house of that tribe; from Judah, one of the twelve tribes, before Pharez, whether from Nahash and Salmon, is not certain. Ram, the father of Nahash, was an elder brother, 1 Chron. 2. 9. perhaps so had Booz, Obad, Jesse; yet, "God chose the house of my father." 3. David was the youngest son of Jesse, yet God liked him to make him king; so it seemed good unto him. God takes whom he likes, and whom he makes like himself, as he did David, and David was a humble youngling, and was one of the youngest sons of David, and yet God chose him to sit upon the throne, because he was the likeliest of them all to build the temple, the wisest and best inclined.

5. He opens to them God's gracious purposes concerning Solomon, v. 6, 7, I have chosen him to be my son. Thus he declares the decree, that the Lord has made a covenant with him, Ps. 89. 20, art thou a son, Ps. 2. 7. the son of my love; for he was called Jeziditah, because the Lord loved him, and Christ is his beloved Son. Of him, God said, as a figure of him that was to come. 1. He shall build my house; Christ is both the Founder, and the Foundation, of the gospel-temple. 2. I will establish his kingdom for ever. This must have its accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, which shall continue in his hands through all the ages of time, Isa. 9. 7. Luke 1. 33, and shall then be delivered up to God, even the Father, yet, perhaps, to be delivered back to the Redeemer for ever. As to Solomon, this promise of the establishment of his kingdom is here made conditional, If he be constant to do my commandments, as at this day. Solomon was now very towardly and good; "If he continue so, his kingdom shall continue, otherwise not, "if he be constant to do his duty, and not otherwise, we may expect the continuance of God's favour. Let those that are well taught, and begin well, take notice of this—if they be constant, they are happy; perseverance wears the crown, though it wins it not.

VI. He charges them to adhere steadfastly to God and their duty, v. 8. Observe, 1. The matter of this charge: Keep, and seek for, all the commandments of the Lord your God. The Lord was their God, his commandments must be their rule, they must have respect to them all, must make conscience of keeping them, and, in order thereunto, must seek for them, that is, must be inquisitive concerning their duty, search the scriptures, take advice, seeke the law at their mouth whose lips were to keep this knowledge, and pray to God to teach and direct them. God's commandments were to be kept without great care. 2. The solemnity of it. He charges them in the sight of all Israel, who would all have notice of this public charge, and in the audience of their God. God is witness, and this congregation is witness, that they have good counsel given them, and fair warning; if they do not take it, it is their fault, and God and man will be witnesses against them. See 1 Tim. 3, 21. 2 Tim. 4, 1. Those that profess religion, as they tender the favour of God, and their reputation with men, must be faithful to their profession. 3. The motive to observe this charge; it was the way to be happy, to have the peaceable possession of this good land themselves, and to preserve the entail of it upon their children.

VII. He concludes with a charge to Solomon himself, v. 9, 10. He is much concerned that he should be religious. He was to be a great man, but he must not think religion below him; a wise man, and this will be his wisdom. Observe, 1. The charge he gives him. He must look upon God as the God of his father, his good father, who had devoted him to God, and educated him for God. He was born in God's house, and therefore bound in duty to be with a perfect heart, as his father was, and in gratitude. Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsaake not. He must know God, and serve him; we cannot serve God aright, if we do not know him; and in vain do we know him, if we do not serve him; serve him with heart and mind. We make nothing of religion, if we do not mind it, and make heart-work of it; serve him with a perfect heart, that is, an upright heart; for sincerity is our gospel-perfection; and with a willing mind, from a principle of love, and as a willing people, cheerfully, and with pleasure. 2. The arguments to enforce this charge. Two arguments of general inducement. (1.) That the secrets of our souls are open before God; he search-eth all hearts, even the hearts of kings, which to men are unspeakable, Prov. 25. 3. We must therefore be sincere, because if we do deceitfully, we shall, and can, and must be exposed, and cannot be imposed upon; we must therefore employ our thoughts, and engage them in God's service, because he fully understands all the imaginations of them, both good and bad. (2.) That we are happy or miserable here, and for ever, according as we do, or do not, serve God. If we seek him diligently, he will be found of us, and that is enough to make us happy, Heb. 11. 6. If we forsake him, desert his service, and turn from following him, he will cast us off for ever, and that is enough to make us miserable. Note, God never casts off till they have first cast him off. Here is one argument peculiar to Solomon: v. 10, "Thou art to build a house for the sanctuary; therefore seek and serve God, that that work may be done from a good principle, in a right manner, and may be accepted of him.

11. Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, 12. And the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the Lord, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things: 13. Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of the Lord, and for all the vessels of service in the house of the Lord. 14. He gave of gold by weight for things of gold, for all
instruments of all manner of service; silver also for all instruments of silver by weight, for all instruments of every kind of service: 15. Even the weight for the candlesticks of gold, and for their lamps of gold, by weight for every candlestick, and for the lamps thereof; and for the candlesticks of silver by weight, both for the candlestick, and also for the lamps thereof, according to the use of every candlestick. 16. And by weight he gave gold for the tables of show-bread, for every table; and likewise silver for the tables of silver: 17. Also pure gold for the flesh-hooks, and the bowls, and the cups: and for the golden basins he gave gold by weight for every bason; and likewise silver for every bason: 18. And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of the Lord. 19. All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern. 20. And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong, and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed; for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord. 21. And, behold, the courses of the priests and the Levites, even they shall be with thee for all the service of the house of God: and there shall be with thee, for all manner of workmanship, every willing skilful man, for any manner of service; also the princes and all the people will be wholly at thy commandment.

As for the general charge that David gave his son to seek God and serve him, the book of the law was, in that his only rule, and there needed no other; but, in building the temple, David was now to give him three things.

1. A model of the building, because it was to be such a building as neither he nor his architects ever saw. Moses had a pattern of the tabernacle showed him in the mount, Heb. 8. 5. so had David of the temple, by the immediate hand of God upon him, v. 19. It was given him in writing, probably, by the ministry of an angel, or as clearly and exactly represented to his mind, as if it had been in writing. But it is said, v. 12, He had the pattern by the Spirit. The contrivance either of David's devotion, or of Solomon's wisdom, must not be trusted to in an affair of this nature. The temple must be a sacred thing, and a type of Christ; there must be in it, not only convenience, but significance: it was a kind of sacrament, and therefore it must not be left to man's art or invention to contrive it; but it must be framed by divine institution. Christ, the true Temple, the church, the gospel-temple, and heaven, the everlasting temple, all are framed according to the divine councils, and the plan laid in the divine wisdom, ordained before the world for God's glory and our's. This pattern David gave to Solomon, that he might know what to provide, and might go by a certain rule. When Christ left with his disciples a charge to build his gospel-church, he gave them an exact model of it, determining what to observe that, and that only, which he commanded. The particular models are here mentioned; of the porch, which was higher than the rest, like a steeple; then the houses, both the holy place, and the most holy, with the rooms adjoining, which were for treasures, chambers, and parlours, especially the place of the mercy seat, v. 11. of the cherubims like the chambers above the porch, in which the dedicated things were laid up. Bishop Patrick supposes that among other things, the tabernacle which Moses reared, and all the utensils of it, which there was no further occasion for, were laid up here; signifying that in the fulness of time, all the Mosaic economy, all the rites and ceremonies of that dispensation, should be respectfully laid aside, and something better come in their room. From a table of the courses of the priests, patterns of the vessels of service, v. 13, and a pattern of the chariot of the cherubims, v. 18. Besides the two cherubims over the mercy-seat, there were two much larger, whose wings reached from wall to wall, 1 Kings 6. 23, &c. and of these David here gave Solomon the pattern, called a chariot; for the angels are the chariots of God, Ps. 68. 17. 2. Materials for the most costly of the utensils of the temple, for that there was no trade made any less than the patterns, he weighed out the exact quantity for each vessel, both of gold and silver, v. 14. In the tabernacle there was but one golden candlestick, in the temple ten, 1 Kings 7. 49. beside silver ones, which, it is supposed, were hand candlesticks, v. 15. In the tabernacle there was but one table; but in the temple, beside that on which the show-bread was set, there were ten tables, 2 Chron. 4. 18. and silver tables, 4. 8. likewise silver tables. For, this house being so much larger than that, it would look bare if it had not furniture proportionable. The gold for the altar of incense, is particularly said to be refined gold, v. 18. purer than any of the rest; for that was typical of the intercession of Christ, than which nothing is more pure and perfect.

3. Directions which way to look for help in this great undertaking. "Fear not opposition, learn not the charge, care, and trouble, fear not miscarrying in it, as in the case of Uzzah; fear not the reproach of the foolish builder, that began to build, and was not able to finish. Be not dismayed, (1.) God will help thee, and thou must look up to him; in the first place, v. 20, The Lord God, even my God, whom I have chosen and served, who has all along been present with me, and prospered me, and to whom, from my own experience of his power and goodness, I recommend thee; he will be with thee, to direct, strengthen, and prosper thee; he will not fail thee nor forsake thee." Note, We may be sure that God, who owned our fathers, and carried them through the services of their day, will, in like manner, if we be faithful to him, go along with us in our day, and will never leave us, while he has any work to do in us, or by us. The same that was Joshua's encouragement, Jos. 1. 5, and Solomon's here, is given to all believers, Heb. 13. 5. He will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. God never leaves any, unless they first leave him. (2.) "Good men will help thee, v. 21. The priests and Levites will advise thee, and thou mayest consult with them. Thou hast good workmen, who are both willing and skilled; and those are two very good properties in a workman in particular work at the temple. And lastly, "The princes and the people will be so far from opposing, or tarding the work, that they will be wholly at thy command, every one in his place ready to further
it." Then good work is likely to go on, when all parties concerned, are hearty in it, and none secretly clog it, but all drive on heartily in it.

CHAP. XXIX.

David had said what he had to say to Solomon. But he had something more to say to the congregation before he parts with them. 1. He presses them to contribute according to their ability, toward the building and furnishing of the temple, v. 1-5. II. They made their presents accordingly with great generosity, v. 6-9. III. David offered up solemn prayers and praises to God, upon that occasion, v. 10-20. With sacrifices, v. 21. IV. Solomon was, hereupon, enlarged, with great joy and magnificence, v. 22-25. V. David, soon after this, finished his course, v. 26-30. And it is hard to say which shines brighter here, the setting sun, or the rising sun.

1. FURTHERMORE, David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, is yet young and tender, and the work is great: for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God. 2. Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood; onyx-stones, and stones to be set, glistening stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. 3. Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have, of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house. 4. Even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses within: 5. The gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord? 6. Then the chief of the fathers, and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers over the king's work, offered willingly, 7. And gave, for the service of the house of God, of gold, five thousand talents and ten thousand drams; and of silver, ten thousand talents; and of brass, eighteen thousand talents; and one hundred thousand talents of iron. 8. And they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of the Lord, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershomite. 9. Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.

We may here observe,

1. How handsomely David accosted the great men of Israel, to engage them to contribute toward the building of the temple. It is our duty to provoke one another to love, and to do good works; not only to do good ourselves, but to draw in others to do good too, as much as we can. There were many very rich men in Israel, they were all to share in the benefit of the temple; and of those several days which were to befriend the building of it: and therefore, though he would not impose on them, as a tax, what they should give toward it, he would recommend the present as a fair occasion for a free will offering; because what is done in works of piety and charity, should be done willingly, and not by constraint; for God loves a cheerful giver.

3. He would have them consider that Solomon was young and tender, and needed help; that he was the person whom God had chosen to do this work, and therefore was well worthy their assistance. It is good service to encourage those in the work of God, that are as yet young and tender.

2. That the work was great, and all hands should contribute to the carrying of it on. The palace to be built, was not for man, but for the Lord God; and the more contributed toward the building, the more magnificent it would be, and therefore the better would it answer the intention.

3. He tells them what great preparations had been made for this work. He did not intend to throw all the burthen upon them, nor that it should be built wholly by contributions; but that they should show their good will, by adding to what was done, v. 2. I have prepared with all my might, that is, I have prepared all that I had; to show that the work for God must be done with all our might, or we shall bring nothing to pass in it.

4. He sets them a good example. Beside what was dedicated to this service out of the spoils and presents of the neighbouring nations, which was for the building of the house: of which before, ch. 22. 14. he had, out of his own share, offered largely for the beautifying and enriching of it, 3000 talents of gold, and 7000 talents of silver, v. 4, 5. and this because he had set his affection to the house of his God. He gave all this, not as Papists build churches, in commutation of penance, or to make atonement for sin; nor as Pharisees give alms, to be seen of men; but purely because he loved the habitation of God's house; so he professed, Ps. 26. 8. and here he proved it. Those who set their affection upon the service of God, will think no pains or cost too much to bestow upon it. Another mark of true piety is, those are pleasing to God, when they come from love. They that set their affection on things above, will set their affection on the house of God, through which our way to heaven lies. Now this he gives them an account of, to stir them up to do likewise. Note, Those who would draw others to that which is good, must lead themselves. Those especially who are to engage others toward the building and dignity, should particularly contrive how to make their light shine before men, because the influence of their example is more powerful and extensive than that of other people.

5. He stirs them up to do as he had done, v. 5. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord? (1.) We must, each of us, in our several ways, serve the Lord, and consecrate our service to him. (2.) We must make the service of our business; must fill our hands to the Lord, so the Hebrew phrase is. Those who engage themselves in the service of God, will have their hands full; there is work enough for the whole man in that service. The filling of our hands with the service of God, imitates that we must serve him only, serve him literally, and serve him in the strength of grace.
of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee: 19. And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace for which I have made provision. 20. And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the Lord your God. And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the king. 21. And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings unto the Lord, on the morrow after that day, even a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink-offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel: 22. And did eat and drink before the Lord on that day with great gladness: and they made Solomon, the son of David, king the second time, and anointed him unto the Lord to be the chief governor, and Zadok to be priest.

We have here,
1. The solemn address which David made to God, upon occasion of the noble subscriptions of the princes, toward the building of the temple, v. 10. Wherefore I said, Lord, not only alone in his closet, but before all the congregation. This I expected when we read, v. 9, that David rejoiced with great joy; for such a devout man as he, would, no doubt, make that the matter of his thanksgiving, which was so much the matter of his rejoicing. He that looked round with comfort, would certainly look up with praise. David was now old, and looked upon himself as near his end; and it well becomes aged saints, and dying saints, to have their hearts much enlarged in praise and thanksgiving. This will silence their complaints of their bodily infirmities, and help to make the prospects of death itself less. David’s psalms, toward the latter end of the book, are most of them psalms of praise. The nearer we come to the world of everlasting praise, the more we should speak the language, and do the work, of that world. In this address,
2. He adores God, and ascribes glory to him, as the God of Israel, blessed for ever and ever. Our Lord’s prayer ends with a doxology, much like this which David here begins with; for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. This is properly praising God, with holy awe and reverence, and agreeable affection, acknowledging, (1.) His infinite perfections; not only that he is great, powerful, glorious, &c. but that his is the greatness, power, and glory, that is, he has them in, and of, himself; he is the Fountain and Centre of every thing that is bright and blessed. All that we can in our most exalted praises attribute to him, he has an un questionable title to. His is the greatness, his great ness is immense, and incomprehensible; and all others are little, are nothing, in comparison of him. His is the power, and it is almighty and irresistible; power belongs to him, and all the power of all the creatures is derived from him, and depends upon him. His is the glory; for his glory is his own end, and the end of the whole creation. All the glory we can give him with our hearts, lips, and lives, comes infinitely short of what is his due. His is the victory; he transcends and surpasses all, and is able to conquer and subdue all things to himself;

10. Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever. 11. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. 12. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thy hand is power and might; and in thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. 13. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. 14. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. 15. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. 16. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared, to build thee a house for thy holy name, cometh of thy hand, and is all thine own. 17. I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. 18. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination
and his victories are incontestable, uncontrollable. And his is the majesty, real and personal; with him is terrible majesty, inexpressible and inconceivable. (2.) His sovereign dominion: a rightful Owner and Possessor of all: "All that is in the heavens, and in the earth, is thine, and at thy disposal, by the indisputable right of creation; and as supreme Ruler and Commander of all: thine is the kingdom, and all kings are thy subjects; for thou art Head, and art to be exalted and worshipped as Head above all. (3.) His universal influence and agency. All that are rich and honourable among the children of men, have their being, and all their days from God. This acknowledgment he would have in all places to be made notice of, and join in, that they might not think they had merited anything of God by their generosity; for from God they had their riches and honour; and what they had returned to him, was but a small part of what they had received from him. Whoever are great among men, it is God's hand that makes them so; and whatever strength we have, it is God that gives it us, as the God of Israel our father, v. 10. Ps. 68. 33.

2. He acknowledges with thankfulness the grace of God enabling them to contribute so cheerfully toward the building of the temple; v. 13, 14, Now therefore, our God, we thank thee. Note, The more we do for God, the more we are indebted to him for the honour of being employed in his service, and for grace enabling us, in any measure, to do so willingly. The thoughts of the heart, they show thank that servant? Luke 17. 9. No: but that servant has a great deal of reason to thank him. He thanks God that they were able to offer so willingly. Note, (1.) It is a great instance of God's grace in us, to be able to do the work of God willingly. He works both to will and to do; and it is in the day of his power, that his people are made willing, Ps. 110. 3. (2.) We must give God the glory of all that we do, at any time done by ourselves or others. Our own good works must not be the matter of our pride, nor the good works of others the matter of our flattery, but both the matter of our praise: for certainly it is the greatest honour and pleasure in the world, faithfully to serve God.

3. He speaks very humbly of himself, and his people, and the offerings they had now presented to God.

(1.) For himself, and those that joined with him, though they were princes, he wondered that God should take such notice of them, and do so much for them: v. 14, Who am I, and what is my people? David was the most honourable person, and Israel the most honourable people, then in the world; yet thus does he speak of himself and them as unworthy the divine cognizance and favour. David now looks very great, presiding in an august assembly, appointing his successor, and making a noble present to the honour of God; and yet he is little and low in his own eyes: Who am I, O Lord? for v. 15, We are strangers before thee, and sojourners, poor despicable creatures. Angels in heaven are at home here, saints on earth are but strangers here: our days on the earth are as a shadow. David's days had their riches and honour, because he was the men's: for he was a great man, a good man, a useful man, and now, an old man; one that lived long, and lived to good purpose: and yet he puts himself not only into the number, but in the front, of those who must acknowledge that their days on the earth are as a shadow; which intimates that our life is a vain life, a dark life, a transient life, and a life that will have its period, perfect light, or perfect darkness. The next words explain it, there is no abiding. Heb. no expectation. We cannot expect any great matters from it, nor can we expect any long continuance of it. This is mentioned here, as that which forbids us to boast of the service we do to God: alas! it is confined to a scantling of time, it is the service of a frail and short life, and therefore what we can pretend to merit than they are.
by bowing down their heads, a gesture of adoration. Whoever is the mouth of the congregation, those only have the benefit, who join with him, not by bowing down the head, so much as by lifting up the soul.

3. They paid their respects to the king, looking upon him as an instrument in God's hand of much good to them; and in honouring him, they honoured God.

3. The next day, they offered abundance of sacrifices to God, v. 21. both burnt-offerings, which were wholly consumed, and peace-offerings, which the offerer had the greatest part of to himself. Hereby they testified a generous gratitude to God for the good posture their public affairs were in, though David was going the way of all the earth.

4. They feasted and rejoiced, before God, v. 22. In token of their joy in God, and communion with him, they feasted upon their peace-offerings, in a religious manner, before the Lord. What had been offered to God, they feasted upon; by which was intimated to them, that they should be never the poorer for their late liberal contributions to the service of the temple; they themselves should feast on the comforts of it.

5. They made Solomon king, the second time. He having been before anointed, in haste, upon occasion of Adonijah's rebellion, it was thought fit to repeat it, for the greater satisfaction of the people.

They anointed him to the Lord. Magistrates must look upon themselves as set apart for God, to be his ministers, and must rule accordingly in the fear of God. Zadok also was anointed to be priest, in the room of Abiathar, who had lately forfeited his honour. Happy art thou, O Israel, under such a prince, and such a pontiff.

23. Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him. 24. And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king. 25. And the Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty, as had not been on any king before him in Israel. 26. Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. 27. And the time that he reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years he reigned in Jerusalem.

28. And he died in a good old age, full of days, rich, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead. 29. Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of God the seer, 30. With all his reign and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries.

These verses bring King Solomon to his throne, and king David to his grave. Thus the rising generation of that which went before, and says, 'Make room for us.' Every one has his day.

I. Here is Solomon rising, v. 25. Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord. Not his throne which he prepared in the heavens, but the throne of Israel is called the throne of the Lord, because he is not only King of all nations, and all kings rule under him, but he was, in a peculiar manner, King of Israel, 1 Sam. 12. 12. He had the founding, he had the filling, of their throne, by immediate direction. The municipal laws of their kingdom were divine. Urim and prophets were the sacred consorts of their princes, therefore is their throne called the throne of the Lord. Solomon's kingdom typified the kingdom of the Messiah, and his is indeed the throne of the Lord; for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to him; hence he calls him his King, Ps. 2. 6. Being set on the throne of the kingdom of God, of which God called him, he prospered. They that follow the divine guidance, may expect success by the divine blessing. Solomon prospered; for,

1. His people paid honour to him, as one to whom honour is due. All Israel obeyed him, that is, were ready to swear allegiance to him, v. 23. the princes and mighty men, and even the sons of David, though, by seniority, their title to the crown was prior to his; and they were not wronged by his advancement; God thought fit to make him king, and made him fit to be so, and therefore they all submitted themselves to him. God inclined their hearts to do so, that his reign might, from the first, be peaceable. His father was a better man than he, and yet came to the crown with much difficulty; after long delay, and by many slow steps; but David had more faith, and therefore had it more tried. They submitted themselves, Heb. They gave the hand under Solomon, that is, bound themselves by oath to be true to him. Putting the hand under the thigh, was a ceremony anciently used in swearing; or they were so entirely devoted, that they would put their hand under his feet to serve him.

2. God put honour upon him; for those that honour him, he will honour: The Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly, v. 25. His very countenance and presence, I am apt to think, had something in them very great and awful: all he said, and all he did, commanded respect. None of all the judges or kings of Israel, his predecessors, made such a figure as he did, nor lived in such splendour.

II. Here is David's setting; that great man goeth from the stage. The historian here brings him to the end of his days, leaves him asleep, and draws the curtain about him.

1. He gives a summary account of the years of his reign, v. 26. 27. He reigned forty years as Moses did, Othniel, Deborah, Gideon, Eli, Samuel, and Saul, who were before him, and Solomon after him.

2. He gives a short account of his death, v. 28. that he died full of days, rich, and honour; that is, (1.) Loaded with them. He was very old and very rich, and very much honoured both of God and man. He had been a man of war from his youth, and as such, had his soul continually in his hand; yet he was not cut off in the midst of his days, but was preserved through all the dangers of a military life, lived to a good old age, and died in peace, died in his bed, and yet in the bed of conquerors. (2.) Satiated with them. He was full of days, rich and honour, that is, he had enough of this world, and of the riches and honours of it, and knew when he had enough, for he was very willing to die and leave it, having said, Ps. 49. 15, God shall receive me, and Ps. 23. 4, Thou art with me. A good man will soon be full of days, riches, and honour; but will never be satisfied with them; no satisfaction but in God's loving kindness.
3. For a fuller account of David's life and reign, he refers his reader to the histories or records of those times, which were written by Samuel while he lived, and continued, after his death, by Nathan and Gad, v. 29. There was related what was observable in his government at home, and his wars abroad, the times, that is, the events of the times, that went over him, v. 29, 30. These registers were then in being, but now are lost. Note, Good use may be made of those histories of the church, which are authentic, though not sacred, or of divine inspiration.
This book begins with the reign of Solomon, and the building of the temple, and continues the history of the kings of Judah thenceforward, to the captivity; and so concludes with the fall of that illustrious monarchy, and the destruction of the temple. That monarchy of the house of David, as it was prior in time, so it was superior in worth and dignity, to all those four celebrated ones which Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of. The Babylonian monarchy I reckon to begin in Nebuchadnezzar himself: Thou art that head of gold, that lasted but about seventy years; the Persian monarchy, in several families, about one hundred and thirty; the Grecian, in their several branches, about three hundred; and three hundred more went far with the Roman; but as I reckon David a greater hero than any of the founders of those monarchies, and Solomon a more magnificent prince than any of those that were the glories of them, so the succession was kept up in a lineal descent throughout the whole monarchy, which continued considerable between four and five hundred years; and, after a long eclipse, shone forth again in the kingdom of the Messiah, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end.

This history of the Jewish monarchy, as it is more authentic, so it is more entertaining and more instructive, than the histories of any of those monarchies. We had the story of the house of David, before, in the first and second books of Kings, intermixed with that of the kings of Israel, which there took more room than that of Judah; but here, we have it entire. Much is repeated here, which we had before, yet many of the passages of the story are enlarged upon, and divers added, which we had not before, especially relating to the affairs of religion; for it is a church-history, and it is written for our learning, to let nations and families know that then, and then only, they can expect to prosper, when they keep in the way of their duty to God; for, all along, the good kings prospered, and the wicked kings suffered. The peaceable reign of Solomon we have, ch. 1-9. the blemished reign of Rehoboam, ch. 10-12. the short but busy reign of Abijah, ch. 13. the long and happy reign of Asa, ch. 14-16. the pious and prosperous reign of Jehoshaphat, ch. 17-20. the impious and infamous reigns of Jehoram and Ahaziah, ch. 21,22. the unsteady reigns of Joash and Amaziah, ch. 24, 25. the long and prosperous reign of Uzziah, ch. 26. the regular reign of Jotham, ch. 27. the profane and wicked reign of Ahaz, ch. 28. the gracious glorious reign of Hezekiah, ch. 29-32. the wicked reigns of Manasseh and Amon, ch. 33. the reforming reign of Josiah, ch. 34, 35. the ruining reigns of his sons, ch. 36. Put all these together, and the truth of that word of God will appear; They that honour me, I will honour; but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. The learned Mr. Whiston, in his chronology, suggests that the historical books which were written after the captivity, namely, the two books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, have more mistakes in names and numbers than all the books of the Old Testament besides, through the carelessness of transcribers; but though that should be allowed, the things are so very minute, that we may be confident, The foundation of God stands sure, notwithstanding.
CHAP. I.

In the close of the foregoing book, we read how God magnified Solomon, and Israel obeyed him; God and Israel concurred to honour him. Now here, we have an account, 1. How he honoured God by sacrifices, v. 1-7. and by prayer, v. 7-14. 2. How he honoured Israel, by increasing their strength, wealth, and trade, v. 15-17.

1. AND Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him, and magnified him exceedingly. 2. Then Solomon spoke unto all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and to the judges, and to every governor in all Israel, the chief of the fathers. 3. So Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses, the servant of the Lord, had made in the wilderness. 4. But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjath-jearim to the place which David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem. 5. Moreover, the brazen altar that Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the Lord; and Solomon and the congregation sought unto it. 6. And Solomon went up thither to the brazen altar before the Lord, which was at the tabernacle of the congregation, and offered a thousand burnt-offerings upon it. 7. In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee. 8. And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast showed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead. 9. Now, O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. 10. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people that is so great? 11. And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: 12. Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.

II. His great piety and devotion. His father was a prophet, a psalmist, and he kept mostly to the ark; but Solomon having read much in his Bible concerning the tabernacle which Moses built, and the altars there, paid more respect to them than, it should seem, David had done. Both did well, and let not the zeal of one be censured, nor the other, whose zeal, a employed chiefly in one religious direction, despise him whose zeal is employed chiefly in another. Let them not judge, or despise, one another.

1. All his great men must thus far be good men, that they must join with him in worshipping God. He spake to the captains and judges, the governors and chief of the fathers, to every governor in all Israel, the chief of the fathers. 2. 3. Authority and interest are both bestowed on those that will thus use it for the glory of God, and the promoting of religion. It is our duty to engage those with whom we have influence, in the solemnities of religion, and it is very desirable to have many join with us in those solemnities; the more the better, it is the lesser heaven. Solomon began his reign with publick worship, and it was a very fine omen. Magistrates are then likely to do well for themselves and their people, when they thus take God along with them at their setting out.

2. He offered abundance of sacrifices to God there, v. 6, a thousand burnt-offerings, and perhaps a greater number of peace-offerings, on which he and his company fasted before the Lord. Where God sows plentifully, he expects to reap accordingly. His father David had left him flocks and herds in abundance, 1 Chron. 27. 29, 31. and thus he gave God his dues out of them. The ark was at Jerusalem, v. 4. but the altar was at Gibeon, v. 5. and thither he brought his sacrifices; for it is the altar that sanctifieth every gift.

3. He prayed a good prayer to God: this, with the answer to it, we had before, 1 Kings 3. 5, 8c. (1.) God bade him ask what he would; not only that he might put him in the right way of obtaining the favours that were intended him, (Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full,) but that he might try him, how he stood affected, and might discover what was in his heart. Men's characters appear in their choices and desires. What wouldst thou have? tries a man as much as, What wouldst thou see? (2.) Like a genuine son of David, he chose spiritual blessings rather than temporal. His petition here is, Give me wisdom and knowledge. He owns those to be desirable gifts, and God, the Giver of them, Prov. 2. 6. God gave the faculty of understanding, and to him we must apply ourselves for the furnishing of it. Two things are here pleaded, which we had not in Kings: [1.] Thou hast made me reign in David's stead. [2.] The father hath put me into this place; and therefore I can in faith ask of thee grace to enable me to do the duty of it. What service we have reason to believe God calls us to, we have reason to hope he will qualify us for. But that is not all; (Lord, thou hast put me into this place in the stead of David, the great and good man that filled it up so well; therefore give me wisdom, that Israel may not suffer damage by the change. Must I reign in my father's stead? Lord, give me my father's spirit.)
Note, The eminency of those that went before us, and the obligation that lies upon us to keep up and carry on the good work they willed engaged in, should provoke us to a gracious emulation, and quicken our prayers to God for wisdom and grace, that we may do the work of God in our day, as faithfully and well as they did in theirs. [2.] *Let thy promise to David my father be established,* v. 9. He means the promise concerning his successor. "In performance of that promise, *Lord give me wisdom."* We do not find that wisdom was any of the things promised; but it was necessary in order to the accomplishment of what was promised, 2 Sam. 7. 13-15. The promise was, *He shall build a house for my name, I will establish his throne, he shall be my son, and my mercy shall not depart from him.* Now, Lord, unless thou give me wisdom, thy house will not be built, nor my throne established; I shall behave in a manner unbecoming my relation to thee as a Father, shall forfeit thy mercy and fool it away; therefore, *Lord, give me wisdom.*

Note, First, God's promises are our best pleas in prayer; *Remember thy word unto thy servant.* Secondly, Children may take the comfort of the promises of that covenant which their parents, in their baptism, laid claim to, and took hold of, for them. Thirdly, The best way to obtain the benefit of the promises and privileges of the covenant, is, to be earnest in prayer with God for wisdom and grace to do the duties of it.

4. He received a gracious answer to this prayer, v. 11, 12. (1.) God gave him the wisdom that he asked for, because he asked for it. Wisdom is a gift that God gives as freely and liberally as any gift, to those that value it, and wrestle for it, and will resolve to make use of it; and he upbraids not the poor petitioners with their folly, James 1. 5. God's grace shall never be wanting to those who sincerely desire to know and do their duty. (2.) God gave him the wealth and honour which he did not ask for, because he asked not for it. Those that pursue the present things most earnestly, are most likely to miss of them; while those that refer themselves to the providence of God, if they have not the most of those things, have the most comfort in them. For this reason the end, and nearly the short of the other, and are disappointed in this too; but those that make the other world their end, shall not only obtain that, and full satisfaction in it, but shall take as much as is convenient of this world in their way.

13. Then Solomon *came from his journey* to the high place that was at Gibeon to Jerusalem, from before the tabernacle of the congregation, and reigned over Israel. 14. And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, which he placed in the chariot-cities, and with the king of Jerusalem. 15. And the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones, and cedar-trees made he as the sycamore-trees that are in the vale for abundance. 16. And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn; the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. 17. And they fetched up, and brought forth out of Egypt, a chariot for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty: and so brought they out horses for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, by their means.

Here is, 1. Solomon's entrance upon the government, v. 13. He came from before the tabernacle, and reigned over Israel. He would not do any acts of government till he had done his acts of devotion; would not take honour to himself till he had given honour to God; first the tabernacle, and then the throne. But when he had obtained wisdom from God, he did not bury his talent, but as he had received the gift, ministered the same, did not give himself up to ease and pleasure, but minded business; he reigned over Israel.

2. The magnificence of his court, v. 14. He gathered chariots and horsemen. Shall we praise him for this? We praise him not; for the king was forbidden to multiply horses, Deut. 17. 16. I do not remember that ever we find his good father in a charriot, or on horseback; a mule was the highest he mounted. We should endeavour to excel those that went before us in goodness, rather than in grandeur.

3. The wealth and trade of his kingdom. He made silver and gold very cheap and common, v. 15. The increase of gold lowers the value of it; but the increase of grace advances its price; the more men have of that, the more they value it; *how much better therefore is it to get wisdom than gold!* He opened also a trade with Egypt, whence he imported horses and linen yarn, which he exported again to the kings of Syria, with great advantage, no doubt, v. 17. This he had before, 1 Kings 10, 28, 29. It is the wisdom of princes to promote industry, and encourage trade, in their dominions. Perhaps Solomon took the hint of setting up the linen-manufacture, bringing linen-yarn out of Egypt, working it into cloth, and then sending that to other nations, from what his mother taught when she specified this, among other employments of the virtuous woman. *She maketh fine linen, and sell eth it, and delivereth girdles to the merchant, Prov. 31. 24.* In all labour there is profit.

CHAP. II.

Solomon's trading; which we read of in the close of the foregoing chapter, and the encouragement he gave both to merchandise and manufacture, were very commendable. But building was the work he was designed for, and to that business he is here applying himself. Here is, 1. Solomon's determination to build the temple, and a royal palace, and his appointing of labourers to be employed herein, v. 1, 2, 17, 18. II. His request to Huram king of Tyre, to furnish him both with artists and materials, v. 9-16. III. Huram's obliging answer to, and compliance with, his requests, v. 11-16.

1. And Solomon determined to build a house for the name of the Lord, and a house for his kingdom. 2. And Solomon told out threescore and ten thousand men to bear burdens, and fourscore thousand to hew in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred to oversee them.

3. And Solomon sent to Huram the king of Tyre, saying, As thou didst deal with David my father, and didst send him cedars to build him a house to dwell therein, even so deal with me. 4. Behold, I build a house to the name of the Lord my God, to dedicate it to him, and to burn before him sweet incense, and for the continual show-bread, and for the burnt-offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new
moons, and on the solemn feasts of the Lord our God. This is an ordinance for ever to Israel. 5. And the house which I build is great: for great is our God above all gods. 6. But who is able to build him a house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who am I then, that I should build him a house, save only to burn sacrifice before him? 7. Send me now, therefore, a man cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and blue, and that can skill to grave with the cunning men that are with me in Judah and in Jerusalem, whom David my father did provide. 8. Send me also cedar-trees, fir-trees, and algum-trees, out of Lebanon; (for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon) and, behold, my servants shall be with thy servants, 9. Even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build shall be wonderful great. 10. And, behold, I will give to thy servants, the hewers that cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil.

Solomon's wisdom was given him, not merely for speculation to entertain himself, (though it is indeed a princely entertainment,) nor merely for conversation to entertain his friends, but for action; and therefore to action he immediately applies himself.

Observe,

I. His resolution within himself concerning his business, v. 1, He determined to build, in the first place, a house for the name of the Lord. It is fit that he who is to be first, should be first served; first a temple, and then a palace; a house, not so much for himself and his own convenience and magnitude, as for the kingdom, for the honour of it among its neighbours, and for the decent reception of the people, whenever they had occasion to apply themselves to their prince; so that in both, he aimed at the public good.

Those are the wisest men that lay out themselves most for the honour of the name of the Lord, and the welfare of communities: we are not born for ourselves, but for God and our country.

II. His embassy to Huram, king of Tyre, to engage his assistance in the prosecution of his designs. The purport of his errand to him, is much the same here as we had it, 1 Kings 5. 2. &c. only here it is more largely set forth.

1. The reasons why he makes this application to Huram, are here more fully represented, for information to Huram, as well as for inducement.

(1.) He pleads his father's interest in Huram, and the kindness he had received from him, v. 3, As thou didst deal with David, so deal with me. We must show kindness to, so we may expect kindness from, our father's friends; and with them should cultivate a correspondence.

(2.) He represents his design in building the temple: he intended it for a place of religious worship, v. 4, that all the offerings which God had appointed for the honour of his name, might be offered up there. The house was built that it might be dedicated to God, and used in his service; this we should aim at in all our business, that our havings and doings may be all to the glory of God. He mentions divers particular services that were there to be performed, for the instruction of Huram, or the mysteries of the true religion, unlike those of the Gentile superstition, coveted not concealment.

(3.) He endeavours to possess Huram with great and high thoughts of the God of Israel, by expressing the mighty veneration he had for his holy name. Great is our God above all gods, above all idols, above all princes. Idols are nothing, princes are little, and the Lord is over all the earth and God of Israel; and therefore, [1.] “The house must be great; not in proportion to the greatness of that God to whom it is to be dedicated, (for between finite and infinite there can be no proportion,) but in some proportion to the great value and esteem we have for this God.” [2.] “Yet, be it never so great, it cannot be a habitation for the great God: let not Huram think that the God of Israel, like the gods of the nations, dwells in temples made with hands, Acts 17. 24, no, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him. It is intended only for the convenience of the priests and worshippers, that they may have a fit place wherein to burn sacrifice before him.”

[3.] He looked upon himself, though a mighty prince, as unworthy the honour of being employed in this great work. Who am I, that I should build a house? It is part of the wisdom wherein we ought to walk toward them that are without, carefully to guard against all misapprehension, which any thing we say or do, may occasion, concerning God; so Solomon does here in his treaty with Huram.

2. The requests he makes to him, are more particularly set down here. (1.) He desires Huram would furnish him with a good hand to work, v. 7, send me a man. He had cunning men with him in Jerusalem and Judah, whom David provided, 1 Chron. 22. 15. Let them not think but that the Jews had some among them that were artists; but send me a man to direct them. “There are ingenuous men in Jerusalem, but not such engravers as are in Tyre; and therefore, since temple-work must be the best in its kind, let me have the best workmen that can be got.”

(2.) With good materials to work on, v. 8. cedar, and other timber in abundance, v. 9. it is part of the wisdom wherein we ought to be great, that is, very stately and magnificent, no cost must be spared, nor any contrivance wanting in it.

3. Here is Solomon's engagement to maintain the workmen, v. 10. to give them so much wheat and barley, so much wine and oil. He did not feed his workmen with bread and water, but with plenty, and every thing of the best. They that employ labourers, ought to take care they be not only well paid, but well provided for with sufficient of that which is wholesome and fit for them. Let the rich masters do for their poor workmen, as they would be done by, if the tables were turned.

11. Then Huram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon, Because the Lord hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them. 12. Huram said moreover, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, that made heaven and earth, who hath given to David the king a wise son, endued with prudence and understanding, that might build a house for the Lord, and a house for his kingdom. 13. And now I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, of Huram my father's. 14. The son of a woman of the
daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre, skilful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device which shall be put to him, with thy cunning men, and with the cunning men of my lord David thy father. 15. Now therefore the wheat, and the barley, the oil, and the wine, which my lord hath spoken of, let him send unto his servants: 16. And we will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need; and we will bring it to thee in floats by sea to Joppa, and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem. 17. And Solomon numbered all the strangers that were in the land of Israel, after the numbering wherewith David his father had numbered them; and they were found a hundred and fifty thousand and three thousand and six hundred. 18. And he set threescore and ten thousand of them to be bearers of burdens, and fourscore thousand to be hewers in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred overseers to set the people a work.

Here we have,

1. The return which Huram made to Solomon's embassy, in which he shows a great respect for Solomon, and a readiness to serve him. Lesser people may learn of those great ones to be neighbourly and complaisant.

1. He congratulates Israel, on having such a king as Solomon was, v. 11. Because the Lord loved his people, he has made thee king. Note, A wise and good government is a great blessing to a people, and may well be accounted a singular token of God's favour. He does not say, Because he loved thee, (though that was true, 2 Sam. 12. 24.) he made thee king, but because he loved his people. Princes must look upon themselves as preferred for the public good, not for their own personal satisfaction, and should rule so, as to prove that they were given in love, and not in anger.

2. He blesses God for raising up such a successor to David, v. 12. It should seem that Huram was not only very well affected to the Jewish nation, and well pleased with their prosperity, but that he was prostrated to the Jewish religion, and worshipped Jehovah, the God of Israel, (who was not known by that name to the neighbouring nations,) as the God that made heaven and earth, and as the Fountain of power as well as being; for he sets up kings. Now that the people of Israel kept close to the law and worship of God, and so preserved their honour, the neighbouring nations were as willing to be instructed by them in the true religion, as they had been by their apostasies, as their idolatries, and infected with the idolatries and superstitions of their neighbours. This made them high, that they lent to many nations and did not borrow, lent truth to them, and did not borrow error from them; as when they did the contrary, it was their shame.

3. He sent him a very ingenious curious workman, that would not fail to answer his expectations in every thing. One that had both Jewish and Gentile blood meeting in him; for his mother was an Israeliite, (Huram thought she was of the tribe of Dan, and therefore says so here,) v. 14. but, it seems, she was of the tribe of Naphtali, 1 Kings 7. 14.) and his father was a Tyrian; a good omen of uniting Jew and Gentile in many Israelite temples; but it was afterward when the building of the second temple was greatly furthered by Darius, (Ezra 6.) who is supposed to have been the son of Esther, an Israelite by his mother's side.

4. He engaged for the timber, as much as he would have occasion for, and undertook to deliver it at Joppa; and, withal, signified his dependence upon Solomon for the maintenance of the workmen, as he had promised, v. 15, 16. This agreement we had, 1 Kings 5. 8, 9.

II. The orders which Solomon gave about the workmen. He would not employ the free-born Israelites in the drudgery-work of the temple itself, not so much as to be overseers of it; in this, he employed the strangers who were presyled to the Jewish religion, who had not lands of inheritance in Chanaan, as the Israelites had, and therefore applied themselves to trades, and got their living by their ingenuity and industry: there was, at this time, a vast number of them in the land, v. 17. who, if they were of any of the devoted nations, perhaps fell within the case, and therefore fell under the law, of the Gibeonites, to be hewers of wood for the congregation; if not, yet being, in many cases, well provided for by the law of Moses, and put upon an equal footing with the native Israelites, they were bound in gratitude to do what they could for the service of the temple; yet, no doubt, they were well paid in money, or money's worth; the law was, Thou shalt not oppress a stranger. The distribution of them we have here, v. 2. and again, v. 18. in all, 150,000. Canaan was a fruitful land, that found meat for so many mouths more than the numerous natives; and the temple, a vast building, that found work for so many hands. Mr. Fuller suggests that the expeditious peculiar to this structure, of framing all before hand, must needs increase the work; I think it rather left so much the more room for this vast multitude of hands to be employed in it; for in the forest of Lebanon they might all be at work together, without crowding one another, which they could not have been upon mount Zion. And if there had not been such vast numbers employed, so large a fabric, which was begun and ended in 7 years, might, for aught I know, have been as long in building as St. Paul's.

CHAP. III.

It was a much larger and more particular account of the building of the temple, which was added to this book of Chronicles. In this chapter, we have, I. The place, and time, of building the temple, v. 1, 2. II. The dimensions, and rich ornaments of it, v. 3-9. III. The cherubins in the most holy place, v. 10-14. IV. There was light in the temple. The two pillars, v. 15-17. Of all which we have already had an account, 1 Kings 6. 7.

1. THEN Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 2. And he began to build in the second day of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign. 3. Now these are the things wherein Solomon was instructed for the building of the house of God. The length by cubits, after the first measure, was threescore cubits, and
II. CHRONICLES, III.

the breadth twenty cubits. 4. And the porch that was in the front of the house, the length of it was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the height was a hundred and twenty: and he overlaid it within with pure gold. And the greater house he ceiled with fir-tree, which he overlaid with fine gold, and set thereon palm-trees and chains. And he garnished the house with precious stones for beauty: and the gold was gold of Parvaim. 7. He overlaid also the house, the beams, the posts, and the walls thereof, and the doors thereof, with gold; and graved cherubims on the walls. 8. And he made the most holy house, the length whereof was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits: and he overlaid it with fine gold, amounting to six hundred talents. 9. And the weight of the nails was fifty shekels of gold. And he overlaid the upper chambers with gold.

Here is,

1. The place where the temple was built. Solomon was neither at liberty to choose, nor at a loss to fix the place. It was before determined, 1 Chron. 22. 1 which was an ease to his mind. (1.) It must be at Jerusalem; for that was the place where God had chosen to put his name there. The royal city must be the holy city: there must be the testimonies of Israel; for there are set the thrones of judgment, Ps. 122. 4, 5. (2.) It must be on mount Moriah; which, some think, was that very place in the land of Moriah, where Abraham offered Isaac, Gen. 22. 2. So the Targum says expressly, adding, But he was delivered by the word of the Lord, and a ram provided in his place. That was typical of Christ's sacrifice of himself; therefore fitly was the temple, which was likewise a type of him, built there. (3.) It must be where the Lord appeared while to David, and answered him by fire, 1 Chron. 21. 18, 26. There atonement was made once; and therefore, in remembrance of that, there atonement must still be made. There where God has met with me, it is to be hoped that he will still. (4.) It must be in the place which David had prepared, not only which he had purchased with his money, but which he had pitched upon by divine direction. It was Solomon's wisdom not to inquire out a more convenient place, but to acquiesce in the appointment of God, whatever might be objected against it. (1.) It must be in the threshing-floor of Ornan, which, if (as a Jebusite) it gives encouragement to the Gentiles, yet it obliges us to look upon the temple-work, as that which requires the labour of the mind, no less than threshing-work does that of the body.

2. The time when it was began; not till the 4th year of Solomon's reign, v. 2. Not that the 3 first years were trifled away, or spent in deliberating whether they should build the temple or no; but they were employed in the necessary preparations for it, wherein 3 years would be soon gone, considering how many hands were to be got together, and set to work. Some conjecture that this was a sabbatical year, or year of release and rest to the land, when the people, being discharged from their husbandry, might more easily lend a hand to the beginning of this work; and then the year it was finished, would fall out to be another sabbatical year, when they would likewise have leisure to attend the solemnity of the dedication of it.

3. The dimensions of it; in which Solomon was instructed, v. 3. as he was in other things, by his father. Thus was the foundation, (so it may be read) which Solomon laid for the building of the house. This was the rule he went by, so many cubits the length and breadth, after the first measure, that is according to the measure first fixed, which there was no reason to make an alteration of, when the work came to be done: for the dimensions were given by divine wisdom; and what God doeth it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it or taken from it, Eccl. 3. 14. His first measure will be the last.

4. The ornaments of the temple; the timber-work was very fine, and yet, within, it was overlaid with pure gold, v. 4. with fine gold, v. 5. and that embossed with palm-trees and chains. It was of gold of Parvaim, v. 6. the best gold. The beams and posts, the walls and doors, were overlaid with gold, v. 7. The most holy place, which was ten yards square, was all overlaid with fine gold, v. 8. even the upper chambers, or rather the upper floor or roof; top, bottom, and sides, were all overlaid with gold. Every nail, or screw, or pin, with which the golden plates were fastened to the walls that were overlaid with them, weighed 50 shekels, or was worth so much; workmanship of all this cost Solomon a very great deal. Some have said that the very pavement was dedicated to God, 1 Chron. 29. 2, 8. and these were set here and there, where they would show to the best advantage. The finest houses now pretend to no better garnishing than good paint on the roof and walls; but the ornaments of the temple were more substantially rich. It was set with precious stones, because it was a type of the new Jerusalem, which has therefore no temple in it, because it is all temple, and the walls, gates, and foundations of walls, are said to be of precious stones and pearls, Rev. 21. 18, 19, 21.

10. And in the most holy place he made two cherubims of image work, and overlaid them with gold. 11. And the wings of the cherubims were twenty cubits long; one wing of the one cherub was five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house; and the other wing was likewise five cubits, reaching to the wing of the other cherub. 12. And one wing of the other cherub was five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house; and the other wing was five cubits also, joining to the wing of the other cherub. 13. The wings of these cherubims spread themselves forth twenty cubits: and they stood upon their feet, and their faces were inward. 14. And he made the vail of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubims thereon. 15. Also he made before the house two pillars of thirty and five cubits high, and the chapter that was on the top of each of them was five cubits. 16. And he made chains, as in the oracle, and put them on the heads of the pillars; and made a hundred pomegranates, and put them on the chains. 17. And he reared up the pillars before the temple, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.
II. CHRONICLES, IV.

and called the name of that on the right hand Jachin, and the name of that on the left Boaz.

Here is an account of, 1. The two cherubims, which were set up in the holy of holies. There were two already over the ark, which covered the mercy-seat with their wings; those were small ones. Now these were wholly new. The ark was doubled in length, though those were continued, (being appurtenances to the ark, which was not to be made new, as all the other utensils of the tabernacle were;) yet those two large ones were added, doubtless, by divine appointment, to fill up the holy place; which otherwise would look bare, like a room unfurnished. These cherubims are said to be of image-work, v. 10, designed, it is likely, to represent the angels who attend the divine Majesty. Each wing extended 5 cubits, so that the whole was 20 cubits, v. 12, 13, which was just the breadth of the most holy place, v. 8. They stood on their feet, as servants, their faces inward toward the ark, v. 13. that it might appear they were not set there to be adored, (for then they would have been made sitting, as on a throne, and their faces toward their worshipers;) but rather as the attendants to the invisible God. We must not worship angels, but we must worship with angels; for we are come into communion with them, Heb. 12. 22, and must do the will of God as the angels do it. The thought that we are worshipping him before whom the angels cover their faces, will help to inspire us with reverence in all our approaches to God. Compare 1 Cor. 11. 10, with Isa. 6. 2.

2. The veil that parted between the temple and the most holy place, v. 14. This denoted the darkness of that dispensation, and the distance which the worshippers were kept at; but, at the death of Christ, this veil was rent; for through him we are made nigh, and have boldness not only to look, but to enter, into the holiest. On this he wrought cherubims, Heb. he caused them to ascend, that is, they were made in raised work, embossed. Or he placed them on the wing in an ascending posture, to remind the worshippers to lift up their hearts, and to soar upward in their devotions.

3. The two pillars which were set up before the temple. Both together were somewhat above 35 cubits in length, v. 15. about 18 cubits high apiece: see 1 Kings 7. 15, &c. We there took a view of those pillars, Jachin and Boaz, establishment and strength in temple-work, and by it.

CHAP. IV.

We have here a further account of the furniture of God's house. 1. Those things that were of brass. The altar for burnt-offerings, v. 1, the sea and lavers to hold water, v. 2. The tables on which the bread of the court were overlaid, v. 9. the vessels of the altar, and other things, v. 10., 11. Those that were of gold. The candlesticks and tables, v. 7, 8, the altar of incense, v. 19, and the appearance of each of these, v. 20., 21. All these, except the brazen altar, v. 1, were accounted for more largely, 1 Kings 7. 23, 25.

I. Moreover, he made an altar of brass, seventy cubits he length thereof, and twenty cubits the breadth there-of, and ten cubits the height thereof. 2. Also he made a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about. 3. And under it was the similitude of oxen, which did compass it round about; ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about: Two rows of oxen were cast when it was cast. 4. It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east; and the sea was set above upon them, and all their hinder parts were inward. 5. And the thickness of it was a hand-breadth, and the brim of it like the work of the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies; and it received and held three thousand baths. 6. He made also ten lavers, and put five on the right hand, and five on the left, to wash in them: such things as they offered for the burnt-offering they washed in them; but the sea was for the priests to wash in. 7. And he made ten candlesticks of gold according to their form, and set them in the temple, five on the right hand, and five on the left. 8. He made also ten tables, and placed them in the temple, five on the right side, and five on the left: he made a hundred basons of gold. 9. Furthermore, he made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court, and overlaid the doors of them with brass. 10. And he set the sea on the right side of the east end, over against the south.

David often speaks with much affection, both of the house of the Lord, and of the courts of our God. Both without doors and within, there was that which typified the grace of the gospel, and shadowed out good things to come, of which the substance is Christ.

1. There were those things in open court, in the view of all the people, which were very significant.

There were of the brazen altar, v. 1. The making of this was not mentioned in the Kings. On this, all the sacrifices were offered, and it sanctified the gift. This altar was much larger than that which Moses made in the tabernacle; that was 5 cubits square, this was twenty cubits square. Now Israel was become both more numerous and more rich, and it was to be hoped, more devout, (for every age should aim to be wiser and better than that which went before it,) it was expected that there would be a greater abundance of offerings brought to God's altar than had been: it is therefore made such a capacious scaffold, that it might hold them all, and none might excuse themselves from bringing those testimonies of their devotion by alleging that there was not room to receive them. God had greatly enlarged their borders, it was therefore fit that they should enlarge his altars. Our returns should bear some proportion to our receipts. It was 10 cubits high, so that the people who worshipped in the courts, might see the sacrifices burnt, and their eye might affect their heart with sorrow for sin: "It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not thus consumed, and that this is accepted as an expiation of my guilt." They might thus be led to consider the great Sacrifice which should be offered in the fulness of time, to take away sin, and abolish death, which the blood of bulls and goats could not possibly do. And with the smoke of the sacrifices their hearts might ascend to heaven in holy desires toward God and his favour. In all our devotions, we
must keep the eye of faith fixed upon Christ, the great Propitiation. How they went up to this altar, and carried the sacrifices up to it, we are not told; some think by a plain ascent like a hill; if by steps, doubtless they were so contrived, as that the end of the law, mentioned Exod. 20. 26. might be answered.

2. There was the molten sea. A very large brass pan, in which they put water for the priests to wash in, v. 2. 6. It was put just at the entrance into the court of the priests, like the font at the church-door. If it were filled to the brim, it would hold 3000 baths, as here, v. 3. but in common, there were only 2000 baths in it, 1 Kings 7. 26. The Holy Ghost by this signified, (1.) Our great gospel-privilege, that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, 1 John 1. 7. To us there is a fountain opened for all believers, (who are spiritual priests, Rev. 1. 5, 6.) nay, for all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to wash in, from sin, which is uncleanness. There is a fulness of merit in Jesus Christ, for all those that by faith apply themselves to him for the purifying of their consciences, that they may serve the living God, Heb. 9. 14. (2.) Our great gospel-duty, which is to cleanse ourselves by true repentance from all the pollutions, of the flesh, and the corruption that is in the world. Our hearts must be sanctified, or we cannot sanctify the name of God. They that draw nigh to God, must cleanse their hands, and purify their hearts, 1 Thess. 5. 23. If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me; and he that is washed, still needs to wash his feet, to renew his repentance whenever he goes in to minister, John 13. 10.

3. There were ten lavers of brass, in which they washed such things as they offered for the burnt-offerings, v. 6. as the priests must be washed, somost the sacrifices. We must not only sanctify ourselves in preparation for our religious performances, but carefully put away all those vain thoughts, and corrupt aims, which cleave to our performances themselves, and pollute them.

4. The doors of the court were overlaid with brass, v. 9. both for strength and beauty, and that they might not be rotted with the weather, to which they were exposed. Gates of brass, we read of, Ps. 107. 16. II. There were those things in the house of the Lord, to which the priests went only in to minister, that were very significant. All was of gold there. The nearer we come to God, the purer we must be, the purer we shall be.

1. There were 10 golden candlesticks, according to the form of that one which was in the tabernacle, v. 7. The written word is a lamp and a light, shining in a dark place. In Moses's time, they had but one candlestick, the Pentecost; but the additions, which, in process of time, were to be made of other books of scripture, might be signified by this increase of the number of the candlesticks. Light was growing. The candlesticks are the churches, Rev. 1. 20. Moses set up but one, the church of the Jews, but in the gospel-temple, not only believers, but churches, are multiplied.

2. There were 10 golden tables, v. 1. Tables whereon the show-bread was set, v. 19. Perhaps every one of the tables had 12 loaves of show-bread on it. As the house was enlarged, the house-keeping was. In my father's house there is bread enough for the whole family. To those tables belonged a hundred golden basins, or dishes; for God's table is well furnished.

3. There was a golden altar, v. 19. on which they burnt incense. It is probable that this was enlarged in proportion to the brazen altar. Christ, who, once for all, made atonement for sin, ever lives, making intercession, in virtue of that atonement.

11. And Huram made the pots, and the shovels, and the basins, and the basons. And Huram finished the work that he was to make for king Solomon for the house of God; 12. To wit, the two pillars, and the pommels, and the chapiters which were on the top of the two pillars, and the two wraiths to cover the two pommels of the chapiters which were on the top of the pillars: 13. And four hundred pomegranates on the two wraiths; two rows of pomegranates on each wraith, to cover the two pommels of the chapiters which were upon the pillars. 14. He made also bases; and lavers made he upon the bases; 15. One sea, and twelve oxen under it: 16. The pots also, and the shovels, and the flesh-hooks, and all their instruments, did Huram his father make to king Solomon, for the house of the Lord, of bright brass. 17. In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay-ground between Succoth and Zeredathah. 18. Thus Solomon made all these vessels in great abundance: for the weight of the brass could not be found out. 19. And Solomon made all the vessels that were for the house of God, the golden altar also, and the tables whereon the show-bread was set; 20. Moreover the candlesticks with their lamps, that they should burn after the manner, before the oracle, of pure gold; 21. And the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs, made he of gold, and that perfect gold; 22. And the snuffers, and the basons, and the spoons, and the censers, of pure gold: and the entry of the house, the inner doors thereof for the most holy place, and the doors of the house of the temple, were of gold.

We have here such a summary, both of the brass-work, and the gold-work of the temple, as we had before, 1 Kings 7. 13, &c. in which we have something more to observe, than, (1.) That Huram the workman was very punctual: he finished all that he was to make, v. 11. and left no part of his work undone. Huram his father, he is called, v. 16. Probably, it was a sort of a nick-name by which he was commonly known, Father Huram; for the king of Tyre called him Huram Abi, my father; in compliance with whom Solomon called him, my father; we have nothing like an artist, and father of the artificers in brass and iron. He acquitted himself well, both for ingenuity and industry. (2.) Solomon was very generous. He made all the vessels in great abundance, v. 18. many of a sort, that many hands might be employed, and so the work might go on with expedition; or that some might be laid up for use when others were worn out. Freely he has received, and he will freely give. When he had made vessels enough for the present, he would not convert the remainder of the brass to his own use; it is devoted to God, and it shall be used for him.

CHAP. V.

The temple being built and furnished for God, we have here, I. Possession given to him, by bringing in the de-
1. **Thus** all the work that Solomon made for the house of the Lord was finished: and Solomon brought in all the things that David his father had dedicated; and the silver, and the gold, and all the instruments, put he among the treasures of the house of God. 2. Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion. 3. Wherefore all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king, in the feast which was in the seventh month. 4. And all the elders of Israel came; and the Levites took up the ark. 5. And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, these did the priests and the Levites bring up. 6. Also king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel that were assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen, which could not be told nor numbered for multitude. 7. And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims: 8. For the cherubims spread forth their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above. 9. And they drew out the staves of the ark, that the ends of the staves were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen without. And there it is unto this day. 10. There was nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put therein at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.

This agrees with what we had, 1 Kings 8. 2, &c. where an account was given of the solemn introducing of the ark into the new-erected temple.

1. There needed no great solemnity for the bringing in of the dedicated things, v. 1. They added to the wealth, and perhaps were so disposed as to add to the beauty, of it; but they could not add to the holiness; for it was the temple that sanctified the gold, Matth. 23. 17. See how just Solomon was both to God and to his father. Whatever David had dedicated to God, however much he might have liked it himself, yet he would by no means alienate it, but put it among the treasures of the temple. Those children that would inherit their godly parents’ blessing, must religiously pursue their pious intentions, and not defeat them. When Solomon had made all the vessels of the temple in abundance, ch. 4. 18. many of the materials were left, which he would not convert to any other use, but laid it up in the treasury for a time of need. Dedicated things must not be alienated. It is so criUe to do it.

2. But it was fit that the ark should be brought in with great solemnity; and so it was. All the other vessels were made new, and larger, in proportion to the house, than they had been in the tabernacle; but the ark, the mercy-seat, and the cherubims were the same; for the presence and the grace of God are the same in little assemblies that they are in large ones, in the poor condition of the church, and their greatest prosperity. True, whenever two or three are gathered together in Christ’s name, there is he as truly present with them, as if there were two or three thousand. The ark was brought in, attended by a very great assembly of the elders of Israel, who came to grace the solemnity; and a very sumptuous appearance, no doubt, they made, v. 2-4. It was carried by the priests, v. 7. brought into the most holy place, and put under the wings of the great cherubim which Solomon had set up there, v. 7, 8. There they are unto this day: not the day when this book was written after the captivity, but when that was written, out of which this story was transcribed. Or they were there (so it might be better read) unto this day, the day of Jerusalem’s desolations, that fatal day, Ps. 137. 7. The ark was a type of Christ, and, as such, a token of the presence of God. That gracious promise, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, does, in effect, bring the ark into our religious assemblies, if we by faith and prayer put that promise in suit; and this we should be most solicitous and earnest for; Lord, if thy presence go not up with us, wherefore should we go up? The temple itself, if Christ leave it, is a desolate place, Matth. 23. 38.

3. With the ark they brought up the tabernacle, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, v. 5. They were not alienated, because they had been dedicated to God; not altered or melted down for the new work, because there was no need of them; but they were carefully laid up as monuments of antiquity; and, probably, as many of the vessels as were fit for use, were still used.

4. This was done with great joy. They kept a holy feast that day, the occasion, v. 3. and sacrificed sheep and oxen without number, v. 6. Note, (1.) The establishment of the public worship of God, according to his institution, and with the tokens of his presence, is, and ought to be, matter of great joy to any people. (2.) When Christ is formed in a soul, the law written in the heart, the ark of the covenant settled there, so that it becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost, there is true satisfaction in that soul. (3.) Whatever we have the comfort of, we must, by the sacrifices of praise, give God the glory of, and not be straitened therein; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. If God favour us with his presence, we must honour him with our services, the best we have.

11. And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place; (for all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course;) 12. Also the Levites, which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them a hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets;

13. It came even to pass, as the trumpeters...
and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; <span class="red">14</span>. So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.

Solomon, and the elders of Israel, had done what they could to grace the solemnity of the introduction of the ark; but God, by testifying his acceptance of what they did, put the greatest honour upon it. The cloud of glory that filled the house, beautified it more than all the gold with which it was overlaid, or the precious stones with which it was garnished; and yet that was no glory, in comparison with the glory of the gospel-dispensation, <span class="red">2</span> Cor. 3. 8-10. Observe.

I. How God took possession of the temple; he filled it with a cloud, v. <span class="red">13</span>. <span class="red">1</span>. Thus he signified his acceptance of this temple to be the same to him, that the tabernacle of Moses was, and assured them that he would be the same in it; he was by a cloud, to make his public entry into that, Exod. 40. 34. <span class="red">2</span>. Thus he considered the weakness and infirmity of those to whom he manifested himself, who could not bear the dazzling lustre of the divine light; it would have overpowered them; he therefore spread a cloud upon it, Job 26. 9. Christ revealed things unto his disciples as they were able to bear him, and in parables, which wrapped up divine things as in a cloud. <span class="red">3</span>. Thus he kept all that worshipped in his courts with holy reverence and fear. Christ's disciples were afraid when they entered into a cloud, Luke 9. 34. <span class="red">4</span>. Thus he would intimate the darkness of that dispensation, by reason of which, they could not steadfastly look to the end of those things which were now abolished, <span class="red">2</span> Cor. 3. 13.

II. What he took possession of it. <span class="red">1</span>. When the priests were come out of the holy place, v. <span class="red">11</span>. This is the way of giving possession. All must come out, that the rightful owner may come in. Would we have God dwell in our hearts? We must leave room for him; let every thing else give way. We are here told that upon this occasion, the whole family of the priests attended, and not any one particular course; <span class="red">all</span> the priests that were present were sanctified, v. <span class="red">11</span>. Because there was work enough for them all, when such a multitude of sacrifices were to be offered, and because it was fit that they should all be eye-witnesses of this solemnity, and receive the impressions of it. 2. When the singers and musicians praised God, then the house was filled with a cloud. This is very observable; it was not when they offered sacrifices, but when they sang the praises of God, that God gave them this token of facing for; for the sacrifices that were offered then were better than that of an ox or bullock, Ps. 69. 31. All the singers and musicians were employed, those of each of the three families; and, to complete the concert, 120 priests, with their trumpets, joined with them, all standing at the east end of the altar, on that side of the court which lay outmost toward the people, v. <span class="red">12</span>. And when this part of the service began, the glory of God appeared. Observe.

1. It was then they were unanimous, when they were as one, to make one sound. The Holy Ghost descended on the apostles, when they met with one accord, Acts 2. 1. Where unity is, the Lord com-

CHAP. VI.

The glory of the Lord, in the vehicle of a thick cloud, having filled the house which Solomon built, by which God manifested his presence there, he immediately improves the opportunity, and addresses himself to God, as a God now, in a peculiar manner, nigh at hand. <span class="red">1</span>. He makes a solemn declaration of his intention in building this house, to the satisfaction of the people, and the honour of God, both which he blessed, v. <span class="red">1</span>.-<span class="red">11</span>. <span class="red">11</span>. He makes a solemn prayer to God, that he would be gracious to accept and answer all the prayers that should be made in, or toward that house, v. <span class="red">12</span>.-<span class="red">42</span>. This whole chapter we had before, with very little variation, 1 Kings 8. <span class="red">12</span>.-<span class="red">53</span>, to which it may not be amiss here to look back.

1. THEN said Solomon, The Lord hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. 2. But I have built a house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever. 3. And the king turned his face, and blessed the whole congregation of Israel: (and all the congregation of Israel stood:) 4. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled that which he spake with his mouth to my father David, saying, 5. Since the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build a house in, that my name might be there; neither chose I any man to be a ruler over my people Israel: 6. But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel. 7. Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. 8. But the Lord said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thy heart to build a house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thy heart: 9. Notwithstanding, thou shalt not build the
house; but thy son which shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name. 10. The Lord therefore hath performed his word that he hath spoken: for I am risen up in the room of David my father, and am set on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built the house for the name of the Lord God of Israel: 11. And in it have I put the ark, wherein is the covenant of the Lord, that he made with the children of Israel.

It is of great consequence, in all our religious actions, that we design well, and that our eye be single. If Solomon had built this temple in the pride of his heart, as Ahasuerus made his feast, only to show the riches of his kingdom, and the honour of his majesty, it would not have turned at all to his account. But he here declares upon what inducements he undertook it, and they are such as not only justify, but magnify, the undertaking.

1. He did it for the glory and honour of God; this was his highest and ultimate end in it. It was for the name of the Lord God of Israel, v. 10, to be a house of habitation for him, v. 2. He has indeed, as to us, made darkness his pavilion, v. 1. but let this house be the residence of that darkness; for it is in the upper world that he dwells in light, such as no eye can approach.

2. He did it in compliance with the choice God had been pleased to make of Jerusalem, to be the city in which he would record his name, v. 6. I have chosen Jerusalem. A great many stately buildings there were in Jerusalem for the king, his princes, and the royal family. If God choose that place, it is fit that there be a building for him, which may exceed all the rest. Were men thus honoured there, let God be thus honoured.

3. He did it in pursuance of his father's good intentions, which he never had an opportunity to put in execution. It was in the heart of David my father to build a house for God; the project was his, be it known to his honour, v. 7. and God approved of it, though he permitted him not to put it in execution, v. 8. Thou didst well that it was in thine heart. Temple-work is often thus done; one row, and another repeats, John 4. 37, 38. one age begins that which the next brings to perfection; and let not the wisest of men think it any disparagement to them, to pursue the good designs which those that went before them, have laid, and to build upon their foundation. Every good piece is not an original.

4. He did it in the performance of the word which God had spoken. God had said, Thy son shall build the house of God; and now he had done it, v. 9, 10. The service was appointed him, and the honour of it designed him, by the divine promise; so that he did not do it of his own head, but was called of God to do it. It is fit that he who appoints the work, should have the appointing of the workmen; and those may go on in their work with great satisfaction, who see their call to it clear.

12. And he stood before the altar of the Lord, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands, 13. (For Solomon had made a brazen scaffold of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven,) 14. And said, O Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keepest covenant, and showest mercy unto thy servants that walk before thee with all their hearts: 15. Thou which hast kept with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him; and spakest with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thy hand, as it is this day. 16. Now therefore, O Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet so that thy children take heed to their way to walk in my law, as thou hast walked before me. 17. Now then, O Lord God of Israel, let thy word be verified, which thou hast spoken unto thy servant David. 18. (But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!) 19. Have respect, therefore, to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee: 20. That thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou hast said that thou wouldest put thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth toward this place. 21. Hearken, therefore, unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear thou from thy dwelling-place, even from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive. 22. If a man sin against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to make him swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house; 23. Then hear thou from heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, by requiting the wicked, by recomposing his way upon his own head; and by justifying the righteous, by giving him according to his righteousness. 24. And if thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall return and confess thy name, and pray and make supplication before thee in this house; 25. Then hear thou from the heavens, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest to them and to their fathers. 26. When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; yet if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict them; 27. Then near
thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when thou hast taught them the good way wherein they should walk; and send rain upon the land, which thou hast given unto thy people for an inheritance. 28. If there be dearth in the land, if there be pestilence, if there be blasting, or mildew, locusts, or caterpillars; if their enemies besiege them in the cities of their land; whatsoever sore or whatsoever sickness there be; 29. Then what prayer or what supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house; 30. Then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men;) 31. That they may fear thee, to walk in thy ways so long as they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers. 32. Moreover, concerning the stranger, which is not of thy people Israel, but is come from a far country for thy great name's sake, and thy mighty hand, and thy stretched-out arm; if they come and pray in this house; 33. Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name, and fear thee, as doth thy people Israel; and may know that this house which I have built is called by thy name. 34. If thy people go out to war against their enemies by the way that thou shalt send them, and they pray unto thee toward this city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name; 35. Then hear thou from the heavens their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. 36. If they sin against thee, (for there is no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near; 37. Yet if they be think themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; 38. If they return to thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name; 39. Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling-place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee. 40. Now, my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and let thine ears be attuned unto the prayer that is made in this place. 41. Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting-place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. 42. O Lord God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant.

Solomon had, in the foregoing verses, signed, and sealed, as it were, the deed of dedication, by which the temple was appropriated to the honour and service of God. Now here he prays the consecration-prayer, by which it was made a figure of Christ, the great Mediator, through whom we are to offer all our prayers, and to expect all God's favours, and to view the heavens, and thine heart, in every thing wherein we have to do with God.

We opened the particulars of this prayer, 1 Kings 8. and therefore shall now only clean up some few passages in it which may be the proper subjects of our meditation.

The first head, which we have to treat of, is the acknowledging of his superior.
their prosperity stood so strong, but that it might be moved; nay, he expected sin would move it. 3. He supposes that those who had not called upon God at other times, yet, in their affliction, would seek him early and earnestly. "When they are in distress, they will confess their sins, and confess thy name, and make supplication to thee." Trouble will drive these (to God, who is his heart, v. 24, 26, 28. 4. He supposes that strangers would come from afar to worship the God of Israel, and to pay homage to him; and this also might reasonably be expected, considering what worthless things the gods of the nations were, and what proofs the God of Israel had given of his being Lord of the whole earth.

III. Here are petitions very pertinent.
1. That God would own this house, and have an eye to it, as the place of which he said that he would put his name there, v. 20. He could not, in faith, have asked God to show such peculiar favour to this house above any other, if he himself had not said that it should be his rest for ever. The prayer that will speed, must be warranted by the word. We may therefore with humble confidence pray: God be well pleased with us in Jesus Christ, because he has declared himself well pleased in him; "This is my beloved Son; but he says not now of any house, "This is my beloved place."
2. That God would hear and accept the prayers which should be made in, or toward, that place, v. 21. He asks not that God should help them, whether they prayed for themselves or no, but that God would help them, in answer to their prayers. Even Christ's intercessions do not supersede, but encourage our supplications. He prays that God would hear from his dwelling-place, even from heaven; that is his dwelling-place still; not this temple; and thence help must come. "When thou hearest, forgive. Note, The forgiveness of one sin, is that which makes way for all the other answers to our prayers, Removendo prohibent—The evil which it drives away, it keeps away.
3. That God would give judgment according to equity, upon all the appeals that should be made to him, v. 23, 30. This we may, in faith, pray for, we are sure it shall be done. God sitteth on the throne, judging right.
4. That God would return in mercy to his people, when they repented and reformed, and sought unto him, v. 25, 27, 38, 39. This we also may, in faith, pray for, building upon the repeated declarations God has made of his readiness to accept penitents.
5. That God would bid the strangers welcome to this house, and answer their prayers, v. 33, for if there be in duty, why should there not be in privilege one law for the stranger, and one horn in the land, Lev. 24. 22.
6. That God would, upon all occasions, own and plead the cause of his people Israel, against all the oppressors of it, v. 35, maintain their cause; and again, v. 39. If they be the Israel of God, their cause is the cause of God, and he will espouse it.
Lastly, He concludes this prayer with some expressions, which he had learned of his good father, and borrowed from one of his psalms. We had them not in the Kings, but here we have them, v. 41, 42. The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but we can never draw out or improve a better language to God, than that of his own Spirit? But these words were of use, in a special manner, to direct Solomon, because they had reference to this very work that he was now doing. We have them, Ps. 132. 8-10. He prays, (v. 41.) (1.) That God would take possession of the temple, and keep possession; that he would make it his resting-place. Thou and the ark; what will the ark do without the God of the ark? Ordinances without the God of the ordinances? (2.) That he would make the ministers of the temple public blessings, clothe them with salvation, that is, not only save them, but make them instrumental to save others, by offering the sacrifices of righteousness. (3.) That the service of the temple might turn abundantly to the joy and satisfaction of all the Lord's people. Let thy saints rejoice in goodness, that is, in the goodness of thy house, Ps. 65. 4. Let all that come hither to worship, like the Eunuch, go away rejoicing. He pleads two things, v. 42. [1.] His own relation to God: "Turn not away the face of thine anointed. Lord, thou hast appointed me to be king, and wilt not thou own me? [2.] God's covenant with his father: Remember the mercies of David thy servant. The piety of David towards God, so some understand it; so the word sometimes signifies, his pious care of the ark, and concern for it. See Ps. 132. 1, 2, 8c. Or, the promises of God to David, which were mercies to him, his great support and comforts in all his troubles. We may plead, as Solomon does here, with an eye to Christ. We deserve that God should turn away our face, and he should reject us and our prayers; but we come in the name of the Lord Jesus, and, as thy Messiah, thy Lord, so the word is; thy Christ, so the LXX. Him thou hast in highest regard, and wilt never turn away his face. We have no righteousness of our own to plead, but, Lord, remember the mercies of David thy servant. Christ is God's servant, Isa. 42. 1. and is called David, Hos. 3. 5. Lord, remember his mercies, and accept of us on the account of them. Remember his tender concern for his Father's honour, and man's salvation, and what he did and suffered from that principle. Remember the promises of the everlasting covenant, which free grace has made to us in Christ, and which are called the sure mercies of David, Isa. 55. 3. and Acts 13. 34. This must be all our desire, and all our hope, all our prayer, and all our plea, for it is all our salvation.

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter we have God's answer to Solomon's prayer. 1. His public reply by which he con- sumed the sacrifices, v. 1. with which the priests and people were much affected, v. 2, 3. By that token of God's acceptance, they were encouraged to continue the solemnities of the feast four days, and Solomon was encouraged to pursue all his designs for the honour of God, v. 4-11. 2. His private answer by word of mouth, in a dream or vision of the night, v. 12-22. Most of these things we had before, 1 Kings 8. 9.

1. Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. 2. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house. 3. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. 4. Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord. 5. And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and a hundred and
twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. 6. And the priests waited on their offices; the Levites also with instruments of music of the Lord, which David the king had made to praise the Lord, because his mercy endureth for ever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood. 7. Moreover, Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that was before the house of the Lord: for there he offered burnt-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings, because the brazen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt-offerings, and the meat-offerings, and the fat. 8. Also, at the same time, Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt. 9. And in the eighth day they made a solemn assembly: for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days. 10. And on the three and twentieth day of the seventh month he sent the people away into their tents, glad and merry in heart, for the goodness that the Lord had showed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people. 11. Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of the Lord, and in his own house, he prosperously effected. Here is, 1. The gracious return which God immediately made to Solomon's prayer. The fire came down from heaven, and consumed the sacrifice, v. 1. In this way, God testifies his acceptance of Moses, Lev. 9. 24. of Gideon, Judg. 6. 21. of David, 1 Chron. 21. 26. of Elijah, 1 Kings 18. 39. and, in general, to accept the burnt-sacrifice, is, in the Hebrew phrase, to turn it to ashes, Ps. 20. 3. The fire came down here, not upon the killing of the sacrifices, but the praying of the prayer. This fire intimated that God was, 1. Glorious in himself; for our God is a consuming fire, terrible even in his holy places. This fire breaking forth (as is probable) out of the thick darkness, made it the more terrible, as on mount Sinai, Exod. 24. 16. 17. The sinners in Sion had reason to be afraid at this sight, and to say, Who among us shall dwell near this devouring fire? Isa. 33. 14. And yet, 2. Gracious to Israel; for this fire, which might justly have consumed them, fastened upon the sacrifice which was offered their stead, and consumed that; by which God signified to them, that he accepted their offerings, and that his anger was turned away from them. Let us apply this, (1.) To the sufferings of Christ; when he pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief, in that he showed his good-will to men, having laid on him the iniquity of all. His death was our life, and he was made sin and a curse, that we might inherit righteousness and a blessing. That sacrifice was consumed, that we might escape: Here am I, let these go away. (2.) To the sanctification of the Spirit, who descends like fire, burning up our lusts and corruptions, those beasts that must be sacrificed, or we are undone; and kindling in our souls a holy fire of piety and devout affections, always to be kept burning on the altar of the heart. 2. Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, but the sacrifice in our stead, for which we are bound to very thank God. 2. The king and all the people offered sacrifices in abundance, v. 4, 5. With these they feasted this holy fire, and bade it welcome to the altar. They had offered sacrifices before, but now they increased, them. Note, The tokens of God's favour to us should enlarge our hearts in his service, and make us to abound therein more and more. The king's example stirred up the people. Good work is then likely to go on, when the law of sacrifice is so numerous, that the altar could not contain them all: but rather than any of them should be turned back, (though we may suppose the blood of them all was sprinkled upon the altar,) the flesh of the burnt-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings, were burned in the midst of the court, v. 7. which Solomon either hallowed for that service, or hallowed by it. In case of necessity, the priests did their part, they waited on their offices; and the singers and musicians on their's, v. 6. with the instruments that David made, and the hymn that David had put into their hand, as some think it may be read, meaning that, 1 Chron. 16. 7. Or, as we read it, when David praised by their ministry. He employed, directed, and encouraged, them in their work; at an especial time they expressing their rejoicings; then on the 15th day, began the feast of tabernacles, which continued to the 22d, and they did not part till the 23d. We must never grudge
the time that we spend in the worship of God, and communion with him; nor think it long, or grow weary of it.

5. Solomon went on in his work, and prosperously effected all he designed, for the adorning both of God's house and his own, v. 11. Those that begin with the service of God, are likely to go on successfully in their own affairs. It was Solomon's praise, that what he undertook, he went through with, and it was by the grace of God that he prospered in it.

12. And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice, 13. If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; 14. If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 15. Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place: 16. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually. 17. And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shall observe my statutes and my judgments; 18. Then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel. 19. But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods and worship them; 20. Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them: and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a by-word among all nations. 21. And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and unto this house? 22. And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them.

That God accepted Solomon's prayer, appeared by the fire from heaven. But a prayer may be accepted, and yet not answered in the letter of it; and therefore God appeared to him in the night, as he did once before, ch. 1. 7. and after a day of sacrifice, so, as then; and gave him a particular answer to his prayer. We had the substance of it before, 1 Kings 9. 2.-9.

1. He promised to own this house for a house of sacrifice to Israel, and a house of prayer for all people, Isa. 56. 7. v. 12, 16. My name shall be there for ever, that is, "There will I make myself known, and there will I be called upon.

2. He promised to answer the prayers of his people, that should at any time be made in that place, v. 13-15. (1.) National judgments are here supposed, v. 13. Famine and pestilence; by the locusts devouring the land, may be meant enemies as greedy as locusts, and laying all waste. (2.) National repentance, prayer, and reformation are required, v. 14. God expects that his people, who are called by his name, if they have dishonoured his name by their iniquity, should honour it by accepting the punishment of their iniquity. They must humble themselves under his hand, must pray for the removal of the judgment, must seek the face and favour of God; and yet all this will not do, unless they turn from their wicked ways, and return to the God from whom they have revolted. (3.) National mercy is then promised; that God will forgive their sin, with which they brought God's judgments upon them to heal their land, redress all their grievances. Pardoning mercy makes way for healing mercy, Ps. 103. 3. Matth. 9. 2.

3. He promised to perpetuate Solomon's kingdom, upon condition that he persevered in his duty, v. 17, 18. If he hoped for the benefit of God's covenant with David, he must imitate the example of David.

But he sets before him death as well as life, the curse as well as the blessing. (1.) He supposes it possible that though they had this temple built to the honour of God, yet they might be drawn aside to worship other gods, v. 19. He knew their proneness to backslide into that sin. (2.) He threatens it as certain, that if they did so, it would certainly be the ruin of both church and state. [1.] It would be the ruin of their state, v. 20. Though they have taken deep root, and taken root long, in this good land, yet will I pluck them up by the roots, extirpate the whole nation, pluck them up as men pluck up weeds out of their garden, which are thrown to the dunghill. [2.] It would be the ruin of their church. This sanctuary would be no sanctuary to them, to protect them from the judgments of God, as they imagined, saying, The temple of the Lord are these, Jer. 7. 4. "This house, which is high, not only for the magnificence of the structure, but for the designed ends and uses of it, shall be an astonishment, it shall come down wonderfully, (Lam. 1. 9.) to the amazement of all the neighbours."

CHAP. VIII.

In this chapter we are told, 1. What cities Solomon built, v. 1. - 6. 2. What workmen Solomon employed, v. 7. - 10. 3. What care he took for a proper settlement for his wife, v. 11. 4. What a good method he put the temple-service into, v. 12. - 16. 5. What trading he had with foreign countries, v. 17, 18.

1. And it came to pass at the end of the twenty years, wherein Solomon had built the house of the Lord, and his own house, 2. That the cities which Huram had restored to Solomon, Solomon built them, and caused the children of Israel to dwell there. 3. And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and prevailed against it 4. And he built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the store-cities which he built in Ha
5. Also he built Beth-horon the upper, and Beth-horon the nether, fenced cities, with walls, gates, and bars; 6. And Baalath, and all the store-cities that Solomon had, and all the chariot-cities, and the cities of the horsemen, and all that Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and throughout all the land of his dominion. 7. As for all the people that were left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which were not of Israel, 8. But of their children, who were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel consumed not, them did Solomon make to pay tribute until this day. 9. But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no servants for his work; but they were men of war, and chief of his captains, and captains of his chariots and horsemen. 10. And these were the chief of king Solomon's officers, even two hundred and fifty, that bare rule over the people. 11. And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come.

This we had 1 Kings. 10. 10.-24. and therefore shall only observe here, 1. Though Solomon was a man of great learning and knowledge, yet he spent his days, not in contemplation, but in action, not in his study, but in his country, in building cities, and fortifying them. In a time of peace preparing for a time of war, which is as much a man's business, as it is in summer to provide food for winter. 2. As he was a man of business himself, and did not consult his own ease, so he employed a great many hands, kept abundance of people to work. It is the interest of a state by all means possible to promote and encourage industry, and to keep its subjects from idleness. A great many strangers there were in Israel, many that remained of the Canaanites; and they were welcome to live there, but not to live and do nothing. The men of Laish, who had no business, were an easy prey to the invaders, Judg. 18. 7.

3. When Solomon had begun with building the house of God, and made good work and quick work of that, he prospered in all his undertakings, so that he had all that he desired to build, v. 6. Those who have a genius for building, find that one object draws on another, and the latter must amend and improve the former. Now observe, (1.) How the Divine Providence gratified even Solomon's humour and gave him success, not only in all that he needed to build, and that was for his advantage to build, but in all that he had a mind to build. So indulgent a Father God is sometimes to the innocent desires of his children that serve him. Thus he pleased Jacob with that promise, Joseph shall put his hand on thine eyes. (2.) Solomon knew how to set bounds to his desires. He was none of them that enlarge them endlessly, and can never be satisfied, but knew when to draw in; for he finished all he desired, and then he desired no more; he did not sit down, and fret that he had not more cities to build, as Alexander did, that he had not more worlds to conquer, Heb. 2. 5. 4. That one reason why Solomon built a palace on purpose for the queen, and removed her and her court to it, was, because he thought it by no means proper that she should dwell in the house of David, v. 11. considering that that had been a place of great piety, and perhaps her house was a place of great vanity. She was proselyted, it is likely, to the Jewish religion; but it is a question whether all her servants were. Perhaps, that had among them the idols of Egypt, and a great deal of profaneness and debauchery. Now, though Solomon had not zeal and courage enough to suppress and punish what was amiss there, yet he so far consulted the honour of his father's memory, that he would not suffer that place to be thus profaned, where the ark of God had been, and where holy David had prayed to God, and did many good prayers, and sung many a sweet psalm. Not that all the places where the ark had been were so holy as never to be put to a common use; for then the houses of Abinadab and Obed-edom must have been so. But the place where it had been so long, and had been so publicly attended on, was so venerable, that it was not fit to be the place of so much gaiety, not to say iniquity, as was to be found, I fear, in the court that Pharaoh's daughter kept. Note, Between things sacred and things common, the ancient land-marks ought to be kept up. It was an outer court of the temple, that was the court of the women. 12. Then Solomon offered burnt-offerings unto the Lord on the altar of the Lord, which he had built before the porch, 13. Even after a certain rate every day offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in the year, even in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles. 14. And he appointed, according to the order of David his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges, to praise and minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required; the porters also by their courses at every gate: for so had David the man of God commanded. 15. And they departed not from the commandment of the king unto the priests and Levites, concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures. 16. Now all the work of Solomon was prepared unto the day of the foundation of the house of the Lord, and until it was finished: so the house of the Lord was perfected. 17. Then went Solomon to Ezion-geber, and to Eloth, at the sea side in the land of Edom. 18. And Hiram sent him, by the hands of his servants, ships, and servants that had knowledge of the sea; and they went with the servants of Solomon to Ophi, and took them four hundred and fifty talents of gold, and brought them to king Solomon. Here is, 1. Solomon's devotion. The building of the ten
I. In the service of the temple; whatever cost he was at in rearing the structure, if he had neglected the worship that was to be performed there, it would all have been to no purpose. Assisting the devotion of others will not atone for our own neglects. When Solomon had built the temple.

1. He kept up the holy sacrifices there, according to the law of Moses, v. 12, 13. In vain had the altar been built, and in vain had fire come down from heaven, if sacrifices had not been constantly brought as the food of that altar, and the fuel of that fire. There were daily sacrifices, a certain rate every day, as duly as the day came; weekly sacrifices on the sabbath, double to what was offered on other days; monthly sacrifices, on the new moons; and yearly sacrifices, at the three solemn feasts. They are spiritual sacrifices that are now required of us, which we are to bring daily and weekly; and it is good to be in a settled method of devotion.

2. He kept up the holy songs there, according to the laws of David, who is here called the man of God, as Moses was, because he was both instructed and authorised of God to make these establishments; and Solomon took care to see them observed, as the duty of every day required, v. 14. Solomon, though a wise and great man, and the builder of the temple, did not attempt to amend, alter, or add, anything to the instructions of God in this respect, but what he had been commanded, but closely adhered to that, and used his authority to have that duly observed; and then none departed from the commandment of the king, concerning any matter, v. 15. He observed God's laws, and then all obeyed his orders. When the service of the temple was put into this good order, then it is said, The house of the Lord was perfected, v. 16. The work was the main matter, not the place; the temple was unfinished till all this was done.

3. Solomon's merchandize. He did himself in person visit the sea-port towns of Eloth and Ezion-geber; for they that deal much in the world, will find it their interest, as far as they can, to inspect their affairs themselves, and to see with their own eyes, v. 17. Canaan was a rich country, and yet must send to Ophiir for gold. The Israelites were a people of small capacity; they must be beholden to the king of Tyre for men that had knowledge of the seas, v. 18. and yet Canaan was God's peculiar land, and Israel God's peculiar people: which teaches us that grace, and not gold, is the best riches; and acquaintance with God and his law, not with arts and sciences, the best knowledge.

CHAP. IX. Solomon here continues to appear great, both at home and abroad. We have the account of his merchandize, 1 Kings 10. nothing is here added; but his defection, toward his latter end, which we have there, ch. 11. is here omitted; and the close of this chapter brings him to the grave with an unstained reputation. Perhaps none of the chapters of the Chronicles agree so much with a chapter in the Kings, as this does with 1 Kings 10. verse for verse, only that the two first verses there are put into one here, and v. 25 here is taken from 1 Kings 4. 26, and the three last verses here from 1 Kings 11. 41. 43.

4. Here is, I. The honour which the queen of Sheba did to Solomon, in the visit she made him to hear his wisdom, v. 21. This chapter gives us an account of the splendour of Solomon's court. 13. 58, 59. The conclusion of his reign, v. 29. 31.

5. And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bare spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. 2. And Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not. 3. And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, 4. And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; his cup-bearers also, and their apparel; and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her. 5. And she said to the king, It was a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom; 6. Howbeit, I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and, behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I heard. 7. Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom. 8. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, to be king for the Lord thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice. 9. And she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices great abundance, and precious stones: neither was there any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave king Solomon. 10. And the servants also of Huram, and the servants of Solomon, which brought gold from Ophiir, brought algum-trees and precious stones. 11. And the king made of the algum-trees terraces to the house of the Lord, and to the king's palace, and harps and psalteries for singers: and there were none such seen before in the land of Judah. 12. And king Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which she had brought unto the king; so she turned, and went away to her own land, she and her servants.

This passage of story has been largely considered in the Kings; yet because our Saviour has proposed it as an example to us in our inquiries after him, Matth. 12. 42. we must not pass it over, without observing briefly.

1. Those who honour God, he will honour, 1 Sam. 2. 30. Solomon had greatly honoured God, in building, beautifying, and dedicating, the temple: all his wisdom, and all his wealth, were employed for the making of that a consummate piece; and now God made his wisdom and wealth to redound greatly to his reputation. The way to have both the credit and comfort of all our endowments, and all our enjoyments, is, to consecrate them to God, and use them for him.
II. CHRONICLES, IX.

2. Those who know the worth of true wisdom, wul eradicate no pains or cost to compass it. The queen of Sheba put herself to a great deal of trouble and expense, to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and yet, learning from him to serve God, and do her duty, she thought herself well paid for her pains. Heavenly wisdom is that pearl of great price, for the purchase of which, if we part with all, we make a good bargain.

3. As every man has received the gift, so he ought to minister the same for the edification of others, as he has opportunity. Solomon was communicative of his wisdom, and willing to teach others what he knew himself. Being taught of God, freely he had received, and freely he gave. Let them that are rich in wisdom, as well as wealth, learn to do good, and be ready to distribute. Give to every one that asketh.

4. Good order in a family, a great family, especially in the things of God, and a regular discharge of the duties of religious worship, are highly expedient, and to be much admired wherever found. The queen of Sheba was exceedingly affected to see the propriety with which Solomon's servants attended him, and with which both he and they attended in the house of God. David's ascent to the house of the Lord was also pleasant and interesting. Ps. 42. 4.

5. Those are happy, who have the opportunity of a constant converse with such as are knowing, wise, and good. The queen of Sheba thought Solomon's servants happy, who continually heard his wisdom; for, it seems, even to them he was communicative. And it is observable, that the posterity of those who had places in his court, were willing to have the names of their ancestors forgotten, and thought themselves sufficiently distinguished and dignified, when they were called the children of Solomon's servants, Ezra 2. 55. Neh. 7. 57. so eminent were they, it was honour enough to be named from them.

6. We ought to rejoice, and give God thanks, for the gifts, graces, and usefulness, of others. The queen of Sheba blessed God for the honour he put upon Solomon, and the favour he did to Solomon, in advancing him to the throne, v. 8. By giving God the praise of the prosperity of others, we share in the comfort of it; whereas, by envying the prosperity of others, we lose the comfort even of our own. The happiness both of king and kingdom, she traces up to the fountain of all bliss, the divine favour: it was because thy God delighted in thee, and because he loved Israel. Those mercies are doubly sweet, which we can taste the kindness and good will of God in, as our God.

7. It becomes those that are wise and good, to be generous according to their place and power. The queen of Sheba was so to Solomon. Solomon was so to her, v. 9, 12. They both knew how to value wisdom, and therefore were neither of them covetous of their money, but cultivated the acquaintance, and confirmed the friendship, they had contracted, by mutual presents. Our Lord Jesus has promised to give us all our desire: Ask, and it shall be given you. Let us study what we shall render to him, and not think any thing too much to do, or suffer, or part with, for him.

13. Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and threescore and six talents of gold; 14. Beside that which chapmen and merchants brought. And all the kings of Arabia and governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon. 15. And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold: six hundred shekels of beaten gold went to one target. 16. And three hundred shields made he of beaten gold; three hundred shekels of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon.

17. Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold. 18. And there were six steps to the throne, with a footstool of gold, which were fastened to the throne, and stays on each side of the sitting-place, and two lions standing by the stays: 19. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps. There was not the like made in any kingdom. 20. And all the drinking-vessels of king Solomon were of gold; and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold: none were of silver; it was not any thing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

21. For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. 22. And King Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.

23. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart. 24. And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year. 25. And Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the chariot-cities, and with the king at Jerusalem.

26. And he reigned over all the kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt. 27. And the king made silver in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar-trees he as the sycamore-trees that are in the low plains in abundance. 28. And they brought unto Solomon horses out of Egypt, and out of all lands. 29. Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, are they not written in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer against Jeroboam the son of Nebat? 30. And Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. 31. And Solomon slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

We have here Solomon in his throne, and Solomon in his grave; for the throne would not secure him from the grave. Mori sephra tigonia—Death wrenches from the hand the sceptre, as well as the yoke.

I. Here is Solomon reigning in wealth and power.
in ease and fulness, such as, for aught I know, could never since be paralleled by any king whatsoever. I cannot pretend to be critical in comparing the grandeur of Solomon with that of some of the great princes of the earth; but the most illustrious of the line of kings were esteemed for their wars, whereas Solomon reigned 40 years in profound peace. Some of those that might be thought to vie with Solomon, affected retirement, kept people in awe by keeping them at a distance; nobody must see them, or come near them, upon pain of death. But Solomon went much abroad, and appeared in public business; so that all things considered, the promise was fulfilled, that God would give him riches and wealth, and honour, such as no kings have had, or shall have, ch. 1. 12.

1. No er any prince appeared in public with greater splendor than Solomon did, which to those that judge by the sight of the eye, as most people do, would very much recommend him. He had 200 targets, and 500 shields, all of beaten gold, carried before him, v. 13, 16, and sat upon a most stately throne; there was not the like in any kingdom. The lustre wherein his seat shone, was typical of the spiritual glory of the kingdom of the Messiah, and but a faint representation of his throne, which is above every throne. Solomon's pomp was all artificial; and therefore our Saviour prefers the natural beauty of the lilies of the field before it: Mat. 6. 29, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

2. Never an king had greater plenty of gold and silver, though there were no gold or silver mines in his own kingdom. Either he made himself master of the mines in other countries, and having a populous country, sent hands to dig out those rich metals; or, having a fruitful country, he exported the commodities of it, and with them fetched home all this gold that is here spoken of, v. 13, 14, 21.

3. Nor any prince had such presents brought him by all his neighbours as Solomon had: All the kings of Arabia, and governors of the country, brought him gold and silver, v. 14. Not as tribute which he extorted from them, but as free-will offerings to procure his favours, or in a way of exchange for some of the productions of his husbandry, corn, or cattle. All the kings of the earth brought him presents, that is, all in those parts of the world where they coveted his acquaintance and friendship. Herein he was a type of Christ, to whom, as soon as he was born, the wise men of the east brought presents, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, Matth. 2. 11. and to whom all that are about him, must bring presents, Ps. 76. 11. Rom. 12. 1.

4. Never any prince was so renowned for wisdom, counsel, v. 17—19. There was not, so admired, v. 23, The kings of the earth (for it was with good reason that a farthing was set as a farthing for common persons to pretend to) sought to hear his wisdom. Either his natural philosophy, or his skill in physic, or his state policy, or his rules of prudence for the conduct of human life, or perhaps the principles of his religion, and the reasons of it. The application which they then made to Solomon to hear his wisdom, will aggravate, shame, and condemn, men that are content with Christ, and his wisdom in the gospel. Though in them are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, yet none of the princes of this world desire to know them, for they are foolishness to them, 1 Cor. 2. 8, 14.

II. Here is Solomon dying; stripped of his pomp, and leaving all his wealth and power, not to one concerning whom he knew not whether he would be a wise man or a fool, Excl. 2. 19. but who, he knew, would be a fool. This was not only vanity, but vexation of spirit, v. 29—31.

It is very observable, that no mention is here made of Solomon's departure from God in the latter days, nor the least hint given of it. 1. Because the Holy Ghost would teach us not to take delight in repeating the faults and follies of others. If those that have been in reputation for wisdom and honour, misbelieve, though it may be of use to take notice of their misconduct, for warning to ourselves and others, yet we must not be forward to mention it, once speaking of it is enough; why should that unpleasing string be again struck upon? Why can we not do as the sacred historian here does, speak largely of that in others, which is praise-worthy, without saying any thing of their blemishes, yea, though they have been great and obvious. This is but doing as we would be done by. 2. Because, though he fell, yet he was not utterly cast down. Therefore his sin is not again recorded, because it was repented of, and pardoned, and so became as if it had never been. Scripture-silence sometimes speaks. I am willing to believe that its silence here, concerning the sin of Solomon, is an intimation that none of the sins he committed, were mentioned against him, Exce. 33. 16. When God pardons sin, he casts it behind his back, and remembers it no more.

CHAP. X.

This chapter is copied almost verbatim from 1 Kings 12. 1. 19, where it was opened at large. Solomon's defection from God was not repeated, but the defection of the ten tribes from his family is, in this chapter; where we find, 1. How foolish Rehoboam was, in his treating with them, v. 1, 5—11. II. How wicked the people were, in complaining of Solomon, v. 2, 4. and forsaking Rehoboam, v. 18. 19. III. How just and righteous God was in all this, v. 15. his counsel was thereby fulfilled. With him are wisdom and strength, both the deceived and the deceived (the fool and the knave) are his, Job 12. 16. that is, are made use of by him, to serve his purposes.

1. And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for to Shechem were all Israel came to make him king. 2. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, (who was in Egypt, whither he had fled from the presence of Solomon the king,) heard it, that Jeroboam returned out of Egypt. 3. And they sent and called him. So Jeroboam and all Israel came, and spake to Rehoboam, saying, 4. Thy father made our yoke grievous; now, therefore, ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee. 5. And he said unto them, Come again unto me after three days. And the people departed.

6. And king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye me, to return answer to this people? 7. And they spake unto him, saying, If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever. 8. But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him. 9. And he said unto them, What advice give ye, that we may
return answer to this people, which have spoken to me, saying, Ease somewhat the yoke that thy father did put upon us? 10. And the young men that were brought up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou answer the people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it somewhat lighter for us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. 11. For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

We may observe here,

1. The wisest and best cannot give every body content. Solomon enriched and advanced his kingdom, did all (one would think) that could be done to make them happy and easy; and yet either he was indiscreet in burdening them with the imposition of taxes and services, or, at least, there was some colour of reason to think so. No man is perfectly wise. It is probable that it was when Solomon had declareed from God and his duty, that his wisdom and God's help had enabled him to act thus improperly. Even Solomon's treasures were exhausted by his love of women; and, probably, it was to maintain them, and their pride, luxury, and idolatry, that he squeezed his subjects.

2. Turbulent and ungrateful spirits will find fault with the government, and complain of grievances, when they have very little reason to do so. Had they not peace, in Solomon's time? Never plundered by invaders, as formerly, never put to fear by the alarms of war, nor obliged to jeopard their lives in the high places of the field. Had they not plenty? Meat enough, and money enough? What would they more? O fortunate nimmium, sua si bona norbit!—O happy, if they knew their happy state! And yet they complain that Solomon made their yoke heavy, and not displeased with the yoke of Christ, that they may have a pretexts to break his bands in swendor, and cast away his cords from them, we are sure that he never gave them any cause at all for the complaint, whatever Solomon did. His yoke was easy, and his burthen light. He never made us serve with an offering, nor wearied us with incense.

3. Many ruin themselves, and their interests, by trampling and provoking their inferiors. Rehoboam thought that because he was king, he might rule it as his father had done, have what he would, and do what he would, and carry all before him. But though he wore his father's crown, he wanted his father's head-piece, and ought to have considered, that, being quite a different man from what his father was, he ought to take other measures: such a wise man as Solomon, may do as he will, but such a fool as Rehoboam, must do as he can. The high-metted horse may be kicked and spurred by him that has the art of managing him; but if an unskilful horseman do it, it is at his peril. Rehoboam paid dear for his threatening, and talking big, and thinking to carry it with a high hand. It was Job's wisdom, as well as his virtue, that he disguised not the cause of his men-servant or maid-servant, when they argued with him, Job 31. 13. but heard them patiently, considered their reasons, and gave them a soft answer. And the like tender consideration of those in subjection, and a forwardness to make them easy, will be the comfort and praise of all in authority, in the church, in the state, and in families.

4. Moderate counsels are generally wisest and best. Gentleness will do what violence will not do. Most people love to be accosted mildly. Rehoboam's old experienced counsellors directed him to this method, v. 7, Be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, and thou art sure of them for ever. Good words cost nothing but a little self-denial, and yet they purchase great things.

5. God often fulfills the counsels of his own wisdom, by infatuating men, and giving them up to the counsels of their own folly. No more needs be done to ruin men, than to leave them to themselves, and their own pride and passion.

12. So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come again to me on the third day. 13. And the king answered them roughly: and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men, 14. And answered them after the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. 15. So the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was of God, that the Lord might perform his word, which he spake by the hand of Abijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

16. And when all Israel saw that the king would not hearken unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? and we have none inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to your tents, O Israel: and now, David, see to thine own house. So all Israel went to their tents. 17. But as for the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. 18. Then king Rehoboam sent Hadoram, that was over the tribute; and the children of Israel stoned him with stones that he died: but king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

And Israel rebellion against the house of David unto this day.

We may learn here,

1. That when public affairs are in a ferment, violent proceedings do but make bad worse. Rough answers (such as Rehoboam here gave) do but stir up anger, and bring oil to the flames. The pilot has need to steer steady in a storm. Many have been driven to the mischief they did not intend, by being too severely dealt with, for what they did intend.

2. That whatever the devices and designs of men are, God is, by all, doing his own work, and fulfilling the word which he has spoken, neither a little or tittle of which shall fall to the ground. The cause of the king's obstinacy and want of thought was of God, that he might perform the word which he spake by Abijah, v. 15. This does not at all excuse Rehoboam's folly, nor lessen the guilt of his haughtiness.
and passion, that God was pleased to serve his own ends by it.

5. That worldly wealth, honour, and dominion, are very uncertain things. Solomon reigned over all Israel, and, one would think, had done enough to oblige all to serve him for many ages; and yet he is scarcely cold in his grave, before 10 of the 12 tribes finally revolt from his son. All the good services he had done for Israel, are now forgotten. What portion have we in David?

Thus is the government of Christ cast off by many, notwithstanding all he has done to oblige the children of men for ever to himself; they say, We will not have this man to reign over us. But this rebellion will certainly be his ruin.

4. That God often visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. Solomon forsakes God, and therefore not he, but his son after him, is forsaken by the greatest part of his people. Thus God, by making the penal consequence of sin to last long, and visibly to continue after the sinner's death, would give an indication of its malignity, and perhaps some intimation of the perpetuity of its punishment. He that sins against God, not only wrongs his soul, but perhaps wrongs his seed more than he thinks of.

5. That when God is fulfilling his threatenings, he will take care that, at the same time, promises do not fail to the ground. When Solomon's iniquity is remembered, and for it he loses ten tribes, David's piety is not forgotten, nor the promise made to him; but for the sake of that, his grandson had two tribes preserved to him. The failings of the saints shall not frustrate any promise made to Christ their Head. They shall be chastised, but the covenant not broken, Ps. 89. 31.-34.

CHAP. XI.

We are here going on with the history of Rehoboam, I. His attempt to recover the ten tribes he had lost, and the letting fall of that attempt, in obedience to the divine command, v. 1.-4. II. His successful endeavours to preserve the two tribes that remained, v. 5.-12. III. The resort of the priests and Levites to him, v. 13.-17. IV. An account of his wives and children, v. 18.-22.

1. AND when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he gathered of the house of Judah and Benjamin a hundred and four-score thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against Israel, that he might bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam.

2. But the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 3. Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, 4. Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up nor fight against your brethren: return every man to his house; for this thing is done of me. And they obeyed the words of the Lord, and returned from going against Jeroboam.

5. And Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defence in Judah. 6. He built even Beth-lehem, and Etam, and Tekoa, 7. And Beth-zur, and Shoco, and Adullam, 8. And Gath, and Mareshah, and Ziph, 9. And Adoraim, and Lachish, and Azekah, 10. And Zorah, and Ajalon, and Hebron, which are in Judah and in Benjamin, fenced cities. 11. And he fortified the strong holds and put captains in them, and store of victual, and of oil and wine. 12. And in every several city he put shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side.

How the ten tribes deserted the house of David, we read in the foregoing chapter. They had formerly sat loose to that family, 2 Sam. 20. 1, 2, and now they quite threw it off; not considering how much it would weaken the common interest, and take Israel down from that pitch of glory at which it had arrived in the last reign. But thus the kingdom must be corrected as well as the house of David.

1. Rehoboam, at length, like a bold man, raised an army, with a design to reduce the revolters, v. 1. Judah and Benjamin were not only resolved to continue their allegiance to him, but ready to give him the best assistance they could, for the recovery of his right. Judah was his own tribe, that owned him some years before the rest did; Benjamin was the tribe in which Jerusalem, or the greatest part of it stood; which perhaps was one reason why that tribe clave to him.

2. Yet like a conscientious man, when God forbade him to prosecute this design, in obedience to him, he let it fall; either because he reverenced the divine authority, or because he knew that he should not prosper if he should go contrary to God's command; but instead of retrieving what was lost, would be in danger of losing what he had. It is dangerous undertaking any thing, but especially undertaking a war, contrary to the will of God. God calls him, v. 3, Rehoboam the son of Solomon, to intimate that this was determined for the sin of Solomon, and it would be to no purpose to oppose a decree that was gone forth. They obeyed the words of the Lord; and though it looked mean, and would turn to their reproach among their neighbours; yet because God would have it so, they laid down their arms.

3. Like a discreet man, he fortified his own country. He saw it was to no purpose to think of reducing those that were revolted. A few good words might have prevented their defection, but now all the force of his kingdom cannot bring them back; the thing is done, and so it must rest; it is his wisdom to make the best of it. Perhaps the same young counsellors that had advised him to answer them roughly, urged him to fight them, notwithstanding the divine inhibitions; but he had paid dear enough for being advised by them, and therefore now, we may suppose, his aged and experienced counsellors and hearers to have suggested him not only to submit to the will of God concerning what was lost, but to make it his business to keep what he had. It was, probably, by their advice that, (1.) He fortified his frontiers, and many of the principal cities of his kingdom, which, in Solomon's peaceable reign, no care had been taken for the defence of. (2.) He furnished them with good store of victuals and arms, v. 11, 12. Because God forbade him to fight, he did not only fortify them, but made them strong, and say that he would do nothing for the public safety, if he might not do that, but prudently provided against an attack. They that may not be conquerors, yet may be builders.

13. And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts. 14. (For the Levites left their suburbs, and their possession, and came to
Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the Lord: 15. And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made.) 16. And after them, out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the Lord God of their fathers. 17. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years: for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon. 18. And Rehoboam took lilim Mahalath the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David to wife, and Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse; 19. Which bare him children; Jeush, and Shamariah, and Zaham. 20. And after her he took Maachah the daughter of Absalom, which bare him Abijah, and Attai, and Ziza, and Shelomith. 21. And Rehoboam loved Maachah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines: (for he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines; and begat twenty and eight sons, and threescore daughters;) 22. And Rehoboam made Abijah the son of Maachah the chief, to be ruler among his brethren: for he thought to make him king. 23. And he dealt wisely, and dispersed of all his children throughout all the countries of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city; and he gave them victual in abundance. And he desired many wives.

See here,

1. How Rehoboam was strengthened by the accession of the priests and Levites, and all the devout and pious Israelites, to him; even all that were true to their God, and their religion.

2. Jeroboam cast them off; that is, he set up such a way of worship as he knew they could not, in conscience, comply with, which obliged them to withdraw from his altar, and at the same time he would not allow them to go up to Jerusalem, to worship at the altar there; so that he totally cast them off from executing the priest's office, v. 14. And very willing he was that they should turn themselves out of their places, that room might be made for those mean and scandalous persons whom he ordained priests for the high places, v. 15. Compare 1 Kings 12. 31. No marvel if he cast off God, cast off his ministers; they were not for his purpose, would not do whatever he bid them do, would not serve his gods, nor worship the golden image which he had set up.

3. They, thereupon, left their suburbs and possessions, v. 14. Out of the lot of each tribe, the Levites had cities allowed them, where they were comfortably provided for, and had opportunity of doing much good. But now they were driven out of all their cities, except those in Judah and Benjamin. One would think their maintenance well set-tled, and yet they lost it. It was a comfort to them, that the law so often reminded them that the Lord was their inheritance, and therefore that they should find him, when they were turned out of their house and possessions. But why did they leave their possession? (1.) Because they saw they could do no good among their neighbours, in whom, (now that Jeroboam set up his calves,) the old proneness to idolatry revived. (2.) Because they themselves would be in a continual temptation, to some base compliances, and in danger of being drawn insensibly to that. If this was evil, not to be led into temptation, we shall get and keep as far as we can out of the way of it. (3.) Because if they retained their integrity, they had reason to expect persecution from Jeroboam and his sons. The priests they made for the devils, would not let the Lord's priests be long among them. No secular advantages whatsoever should draw us thither, or detain us there, where we are in danger of making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

4. When the priests and Levites came to Jerusalem, all the devout pious Israelites of every tribe followed them. Such as set their heart, to seek the Lord God of Israel, that made conscience of their duty to God, and were sincere and resolute in it, they left the inheritance of their fathers, and went and took houses in Jerusalem, that they might have free access to the altar of God, and be out of the temptation to worship the calves, v. 16. Note, (1.) That is best for us, which is best for our souls; and in all our choices, advantages for religion must take place of all outward conveniences. (2.) Where God's faithful priests and his faithful people should be. If Jeroboam cast off God's ministers, every true-born Israelite will think himself obliged to own them, and stand by them. For sake not the Levite, the outcast Levite, as long as thou livest. When the ark removes, remove ye, and go after it, Josh. 3. 3.

5. They strengthened the kingdom of Judah; 17. not only by the addition of so many persons to it, but, in addition to that, by engaging their interest in the effects of their faith, and in their prayers they procured a blessing upon the kingdom, which was a sanctuary to them. See Zech. 12. 5. It is the interest of a nation to protect and encourage religion and religious people, and adds more that...
any thing to its strength. They made him and his people strong, three years: for so long they walked in the way of David and Solomon, their good way; but when they forsook that, and so threw themselves out of God's favour and protection, the best friends they had, could no longer help to strengthen them. We cleave while we cleave to God and our duty, and no longer.

II. How Rehoboam was weakened by indulging himself in his pleasures. He desired many wives, as his father did, v. 23, yet, 1. In this, he was more wise than his father, that he does not appear to have married strange wives. The wives mentioned here were not only daughters of Israel, but of the family of David; one was a descendant from Eliab, David's son, and another from Absalom, probably David's son, v. 20, another from Jerimoth, David's son. 2. In this, he was more happy than his father, that he had many sons and daughters; whereas we read not of more than one son that his father had. One can scarcely imagine that he had no more; but if he had, they were not worth mentioning; whereas several of Rehoboam's sons are here named, v. 19, 20. as men of note, and such active men, that he thought it his wisdom to disperse them throughout the countries of Judah and Benjamin, v. 23, either, (1.) That they might not be rivals with his son Abijah, whom he designed for his successor; or, rather, (2.) Because he could repose a confidence in them, for the preserving of the public peace and safety, could trust them with fenced cities, which he took care to have well-ventilated, that they might stand him in stead, in case of invasion. The like that acted foolishly at first, dealt wisely afterward. After-wisdom is better than none at all; nay, they say, "Wit is never good till it is bought;" though his was dear bought with the loss of a kingdom.

CHAP. XII.

This chapter gives us a more full account of the reign of Rehoboam than we had before in Kings, and it is a very melancholy account. Methinks we are in the book of Judges again; for, 1. Rehoboam and his people did evil in the sight of the Lord, v. 1. 2. God, therefore, sold them into the hands of Shishak king of Egypt, who greatly oppressed them, v. 2, 3. 3. God sent a prophet to them to expose to them the judgment, and to call them to repentance, v. 5. 4. They, therefore, humbled themselves, revolved over their religion, burnt incense to their own gods, and to the heathen, but sought to his anger, v. 7, 12, and yet left them under the marks of his displeasure, v. 8, 11. Lastly, Here is a general character of Rehoboam and his reign, and the conclusion of it, v. 13 to 16.

1. And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him. 2. And it came to pass, that, in the fifth year of Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the Lord. 3. With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubins, the Sukkiins, and the Ethiopians. 4. And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem. 5. Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the Lord, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak. 6. Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, the Lord is righteous. 7. And when the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves, therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. 8. Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. 9. So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house; he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made. 10. Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house. 11. And when the king entered into the house of the Lord, the guard came and fetched them, and brought them again into the guard-chamber. 12. And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the Lord turned from him, that he would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah things went well.

Israel was very much disgraced and weakened by being divided into two kingdoms; yet the kingdom of Judah, having both the temple and the royal city, both the house of David and the house of Aaron, might have done very well if they had continued in the way of their duty; but here we have all out of order there.

1. Rehoboam and his people left God. He forsook the law of the Lord, and so, in effect, forsook God, and all Israel with him, v. 1. He had his happy triennium, when he walked in the way of David and Solomon, ch. 11. but it expired, and he grew remiss in the worship of God; in what instances, we are not told, but he fell off, and Judah with him, here called Israel, because they walked in the evil ways which Jeroboam had drawn the kingdom of Israel into. This he did, when he had established the kingdom, and strengthened himself. As long as he thought his throne tottered, he kept to his duty; but when he might make God his friend; but when he found it stood firm, he thought he had no more occasion for religion; he was safe enough without it. Thus the prosperity of fools destroys them. Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked. When men prosper, and are in no apprehension of troubles, they are ready to say to God, Depart from us. 2. God quickly brought troubles upon them, to awaken them, and recover them to repentance, because their hearts were hardened. It was but in the 4th year of Rehoboam, that they began to corrupt themselves, and in the 5th year, the king of Egypt came up against them with a vast army, took the fenced cities of Judah, and came against Jerusalem, v. 2, 3, 4. This great calamity came upon them so soon after they began to desert the worship of God, by a hand they had little reason to suspect, (having
had a great deal of friendly correspondence with Egypt in the last reign, and came with so much violence, (all the fenced cities of Judah, which Rehoboam had lately fortified and garrisoned, and on which he relied much for the safety of his kingdom, flying rapidly into the hands of the enemy, without making any resistance,) that the whole was, obviously, of the Lord, because they had transgressed against him.

III. Lest they should not readily, or not rightly, understand the meaning of this providence, God, by the word, explains the scourge, v. 5. When the princes of Judah were all met at Jerusalem, probably in a council to take concert measures for their own safety in this critical juncture, he sent a prophet to them, the same that had brought them an injunction from God not to fight against the ten tribes, (ch. 11. 2.) Shemaiah by name; he told them plainly that the reason why Shishak prevailed against them was, not because they had been impotent in the management of their affairs, (which perhaps the princes in this congress were, at this time, scrutinizing,) but because they had forsaken God. God never leaves any, till they first leave him.

IV. The rebukes both of the word and of the rod being thus joined, the king and princes humbled themselves before God for their iniquity, penitently acknowledged the sin, and patiently accepted the punishment of it, saying The Lord is righteous, v. 6. We have none to blame but ourselves; let God be cleansed of sin and the Lord purified, when we are under the rebukes of Providence, to justify God, and judge ourselves; even kings and princes must either bend, or break, before God; either be humbled or be ruined.

V. Upon the profession they made of repentance, God showed them some favour, saved them from ruin, and yet left them under some remaining fears of the judgment, to prevent their revolt again.

1. God, in mercy, prevented the destruction they were now upon the brink of. Such a vast, and now victorious army, as Shishak had, having made themselves masters of all the fenced cities, what other could be expected, than that the whole country, and even Jerusalem itself, would, in a little time, be their's? But when God saith, Here shall the proud waves be stayed; the most threatening force shall be quenched, and become impotent. Here, again, the destruction, which he had suffered in Jerusalem, is forbidden to destroy that: My wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem; nor at this time, not by this hand, not utterly to destroy it, v. 7. 12. Note, Those that acknowledge God righteous in afflicting them, shall find him gracious. They that humble themselves before him, shall find favour with him. So ready is the God of mercy to like the first occasion to show mercy. If we have humbled hearts under humbling providences, the affliction has done its work, and it shall either be removed, or the property of it altered.

2. He granted them some deliverance, not complete, but in part; he gave them some advantages against the enemy, so that they recruited a little; he gave them deliverance for a little while, so some. They made a sort of war, and for a little while, soon relapsing again; and as their reformation was, so was their deliverance. Yet it is said, v. 12, in Judah things went well, and began to look with a better face. (1.) In respect of piety; there were good things in Judah, so it is in the margin; good ministers, good people, good families, who were made better by the calamities of their country. Note, Fortunes of judgment and degeneracy, it is some comfort if there be a remnant among good things are found; this is a ground of hope in Israel. (2.) In respect of prosperity. In Judah things went ill, when all the fenced cities were taken, v. 4, but when they repented, the posture of their affairs altered, and things went well. Note, If things do not go so well as we could wish, yet we have reason to take notice of it with thankfulness, if they be better than was to have been expected, better than formerly, and better than we deserved; and we should own God's goodness, if he do but grant us some deliverance.

3. Yet he left them to smart sorely by the hand of Shishak, both in their liberty and their wealth.

(1.) In their liberty; v. 8. They shall be his servants, that is, they shall be much at his mercy, and be put under contributions by him, and some of them, perhaps, be taken prisoners, and held in captivity by him, that they may know his service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. They complained, it may be, of the strictness of their religion, and therefore forsook the law of the Lord, v. 1. because they thought it a yoke too hard, too heavy, upon them. "Well," said God, "let them mend their service if they can; let the neighbouring princes rule them a while, since they are not willing that I should rule them, and let them try how they like that; they might have served God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, and would not; let them serve their enemies then in hunger and thirst, Deut. 28. 47, 48, till they think of returning to their first master, for then it was better with them," Hos. 2. 7. This, some think, is the meaning of that, Ezek. 20. 24, 25, Because they defiled my statutes, and gave them statutes that were not good. Note, [1.] The more God's service is compared with other services, the more reasonable and easy it will appear. [2.] Whatever difficulties or hardships we may imagine there are in the way of obedience, it is better, a thousand times, to go through them, than to expose ourselves to the punishment of disobedience. Are the laws of temperance thought hard? The effects of intemperance will be much harder. The service of virtue is perfect liberty; the service of lust is perfect slavery.

(2.) In their wealth. The king of Egypt plundered both the temple and the exchequer, the treasuries of both which, Solomon left very full; but he took them away; yea he took all, he could lay his hands on, v. 9. This was what he came for. David and Solomon, who walked in the way of God, filled the treasuries, one by war, and the other by merchandize; and the heathen kings of Egypt, emptied them. The taking away of the golden shields, and the substituting of brazen ones in their place, v. 9-11. we had an account of before, 1 Kings 14. 25. 28.

13. So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam was one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess. 14. And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord. 15. Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer, concerning genealogies? And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. 16. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.
The story of Rehoboam's reign is here concluded; much as the story of the other reign concludes. Two things especially are observable here,

1. That he was, at length, well fixed in his kingdom, v. 13. His fenced cities in Judah did not answer his expectation, so he now strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and made it his business to fortify that; and there he settled 17 years in the city which the Lord had chosen to set his name there. This intimates his honour and privilege, that he had his royal seat in the holy city, which yet was but an aggravation of his impiety; near the temple, but far from God. Frequent skirmishes there were between his subjects and Jeroboam's, such as amounted to continual war, v. 15. but he held his own, and maintained the ground, as it should seem, did not so grossly forsake the law of God as he had done, v. 1 in his 4th year.

2. That he was never rightly fixed in his religion, v. 14. he never quite cast off God; and yet, in this, he did evil, that he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord. See what the fault is laid upon. (1.) He did not serve the Lord, because he did not seek the Lord. He did not pray, as Solomon did, for wisdom and grace. If we prayed better, we should be every way better. Or, he did not consult the word of God, did not seek to that as his oracle, nor take directions from that. (2.) He made nothing of his religion, because he did not set his heart to it; never minded it with any closeness of application, had never any heartly disposition to it, nor ever came up to a steady resolution in it. What little goodness he had, passed away like the morning cloud. And therefore he did evil, because he was never determined for that which is good. Those are easily drawn by Satan to an evil, who are wavering and inconstant in that which is good, and are never persuaded to make religion their business.

CHAP. XIII.

We have here a much fuller account of the reign of Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, than we had in the Kings. There we found that his character was no better than his father's; he walked in the way of his father, and his heart was not right with God, 1 Kings 15. 2, 3. But here we find him more brave and successful in war, than his father was. He reigned but three years, and was chiefly famous for a glorious victory he obtained over the forces of Jeroboam. Here is, 1. The armies brought into the field on both sides, v. 3. The remonstrance which Abijah made before the battle, setting forth the justice of his cause, v. 4. 12. III. The distress which Judah was brought into by the policy of Jeroboam, v. 13, 14, 15. The victory they obtained, notwithstanding, by the power of God, v. 15, 16, 19, 20. The conclusion of Abijah's reign, v. 21, 22.

Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah. 2. He reigned three years in Jerusalem: (his mother's name also was Michaiah, the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah:) and there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. 3. And Abijah set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men: Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, being mighty men of valour. 4. And Abijah stood up upon mount Zemaraim, which is in mount Ephraim, and said, Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel. 5. Ought you not to know, that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt? 6. Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon, the son of David, is risen up, and hath rebelled against his lord. 7. And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tender-hearted, and could not withstand them. 8. And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord in the hand of the sons of David; and ye be a great multitude, and there are with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods. 9. Have ye not cast out the priests of the Lord, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of other lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, the same may be a priest of them that are no gods. 10. But as for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests which minister unto the Lord, are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business: 11. And they burn unto the Lord, every morning and every evening, burnt-sacrifices and sweet incense: the show-bread also set they in order upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the Lord our God; but ye have forsaken him. 12. And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarum against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the Lord God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper.

Abijah's mother was called Maachah, the daughter of Absalom, ch. 11. 20; here she is called Michal, the daughter of Uriel. It is most probable that she was a grand-daughter of Absalom, by his daughter Tamar, 2 Sam. 14. 27. and that her immediate father was this Uriel. But we are here to attend Abijah into the field of battle, with Jeroboam king of Israel. 1. God gave him leave to engage with Jeroboam, and owned him in it, though he would not permit Rehoboam to do it, ch. 11. 4. 1. Jeroboam, it is probable, was now the aggressor, and what Abijah did, was in his own necessary defence. Jeroboam, it may be, happening to survive Rehoboam, claimed the crown of Judah by succession, at least, hoped to get it from this young king, upon his accession to the throne. Against these imprudent pretensions, it was brave in Abijah to take up arms, and God stood by him. 2. When Rehoboam attempted to recover his 10 tribes, Jeroboam was upon his good behaviour, and there must be some trial of him; but now that he had discovered what manner of man he was, by setting up the calves, and casting off the priests, Abijah is allowed to chastise him; and it does not appear that he intended any more; whereas
Rehoboam aimed at no less than the utter reduction of the 10 tribes, which was contrary to the counsel of God.

II. Jeroboam's army was double in number to that of Abijah, v. 3. for he had ten tribes to raise an army out of, Abijah had but two. Yet the interior number proves victorious; for the battle is not always to the strong, nor the cause to the majority.

III. Abijah before he fought them, reasoned with them, to persuade them, though not for them to return to the house of David, (that matter was settled by the divine determination, and he acquiesced,) yet to desist from fighting against the house of David. He would not have them withstand the kingdom of the Lord in the hands of the sons of David, v. 8. but at least to be content with what they had. Note, It is good to try reason before we use force. If the point may be gained by dint of argument, better so than by dint of sword. We must never fly to violent methods, till all the arts of persuasion have been tried in vain. War, that ultima ratio regum—that last resort of kings, should be preceded by every expedient calculated to prevent it. Fair reasoning may do a great deal of good, and prevent a great deal of mischief: How forcible are right words! Abijah was got with his army into the heart of their country; but when he was upon the mount Ephraim, where he might be heard by Jeroboam, and the principal officers, with whom, it is probable, he desired to have a treaty, which they consented to. It has been usual for great generals to make speeches to their own soldiers, to animate them; this speech of Abijah had that tendency, but was directed to Jeroboam and all Israel.

Two things Abijah undertakes to make out for the satisfaction of his own men, and the conviction of the enemy.

1. That he had right on his side, a jus divinum—a divine right: You know, or ought to know, that God gave the kingdom to David and his sons for ever, v. 5. not by common providence, his usual way of disposing of kingdoms, but by a covenant of salt, a lasting covenant, a covenant made by sacrifice, which was always salted; so Bishop Patrick. All Israel had owned that David was a king of God's making, and that God had enthroned the crown upon his family; so that Jeroboam's taking the crown of Israel, at first, was not justifiable; yet it is not certain that he refers chiefly to that, for he knew that Jeroboam had a grant from God of the 10 tribes; his attempt, however, now to disturb the peace and possession of the whole kingdom, was a matter for no just excuse; for when the 10 tribes were given him, two were reserved for the house of David. He shows, (1.) That there was a great deal of dishonesty and disingenuity in his first setting up of himself. He rebelled against his lord, who had preferred him, 1 Kings 11. 28. and basely took advantage of Rehoboam's weakness in a critical juncture, when, in gratitude to his old master, and in justice to his father, he would have lived by the truth, and helped to secure the people in their allegiance to him, than to head a party against him, and make a prey of him; which was unworthy done, and what he could not expect to prosper in. They that supported him are here called vain men, (a character perhaps borrowed from Judg. 11. 3.) men that did not act from any steady principle, but were given to change, they that had been shan'd off the yoke of government, and setting those over them, that would do just as they would have them to do. (2.) That there was a great deal of impolicy in his present attempt; for, in fighting against the house of David, he fought against the kingdom of the Lord. They who oppose right, oppose the righteous God who sits in the throne judging right, and cannot promise themselves success in so doing.

Right may indeed go by the worst, for a time; but it will prevail, at last.

2. That he had God on his side. This he insists much upon, that the religion of Jeroboam and his army was false and idolatrous; but for his part, he, and his people, the men of Judah, had the pure worship of the true and living God among them. It appears from the character given of Abijah, 1 Kings 15. 3. this man was not himself truly religious, and yet here he encouraged himself in this war, chiefly from the religion of his kingdom. For, (1.) Whatever he was otherwise, it should seem that he was no idolater, or if he connived at the high places and images, ch. 14. 3. 5. yet he constantly kept up the temple-service. (2.) Whatever corruptions there were in the kingdom of Judah, the state of religion among them was better than in the kingdom of Israel, with which they were now contending. (3.) It is common for those that deny the power of godliness, to boast of the form of it. (4.) It was the cause of his kingdom that he was pleading; and though he was not himself so good as he should be, yet he hoped that, for the sake of the good men and good things that were in Judah, God would now appear for them. Many that have little religion themselves, yet have some religion in existence as to value it in others. See how he describes.

[1.] The apostasy of Israel from God. "You are a great multitude," said he, "far superior to us in number; but we need not fear you, for you have that among yourselves, that is enough to ruin you. For," First, "You have calves for your gods, v. 8. that are unable to protect and help you, and will certainly cause the true and living God to oppose you. These shall be your God, troubles of your camp." Secondly, "You have base men for your priests, v. 9. You have cast off the tribe of Levi, and the house of Aaron, whom God appointed to minster in holy things; and in conformity to the custom of the idolatrous nations, make any man a priest, that has a mind to the office, and will be at the charge of the consecration, though never so much a scandal to the office." Yet such, though very unfit to be priests, were fittest of all to be their priests; for what more agreeable to gods that were no gods than priests that were no priests? Like to like, both pretenders and usurpers.

[2.] The adherence of Judah to God. "But as for us, (v. 10.) we have not forsaken God. Jehovah is our God, the God of our fathers, the God of Israel, who is able to protect us, and give us success. He has chosen you, and given you." First, "At home in his temple; we keep his charge, v. 10. 11. We worship no images, have no priests but what he has ordained, no rites of worship but what he has prescribed: both the temple-service and the temple-furniture are of his appointing; his appointment we abide by, and neither add nor diminish. These we have the comfort of; these we now stand in the day of battle, so that we have reason to say, as in a civil account, we have the better cause. Secondly, Here in the camp, he is our Captain, and we may therefore be sure that he is with us, because we are with him, v. 12. And as a token of his presence, we have here with us his priests, sounding his trumpets according to the law, as a testimony against you, and an assurance to us, that in the day of battle we shall be in our right, and have no need to fear God, and saved from our enemies," for so this sacred signal is explained, Numb. 10. 9. Nothing is more effectual to impose men, and put spirit in them, than to be sure that God is with them, and fights for them. He concludes with fair warning to his enemies. "Fight not against the God of your fathers; it is folly to fight against the God of almighty power; but it is treachery and base ingratitude, to fight against your fathers' God, and you cannot expect to prosper."
13. But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them: so they were before Judah, and the ambushment was behind them. 14. And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle was before and behind: and they cried unto the Lord, and the priests sounded with the trumpets. 15. Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel with a great slaughter.

16. And the children of Israel fled before Abijah: and God delivered them into his hand. 17. And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men. 18. Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers. 19. And Abijah pursued after Jeroboam, and took cities from him; Beth-el with the towns thereof, and Jeshanah with the towns thereof, and Ephraim with the towns thereof. 20. Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah; and the Lord struck him, and he died. 21. But Abijah waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, and begat twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters. 22. And the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways, and his sayings, are written in the book of the prophet Iddo.

We do not find that Jeroboam offered to make any answer at all to Abijah's speech; though it was such a sore occasion, he resolved not to heed it, and therefore heard it as though he heard it not: he came to fight, not to dispute; the longest sword, he thinks, will determine the matter, not the better cause: let us therefore see the issue, whether right and religion carry the day or no.

1. Jeroboam, who trusted on his politics, was beaten. He was so far from reasoning, that he was not for fair fighting; we may suppose that he felt a sovereign contempt for Abijah's harangue. "One stratagem," thinks he, "is worth twenty such speeches, we will soon give him an answer to all his arguments, he shall soon find himself overpowered with numbers, surrounded on every side with the instruments of death, and then let him boast of his religion and his title to the crown." A little, it is probable, was agreed on, yet Jeroboam hardly took the advantage of it, and while he was treating, laid his ambushment behind them, against all the laws of arms. What honour could be expected in a servant when he reigned? Abijah was for peace, but when he shake, they were for war, Ps. 120. 7.

II. Abijah and his people, who trusted in their God, came as conquerors, notwithstanding the disaster of their strength and numbers.

1. They were brought into a great strait, put into a great fright, for the battle was before and behind. A good cause, and, one which is designed to be victorious may, for a season, be involved in embarrassment and distress. It was David's case. They confessed me about like bees, Ps. 118. 10-12.

2. In their distress, when danger was on every side, which way should they look but upward for deliverance? It is an unspeakable comfort, that no enemy, (not the most powerful or politic,) no stratagem or ambushment, can cut off our communication with heaven; our way thitherward is always open. (1.) They cried unto the Lord, v. 14. We hope they did this, before they engaged in this war, but the distress they were in made them renew their prayers, and quickened them to be importunate. God hides his people in the strait, that he may teach them to cry unto him. Earnest praying is crying. (2.) They relied on the God of their fathers, depended upon his power to help them, and committed themselves to him, v. 18. The prayer of faith is the prevailing prayer, and this is that by which we overcome the world, even our faith, 1 John 5. 4. (3.) The priests sounded the trumpets, animating them by giving them an assurance of God's presence with them. It was not only a noise, but a sacred sound, and put life into their faith. (4.) They shouted in confidence of victory, "The day is our own, for God is with us." To the cry of prayer they added the shout of faith, and so became more than conquerors.

3. Thus they obtained a complete victory. As the men of Judah shouted for joy in God's salvation, God smote Jeroboam and all Israel with a great slaughter, and amazement, that they could not strike a stroke, but fled with the greatest precipitation imaginable, and the conquerors gave no quarter, so that they put to the sword 500,000 chosen men, v. 17. more, it is said, than ever we read of in any history to have been killed in one battle; but the battle was the Lord's, who would thus chastise the idolatry of Israel, and own the house of David. But see the effect of moral victory: it was the blood of Israelites that was thus shed like water by Israelites, while the heathen, their neighbours, to whom the name of Israel had formerly been a terror, cried "Aha, so would we have it!"

4. The consequence of this, was that the children of Israel, though they were not brought back to the house of David, (which by so great a blow surely they would have been, had not the determinate counsel of God been otherwise,) yet, for that time, were brought under, v. 18. Many cities were taken, and remained in the possession of the kings of Judah; as Beth-el particularly, v. 19. What became of the golden calf there, when it came into the hands of the king of Judah, we are not told; perhaps it was removed to some place of greater safety, and, at length, to Samaria, Hos. 8. 5. yet in Judah's time, when it and Bethel were restored. Perhaps Abijah, when it was in his power to demolish it, suffered it to stand, for his heart was not perfect with God; and not improving what he had got for the honour of God, he soon lost it all again. Lastly, The death both of the conqueror and of the conqueror, not long after.

1. Jeroboam never looked up after this defeat, though he survived it, 2 or 3 years. He could not recover any credit or any life, v. 20. The Lord struck him either with some bodily disease, of which he languished; or with melancholy and trouble of mind, his heart was broken, and vexation at his losses brought his head, probably, by this time, a hoary head, with a sorrow to the grave. He escaped the sword of Abijah, but God struck him: there is no escaping his sword.

Abijah waxed mighty upon it. What number of wives and children he had before, does not appear; but now he multiplied his wives to 14 in all, by whom he had 38 children, v. 21. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of these arrows. It seems, he had ways peculiar to himself, and sayings of his own, which were recorded with his acts in the history of those times, v. 22. But the number of his months was cut off in the midst, and, soon after
his triumphs, death conquered the conqueror. Perhaps he was too much lifted up with his victories, and therefore God would not let him live long to enjoy the honour of them.

CHAP. XIV.

In this and the two following chapters, we have the history of the reign of Asa; a good reign, and a long one. In this chapter, we have, I. His piety, v. 1-5. II. His policy, v. 6-8. III. His prosperity, and particularly a glorious victory he obtained over a great army of Ethiopians that came out against him, v. 9-15.

1. SO Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David; and Asa his son reigned in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years. 2. And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God: 3. For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves; 4. And commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. 5. Also he took away, out of all the cities of Judah, the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him. 6. And he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years; because the Lord had given him rest. 7. Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about them walls and towers, gates and bars, while the land is yet before us; because we have sought the Lord our God, we have sought him, and he hath given us rest on every side. So they built, and prospered. 8. And Asa had an army of men that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand, and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand: all these were mighty men of valour.

Here is,

I. Asa's general character, v. 2. He did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. 1. He aimed at pleasing God: studied to approve himself to him. Happy they that walk by this rule, to do that, not only which is right in their own eyes, or in the eyes of the world, but which is so in God's eyes. 2. He saw God's eye always upon him, and that helped much to keep him to what is good and right. 3. God graciously accepted of him in what he did, and approved it as good and right.

II. A blessed work of reformation which he set on foot immediately upon his accession to the crown. 1. He removed and abolished idolatry. Since Solomon admitted it in the latter end of his reign, nothing had been done to suppress it, and so, we presume, it had got ground, strange gods were worshipped, and had their altars, images, and groves; and the temple-service, though kept up by the priests, (ch. 13. 10.) was neglected by many of the people. Asa, as soon as he had power in his hands, made it his business to destroy all those idolatrous altars and images, v. 3. 5. they being a great provocation to a jealous God, and a great temptation to a careless unthinking people. He hoped by destroying the idols, to reform the idolaters, which he aimed at, rather than to ruin them. 2. He revived and established the pure worship of God; and since the priests did their part in attending God's altars, he obliged the people to do their's, v. 4. he commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and not the gods of the heathen, and to do the law and the commandment, that is, to observe all divine institutions, which many had utterly neglected. In doing this, the land was quiet before him, v. 5. Though they were much in love with their idols, and very loath to leave them, yet the convictions of their consciences sided with the commands of Asa, and they could not, for shame, refuse to comply with them. Note, They that have power in their hands, and use it vigorously for the suppression of idolatries and ungodliness, all of manners, will not meet with so much difficulty and opposition therein, as, perhaps, they feared. Vice is a sneaking thing, and virtue has reason enough on its side to make all injustice stop her mouth, Ps. 107. 42.

III. The tranquillity of his kingdom, after constant alarms of war during the two last reigns. In his time, there were so many quiet years, that he was able to strengthen his borders with the kingdom of Israel, who did not recover the blow given them in the last reign, for a great while. Abijah's victory, which was owing, under God, to his courage and bravery, laid a foundation for Asa's peace, which was the reward of his piety and reformation. Though Abijah had little religion himself, he was instrumental to prepare the way for one that had much. If Abijah had not done what he did, to quiet the land, Asa could not have done what he did to reform it; for Inter arma silent leges—Amidst the din of arms, the voice of law is unheard.

IV. The prudent improvement he made of that tranquillity: The land had rest, for the Lord had given him rest. Note, If God give quietness, who then can make trouble, Job 34. 29. Those have rest indeed, to whom God gives rest: peace indeed, to whom Christ gives peace, not as the world giveth, John 14. 27. Now, 1. Asa takes notice of the rest they had, as the gift of God: He hath given us rest on every side. Note, God must be acknowledged, with thankfulness, in the rest we are blessed with, of body and mind, family and country. The rest was the reward of the reformation begun; Because we have sought the Lord our God, he has given us rest. Note, As he who sows the seed of providence should not be surprised for a check to us till we have gathered it; so the smiles of Providence should be taken notice of for our encouragement in that which is good. See Hug. 2. 18, 19. Mal. 3. 12. We find by experience that it is good to seek the Lord; it gives us rest; while we pursue the world, we meet with nothing but vexation. 2. He consults with his people, by their representatives, how to make a good use of the present glories of peace they enjoyed; and teaches them what is due to God, he must not be idle, but busy. Times of rest from war should be employed in work, for we must always find ourselves something to do. In the years when he had no war, he said, "Let us build; still let us be doing." When the churches had rest, they were built up, Acts 9. 31. When the sword is sheathed, take up the trowel. (2.) That they must not be idle, but prepare for the wars of God. We must be getting ready for trouble, expect it, and lay up in store for it. [1.] He fortified his principal cities with walls, towers, gates, and bars, v. 7. "This let us do," says he, "while the land is yet before us," that is, "while we have opportunity and advantage for it, and have nothing to hinder us." He speaks as if he expected that, some way or other, trouble would arise, when it would be too late to fortify, and when they would wish they had
done: So they built and prospered. [2.] He had a good army ready to bring into the field, v. 8. not a standing army, but the militia or trained-bands of the country. Judah and Benjamin were mustered severally; and Benjamin (which, not long ago, was called little Benjamin; Ps. 68. 27.) had almost as many soldiers as Judah, came as near as 28 to 30. so strangely had that tribe increased of late. The blessing of God can make a little one to become a thousand. It should seem, these two tribes were differently armed, both offensively and defensively. The men of Judah guarded themselves with targets, the men of Benjamin with shields, the former much larger than the latter, 1 Kings 10. 16, 17. The men of Judah fought with spears, when they closed in with the enemy; the men of Benjamin drew bows, to reach the enemy at a distance; both did good service, and neither could say to the other, I have no need of thee. Different gifts and employments are for the common good.

9. And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian, with a host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots, and came unto Mareshah. 10. Then Asa went out against him, and set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. 11. And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee. 12. So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled. 13. And Asa, and the people that were with him, pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before the Lord, and before his host: and they carried away very much spoil. 14. And they smote all the cities round about Gerar: for the fear of the Lord came upon them: and they spoiled all the cities; for there was exceeding much spoil in them. 15. They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem.

Here is,

1. Disturbance given to the peace of Asa's kingdom by a formidable army of Ethiopians that invaded them, v. 9. Through fear of this fear came upon them, that their faith in God might be tried, and that God might have an opportunity of doing great things for them. It was a vast number that the Ethiopians brought against him, a thousand thousand men; and now he found the benefit of having an army ready raised against such a time of need. That provision which we thought needless, may soon appear to be of great advantage.

2. The application Asa made to God, on occasion of the threatening cloud which now hung over his head, v. 11. He that sought God in the day of his peace and prosperity, could, with holy boldness, cry to God in the day of his trouble, and call him his God. His prayer is short, but has much in it. (1.) He gives to God the glory of his infinite power and sovereignty. It is nothing with thee to help, and save, by many or few, by them that are mighty, or by them that have no power. See 1 Sam. 17. 47. God works in his own strength, not in the strength of instruments, Ps. 21. 13. nay, it is his glory to help the weakest, and perfect strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings. "We do not say, Lord, take our part, for we have a good army for thee to work by: but, take our part, for without thee we have no power." (2.) He takes hold of their covenant-relation to God, and says, O Lord our God, and again, Thou art our God, whom we have chosen and cleave to as our's, and who has promised to be our's." (3.) He pleads their dependence upon God, and the eye they had to him, in this expedition. He was well-prepared for it, yet trusted not to his preparations; but, "Lord we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude, by warrant from thee, aiming at thy glory, and trusting to thy strength." (4.) He interchanges in God's cause, "Let not man," (mortal man, so the word is,) "prevail against thee. If he prevail against us, it will be said that he prevails against thee, because thou art our God, and we rest on thee, and go forth in thy name, which thou hast encouraged us to do. The enemy is a mortal man; make it to appear what an unequal match he is for an immortal God. Lord, maintain thine own honour: hallowed be thy name.

3. The glorious victory God gave him over his enemies; (1.) God defeated the enemy, and put their forces into disorder, v. 12. The Lord smote the Ethiopians, smote them with terror, and an unaccountable consternation, so that they fled, and knew neither why nor whither. (2.) Asa and his soldiers took the advantage God gave them against the enemy. [1.] They destroyed them. They fell before the Lord, for who can stand before him? and before his host, either an invincible host of angels that were employed to destroy them, or the host of Israel, called God's host, because owned by him. [2.] They took the plunder of their camp; carried away very much spoil from the slain, and from the baggage. [3.] They smote the cities that were in league with them, to which they fled for shelter, and carried off the spoil of them, v. 13, and they were not subdued by his terror and resistance; the fear of the Lord came upon them, that is, a fear which God struck them with, to that degree that they had no heart to withstand the conquerors. [4.] They fetched away the cattle out of the enemy's country, in vast numbers, v. 15. Thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

CHAP. XV.

Asa and his army were now returning in triumph from the battle, laden with spoils, and adorned with the trophies of victory; the pious prince, we may now suppose, studying what he should render to God for this great favour. He knows that the work of reformation, which he had begun in his kingdom, is his crown, his glory; and that the enemies abroad are subdued, but there were more dangers to apprehend. Enemies at home, that were yet unconquered; idolaters in Judah and Benjamin: his victory over the former imboldens him vigorously to renew his attack upon the latter. Now, when we have, by our own efforts, sent God sent him, by a prophet, to engage him to, and encourage him in, the prosecution of his reformation, v. 1. 7. II. The life which this message put into that good cause, and their faith and reliance, in the issue of things, is the subject of the next chapter, v. 8. The spoil dedicated to God, v. 9. 11. A covenant with God, and a law for the punishing of idolaters, v. 12, 15. A reformation at court, v. 16. Dedicated things being the crown of God's reformation. As in all things, but that the high places were permitted, v. 17. And the effect of this was great peace, v. 19.

1. AND the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Obad: 2. And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto
II. CHRONICLES, XV.

To this brought them to God, they found it not in vain to seek him, v. 4. But the question is, What time does this refer to? 1. Some think it looks as far back as the days of the Judges. A long season ago, Israel was without the true God; for they worshipped false gods; it was a time of ignorance, for though they had priests, they had no teaching priests; though they had elders, yet no law, to any purpose, v. 2. These were sad times, when they were frequently opposed by one enemy or other, and grievously harassed by Moabites, Midianites, Ammonites, and other nations, they were vexed with all adversity, v. 6. Yet when, in their perplexity, they turned to God by repentance, prayer, and reformation, he raised up able workers for the Lord. Then was that maxim often verified, that God is with us, while we are with him. Whatevery things of this kind were written afore-time, were written for our admonition.

2. Others think it describes the state of the ten tribes, (who were now properly called Israel,) in the days of Asa. Note, since Jeroboam set up the calves, though he pretended to honour the God that brought the people out of Egypt, yet his idolatry has brought them to downright idolatry, they are without the true God, and no marvel, when they were without teaching priests; Jeroboam's priests were not teachers, and thus they came to be without law: it is next to impossible, that anything of religion should be kept up without a preaching ministry. In those times, there was no peace, v. 5. Their war with Judah gave them frequent alarms; so did the late insurrection of Baasha, and other occasions not mentioned. They provoked God with all iniquity, and then vexed them with all adversity; yet when they turned to God, he was entreated for them. Let Judah take notice of this, let their neighbours' harms be their warnings. Give no countenance to graven images, for you see what mischief they produce.

3. Others think the whole passage may be read in the future tense, and that it looks forward; hereafter, Israel will be without the true God, and a teaching priest, and they will be destroyed by one judgment after another till they return to God, and seek him. See Hos. 3. 4.

III. Upon this he grounded his exhortation to prosecute the work of reformation with vigour, v. 7. Be strong, for your work shall be rewarded. Note, 1. God designed his people to be strong. 2. They should be strong in cheerful and cheerful service. They should labour for God cheerfully, and cheerfulness, but will not be done without resolution. 2. This should quicken us to the work of religion, that we shall be sure not to lose by it ultimately. It will not go unrewarded. How should it, when the work is its own reward?

8. And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Obad the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the Lord that was before the porch of the Lord. 9. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: (for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him:) 10. So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.
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11. And they offered unto the Lord the same time, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen, and seven thousand sheep. 12. And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; 13. That whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. 14. And they swore unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. 15. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the Lord gave them rest round about. 16. And also concerning Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron. 17. But the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days. 18. And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels. 19. And there was no more war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa.

We are here told, what good effect the foregoing sermon had upon Asa.

I. He grew more bold for God than he had been; his victory would inspire him with some new degrees of resolution, but this message from God with much more; now he took courage, he saw how necessary a further reformation was, and what assurance he had of God's presence with him in it; and this made him daring, and helped him over the difficulties which had before deterred him, and driven him off from the undertaking. Now he ventured to destroy all the abominable idols, (and all idolatries are abominable, 1 Pet. 4. 3.) as far as ever his power went: Away with them all. He also renewed the altar of the Lord, which, it seems, was gone out of repair, though it was not above thirty-five years since Solomon's head was laid, who erected it. So soon did these ceremonial institutions begin to wax old, as things which, in the fullness of time, must vanish away, Heb. 8. 13.

II. He extended his influence further than before, v. 9. He summoned a solemn assembly, and particularly brought the strangers to it, who were come over to him from the ten tribes. 1. Their coming was a great encouragement to him; for the reason of their coming was because they saw that the Lord his God was with him. It is good to be with those that have God with them, to come into relation to, and contract acquaintance and friendship with, those that live in the fear and favour of God; We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you, Zech. 8. 23. 2. The cognizance he took of them, and the invitation he gave that the general assembly, were a great encouragement to them. All strangers are to be helped, but those that cast themselves on God's good providence, purely to keep a good conscience, are worthy of double honour. Asa gave orders for the gathering of them together, v. 9. yet it is said, v. 10. they gathered themselves together, made it their own act. Afterwards they were to choose, and three days after this meeting was held in the third month, probably, at the feast of Pentecost, which was in that month.

III. He and his people offered sacrifices to God, as his share of the spoil they had got, v. 11. Their offering here was nothing to Solomon's ch. 7. 5. which was owing to the diminution, either of their zeal, or of their wealth, or of both. These sacrifices were intended by way of thanksgiving for the favours they had not received, and supplications for further favours. Prayers and praises are now our spiritual sacrifices. And as he took care that the altar should have its gift, so he took care that the temple should have its gold; he brought into the house of God all the dedicated things, v. 18. It is honesty to render to God the things that are his. What has been long designed for him, and long laid by for him, as, it should seem, these dedicated things had been, should, at length, be laid out for him. Will a man rob God, or make slow payment to him, who is always ready to do us good?

IV. They entered into covenant with God, repenting that they had violated their engagements to him, and resolving to do better for the future. It is proper for penitents, for converts, to renew their covenants. It should seem, the motion came not from Asa, but from the people themselves: let every man make a volunteer self-covenant with God. Thy people shall be willing, Ps. 110. 3.

Observe,

1. What was the matter of this covenant. Nothing but what they were before oblied to; and though no vow or promise of theirs could lay any higher obligation upon them, than they were already under from the divine precept, yet it would help to increase their sense of the obligation, to arm them against temptations, and would be a testimony to the equity and goodness of the precept. And by joining all together in this covenant, they strengthened the hands one of another. Two things they engaged themselves to. (1.) That they would diligently seek God themselves, seek his precepts, seek his favour. What is religion but seeking God, inquiring after him, applying to him, upon all occasions? What is God's all nobleness, and all excellency, but his heaven; while we are here, we must continue seeking. That they would seek him as the God of their fathers, in the way that their fathers sought him, and in dependence upon the promise made to their fathers; and that they would do it with all their heart, and with all their soul; for those only seek God acceptably and successfully, that are inward with him, intent upon him, and entire for him, in their seeking of him. We make nothing of our religion, if we do not make heart-work of it; God will have all the heart, or none; and when a jewel of such inestimable value as the divine favour is to be found, it is worth while to seek it with all our soul. (2.) That they would, to the utmost of their power, oblige others to seek him, v. 13. They agreed, that whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel, and his covenants, and his ordinances, other gods, or refuse to join with them in the worship of the true God, that was either an obstinate idolater, or an obstinate atheist, he should be put to death. This was no new law of their own making, but an order to put in execution that law of God to this purport, Deut. 17. 2, &c. If this law had been duly executed, there had not been so many abominable idols found in Judah and Benjamin, v. 8. Whether men may now, under the gospel, be compelled by such methods as these, to seek the Lord, is justly questioned; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, and yet mighty.

2. In what manner they made this covenant
(1) With great cheerfulness, and all possible expressions of joy, They swore unto the Lord; not secretly, as if they were either ashamed of what they did, or afraid of binding themselves too fast to him, but with a loud voice, to express their own zeal, and to animate one another; and they all rejoiced at the oath, v. 14, 15. They did not swear to God with reluctance, (as the poor debtor confesses a judgment to his creditor,) but with all the pleasure and satisfaction imaginable, as the bridegroom plights his troth to the bride in the marriage covenant. Every honest Israelite was pleased with his own engagements to God, and they were all pleased with one another. They rejoiced in it at heart, and could not prevent their apostasy from God, and a happy indication of God's presence with them. Note, The times of renewing our covenant with God, should be times of rejoicing. And national reformation cannot but give general satisfaction to all that are good. It is an honour and happiness to be in bonds to God. (2.) They did it with great sincerity, zeal, and resolution: they swore to God with all their hearts, and sought him with their whole desire. The Israelites were now in an extraordinarily good frame; O that there had always been but such a heart in them! This comes in as the reason why they rejoiced so much in what they did, it was because they were hearty in it. Note, Those only experience the pleasure and comfort of religion, that are sincere and upright in it. What is done in hypocrisy, is a mere drudgery. But if God have the heart, we have the joy.

Lastly, We are told what was the effect of this their solemn covenanting with God.

1. God did well for them. He was found of them, and gave them rest round about, v. 15. so that there was no war, for a long time after, v. 19. no open general war; though there were constant bickerings between Judah and Israel upon the frontiers, 1 Kings 15. 16. National piety procures national blessings.

2. They did, on the whole, well for him. They carried on the reformation so far, that Maachah the queen-mother was deposed for idolatry, and her idols destroyed, v. 16. This was bravely done of Asa, that he would not connive at idolatry in those that were nearest to him; like Levi, that said to his father and mother, I have not seen him, Deut. 53. 4. Any instance of mother's or grandmother's sin, that has not led to a sin in the children, and dared not leave an idol in an apartment of his palace, while he is destroying idols in the cities of his kingdom. We may suppose this Maachah was so far convinced of her sin, that she was willing to subscribe the association mentioned, v. 12, 13. binding herself to seek the Lord, and therefore was not put to death, as those were, who refused to sign it; great as well as small, were zealous to maintain it, as well as men; perhaps they were women, with an eye to her; but because she had been an idolater, Asa thought fit to divest her of the dignity and authority she had, and, probably, he banished her the court, and confined her to privacy, lest she should influence and infect others. But the reformation was not complete, the high places were not all taken away, though many of them were, ch. 14. 3. 5. Those in the cities were removed, but not those in the country-cities; or those in the cities of Judah, but not those in the cities of Israel which were reduced to the house of David; or those that were used in the service of false gods, but not those that were used in the service of the God of Israel; those he connived at, and yet his heart was perfect. There may be defects in some particular duties, where yet the heart, in the main, is upright with God; sincerity is something less than sinless perfection.

CHAP. XVI.

This chapter concludes the history of the reign of Asa, but does not furnish so pleasing an idea of his latter end as of his beginning. 1. Here is a foolish treaty with Ben-hadad king of Syria, v. 1. - 6. The reproof which God sent him for it by a prophet. v. 6. 8. His Asa's displeasure against the prophet for his faithfulness, v. 10. IV. The sickness, death, and burial, of Asa, v. 11. 14.

I. In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. 2. Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the Lord and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-hadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, 3. There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me. 4. And Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-maim, and all the store-cities of Naphtali.

5. And it came to pass, when Baasha heard it, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease. 6. Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha was a building; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.

How to reconcile the date of this event with the history of the kings, I am quite at a loss; Baasha died in the 26th year of Asa, 1 Kings 16. 8. How then could this be done in his 36th year? In the 26th year when Baasha was quite cut off, and Omri was upon the throne? It is generally said to be meant of the 36th year of the kingdom of Asa, namely, that of Judah, beginning from the first of Reboam, and so it coincides with the 16th of Asa's reign. But then ch. 15. 19. must be so understood; and how could it be spoken of as a great thing that there was no more war till the 15th year of Asa, when that passage immediately before was in his 15th year, ch. 15. 16. and after this miscarriage of his, here recorded, he had wars, v. 9. Josephus places it in his 26th year, and then we must suppose a mistake in the transcriber here, and ch. 15. 19. which, if we admit, the computation is easy.

This passage we had before, 1 Kings 15. 17. &c. and Asa was several ways faulty in it. 1. He did not do well to make a league with Ben-hadad a heathen king, and to value himself so much upon it as he seems to do, ch. v. 3. Had he relied more upon his covenant, and his father's, with God, he would not have boasted so much of his league, and his father's, with the royal family of Syria. If he had had a due regard to the honour of Israel in general, he would have found some other expedient to give Baasha a diversion, than by calling in a foreign force, and inviting into their country a common enemy, which, in process of time, might be a plague to Judah too. 3. It was, doubtless, a sin in Ben-hadad to break his league with Baasha, upon no provocation, but merely through the influence of a
bride; and if so, certainly it was a sin in Asa to move him to it, especially to hire him to do it. The public faith of kings and kingdoms must not be made so cheap a thing. 4. To take silver and gold out of the house of the Lord for this purpose, was a great aggravation of the sin, v. 2. Must the temple be plundered to serve his carnal policies? He had better have brought gifts and offerings, with prayers and supplications, to the house of the Lord; that he might have engaged God on his side, and made him his friend; then he had not needed to have been at this expense to make Ben-hadad his friend. 3. It was well if Asa had not to answer for all the mischief that the army of Ben-hadad did unjustly to the cities of Israel, all the blood they shed, and all the spoil they made, v. 4. Perhaps Asa intended not they should carry the matter so far. But that they draw others to sin, know not what they do, nor where it will end: the beginning of sin, is as the letting forth of water.

However, the project succeeded. Ben-hadad gave Baasha a powerful diversion, obliged him to leave off building Ramah, and betake himself to the defence of his own country northward; which gave Asa an opportunity, not only to demolish his fortifications, but to seize the materials, and convert them to his own use.

7. And at that time Hanáni the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thy hand. 8. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thy hand. 9. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him. Herein thou hast done foolishly; therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars. 10. Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison-house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time. 11. And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 12. And Asa, in the thirty and ninth year of his reign, was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians. 13. And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign. 14. And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art; and they made a very great burning for him.

Here is,

1. A plain and faithful reproof given to Asa by a prophet of the Lord, for making this league with Ben-hadad. The reprover was Hanáni, the seer, the father of Jeán another prophet, whom we read of, 1 Kings 16. 1. 2 Chron. 19. 2. We observed several things amiss in Asa's treaty with Ben-hadad. But that which the prophet here charges upon him was the greatest. The reason why he was made to suffer this aggravation, is, his relying on the king of Syria, and not on the Lord his God, v. 7. He thought that though God was on his side, this would not stand him in stead, unless he had Ben-hadad on his side; that God either could not, or would not, help him, but he must take this indirect course to help himself. Note, God is much displeased, when he is distrustful, and when an arm of flesh is relied on more than his power and providence. By this act, Asa set God at naught; in God we give honour to him, and therefore he thinks himself affronted, if we give that honour to another. He plainly tells the king that herein he had done foolishly, v. 9. It is a foolish thing to lean on a broken reed, when we have the Rock of ages to rely upon. To convince him of his folly, he shows him,

1. That he acted against his experience, v. 8. He, of all men, had no reason to distrust God, who had found him such a present powerful Helper, by whom he had been made to triumph over a threatening enemy, as his father before him, because he relied upon the Lord his God, ch. 13. 18.—14. 11. "What!" said the prophet, "Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, enough to swallow up a kingdom? And yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand; and was it not he sufficient to help thee against Baasha?" Note, The many experiences we have had of the goodness of God to us, aggravate our distrust of him. Has he not helped us in six troubles? And have we any reason to suspect him in the seventh? But see how deceitful our hearts are? We trust in God, when we have nothing else to trust to, when need drives us to him; but when we have other things to stay on, we are apt to stay too much on them, and to lean to our own understanding, as long as that has any thing to offer; but a believing confidence will be in God only, when a smiling world courts it most.

2. That he acted against his knowledge of God and his providence, v. 9. Asa could not be ignorant that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the earth, strongly to hold with them (so it may be read) whose heart is perfect toward him; that is, (1.) That God governs the world in infinite wisdom, and the creatures, and all their actions, are continually under his eye. The eye of Providence is quick-sighted, it runs; it is intent, it runs to and fro; it reaches far, through the whole earth, no corner of which is from under it, not the most dark or distant; and his eye directs his hand, and the arm of his power; for he shows himself strong. Does Satan walk to and fro in the earth? Providence runs to and fro in the earth. (2.) That God governs the world for the good of his people; does all in pursuance of the counsels of his love concerning their salvation, all for Jacob his servant's sake, and Israel his elect, Isa. 45. 4. Christ is head over all things to his church, Eph. 1. 22. (3.) That they whose hearts are upright with him, may be sure of his protection, and have all the reason to depend upon it. He is able to protect them in the way of their duty; for wisdom and might are his, and he actually intends their protection: a practical disbelief of this, is at the bottom of all our departures from God, and double-dealing with him. Asa could not trust God, and therefore made court to Ben-hadad.

3. That he acted against his interest. (1.) He had lost an opportunity of checking the growing
greatness of the king of Syria, v. 7. His host is es-
topped out of thy hand, which otherwise would have 
joined with Baasha's, and fallen with it. (2.) He 
had incurred God's displeasure, and henceforth 
must expect no peace, but the constant alarms of 
war, v. 9. They that cannot find in their hearts to 
trust God, forfeit his protection, and throw them-

selves out of it.

II. Asa's displeasure at this reproof. Though it 
came from God by one that was known to be his 
 messenger, though the reproof was just, and the 
 reasoning fair, and all intended for his good, yet he 
 was waxed with the see, for telling of his folly; 
ye, he was in a rage with him, v. 10. Is this Asa? 
 Is this he whose heart was perfect with the Lord 
 his God all his days? Well, let him that thinketh 
 he stands, take heed lest he fall. A wise man! and 
yet in a rage! An Israelite! and yet in a rage with a 
 prophet! A good man! and yet impatient of re-
 proof, and that cannot bear to be told of his faults!
 Lord, what is man, when God leaves him to himself? 
They that idolize their own conduct, cannot bear 
 contradiction; and they that indulge a peevish 
 passionate temper, may be transported by it into 
 impieties as well as into indecencies, and will, some 
time or other, fly into the face of God himself. 
See what gall and wormwood this root of bitterness 
 bore. 1. In his rage, he committed the prophet to 
 the jail; put him in a prison-house, as a malefactor; 
in the furnace, as to some read it. God's prophets meet 
 with many things that bear to be told, but take it 
 much amiss, yet they must do their duty. 2. Hav-
 ing proceeded thus far, he oppressed some of the 
 people, probably, such as owned the prophet in his 
 sufferings, or were known to be his particular 
 friends. He that abused his power for the persecu-
 tion of God's prophet, was left to himself, further 
 to abuse it for the crushing of his own subjects, 
 who, though they had oppressed him, but take it 
 much amiss, yet they must do their duty. 2. Hav-
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 to abuse it for the crushing of his own subjects, 
 who, though they had oppressed him, but take it 
 much amiss, yet they must do their duty. 2. Hav-

III. His sickness. Two years before he died, he 
 was diseased in his feet, v. 12. afflicted with the 
 gout in a high degree. He had put the prophet in 
 the stocks, and now God put him in the stocks; so 
 his punishment answered his sin. His disease was 
 exceeding great; it came to the height, so some; it 
 flew up to his head, so others; and then it was mor-
t. This was his punishment but his sin, that in 
 his disease, instead of seeking to God for relief, 
 he sought to the physicians. His making use of 
 physicians, was his duty; but trusting to them, and 
 expecting that from them, which was to be had 
 from God only, were his sin and folly. The help 
of creatures must always be used with an eye to 
 the Creator, and in dependence upon him, who 
 makes every creature that to us which it is, and 
 without which we perish. Those who trust in God 
 and his Promises are physicians of no value. Some 
think that the physicians were strangers to the commonwealth 
of Israel, and were a sort of conjurers, to whom he 
 applied himself, as if there were not a God in 
 Israel.

IV. His death and burial. His funeral had some-
 thing of extraordinary solemnity in it, v. 14. they 
made a very magnificent burying for him. I am loath 
to think that he himself ordered this funeral pomp, 
and that it was an instance of his vanity, that he would be buried like the Gentiles, 
and not after the way of the Jews. It is said indeed, 
He digged the sepulchre for himself, as one mindful of 
his grave; but I am willing to believe it was ra-
 ther an expression of the great respect his people 
retained for him, notwithstanding the failings and 
imperfections of his latter days. It was agreed to do 
him honour at his death. Note, The eminent piety 
and usefulness of good men ought to be remembered 
to their praise, though they had their blenishments.

Let their faults be buried in their graves, while 
their services are remembered over their graves. 
He that said, There is not a just man that doeth 
good and sinneth no, yet said also, The memory of 
the just is blessed; and let it be so.

CHAP. XVII.

Here begin the life and reign of Jehoshaphat, who was one of 
the first three among the royal worthies, one of the 
best that ever swayed the sceptre of Judah, since David's 
head was laid. He was a good son of a good father, so 
that, as his son came in the blood, even the blood 
royal. Happy the son that had such a father, to lay a 
good foundation in him and for him! Happy the father 
that had such a son, to build so well upon the foundation 
he had laid! Happy the reign that was blessed with 
two such kings, two such reigns together! In this 
chapter we have, I. His accession to, and establishment 
in the throne, v. 1, 2, 5. II. His personal piety, v. 3, 4, 6. III. The course he took to promote religion in his 
 kingdom, v. 7, 9. IV. The mighty way he bore among 
the neighbours, v. 10, 11. V. The great strength of 
his kingdom, both in garrisons and standing forces, v. 12, 
19. Thus was his prosperity the reward of his piety, 
and his piety the brightest grace and ornament of his 
prosperity.

AND Jehoshaphat his son reigned in 
his stead, and strengthened himself against 
Israel 2. And he placed forces in 
all the fenced cities of Judah, and set 
garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of 
Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken. 
3. And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, 
because he walked in the first ways of 
his father David, and sought not unto Baalim;
4. But sought to the Lord God of his 
father, and walked in his commandments, 
and not after the doings of Israel: 
Therefore the Lord established the kingdom 
in his hand; and all Judah brought to 
Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and 
honour in abundance. 6. And his heart 
was lifted up in the ways of the Lord: moreover, he took away the high places 
and groves out of Judah. 7. Also, in the third 
year of his reign, he sent to his princes, even 
to Ben-hail, and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, 
and to Nethaneel, and to Michaiah, to 
teach in the cities of Judah. 8. And with 
them he sent Levites, even Shemaiah, and 
Nathaniah, and Zebediah, and Asahel, and 
Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adoni-
jah, and Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah, Le-
vites; and with them Elishama and Jeho-
ram, priests. 9. And they taught in Judah, 
and had the book of the law of the Lord 
with them, and went about throughout all 
the cities of Judah, and taught the people. 

Here we find concerning Jehoshaphat.

I. What a wise man he was. As soon as he 
came to the crown he strengthened himself against 
Israel, v. 1. Ahab had now been three years upon 
the throne of Israel, an active warlike prince; the 
vigour of his beginning falling in with the decay of 
Asa's conclusion, it is probable that the kingdom 
of Israel had, of late, got ground of the kingdom 
of Judah, and began to grow formidable to it; so 
that the first thing Jehoshaphat had to do, was, to 
make his part good on that side, and to check the
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growing greatness of the king of Israel, which he did so effectually, and without bloodshed, that Ahab soon courted his alliance, so far was he from giving him any disturbance, and proved more dangerous as a friend, than he could have been as an enemy. Jehoshaphat strengthened himself not to act offensively against Israel, or invade them, but only to maintain his own; which he did by fortifying the cities that were on his frontiers, and putting garrisons, stronger than had been, in the cities of Ephraim, which he was master of, v. 2. He did not strengthen himself, as his father did, by a league with the king of Syria, but by fair and regular negotiations, on which he might expect the blessing of God, as he was inclinable to the

II. What a good man he was. It is an excellent character that is here given of him, and very observable,

1. That he walked in the ways of his father David. In the characters of the kings, David's ways are often made the standard, as 1 Kings 15. 3. 11. 2 Kings 14. 3,—16. 2.—18. 3. But the distinction is not so clearly so strong here, as between his first ways and his last ways; for the last were not so good as the first: his ways, before he fell so foully in the matter of Uriah, (which is mentioned long after as the bar in his escutcheon, 1 Kings 15. 5.) were good ways, and though he happily recovered from that fall, yet perhaps he never, while he lived, fully retrieved the spiritual strength and comfort he lost by it. Jehoshaphat followed David, as he followed God, and no further. St. Paul himself thus limits our imitation of him, 1 Cor. 11. 1, "Follow me, as I follow Christ, and not otherwise." Many good people have had their first ways, which were their best ways; their first love, which was their strongest love. In every copy we propose to write after, as we must single out that only which is good, so that chiefly which is best. The words here will admit another rendering; they run thus; He walked in the ways of David, but his father, (Hareshonim,) those first ways; or those ancient ways; he proposed to himself, for his example, the primitive times of the royal family, those purest times, before the corruptions of the late reign came in. See Jer. 6. 15. The LXX. leave out David, and so refer it to Asa; he walked in his first ways of his father, and did not imitate him in those in which he was worsted in the last end of his time. It is good to be cautious in following the best men, lest we step aside after them.

2. That he sought not to Baalim, but sought to the Lord God his father, v. 3. 4. The neighbouring nations had their Baalim, one had one Baal, and another had another; but he abhorred them all, had nothing to do with them: he worshipped the Lord God of his father, and him only; prayed to him only, and inquired of him only; both are included in seeking him.

3. That he walked in God's commandments, not only worshipped the true God, but worshipped him according to his own institution, and not after the doings of Israel, v. 4. Though the king of Israel was his neighbour and ally, yet he did not learn his ways, nor his moro methods: he gave him no heart in civil matters, he would not be conversant with him, nor comply with him in his religion: there he kept close to the rule.

4. That his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord, v. 6. or he lifted up his heart. He brought his heart to his work, and lifted up his heart in it; that is, he had a sincere regard to God in it. Unto Me, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. His heart was enlarged in that which is good, Ps. 119. 32. He never thought he could d. enough for God. He was lively and affectionate in his religion, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, cheerful and pleasant in it; he went on in his work with alacrity; as Jacob, who, after his vision of God at Bethel, lifted up his feet, Gen. 29. 1. margin. He was bold and resolute in the ways of God, and went on with courage; his heart was lifted up above the consideration of the difficulties that were in the way of his duty, he easily over-reve all them, and was not frightened with winds and clouds, from digging and reaping, Eccl. 11. 4. Let us walk in the same spirit.

III. What a useful man he was; not only a good man, but a good king; he not only was good himself, but did good in his generation, he did a great deal of good.

He built up the teachers of the law, so images are called, Heb. 2. 18. the high places and the groves, v. 6. It is meant of those in which idols were worshipped; for those that were dedicated to the true God only, were not taken away, ch. 20. 33. It was only idolatry that he abolished; nothing daubed the nation more than those idolatrous groves or images, which he took away.

2. He sent forth teachers of truth. When he inquired into the state of affairs in his kingdom, he found his people generally very ignorant; they knew not that they did evil; even in the last good reign, there had been little care taken to instruct them in their duty; and therefore Jehoshaphat resolves to begin his work at the right end, deals with them as reasonable creatures, will not lead them blind-fold, nor, not into a reformation, but endears to have them well taught, knowing that that was the way to save them well cured; in this good work, he employed, (1.) His princes; those about him he sent forth, to teach in the cities of Judah, v. 7. He ordered them, in the administration of justice, not only to correct the people when they did ill, but to teach them how to do better, and to give a reason for what they did, that the people might be informed of the difference between good and evil. The princes or judges on the bench have a great opportunity of teaching people their duty to God and man, and it is not out of their province, for the laws of God are to be looked upon as laws of the land. (2.) The Levites and priests went with the princes, and taught in Judah, having the book of the law with them, v. 8. 9. They were teachers by office, Deut. 33. 10. it was part of the work for which they had their maintenance; the priests and Levites only were to read. It seems, they had neglected it, pretending, per haps, that they could not get the people to hear them. "Well," says Jehoshaphat, "you shall go along with the princes, and they with their authority shall oblige the people to come and hear you; and then if they be not well instructed, it is your fault." What an abundance of good may be done, when Moses and Aaron thus pressed and pressed in the doing of it, when princes with their power, and priests and Levites with their scripture-learning, agree to teach the people the good knowledge of God and their duty! These itinerant judges, and itinerant preachers together, were instrumental to diffuse a blessed light throughout the cities of Judah. But it is said, They had the book of the law for the Lord with them. [1.] For their own direction, that from thence they might fetch all the instructions they gave to the people, and not teach for doctrines the commandments of men. [2.] For the conviction of the people, that they might see that they had a divine warrant for what they said, and delivered to them that only which they received from the Lord. Note, Ministers, when they go to teach the people, should have their Bibles with them.

IV. How happy he was in the favour of his God who signally owned and blessed him. The Lord
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was with him, v. 3. The word of the Lord was his helper, so the Chaldee paraphrase. The Lord established the kingdom in his hand, v. 5. Those stand firm, that have the presence of God with them. If the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, that will establish the work of our hands, and establish us in our integrity.

V. How happy he was, in the affections of his people, v. 5. All Judah brought him presents, in acknowledgment of his kindness in sending preachers among them. The more there is of true religion among a people, the more there will be of conscientious loyalty. A governor that answers the end of government, will be supported. The effect of the favour both of God, and his kingdom, was, that he had riches and honour in abundance. It is undoubtedly true, though few will believe it, that religion and piety are the best friends to outward prosperity. And observe, it follows immediately, His heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord. Riches and honour in abundance prove to many a clog and a hindrance in the ways of the Lord, an occasion of pride, security, and sensuality; but it had a quite contrary effect upon Jehoshaphat; his abundance was oil to the wheels of his obedience, and the more he had of the wealth of this world, the more was his heart lifted up in the ways of the Lord.

10. And the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. 11. Also some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute-silver: and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats. 12. And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles, and cities of store. 13. And he had much business in the cities of Judah: and the men of war, mighty men of valour, were in Jerusalem. 14. And these are the numbers of them, according to the house of their fathers: Of Judah, the captains of thousands; Adnah the chief, and with him mighty men of valour three hundred thousand. 15. And next to him was Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred and fourscore thousand. 16. And next him was Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the Lord; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valour. 17. And of Benjamin; Eliada a mighty man of valour, and with him armed men with bow and shield, two hundred thousand. 18. And next him was Jehozabad, and with him a hundred and fourscore thousand ready prepared for the war. 19. These waited on the king, besides those whom the king put in the fenced cities throughout all Judah.

We have here a further account of Jehoshaphat's great prosperity, and the flourishing state of his kingdom.

1. He had good interest in the neighbouring princes and nations. Though he was not perhaps so great a soldier as David, and therefore, on this account, their terror; nor so great a scholar as Solomon, and therefore, on this account, their oracle, yet the fear of the Lord fell so upon them, that is, God so influenced and governed their spirits, that they had all a sentiment for him, v. 10. And (4.) None of them made war against him. God's good providence so ordered it, that while the princes and priests were instructing and reforming the country, none of his neighbours gave him any molestation, to take him off from that good work.

Thus when Jacob and his sons were going to worship at Beth-el, the terror of God was upon the neighbouring cities, that they did not pursue after them, Gen. 33. 3. and 4. and 5.

Many of them brought presents to him, v. 11, to secure his friendship. Perhaps it was a tribute imposed upon them by Asa, who made himself master of the cities of the Philistines, and the tents of the Arabians, ch. 14. 14. 15. With the 7700 rams, and the same number of he-goats, which the Arabians brought, there was, probably, a proportionable number of ewes and lambs, she-goats and kids.

2. He had very considerable stores laid up in the cities of Judah; he pulled down his barns, and built larger, v. 12, castles and cities of store, for arms and victuals. He was a man of business, and aimed at the public good in all his undertakings, either to preserve the peace or prepare for war.

3. He had the militia in good order; it was never inactive, like the militia of the times. David modelled it. Five thousand were his privy-councillors, (if I may so call them) are here named, with the numbers of those under their command, the serviceable men, that were fit for war in their respective districts; three in Judah, and two in Benjamin. It is said of one of these great commanders, Amasiah, that he willingly offered himself unto the Lord, v. 16. not only to the king, to serve him in this pest, but to the Lord, to glorify him in it. He was the most eminent among them for religion; he accepted the place, not for the honour, or power, or profit, of it; but for conscience-sake toward God that he might serve his country. It was usual for great generals then to offer their spoils to the Lord, 1 Chron. 26. 26. but this good man offered himself first to the Lord, and then his dedicated things.

The number of the soldiers under these 5 generals amounted to 1,186,000 men. A vast number for so small a compass. David's and Benjamin's lot was, to furnish out and maintain, Abijah could bring into the field but 400,000, ch. 13. 3. Asa not 600,000, ch. 14. 8. yet Jehoshaphat has at command almost 1,200,000. But it must be considered, (1.) That God had promised to make the seed of Abraham like the sand of the sea for number. (2.) There had now been a long peace. (3.) We may suppose that part of his army was very much enlarged. (4.) Many were come over to them from the kingdom of Israel, ch. 15. 9. which would increase the numbers of the people. (5.) Jehoshaphat was under a special blessing of God, which made his affairs to prosper greatly. The armies, we may suppose, were dispersed all the country over, and each man resided, for the present, at his own place; and so it was often, to be mustered and trained, and were ready at call whenever there was occasion; the commanders waited on the king, v. 19. as officers of his court, privy-counsellors, and ministers of state.

But, lastly, observe; It was not this formidable army that struck a terror upon the neighbouring nations, that restrained them from attempting any thing against Israel, or obliged them to pay tribute, but the fear of God which fell upon them when Jehoshaphat reformed his country, and set up a
preaching ministry in it, v. 10. The ordinances of God are more the strength and safety of a kingdom, than its military force; its men of God, more than its men of war.

CHAP. XVIII.

The story of this chapter we had just as it is here related in the story of the reign of Ahab king of Israel, 1 Kings 22. While it redounds to the credit of Ahab more than any thing else recorded of him, that he was in league with so good a man as Jehoshaphat, it is a great blinsh in the reign of Jehoshaphat, that he thus connected himself with so bad a man as Ahab. Here is, I. The alliance he contracted with Ahab, v. 1. II. His connect to join with him in his expedition for the recovery of Ramoth-gilead out of the hands of the Syrians, v. 2, 3. III. Their consulting with the prophets, false and true, before they went, v. 4. - 7. IV. The success of their expedition; Jehoshaphat barely escaped, v. 28. - 32. and Ahab received his death's wound, v. 33, 34.

1. NOW Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab. 2. And after certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria: and Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that he had with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramoth-gilead. 3. And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead? And he answered him, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war.

Here is, 1. Jehoshaphat growing greater. It was said before, ch. 17. 5. he had riches and honour in abundance; and here it is said again: his wealth and honour increased upon him by piety and good management.

But, 2. Not growing wiser, else he would not have joined with Ahab, that degenerate Israelite, who had sold himself to work wickedness. What good could he do to a man that was so bad? What good could he do to a man that was so obstinate, an idolater, a persecutor? With him he joined in affinity, that is, married his son Jeheram to Ahab's daughter Athaliah, the worst match that ever was by any of the house of David; I wonder what Jehoshaphat could promise himself by it: (1.) Perhaps pride made the match, as it does many a one which proceeds accordingly. His religion forbade him to marry his son to a daughter of any of the heathen princes that were about him, Thou shalt not take their daughters to thy sons; and, having riches and honour in abundance, he thought it a disparagement to marry him to a subject. A king's daughter it must be, and therefore Ahab's, little considering that Jezebel was her mother. (2.) Some think he did it in policy, hoping by this expedient to unite the kingdoms in his son, Ahab perhaps flattering him with hopes that he would make him his heir, when he intended no such thing.

This match drew Jehoshaphat, [1.] Into an intimate familiarity with Ahab; he made him a visit at Samaria. And Ahab, proud of the honour which Jehoshaphat did him, gave him a very splendid entertainment, according to the splendor of those times; he killed sheep and oxen for him, plain meat, in abundance, v. 2. In this, Jehoshaphat did not walk so closely as he should have done, in the ways of his father David, for he hated the congregation of evil-doers, and would not sit with the wicked, Ps. 26. 5. nor desired to eat of their dainties, Ps. 141. 4. [2.] Into a league with Ahab against the Syrians.

Ahab persuaded him to join forces with him in an expedition for the recovery of Ramoth-gilead, a city in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan. Did not Ahab know that, and all the other cities of Israel, did, of right, belong to Jehoshaphat, as heir of the house of David? With what face could he ask Jehoshaphat to assist him in recovering it for himself, whose title to the crown was usurped and precarious? Yet Jehoshaphat, an easy man, yields to go with him; I am as thou art, v. 3. Some men's kindnesses are dangerous, as well as their society infectious. The feast Ahab made for Jehoshaphat, was designed only to wheedle him into this expedition. The kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

4. And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord to-day. 5. Therefore the king of Israel gathered together of prophets four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up: for God will deliver it into the king's hand. 6. But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him? 7. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah the son of Imla. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. 8. And the king of Israel called for one of his officers, and said, Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Imla. 9. And the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat king of Judah, sat either of them on his throne, clothed in their robes, and they sat in a void place at the entering in of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. 10. And Zedekiah the son of Chenanaah had made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith the Lord, With these thou shalt push Syria until they be consumed. 11. And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. 12. And the messenger that went to call Micaiah spake to him, saying, Behold, the words of the prophets declare good to the king with one assent: let thy word therefore, I pray thee, be like one of theirs, and speak thou good. 13. And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak. 14. And when he was come to the king, the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And he said, Go ye up, and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand. 15. And the king said to him, How many times shall I adjure thee, that thou say nothing but the truth to me in the name
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of the Lord? 16. Then he said, I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master; let them return, therefore, every man to his house in peace. 17. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would not prophesy good unto me, but evil? 18. Again he said, Therefore, hear the word of the Lord; I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand, and on his left. 19. And the Lord said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one spake, saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner. 20. Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? 21. And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so. 22. Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil against thee. 23. Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote Micaiah upon the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee? 24. And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see on that day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself. 25. Then the king of Israel said, Take ye Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; 26. And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I return in peace. 27. And Micaiah said, If thou certainly return in peace, then hath not the Lord spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, all ye people.

This is almost word for word the same with what we had, 1 Kings 22. We will not repeat what was there said, nor have we much to add, but may take occasion to think. 1. Of the great duty of acknowledging God in all our ways, and inquiring at his word, whatever we undertake. Jehoshaphat was not willing to proceed till he had done this, v. 4. By particular believing prayer, by an unbiased consulting of the scripture and our own consciences, and by an observant regard to the hints of providence, we may make such inquiries, and very much to our satisfaction. 2. Of the great danger of bad company even to good men; those that have most wisdom, grace, and resolution, cannot be sure that they can converse familiarly with wicked people, and get no hurt by them. Jehoshaphat here, in compliance to Ahab, sits in his robes, patiently hearing the false prophets speaking lies in the name of the Lord, v. 9. can scarcely find in his heart to give him a too mild and gentle reproof for hating a prophet of the Lord, v. 7. and dares not rebuke that false prophet who basely abused that faithful seer, nor oppose Ahab who committed him to prison. They who venture among the seats of the scornful, cannot come off without a great deal of the guilt attaching to, and the omission of their duty, unless they have such measures of wisdom and courage as few can pretend to. 3. Of the unrightness of those who are surrounded with flatterers, especially flattering prophets, who cry peace to them, and prophesy nothing but smooth things. Thus was Ahab cheated into his ruin, and justly; for he hearkened to such and preferred them that humoured him, before a good prophet that gave him fair warning of his danger. Those do best for themselves, that give their friends leave, and particularly their ministers, to deal plainly and faithfully with them, and take it not only patientely, but kindly. That counsel is not always best for us, that is most pleasing to us. 4. Of the power of Satan, by the divine permission, in the children of disobedience. One lying spirit wrought upon 400 lying prophets, and made use of them to deceive Ahab, v. 21. The Devil becomes a murderer by being a liar, and destroys men by deceiving them. 5. Of the justice of God in giving those up to strong delusions to believe a lie, who will not receive the love of the truth, but rebel against it, v. 21. Let the lying spirit prevail to entice those to their ruin, that will not be persuaded to their duty and happiness. 6. Of the hard case of faithful ministers, whose lot it has often been to be hated, and persecuted, and ill-treated, for being true to their God, and just and kind to the souls of men. Micaiah, for discharging a good conscience, was buffeted, imprisoned, and condemned to the bread and water of affliction. But he could with assurance appeal to the issue, as all those may do, who are persecuted for their faithfulness, v. 27. The day will declare who is in the right, and who in the wrong, when Christ will appear, to the unspeakable consolation of his persecuted people, and the everlasting confusion of their persecutors, who will be made to see in that day, v. 24. what they will not now believe.

28. So the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, went up to Ramoth-gilead. 29. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and will go to the battle; but put thou on thy robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went to the battle. 30. Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots that were with him, saying, Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel. 31. And, it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel: therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him; and God moved them to depart from him. 32. For it came to pass, that, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back again from pursuing him. 33. And a certain man drew
a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness; therefore he said to his chariot-man, Turn thy hand, that thou mayest carry me out of the host; for I am wounded. 34. And the battle increased that day: howbeit the king of Israel stayed himself up in his chariot against the Syrians until the even; and about the time of the sun going down he died.

We have here, 1. Good Jehoshaphat exposing himself in his robes, thereby endangered, and yet delivered. We have reason to think that Ahab, while he pretended friendship, really aimed at Jehoshaphat’s life, to take him off, that he might have the management of his successor, who was his son-in-law, else he would never have advised him to enter into the battle with his robes on, which was but to make himself an easy mark to the enemy; and if really he intended that, it was as unprincipled a piece of treachery as ever man was guilty of, and justly was he himself taken in the pit he digged for his friend. The enemy had soon an eye upon the robes, and vigorously attacked the unwary prince, who, now, when it was too late, wished himself in the habit of the poorest soldier, rather than in his princely raiment. He cried out, either to his friends, to relieve him; (but Ahab took no care of that;) or to his enemies, to rectify their mistake, and let them know that he was not the king of Israel; or to God, for succour and deliverance; to whom else should he cry? And he found it was not in vain, the Lord helped him out of his distress, by moving the captains to depart from him, v. 31. God has all men’s hearts in his hand, and turns them as he pleases, contrary to their own first intentions, to serve his purposes. Many are moved unaccountably both to themselves and others, but an invisible power moves them. 2. Wicked Ahab disguising himself, arming himself, thereby, he thought, securing himself, and yet slain, v. 33. No art, no arms, can save those whom God has appointed to ruin. What can hurt those whom God will destroy? Jehoshaphat is safe in his robes, Ahab killed in his armour; for the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

CHAP. XIX.

We have here a further account of the good reign of Jehoshaphat. 1. His return in peace to Jerusalem, v. 1, II. The reproach given him for his league with Ahab, and his acting in conjunction, with him, v. 2, 3. III. The great care he took, thereupon, to reform his kingdom, v. 4. IV. The instructions he gave to his judges, both those in the country-towns that kept the inferior courts, v. 5., 7. and those in Jerusalem, that sat in the supreme judicature of the kingdom, v. 8., 11.

1. And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. 2. And Jehu, the son of Hanani the seer, went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord. 3. Nevertheless, there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thy heart to seek God. 4. And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people, from Beer-sheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the Lord God of their fathers.

Here is, 1. The great favour God showed to Jehoshaphat. 1. In bringing him back in safety from his dangerous expedition with Ahab, which had like to have cost him dear, v. 1. He returned to his house in peace. Notice is taken of this to intimate, (1.) That he fared better than he expected. He had been in imminent peril, and yet came home in peace. Whenever we return in peace to our houses, we ought to acknowledge God’s providence in preserving our going out and our coming in. But if we have been kept through more than ordinary dangers, we are, in a special manner bound to be thankful. There was but a step perhaps between us and death, and yet we are alive. (2.) That he fared better than he deserved; he was out of the way of his duty, had been out upon an expedition which he could not well account for to God and his conscience, and yet he returned in peace; for God is not extreme to mark what we do amiss, nor does he withdraw his protection every time we forget it. (3.) That he fared better than Ahab king of Israel, who was so much hated by the Lord: Jehoshaphat had said to Ahab, I am as thou art, God distinguished him, for he knows and owns the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish. Distinguishing mercies lay us under peculiarly strong obligations: two kings in the field together, one taken and the other left, one brought home in blood, the other in peace.

2. In sending him a reproof for his affinity with Ahab. It is a great mercy to be made sensible of our faults, and to be told, in time, wherein we have erred, that we may repent, and amend the error, before it be too late. The prophet by whom the reproof is sent, is, Jehu the son of Hanani: the father was an eminent prophet in the last reign, as appeared by Asa’s putting him in the stocks for his plain dealing; yet his son was not afraid to reprove his father’s son, nor was Jehu afraid to rebuke his son. It is a useful lesson, not only not discouraged, but animated, by his sufferings, 2 Tim. 3. 11, 14.

(1.) He tells him plainly, that he had done very ill in joining with Ahab; "Shouldest thou, a godly man, help the ungodly, give them a hand of fellowship, and lend them an assisting hand?" Or, "Shouldest thou love them that hate the Lord; wilt thou lay those in thy bosom, whom God beholds afar off?" It is the black character of wicked men, that they are haters of God, Rom. 1. 30. Idolaters are so reputed in the second commandment: and therefore it is not for those that love God, to take delight in them, or contract intimacy with them. Do not I hate those, says David, that hate thee? Ps. 139. 21, 22. Those whom the grace of God has dignified, ought not to debase themselves. Let God’s people be of God’s mind.

(2.) That God was displeased with him for doing this; "There is wrath upon thee, from before the Lord, and thou must, by repentance, make thy peace with him, or it will be the worse for thee." He did so, and God’s anger was turned away. Yet his trouble, as recorded in the next chapter, was a rebuke to him for meddling with strife that belonged not to him. If he be so fond of war, he shall have enough of it. And the great mischances which his seed after him fell into by the house of Ahab, was the just punishment of his affinity with that house.

(3.) Yet he takes notice of that which was praised worthy, as it is proper for us to do when we give a
reproof, v. 3, "There are good things found in thee; and therefore, though God be displeased with thee, he does not, he will not, cast thee off." His abasing idolatry with a heart fixed for God, and engaged to seek him, was a good thing which God accepted of, and would have him go on with, notwithstanding.

II. The return of duty which Jehoshaphat made to God for this favour. He took the reproof well, and was not wroth with the seer as his father was, but submitted. Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness. See what effect the reproof had upon him. 1. He dwelt at Jerusalem, v. 4. minded his own business at home, and would not expose himself by making any more such visits to Ahab. Rebuke a wise man, and he will be yet wiser, and will take warning. Prov. 9. 8, 9. To pine (as I may say) for the visit he made to Ahab, he made a pious profitable visitation of his own kingdom; he went out through the people in his own person from Beer-sheba in the south to Mount Ephraim in the north, and brought them back to the Lord. God of their fathers, that is, did all he could towards it.

(1.) By what the prophet said, he perceived that his former attempts for religious reformation were well-pleasing to God, and therefore he revived them, and did what was then left undone. It is good when commendations thus quicken us to our duty, and when the more we are praised for doing well, the more vigorous we are in well-doing. (2.) Perhaps he found that his late affinity with the idolatrous house of Ahab and kingdom of Israel, had had a bad influence upon his own kingdom; many we may suppose, were emboldened to revolt to idolatry, when they saw even their reforming king, so intimate with idolaters; and therefore he thought himself doubly obliged to do all he could to restore them. If we truly repent of our sin, we shall do our utmost to repair the damage we have any way done by it to religion, or the souls of others. We are particularly concerned to recover those that have fallen into sin, or been hardened in it by our example.

5. And he set judges in the land, throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city, 6. And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. 7. Wherefore now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts. 8. Moreover, in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the Lord, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem. 9. And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully, and with a perfect heart. 10. And what cause soever shall come to you or your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the Lord, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass. 11. And, behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of

the Lord; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters: also the Levites shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good.

Jehoshaphat having done what he could, to make his people good, he is here providing, if possible, to keep them by the influence of his government. He had sent preachers among them, to instruct them, ch. 17. 7. 9. and that provision did well: but now he saw it further requisite to send judges among them, to see the laws put in execution, and to be a terror to evil doers. It is probable that there were judges up and down the country before, but either they neglected their business, or the people slighted them, so that the end of their institution was not answered; and therefore it was necessary it should be new modelled, new men employed, and a new charge given them. That is it, which is here done.

I. He erected inferior courts of justice in the several cities of the kingdom, v. 5. The judges of these courts were to keep the people in the worship of God, and to see the observance of the law, and to decide controversies between man and man. Here is the charge he gave them, v. 6. In which we have,

1. The means he prescribes to them, for the keeping of them close to their duty; and these are two. (1.) Great caution and circumspection: Take heed what ye do, v. 6. And again, "Take heed and do it, (v. 7.) Mind your business; take heed of making any mistakes; be afraid of misunderstanding any point of law, or the matter of fact." Judges, of all men, have need to be cautious, because so much depends upon their taking a thing right, (2.)

Great piety and religion: Let the fear of God be upon you, that will be a restraint upon you to keep you from doing wrong, Neh. 3. 15. Gen. 42. 18, and an encouragement to you to be active in doing the duty of your place." Let destruction from God be a terror to them, as Job speaks, Job 31. 23, and then they will be a terror to none but evil doers.

2. The motives he would have them consider, to engage them to faithfulness: these are three, all taken from God. (1.) That from him they had their commission; his ministers they were. The powers that be, are ordained by him, and for him. "Ye judge not for man, but for the Lord; your business is to do what he wills by you, for the end of his kingdom among men," (2.) That his eye was upon them: "He is with you in the judgment, to take notice what you do, and call you to an account if you do amiss." (3.) That he is the great Example of justice to all magistrates: There is no iniquity with him, no bribery, nor respect to persons. Magistrates are called gods, and therefore must endeavour to resemble him.

II. He erects a supreme court at Jerusalem, which was advised with, and appealed to, in all the difficult causes that occurred in the inferior courts, and which gave judgment upon demurrers, (to speak in the language of our own law,) special verdicts, and writs of error. This court sat in Jerusalem, for there were set the thrones of judgment, there they would be under the inspection of the king himself. Observe.

1. The causes cognizable in this court; and they were of two kinds, as with us. (1.) Pleas of the crown, called here the judgment of the Lord, because the law of God was the law of the realm. All criminals were charged with the breach of some part of his law, and were said to offend against his peace, his crown and dignity. (2.) Common pleas, between party and party, called here cov
I. Chronicles, XX.

We have here, I. The great danger and distress that Jehoshaphat and his kingdom were in from a foreign invasion, v. 1, 2. II. The pious course he took for their safety, by fasting, and praying, and seeking God, v. 3–13. III. The assurance which God, by a prophet, immediately gave them of victory, v. 14–17. IV. Their thankful believing reception of those assurances, v. 18–21. V. The defeat which God gave to their enemies, thereupon, v. 22–25. VI. A solemn thanksgiving which they kept for their victory, and for the happy consequences of it, v. 26–30. VII. The conclusion of the reign of Jehoshaphat, not without some blemishes, v. 31–37.

1. It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other besides the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. 2. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea, on this side Syria: and, behold, they be in Hazazon-tamar, which is En-gedi. 3. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. 4. And Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord; even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. 5. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, 6. And said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thy hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? 7. Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? 8. And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, 9. If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help. 10. And now, behold, the children of Ammon, and Moab, and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; 11. Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. 12. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee. 13. And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

We left Jehoshaphat, in the foregoing chapter, well employed in reforming his kingdom, and providing for the due administration of justice, and support of religion, in it, and expected nothing but to hear of the peace and prosperity of his reign; but here we have him in distress, which distress, how-
ever was followed by such a glorious deliverance as was an abundant recompense for his piety. If we meet with trouble in the way of duty, we may believe it is that God may have an opportunity of showing us so much the more of his marvellous loving kindness. We have here,

1. A formidable invasion of Jehoshaphat's kingdom by the Moabites and Ammonites, and their auxiliaries, v. 1. Jehoshaphat was surprised with the intelligence of it, when the enemy had already entered, must do, if, v. 2. What pretence they had to quarrel with Jehoshaphat, does not appear; they said are come from beyond the sea, meaning the dead sea, where Sodom stood. It should seem, they marched through those of the ten tribes that lay beyond Jordan, and they gave them passage through their borders; so ungrateful were they to Jehoshaphat who had lately put his hand to help them. Several nations joined in this confederacy, but especially the children of Lot, whom the rest helped, Ps. 83. 6-8. The neighbouring nations had feared Jehoshaphat, ch. 17. 10. but perhaps his affinity with Ahab had lessened him in their esteem, and they had some intimation that his God was displeased with him for it, which they fancied would give them an opportunity to make a prey of his kingdom. By this time Ahab had had signals of the approach of the invaders. No mention is made of his mustering his forces, which yet it is most probable that he did, for God must be trusted in the use of means. But his great care was, to obtain the favour of God, and secure him on his side, which perhaps he was the more solicitous about, because he had been lately told that there was wrath upon him from before the Lord, ch. 19. 2. But he lost the mind of his father, and was ungrateful, yea, not to fall into the hands of man. 1. He feared; consciousness of guilt made him fear; those that have least sin, are most sensible of it: the surprise added to the fright. Holy fear is a spur to prayer and preparation, Heb. 11. 7. 2. He set himself to seek the Lord, and, in the first place, to make him his friend, that they would seek the Lord so as to find him, and to find favour with him, must set themselves to seek him, with the utmost vigour and resolution to continue seeking him. 3. He proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah, appointed a day of humiliation and prayer, that they might join together in confessing their sins we had. Several meetings of the people joined together, with sincerity of intention, and with the utmost vigour and resolution to continue seeking him. 4. He proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah, appointed a day of humiliation and prayer, that they might join together in confessing their sins and asking help of the Lord. Fasting from bodily refreshments, upon such extraordinary occasions, is a token of their in recovering the sins we had. Several meetings of the people joined together, with sincerity of intention, and with the utmost vigour and resolution to continue seeking him. 5. He set himself to seek the Lord, and, in the first place, to make him his friend, that they would seek the Lord so as to find him, and to find favour with him, must set themselves to seek him, with the utmost vigour and resolution to continue seeking him. 6. He set himself to seek the Lord, and, in the first place, to make him his friend, that they would seek the Lord so as to find him, and to find favour with him, must set themselves to seek him, with the utmost vigour and resolution to continue seeking him. 7. We hold this land by grant from thee. Lord, maintain thine own grant, and warrant it against all unjust claims. Suffer us not to be cast out of thy possession, we are tenants, thou art our landlord, wilt thou not hold thine own? v. 11. They that use what they have for God, may comfortably hope that he will secure it to them. 8. He makes mention of the sanctuary, the temple they had built for God's name, v. 8. For instance, if he should receive anything that God's house, and for his own sake, we offer it, that we may be excused, v. 9. 9. If they were not willing to give it, no, not though they were emboldened by any argument of their own, no, not though they provoke you; yet now see how they invade us. We may comfortably appeal to God against those that render us evil for good. 10. They break in upon our ancient rights. They come to cast us out of our possessions, and seize our land for themselves; O our God, wilt thou not judge them, v. 12. Wilt thou not give judgment against them, and execute it upon them? The justice of God is the refuge of those that are wronged. 11. The place they met in, was the house of the Lord, before the new court, which was perhaps lately added to the former courts, that, as some think, which was called the court of the women; thus they came within reach of that gracious pro-

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11. But thou, none that we can expect any thing from, without thy special presence and blessing, none to boast of, none to trust to; but our eyes are upon thee, we rely upon thee, and from thee is all our expectation. The disease seems desperate, we know not what to do, we are quite at a loss, in a great strait; but this is a sovereign remedy, our eyes are upon thee, an eye of acknowledgment and humble submission, an eye of faith and entire dependence, an eye of desire and hearty prayer, an eye of hope and patient expectation. "In thee, O God, do we put our trust; our souls wait on thee." 14. Then upon Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jediel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite, of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation; and he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat; Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. 16. To-morrow go ye down against them; behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz: and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. 17. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go out against them; for the Lord will be with you. 18. And Jehoshaphat bowed his head, with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshiping the Lord. 19. And the Levites of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

We have here God's gracious answer to Jehoshaphat's prayer; and it was a speedy answer; while he was yet speaking, God heard; before the congregation was dismissed, they had assurance given them that they should be victorious, for it is never in vain to seek God.

1. The spirit of prophecy came upon a Levite that was present, not in any place of eminency, but in the midst of the congregation, v. 14. The Spirit, like the wind, blow where, and on whom, he listeth. He was of the sons of Asaph, and therefore one of the singers; on that office God would put an honour. Whether he was a prophet before this or no, is uncertain, most probably he was, which would make him the more regarded. There needed no sign, the thing itself was to be performed the very next day, and that would be confirmation enough to his prophecy.

2. He encouraged them to trust in God, though the danger was very threatening, v. 15. "Be not afraid; you have admitted fear enough to bring you to God, do not now admit that which will drive you from him again. The battle is not yours; it is not in your own strength, nor for your own cause, that you engage, the battle is God's, he does and will, as you have desired, interest himself in the cause."

3. He gives them intelligence of the motions of the enemy, and orders them to march toward them, with particular directions where they should find them. To-morrow (the day after the fast,) go ye down against them, v. 16, 17. It is fit that he who commands the deliverance, should command those for whom the deliverance is to be wrought, and give the necessary orders, both for time and place.

4. He assures them, that they should be, not the glorious instruments, but the joyful spectators, of the total defeat of the enemy. "You shall not need to strike a stroke, the work shall be done to your hands, only stand still and see it," v. 17. As Moses said to Israel at the Red-sea, Exod. 14. 13, "God is with you, who is able to do his work himself, and who will do it; if you battle he will battle on his too." Let but the christian soldier go out against his spiritual enemies, and the God of peace will tread them under his feet, and make him more than a conqueror.

5. Jehoshaphat and his people received these as surrenaces with faith, reverence, and thankfulness. (1.) They bowed their heads. Jehoshaphat first, and then all the people, fell before the Lord, and worshiped, receiving with a holy awe and fear of God this token of his favour, and saying with faith, Be it unto us according to thy word. (2.) They lifted up their voices in praise to God, v. 19. An active faith can give thanks for a promise, though it be not yet performed, knowing that God's bonds are as good as ready money; God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice, Ps. 60. 6.

20. And they rose early in the morning and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. 21. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever. 22. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. 23. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. 24. And when Judah came toward the watch-tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped. 25. And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance, both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, (which they stripped off for themselves,) more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much. 26. And on the
Day, they assembled themselves in the valley of Beracah; for there they blessed the Lord; therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Beracah, unto this day. 27. Then they returned every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy: for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies. 28. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets, unto the house of the Lord. 29. And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel. 30. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet; for his God gave him rest round about.

We have here the foregoing prayer answered, and the foregoing promise performed, in the total overthrow of the enemies' forces, and the triumph (for so it was rather than a victory) of Jehoshaphat's forces over them.

I. Never was army drawn out to the field of battle so as Jehoshaphat's army was. He had soldiers ready furnished for battle, ch. 18, but here is no notice taken of their military equipment, their swords or spears, their shields or bows. But Jehoshaphat took care, 1. That faith should be their armour; as they went forth instead of calling them to handle their arms, and stand to them, to keep ranks, observe orders, and fight valiantly, he bids them believe in the Lord God, and give credit to his word in the mouth of his prophets, then they should trust in the Lord, and he established, ver. 18. That is true courage, which faith inspires a man with; nor will any thing contribute more to the establishing of the heart in shaking times, than a firm belief of the power, and mercy, and promise of God. The heart is fixed, that thus trusteth in the Lord, and is kept in perfect peace. In our spiritual conflicts, this is the victory, this is the prosperity, even our faith. 2. That praise and thanksgiving should be their vesture; and Jehoshaphat called a council of war, and it was resolved to appoint singers to go out before the army, to charge in the front, who had nothing else to do but to praise God, to praise his holiness, which is his beauty; to praise him as they did in the temple, that beauty of holiness, with that ancient and good doxology which eternity itself will not wear threadbare, Praise the Lord: for his mercy endureth for ever. By this strange subtlety toward the field of battle, Jehoshaphat intended to express his firm reliance upon the word of God, (which enabled him to triumph, before the battle,) to animate his own soldiers, to confound the enemy, and to engage God on their side; for praise pleases God better than all burnt-offering and sacrifice.

II. Never was army so unaccountably destroyed as that of the enemy; not by thunder, or hail, or the sword of an angel, not by dint of sword, or strength of arm, or any surprising alarm, like that which Gideon gave the Midianites; but the Lord set ambushments against them, either hosts of angels, or as Bishop Patrick thinks, their own ambushments, whom God struck with such confusion, that they fell upon their own friends as if they had been enemies, and everybody helped to destroy another, so that none escaped. This God did, when his people began to sing and to praise, v. 22. for he delights to furnish those with matter for praise, that have hearts for it. We read of his being angry at the prayers of his people, Ps. 80. 4, but never at their promises. When they did but begin the work of praise, God perfected the work of their deliverance. What ground there was for the failings of one another, does not appear, perhaps there was none; but so it was, that the Ammonites and the Moabites fell foul upon the Edomites and cut them off, and then they fell out with one another and cut one another off, v. 23. Thus God often makes wicked people instruments of destruction to another; and what alliances can be so firm as to keep those together, which he designed to be in pieces one against another? See the consequence of divisions which neither of the contending parties can give any good account of the reason of. Those are wretchedly infatuated, to their ruin, that fall foul upon their friends as if they were enemies.

III. Never was spoil so cheerfully divided, for Jehoshaphat's army had nothing to do besides; the rest was done for them. When they came to the view of this vast army, instead of finding living men to fight with, they found them dead men, and their carcases spread as dung upon the face of the earth, v. 24. See how rich God is in mercy to them that call upon him in truth, and how often he outdoes the prayers and expectations of his people. Jehoshaphat and his people prayed to be delivered from being spoiled by the enemy; and God not only did that, but enrich'd them with the spoil of the enemies. It is one of the greatest things that can happen to us, the Lord is pleased to multiply the spoils we have been allowed to receive, and give us new friends, and new strength, and new abundance, and besides a second and third blessing, to those blessings which we thought we must have lost. This was a three days in gathering it, v. 25. Now it appeared what was God's end in bringing this great army against Judah; it was to humble them and prove them, that he might do them good in their latter end. It is a great, but a very common trial, to be greatly blessed, and then to be greatly humbled; this was the trial of Berachah, that is, of blessing, v. 26. The remembrance of this work of wonder was hereby perpetuated for the encouragement of succeeding generations to trust in God. 2. Yet they did not think this enough, but came in solemn procession, all in a body, and Jehoshaphat at the head of them, to Jerusalem, that the country as they passed along, might join with them in their praises, and that they might give thanksgiving and triumph for God's doings by prayer obtained, in the house of the Lord, v. 27, 28. Praising God must not be the work of a day only; but our praises, when we have received mercy, must be often repeated, as our prayers were, when we were in the pursuit of it. Every day we must bless God; as long as we live, and while we have any being, we must praise him, depending upon him in that we are, and spend our eternity. Public mercies call for public acknowledgments, in the courts of the Lord's house, Ps. 116. 19.

V. Never did victory turn to a better account than this, for, 1. Jehoshaphat's kingdom was hereby made to look very great and considerable abroad, v. 29. When they heard that God fought thus for Israel, they could not but say, There is none like unto God the God of Jeshurun, and Hapby art thou, O Israel! It begat in the neighbours a
reverence of God, and a cautious fear of doing any injury to his people. It is dangerous fighting against those who have God with them. It was made very easy and quiet at home, v. 30. They were quiet among themselves. Those that were displeased at the destroying of the images and groves, were now satisfied, and obliged to own that since the God of Israel could deliver after this sort, he only is to be worshipped, and in that way only which himself has appointed. They were also quiet from the fear of insults from their neighbours, God having given them rest round about. And if he give rest, who can give disturbance?

31. And Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem: and his mother’s name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. 32. And he walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord. 33. Howbeit the high places were not taken away; for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers. 34. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold they are written in the book of Jehu, the son of Hanani, who is mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel. 35. And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly. 36. And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Ezion-gaber. 37. Then Eliezer, the son of Dodavah of Mareshah, prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

We are now drawing toward the close of the history of Jehoshaphat’s reign, for a further account of which, they who lived when this book was published, were referred to an authentic history of it, written by Jehu the prophet, ch. 19. 2. which was then extant, v. 34. This was the general character of his reign, that he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; kept close to the worship of God himself, and did what he could to keep his people close to it. But two things are here to be lamented; 1. The people still retained a partiality for the high places, v. 33. Those that were erected to the honour of strange gods, were taken away, ch. 17. 6, but those where the true God was worshipped, being less culpable, were thought allowable, and Jehoshaphat was loath to disoblige the people so far as to take them away, for as yet they had not prepared their hearts to the God of their fathers. They complied with Jehoshaphat’s reformation, because they could not, for shame, do otherwise, but they were not hearty in it, did not direct their hearts to God in it, did not act in it from any good principle, nor with any zeal or resolution: and the best magistrates cannot bring to pass what they would in reformation, when the people are cool in it.

for the house of Ahab, because he had married his son to a daughter of that family, though he had been plainly reproofed for it, and had like to have smarted for it. He saw and knew that Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, did very wickedly, and therefore could not expect to prosper; yet he joined himself with him, not in war, as with his father, but in trade, became his partner in an East-India fleet bound for Ophir, v. 35, 36. There is an emphasis laid upon the time, after this, after God had done such great things for him, without any such scandalous and pernicious confederacies, given him not only victory, but wealth; yet, after this, to go and join himself with a wicked king, was very ungrateful. After God had given him such a deliverance as this, how he again break God’s commandments, and join in affinity with the foes of God’s abominations? What could he expect but that God should be angry with him? Ezra 9. 13, 14. Yet he sends to him, to show him his error, and bring him to repentance, (1.) By a prophet, who foretold the blasting of his project, v. 37. And, (2.) By a storm, which brake the ships in the port before they set from thence, by which he was warned to break off his alliance with Ahaziah, and to turn his homeward; for when Ahaziah afterward pressed him to join with him he would not, 1 Kings 22, 49. See how pernicious a thing it is to join in friendship and society with evil-doers, it is a hard matter to break off from it. A man may much better keep himself from being taken in the snare, than recover himself out of it.

CHAP. XXI.

Never surely did any kingdom change its king so much for the worse as Judah did, when Jehoram, one of the vilest, succeeded Jehoshaphat, one of the best. Thus were they punished for not making a better use of Jehoshaphat’s good government, and their disaffectedness (at least) to his reformation, ch. 20. 32. They that knew not how to value a good king, are justly plagued with a bad one. Here is, 1. Jehovah’s elevation to the throne, v. 1–3. 2. Jehoram’s wickedness, v. 5, 8. 3. The wicked course he took to establish himself in it, by the murder of his brethren, v. 4. III. The idolatries, and other wickedness he was guilty of, v. 5, 6, 11. IV. The prophecy of Elijah against him, v. 12, 15. 5. The judgments of God on him, and the revolt of his subjects from him, v. 8, 10. and the success of his enemies against him, v. 16, 17. VI. His miserable sickness, and inglorious exit, v. 18, 20. VII. The preservation of the house of David notwithstanding, v. 7.

1. NOW Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead. 2. And he had brethren, the sons of Jehoshaphat, Azariah, and Jehiel, and Zechariah, and Azariah, and Michael, and Shephathiah: all these were the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Judah. 3. And their father gave them great gifts of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with fenced cities in Judah: but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram, because he was the first-born. 4. Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers also of the princes of Israel. 5. Jehoram was thirty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 6. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab; for he
had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord. 7. Howbeit the Lord would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever. 8. In his days the Edomites revolted from under the dominion of Judah, and made themselves a king. 9. Then Jehoram went forth with his princes, and all his chariots with him: and he rose up by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him in, and the captains of the chariots. 10. So the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. The same time also did Libnah revolt from under his hand; because he had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers. 11. Moreover, he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah thereto.

We find here,
I. That Jehoshaphat was a very careful indulgent father to Jehoram. He had many sons, who are here named, v. 2. and it is said (v. 13.) that they were better than Jehoram, had a great deal more wisdom and virtue, and lived up to their education, which he went counter to. They were very hopeful, and any of them more fit for the crown than he; and yet because he was the first born, v. 3. his father secured the kingdom to him, and portioned his brethren, and disposed of them so as that they would be easy, and give him the peace of mind that his, as Abraham, when he made Isaac his heir, dismissed his other children with gifts. Herein Jehoshaphat was very kind and fair to his son, which might have obliged him to be respectful to him, and tread in the steps of so good a father. But it is no new thing for the children that have been most indulged by their parents, to be least dutiful to them. Whether, in doing this, he acted wisely and well for his people, and was just to them, I cannot say. His birth-right entitled him to a double portion of his father's estate, Deut. 21. 17. But if he appeared utterly unfit for government, (the end of which is the good of the people,) and likely to undo all that his father had done, it had been better perhaps to have set him aside, and taken the next that was hopeful, and not inclined, as he was, to idolatry. Power is a sacred thing, with which men may either do much good or much hurt; and therefore Deuteronomy—Let him that deserveth it, have it. Salus populi suprema lex—The security of the people is the first consideration.
II. That Jehoram was a most barbarous brother to his father's sons. As soon as he had settled himself in the throne, he slew all his brethren with the sword, either by false accusation, under colour of law, or rather by assassination, by some wicked hand, or murder, to which he was very much inclined (it is likely) that he could not think himself safe in the government till they were taken out of the way. Those that mean ill themselves, are commonly, without cause, jealous of those about them. The wicked fear where no fear is, or pretend to do so, in order to conceal their malice. Jehoram, it is likely, hated his brethren, and slew them, for the same reason that Cain hated Abel, and slew him, because their piety condemned his impiety, and won them that esteem with the people, which he had lost. With them he slew divers of the princes of Israel, who adhered to them, who were likely to avenge their death. The princes of Judah, those who had taught the good knowledge of the Lord, ch. 17. 7. and given him no disturbance, or disturbance of his kingdom, ch. 19. 8. because they were Israelites, indeed men of integrity. The sword which the good father had put into their hands, this wicked son sheathed in their bowels. Woe unto him that thus foundeth a kingdom in blood, Hab. 2. 12. it will prove a foundation that will sink the superstructure.
III. That Jehoram was a most wicked king, who corrupted and debauched his kingdom, and ruined the reformation that his good father and grandfather had carried on; he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, v. 6. made high places which the people were of themselves too forward to make, and did his utmost to set up idolatry again, v. 11. As for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, where he kept his court, he easily drew them into his spiritual whoredom; he caused them to commit fornications, seducing them to eat things sacrificed to idols, Rev. 2. 20. 2. The country people seem to have been brought to it with more difficulty; but they that would not be corrupted by flatteries, were driven by force, to partake in his abominable idolatries; he compelled Judah thereto. He used that power for the destruction of the church, which was given him for the edification of it.
IV. That when he forsook God and his worship, his subjects forsook his allegiance to him. 1. Some of the provinces abroad did so, that were tributaries to him. The Edomites revolted, v. 8. and though he chastised them, v. 9. yet he could not reduce them, v. 10. 2. One of the cities of his own kingdom did so: Libnah revolted, v. 10. and set up for a free state, as of old it had a king of its own, Josh. 12. 15. And the reason is here given, not only why God permitted it, but why they did it; they shook off his government, because he had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers, was become an idolater and a worshipper of false gods, and they could not continue subject to him, without some danger of being themselves also driven away from God and their duty. While he adhered to God, they adhered to him; but when he cast God off, they cast him off. Whether this reason will justify them in their revolt or no, it will justify God's Providence which ordered it so.
V. That yet God was tender of his covenant with the house of David, and therefore would not destroy the royal family, though it was so wretchedly corrupted and degenerated, v. 7. These things we had before, 2 Kings 8. 19. 22. The tenor of the covenant was, that David's seed should be visited for their transgressions, but the covenant should never be broken, Ps. 89. 30. 36. 12. And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah. 13. But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were better than thyself; 14. Behold, with a great plague will the Lord smite thy people, and
thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: 15. And thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day. 16. Moreover, the Lord stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians, that were near the Ethiopians. 17. And they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons. 18. And after all this the Lord smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease. 19. And it came to pass, that, in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness, so he died of sore diseases: and his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers. 20. Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years, and departed without being desired; howbeit they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchre of the kings.

Here we have,

I. A warning from God sent to Jehoram by a writing from Elijah the prophet. By this it appears that Jehoram came to the throne, and showed himself what he was, before Elijah's translation. It is then that we find Elisha, attending Jehoshaphat, and described as pouring water on the hands of Elijah, after the story of Elijah's translation, 2 Kings 3. 11. but that might be, and that description might be given of him, while Elijah was yet on earth: and it is certain that that history is put out of its proper place, for we read of Jehoshaphat's death, and Jehoram's coming to the crown, before we read of Elijah's translation, 1 Kings 22. 50. We will suppose that the time of his departure was at hand, so that he could not go in person to Jehoram; but that hearing of his great wickedness in murdering his brethren, he left this writing, it is probable, with Elisha, to be sent him by the first opportunity, that it might either be a means to reclaim him, or a witness against him, that he was fairly told what would be in the end hereof. The message is sent him in the name of the Lord God of David his father, v. 12. His conformity to the ways of the house of Ahab, that he might make a scandalous family.—His setting up and enforcing idolatry in his kingdom—and his murdering his brethren because they were better than himself, v. 13. These are the heads of the indictment against him.

2. Judgment is given against him for these crimes; he is plainly told, that his sin should certainly be the ruin, (L. of his kingdom and family, v. 14. "With a heavy stroke, even that of war and captivity, will the Lord smite thy people and thy child-
ren, &c. Bad men bring God's judgments upon all about them. His people justly suffer, because they had complied with his idolatry, and his wives, because they had drawn him to it. (2.) Of his health and life; Thou shalt have great sickness, very painful and tedious, and, at last, mortal, 22. This he is warned of before, that his blood might be upon his own head, the watchman having delivered his soul; and that when these things, so particularly foretold, came to pass, it might appear that they did not come by chance, but as the punishment of his sins, and were so intended. And now if, as he had learned of Ahab to do wickedly, he had but learned even of Ahab to humble himself, upon the receipt of these threatening messages from Elijah, (compare 1 Kings 21. 27.) he had rent his clothes, put on sackcloth, and fasted, who knows but, like him, he might have obtained, at least, a reprieve? But it does not appear that he took any notice of it, he threw it by as waste-paper; Elijah seemed to him as one that mocked. But they that will not believe, shall feel. II. The threatened judgments brought upon him, because he slighted the threatenings. A marvellous hardening of sinners is not frant onstage, moved to repentance, by the threatenings of misery in another world, which is future and out of sight, when the certain prospect of misery in this world, the sinking of their estates, and the ruin of their healths, will not restrain them from vicious courses.

1. See Jehoram here stripped of all his comforts. God stirred up the spirit of his neighbours against him, who had abased and treated Elisha, and hated and despised him, looking upon it as a scandalous thing for a nation to change their gods. Some occasion or other they took to quarrel with him, invaded his country, but, as it should seem, fought neither against small nor great, but the king's house only: they made directly to that, and carried away all the substance that was found in it; no mention is made of their carrying away any way captives, but the king's wives, and his sons, v. 17. Thus God made it evident, that the controversy was with him and his house. Here it is only said, They carried away his sons; but we find, ch. 22. 1. that they slew them all: blood for blood. He had slain all his brethren, to strengthen himself; and now, all his sons are slain, but one, and so he is weakened. If he had not been of the house of David, that one had not escaped; when Jeroboam's house, and Baasha's, that of Bani, and of Baasha's son Nadab, were destroyed, one left; but David's house must not be wholly extirpated, though sometimes wretchedly degenerated, because a blessing was in it; no less a blessing than that of the Messiah.

3. See him tormented with sore diseases and of long continuance, such as were threatened in the law against those that would not fear the Lord their God, Deut. 28. 58. For two years he continued ill, and could get no relief; for the disease was incurable, though he was in the prime of life, not 40 years old. Asa, whose heart was perfect with God, though in some instances he stooped aside, was diseased only in his feet; but Jehoram, whose heart was wicked, was struck with a more inveterate disease. His passion toward his brethren, was so plagued in his bowels that they fell out. Even good men, and those who are very dear to God, may be afflicted with diseases of this kind; but to them they are fatherly chastisements, and by the support of divine consolations the soul may dwell at ease even then when the body lies in pain. These sore diseases seized him, just after his house was plundered, and his wives and children carried away. (1.) Perhaps his grief and anguish of mind for that calamity, might
occasion his sickness, or at least, contribute to the heightening of it. (2.) By this sickness, he was disabled to do any thing for the recovery of them, or the revenge of the injury done him. (3.) It added, no doubt, very much to his grief, in his sickness, that he wanted the society of his wives and children, and that all the substance of his house was carried away. To be sick and poor, sick and solitary, but especially to be sick in sin, sick, and under the curse of God, sick, and destitute of grace to bear it with, no inward comfort to balance it with—is a most deplorable case.

3. See him buried in disgrace. He reigned but 8 years, and then deserted without being desired, v. 20. No body valued him or lamented him when he died, but wished no greater loss might ever come to Jerusalem. To show what little affection or respect they had for him, they would not bury him in the sepulchres of the kings, as thinking him unworthy to be numbered among them, who had governed so ill. The excluding of his body from the sepulchres of his fathers, might be ordered by Providence, as an intimation of the everlasting separation of the souls of the wicked from all the spirits of just men. This further disgrace they put upon him, that they made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers, v. 19. His memory was far from being sweet and precious to them, and therefore they did not honour it with any sweet odours or precious spices; though we may suppose that his dead body, after so long and loathsome a disease, needed something to perfume it. The generality of the people, though prone enough to idolatry, yet had no true kindness for their idolatrous kings. Wickedness and profligacy make men despicable, even in the eyes of those who have but little religion themselves, while natural conscience itself often gives honour to those who are truly pious. They that despise God, shall be lightly esteemed, as Jehoram was.

CHAP. XXII.

We read, in the foregoing chapter, of the carrying away of Jehoram's sons and his wives; but here we find one of his sons, and learn of his sons, that his son Ahaziah, and his wife Athaliah, both reserved to be the shame and plague of his family. I. Ahaziah was the shame of it as a paraker. 1. In the sin, and 2. In the destruction, of the house of Ahab, v. 1-8. II. Athaliah was the plague of it too. She defiled all the seed-royal, and usurped the throne, v. 10-12.

1. AND the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his stead: for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had slain all the eldest. So Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram king of Judah, reigned. 2. Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Athaliah the daughter of Omri. 3. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly. 4. Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the Lord, like the house of Ahab: for they were his counsellors, after the death of his father, to his destruction. 5. He walked also after their counsel, and went with Jehoram, the son of Ahab, king of Israel, to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-gilead: and the Syrians smote

Joram. 6. And he returned to be healed in Jezreel, because of the wounds which were given him at Ramah, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria. And Azariah, the son of Jehoram king of Judah, went down to see Jehoram, the son of Ahab, at Jezreel, because he was sick. 7. And the destruction of Ahaziah was of God, by coming to Joram; for when he was come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu, the son of Nimshi, whom the Lord had appointed to cut off the house of Ahab. 8. And it came to pass, that when Jehu was executing judgment upon the house of Ahab, and found the princes of Judah, and the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah, that ministered to Ahaziah, he slew them. 9. And he sought Ahaziah: and they caught him, (for he was hid in Samaria,) and brought him to Jehu: and when they had slain him, they buried him: Because, said they, he is the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with all his heart. So the house of Ahaziah had no power to keep still the kingdom.

We have here an account of the reign of Ahaziah, a short reign, (of one year only,) yet long enough, unless it had been better. He was called Jehoahaz, ch. 21. 17. here Ahaziah, which is the same name, and of the same signification, only the words of which it is compounded, are transposed. He is here said to be 42 years old when he began to reign, v. 2. which could not be, for his father's, his immediate predecessor, was but 40 when he died; and it is said, 2 Kings 8. 26. that he was 22 years old when he began to reign. Some make this 42 to be the age of his mother Athaliah, for in the original it is, he was the son of 42 years, that is, the son of a mother that was of that age; and justly is her age put to his, in reproach to him, because he was reared by her, and did what she would, she, in effect, reigned, and he had little more than the title of king. Many good expositors are ready to allow that this, with some few more such difficulties, arises from the mistake of some transcriber, who put 42 for 22, and the copies by which the error should have been corrected, might be lost. Many ancient translations read it here 22. Few books are now printed without some errata; yet the authors do not therefore disown them, nor are the errors of the press imputed to the author, but the candid reader amendeth them by the sense, or by comparing them with some other part of the work, as we may easily do this.

The history of Ahaziah's reign is briefly summed up in two clauses, v. 3. 4. That his mother and her relations were his counsellors to do wickedly, all in his destruction.

I. He did wickedly. Though by a special providence of God he was preserved alive, when all his brethren were slain, and reserved for the crown, notwithstanding he was the youngest of them; though the inhabitants of Jerusalem, when they had buried his father ingloriously, made him king, in hopes he would take warning by that not to tread in his steps, but would do better for himself and his kingdom; yet he was not influenced by the favours either of God or man, but walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, did evil in the sight
of the Lord like them, v. 3, 4. that is, He worshipped the same false gods that they worshipped, Baalim and Ashtoreth, supposing (as the learned Bishop Patrick thinks) that by these demons, as mediators, they might have easier access to the supreme N u m e n, the God of Israel, or that these they might resort to at all times and for all matters, as beyond and not in the reach and volition, but of a middle nature, between the immortal God and mortal men—deified heroes; so they worshipped them as the church of Rome does saints and angels. That was sufficiently bad; but I wish there was no reason to suspect worse; I am apprehensive that they looked upon Jehovah, the God of their fathers, to be altogether such a one as these of Baalim, and them to be as great and as good as heirs, and as required by use, inasmuch as these of Baalim encouraged all manner of lewdness and sensuality, which the God of Israel strictly forbade.

II. He was counselled by his mother, and her relations to do so. She was his counsellor, v. 3, and so were they after the death of his father, v. 4. While his father lived, he took care to keep him to idolatry; but when he was dead, the house of Ahab feared lest his father's name and glory should deter him from it, and therefore they were very industrious to keep him close to it, and to make him seven times more a child of hell than themselves. The counsel of the ungodly is the ruin of many young persons, when they are setting out in the world. This young prince might have had better advice, if he had pleased, from the princes and the judges, the priests and Levites, that had been brought up in his good grandfather's times for teaching the knowledge of God; but the house of Ahab humoured him, and he walked after their counsel, gave himself up to be led by them, and did just as they would have him. Thus do they debauch and destroy themselves, that forsake the divine guidance.

III. He was counselled by them to his destruction. So it proved. Those that counsel us to do wickedly, counsel us to our destruction; while they favour and flatter, and pretend friendship, they are really our worst enemies. They that debase young men, destroy them. 1. It was bad enough that they exposed him to the sword of the Syrians, drawing him in to join with Joram king of Israel, in an expedition to Ramoth-gilead, where Joram was wounded; an expedition that was not for his honour. Those that give us bad counsel in the affairs of life, may justly be made by God our counsellors to do foolishly in our own affairs. But that was not all. 2. By engaging him in an intimacy with Joram king of Israel, they involved him in the common ruin of the house of Ahab. He came on a visit to Joram, v. 6, just at the time that Jehu was executing the judgment of God upon that idolatrous family, and so was cut off with them, v. 7—10.

Here (1.) See, and dread, the mischief of bad company, and of joining in with sinners. If not the infection, yet let the destruction be feared; Come out from Babylon, that falling house, Rev. 18. 4.

(2.) See, and acknowledge, the justice of God. His providence brought Ahaziah, just at this fatal juncture, to see Joram, that he might fall with him, and be taken as in a snare. This we had an account of in 2 Kings 9. 27, 28. Here it is added, that he was decently buried, (not as Jehoram, whose dead body was cast into Naboth's vineyard, 2 Kings 9. 26.) and the reason given is, because he was the son, that is the grandson, of good Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with all his heart. Thus is he remembered with honour long after his death, and some respect shown even to his degenerate and unworthy seed for his sake. The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.

10. But when Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she arose, and destroyed all the seed-royal of the house of Judah. 11. But Jehosheba, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bed-chamber. So Jehosheba, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. 12. And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land.

We have here what we had before, 2 Kings 11. 1, &c.

1. A wicked woman endeavouring to destroy the house of David, that she might set up a throne for herself upon the ruins of it. Athaliah barbaraously cut off all the seed-royal, v. 10, perhaps intending to transmit the crown of Judah after herself to some of her own relations, that though her family was cut off in Israel by Jehu, it might be planted in Judah.

2. A good woman, effectually preserving it from being wholly extinguished. One of the late king's sons, a child of a year old, was rescued from among the dead, and saved alive by the care of Jehoiada's wife, v. 11, 12, that a lamb might be ordained for God's anointed; for no word of God shall fall to the ground.

CHAP. XXIII.

Six years bloody Athaliah had tyrannised, in this chapter, we have her deposed and slain, and Joash, the rightful heir, enthroned. We had the account before, nearly as it is here related, 2 Kings, 11. 4, &c. I. Jehoiada prepared the people for the king, acquainted them with his design, armed them, and appointed them their posts, v. 1—10. II. He produced the king to the people, crowned and anointed him, v. 11. III. He slew the usurper, v. 12, 15. IV. He reformed the kingdom, re-established religion, and restored the civil government, v. 16—21.

1. And in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, and Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, and Azariah the son of Ober, and Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him. 2. And they went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. 3. And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the Lord hath said of the sons of David. 4. This is the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you entering on the sabbath, of the priests and of the Levites, shall be porters of the doors; 5. And a third part shall be at the king's house; and a third part at the gate of the foundation: and all the people...
shall be in the courts of the house of the Lord. 6. But let none come into the house of the Lord, save the priests, and they that minister of the Levites; they shall go in, for they are holy: but all the people shall keep the watch of the Lord. 7. And the Levites shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand; and whosoever else cometh into the house, he shall be put to death: but be you with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out. 8. So the Levites, and all Judah, did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest had commanded, and took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that were to go out on the sabbath: for Jehoiada the priest dismissed not the courses. 9. Moreover, Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains of hundreds and spears, and bucklers, and shields, that had been king David's, which were in the house of God. 10. And he set all the people, (every man having his weapon in his hand,) from the right side of the temple to the left side of the temple, along by the altar and the temple, by the king round about. 11. Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king: and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king.

We may well imagine the bad posture of affairs in Jerusalem during Athaliah's 6 years' usurpation, and may wonder that God permitted it, and his people shew it, the same. But after such a dark and tedious night the returning day in this revolution was the brighter and the more welcome; the continuance of David's seed and throne was what God had sworn by his holiness, Ps. 89. 36. and an interruption was no defeasance; the stream of government here runs again in the right channel. The instrument and chief manager of the restoration is Jehoiada. 1. He here appears to be a man of great conduct; that reserved the young prince for so many years till he was fit to appear in public, and till the nation was grown weary of the usurper; prepared his work beforehand, and then effected it with admirable secrecy and expedition. When God has work to do, he will qualify and animate men for it. 2. A man of great interest. The captains joined with him, v. 1. The Levites and the chief of the fathers of Israel came at his call to Jerusalem, v. 2. and were there ready to receive his orders. See what a command wisdom and virtue will give men. The Levites and all Judah did as Jehoiada commanded, v. 8. and, which is strange, all that were intrusted with the secret, kept their own counsel till it was executed. Thus the words of the wise are heard in quiet, Eccl. 9. 17. 3. A man of great faith. It was not only common equity, (much less his wife's relation to the royal family, that put him upon this undertaking,) but a regard to the word of God, and the divine entail of the crown, v. 3. The king's son shall reign, must reign, as the Lord hath said. His eye to the promise, and dependence upon that, added a great deal of glory to this undertaking. 4. A man of great religion. This matter was to be done in the temple, which might occasion some breach of rule, and the necessity of the case might be thought to excuse it; but he gave special order that none of the people should come into the house of the Lord, but the priests and Levites only, who were born upon pain of death, v. 6, 7. Never let sacred things be profaned, no not for the support of civil rights. 5. A man of great resolution. When he had undertaken this business, he went through with it, brought out the king, crowned him, and gave him the testimony, v. 11. He ventured his head, but it was in a good cause, and therefore he went on boldly. It is here said, that his sons joined with him in anointing the young king, one of whom, it is likely, was that Zechariah whom Joash afterward put to death for reproving him, ch. 24. 20. which was so much the more ungrateful, because he bore a willing part in anointing him. 12. Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the Lord. 13. And she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar at the entering in, and the princes and the trumpets by the king: and all the people of the land rejoiced, and sounded with trumpets; also the singers with instruments of music, and such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, treason! 14. Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth of the ranges: and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword. For the priest said, Slay her not in the house of the Lord. 15. So they laid hands on her: and when she was come to the entering of the horse-gate, by the king's house, they slew her there. 16. And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the Lord's people. 17. Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down, and brake his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. 18. Also Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the Lord by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the Lord, to offer the burnt-offerings of the Lord, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, as it was ordained by David. 19. And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the Lord, that none which was unclean in any thing should enter in. 20. And he took the captains of hundreds, and the nobles, and the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and brought down the king from the house of the Lord: and they came through the high gate into the king's house, and set the king upon the throne of the kingdom. 21. And all the people of the
land rejoiced: and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword.

Here is, 1. The people pleased, v. 12, 13. When the king stood at his pillar, whose right it was to stand there, all the people of the land rejoiced to see a rod spring out of the stem of Jesse, Isa. 11. 1. When it seemed a withered root in a dry ground, to see what they desired, a rose, a king of the house of David; what a pleasing surprise was it to them! They ran in transports of joy to see this sight, praised the king, and praised God, for they had with them such as taught to sing praise.

2. Athaliah slain. She ran herself upon the point of the sword of justice; for, imagining her interest much better than it was, she ventured into the house of the Lord, at that time, and cried, Treason, Treason! But he body seconded her, or sided with her; the pride of her heart deceived her; she thought all her own, whereas none were cordially so. Jehoiada, as protector in the king's minority, ordered her to be slain, v. 14. which was done immediately, v. 15. only care was taken that she should not be slain in the house of the Lord; that sacred place must not be so far disgraced, nor that wicked woman so far honoured.

3. The original contract agreed to, v. 16. In the Kings it was said, Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord, the people, and the king, 2 Kings 11. 17. Here it is said to be between himself, the people, and the king; for he, as God's priest, was his representative in this transaction, or a sort of mediator as Moses was. The indenture was tripartite, but the true intent of the whole was, that they should be the Lord's people. God covenanted by Jehoiada to take them for his people; the king and people covenanted with him to be his; and then the king covenanted with the people to govern them as the people of God, and the people with the king to be subject to him, as the Lord's people, in his fear, and for his sake. Let us look upon ourselves and one another as the Lord's people, and it will have a powerful influence upon us in the discharge of all our duties and man.

4. Baal destroyed, v. 17. They would not have done half their work, if they had destroyed the usurper of the king's right only, and not the usurper of God's right; if they had asserted the honour of the throne, and not that of the altar. The greatest grievance of Athaliah's reign, was the bringing in of the worship of Baal, and supporting of that; therefore that was to be abolished in the first place. Down with Baal's house, his altars, his images; down with them all, and let the blood of his priests be mingled with his sacrifices; for God had commanded that seducers to idolatry should be put to death, Deut. 13. 5, 6. The temple-service revived, v. 18, 19. This had been neglected in the last reigns; the priest and people wanting either power or zeal to keep it up, while they had received the benefits of it. But Jehoiada put the houses of the office of the Lord into the proper course and proper hands again, which in the late times had been disturbed and invaded. (1.) He appointed the priests to their courses, for the due offering of sacrifices, according to the law of Moses. (2.) The singers to their's, according to the appointment of David. The sacrifices (it should seem) they offered without joy and without singing; and well might they be; we joy in God when we receive the atonement, Rom. 5. 11. (3.) The porters were put in their respective posts as David ordered, v. 19. and their office was to take care that none who were upon any account ceremonially unclean, should be admitted into the courts of the temple.

6. The civil government re-established, v. 20. They brought the king in state to his own palace, and set him upon the throne of the kingdom, to give law, and give judgment, either in his own person, or in Jehoiada his tutor. Thus was this happy revolution perfected; the generality of the people rejoiced in it, the rest were quiet and made no opposition, v. 21. When the son of David is enthroned in the soul, all is quiet, and springs of joy are opened.

CHAP. XXIV.

We have here the history of the reign of Joash, the progress, and especially the period, of which was not of a piece with Baal's reign, nor alone with so much lustre. How wonderfully he was preserved for the throne, and placed in it, we read before; now here we are told how he began in the spirit, but ended in the flesh. 1. In the beginning of his time, while Jehoiada lived, he did well; particularly, he took care to put the temple in good repair, v. 1 . . 14. II. In the latter end of his time, after Jehoiada's death, he apostatized from God, and his apostasy was his ruin. 1. He set up the worship of Baal again, v. 15 . . 18, though warned to the contrary, v. 19. 2. He put Zechariah the prophet to death, because he reproved him for it, v. 20 . . 22. 3. The judgments of God came upon him for it. The Syrians invaded him, v. 23, 24. He was struck with sore diseases; his own servants conspired against him, and slew him; and, as a mark of infamy upon him, he was not buried in the burying-place of the kings, v. 25 . . 27.

1. Joash was seven years old when he began to reign; and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. 2. And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest. 3. And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters. 4. And it came to pass after this, that Joash was minded to repair the house of the Lord. 5. And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, Go out unto the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that ye hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hardened it not. 6. And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in, out of Judah and out of Jerusalem, the collection, according to the commandment of Moses the servant of the Lord, and of the congregation of Israel, for the tabernacle of witness? 7. For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the Lord did they bestow upon Baalim. 8. And at the king's commandment they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of the Lord. 9. And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in to the Lord the collection that Moses the servant of God laid upon Israel in the wilderness. 10. And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end. 11. Now it came to pass, that at what time the chest was brought unto the
king's office by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money, the king's scribe and the high priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to his place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance. 12. And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of the Lord, and hired masons and carpenters to repair the house of the Lord, and also such as wrought iron and brass to mend the house of the Lord. 13. So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it. 14. And when they had finished it, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels for the house of the Lord, even vessels to minister, and to offer withal, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver: and they offered burnt-offerings in the house of the Lord continually all the days of Jehoiada.

This account of Joash's good beginnings we had, as it stands here, 2 Kings 12. 1, &c. though the latter part of this chapter, concerning his apostasy, we had little of there. What is good in men we should take all occasions to speak of, and often repeat it; what is evil we should make mention of but sparingly, and no more than is needful.

We shall here only observe,

1. That it is a happy thing for young people, when they are setting out in the world, to be under the direction of those that are wise and good, and faithful to them, as Joash was under the influence of Jehoiada, during whose time he did that which was right. Let those that are young, reckon it a blessing to them, and not a burden and check upon them, to have those with them, that will caution them against that which is evil, and advise and quicken them to that which is good, and let them reckon it not a mark of weakness and subservience of wisdom and discretion, to hearken to such. He that will not be counselled, cannot be helped. It is especially prudent for young people to take advice in their marriages, as Joash did, who left it to his guardian to choose him his wives, because Jezebel and Athaliah had been such plagues, v. 3. That is a turn of life, which often proves either the making or marvelling of young people, and therefore should be attended to with great care.

2. Men may go far in the external performances of religion, and keep long to them, merely by the power of their education, and influence of their friends, who yet have no hearty affection for divine things, nor any inward relish of them. Foreign inducements may push men on to that which is good, who are not guided by a living principle of grace in their hearts.

3. In the shows of devotion, it is possible that those who have only the form of godliness, may outstrip those who have the power of it. Joash is more solicitous and more zealous about the repair of the temple than Jehoiada himself, whom he reproves for his remissness in that matter, v. 6. It is easier to build temples than to be temples to God.

4. The repairing of churches is a good work, which all in their places should promote, for the decency and conveniency of religious assemblies. The learned tell us, that in the christian church, anciently, part of the tithes were applied that way.

5. Many a good work would be done that now lies undone, if there were but a few active men to stir it up and put it forward. When Joash found that money did not come in as he expected one way, he tried another way, and that answered the intention. Many have honesty enough to follow, that have not zeal enough to lead, in that which is good. The throwing of money into a chest, through a hole in the lid of it, was a way that had not been used before, and perhaps the very novelty of the thing made it a successful expedient for the raising of money; a great deal was thrown in, and with a great deal of cheerfulness; they all rejoiced, v. 10. An invention to please people's humour may sometimes bring them to their duty. Wisdom herein is profitable to direct.

6. Faithfulness is the greatest praise, and will be the greatest comfort, of those that are intrusted with public treasure, or employed in public business. The king and Jehoiada faithfully paid the money to the workmen, who faithfully did the work, v. 12, 13.

15. But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died; a hundred and thirty years old was he when he died. 16. And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both towards God, and towards his house. 17. Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah and made obeisance to the king: then the king hearkened unto them. 18. And they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. 19. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the Lord; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear. 20. And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you. 21. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones, at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the Lord. 22. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son: and when he died, he said, The Lord look upon it, and require it. 23. And it came to pass, at the end of the year, that the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus. 24. For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the Lord delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers.
We have here a sad account of the degeneracy and apostasy of Joash. God had done great things for him; he had done something for God; but he proved ungrateful to his God, and false to the engagements he had laid himself under to him. How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed! Here we find,

I. The occasions of his apostasy; when he did that which was right, it was not with a perfect heart; he never was sincere, never acted from a principle, but in complaisance to Jehoiada, who had helped him to the crown, and because he had been protected in the temple, and rose upon the ruins of idolatry. And therefore when the wind turned, he turned with it.

1. His good counsellor left him, and was by death removed from him. It was a mercy to him and his kingdom that Jehoiada lived so long. One hundred and thirty years, v. 15. By which it appears that he was born in Solomon's time, and had lived six entire reigns before this. It was an encouragement to him to go on in that good way which Jehoiada had trained him up in, to see what honour was done to Jehoiada at his death: they buried him among the kings, with this honourable encomium, perhaps it was part of the inscription on his grave-stone, that he had done good in Israel. Jehoiada is called Israel, because to these other tribes, having revolted from God, they only were Israelites indeed. Note, It is the greatest honour to do good in our generations; and those who do that which is good, shall have praise of the same. He had done good toward God; not that any man's goodness can extend unto him, but he had done good toward his house, in reviving the temple-service, ch. 23. 8. Note, Those do the greatest good to their country, that lay out themselves in their places to promote religion. Well, Jehoiada finished his course with honour; but the little religion that Joash had was all buried in his grave, and after his death, both king and kingdom miserably degenerated. See how much one head may sustain, and what a great judgment to any prince or people, the death of godly, zealous, useful, men is. See how necessary it is that, as our Saviour taught, we should be one in act in religion from an inward principle, which will carry us on through all changes. Then the loss of a parent, a minister, a friend, will not be the losing of our religion.

2. Bad counsellors got about him, insinuated themselves into his affections, wheedled him, flattered him, made obeisance to him, and, instead of condoling, congratulated him upon the death of his old tutor, as his release from the discipline he had been so long under, unworthy a man, a king. They tell him he must be priest-ridden no longer, he is now discharged from grave lessons and restraints, he may do as he pleases; and (would you think it?) the princes of Judah were the men that were so undutious that to flatter him, v. 17. His father and grandfather were conspiring with the house of Ahab, from whom no better could be expected. But that the princes of Judah should be seducers to their king, was very sad. But they that incline to the counsels of the ungodly, will never want ungodly counsellors. They made obeisance to the king, flattered him into an opinion of his absolute power, promised to stand by him in making his will and had a reference for a law, any divine precept or institution to the dictate of his own will, and not of his kingdom. And he hearkened to them: their discourse pleased him, and was more agreeable than Jehoiada's dictates used to be. Princes, and inferior people, have been many a time thus flattered into their ruin by those who have promised them liberty and dignity, but who have really brought them into the greatest servitude and disgrace.

II. The apostasy itself, v. 18. They left the house of God, and served groves and idols. The princes, it is likely, had a request to the king, which they tell him they durst not offer while Jehoiada lived; but now they hope it will give no offence; it is, that they may set up the groves and idols again, which were thrown down in the beginning of his reign, for they hate to be always confined to the dull old-fashioned service of the temple. And he not only gave them leave to do it themselves, but he joined with them. The king and princes, who, a while ago, were repairing the temple, now forsook the temple; who had pulled down groves and idols, now themselves served them. So inconsistent a thing is man, and so little confidence to be put in him!

III. The aggravations of this apostasy, and the additions of guilt to it. God sent prophets to them, v. 19. to reprove them for their wickedness, and to tell them what would be in the end thereof, and so to bring them again unto the Lord. It is the work of ministers to bring people, not to themselves, but to God; to bring those again to him, who have gone a whoring from him. In the most degenerate times, God left not himself without a witness; though they had dealt very disingenuously with God, yet he sent prophets to them, to convince and instruct them, and to assure them that he who deals falsely with him, if yet they would return: for he would rather sinners should turn and live than go on and die; and they that perish, shall be left inexcusable. The prophets did their part, they testified against them; but few or none received their testimony.

1. They slighted all the prophets, they would not give ear; they were so strangely wedded to their idols, that no reproves, warnings, threatenings, or reproaches of the vantage of things would make them convince, would reclaim them. Few would hear them, fewer would heed them, but fewest of all would believe them or be governed by them.

2. They slew one of the most eminent; Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, and perhaps others. Concerning him observe,

(1.) The message which he delivered to them in the name of the Lord. The people were assembled in the court of the temple, (for they had not quite left it,) on occasion, probably of some solemn feast, when this Zechariah, being filled with the spirit of prophecy, and known (it is likely) to be a prophet, stood up in some of the desks that were in the court of the priests, and very plainly, but without any provoking language, told the people of their sin, and what would be the consequences of it. He does not impeach any particular persons, nor pre
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dict any particular judgments, as sometimes the
prophets did; but as ineffectually as possible re-
manded them of what was written in the law. Let
them but look into their Bibles, and there they
would find, [1.] The precept they broke; "Ye
transgress the commandments of the Lord,
you know you do so in serving groves and idols; and
why will you so offend God and wrong yourselves?"
[2.] The penalty they incurred; "You know if the
word of God be true, you cannot prosper in this
evil way; never expect to do ill, and live. Nay,
you find already that because you have for-
saken the Lord he hath forsaken you, as he told
you he would," Deut. 29. 25—31. 16, 17. This is
the work of ministers, by the word of God, as a
lamp, and a light, to discover the sin of men, and
expose the providences of God.

(2.) The barbarous treatment they gave him for
his kindness and faithfulness in delivering their
sage to them, v. 21. By the termination of the
princes, or some of their party, and by the com-
mandment of the king, who thought himself aff-
ronted by this fair warning, they stoned him to
death immediately; not, under colour of law, ac-
cusing him as a blasphemer, a traitor, or a false
prophet, but in a popular tumult, in the court of
the house of the Lord—as horrid a piece of wickedness
as perhaps any we read of in all the history of the
kingdom. The place is sacred, a place of the future
sacrifices, the court of the temple, the inner court,
between the porch and the altar; the message yet
more sacred, we have reason to think that they
knew it came from the spirit of prophecy; the re-
proof was just, the warning fair, both backed with
scripture, and the delivery very gentle and tender;
and yet so impudently and daringly do they defy
God himself, that nothing less than the blood of
the public worship and the king is not sufficient
for it. So that like an avaricious monarch they
polluted the court of the temple, the sabbath, and
the day of expiation; for, on that day, their tra-
dition says, this happened.

(3.) The aggravation of this sin; that this Zechar-
ian, who suffered martyrdom for his faithfulness to
God and his country, was the son of Jehoiada,
who had done so much good in Israel, and particu-
larly had been as a father to Joash, v. 22. The
affairs done by it to God, and the contempt put
on religion, are not so particularly taken notice of,
as the ingratitude there was in it to the memory of
Jehoiada. He remembered not the kindness of
the father, but slew the son for doing his duty, and
what the father would have done, if he had been there.
Call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no
worse.

(4.) The dying martyr's prophetic imprecation of
vengeance upon his murderers; "The Lord did
upon it, and require it! This came not from a
spirit of revenge, but a spirit of prophecy; He will
require it. This would be the continued cry of the
blood they shed, as Abel's blood cried against Cain:
"Let the God to whom vengeance belongs, demand
blood for blood." He will do it, for he is righteous.
This precious blood was reckoned for quickly in
the judgment that came upon him at the precipice
to which he was driven, for it came into the account afterward in the destruc-
tion of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans: their misusing of
the prophets was that which brought upon them
ruin without remedy, ch. 36. 16. nay, our Saviour
makes the persecutors of him and his gospel an-
swerable for the blood of this Zechariah; so loud,
so long, does the blood of the martyrs cry, see
Matth. 23. 35. such as this is the cry of the soul
under the altar, Rev. 6. 16, How long ere thou
avenge our blood? For it shall not always go un-
revenged.

Lastly, The judgments of God which came upon
Joash for this aggravated wickedness of his.
A small remnant of Syrians made themselves mas-
ters of Jerusalem, destroyed the princes, plundered
the city, and sent the spoil of it to Damascus, v. 23,
24. God's people, while they kept in with God,
had often been conquerors, when the enemy had
the advantage of the greater number; but now, on
the contrary, an inconsiderable handful of Syrians
raided a very great host of Israelites, because they
had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers; and
then the Lord, by the hands of his enemies, but opposed them with the utmost
disadvantage; for their God not only departed from
them, but turned to be their enemy and fought against
them. The Syrians were employed as in-
struments in God's hand to execute judgments against
Joash, though they little thought so, Isa.
10. 6, 7, and see Deut. 32. 30.

2. God smote him with great diseases of body, or
mind, or both; either like his grandfather, ch. 21.
18. or like Saul, an evil spirit from God troubling
him. While he was plagued with the Syrians, he
thought that if he could but get clear of them, he
should do well enough. But before they departed
from him, God smote him with diseases. If ven-
geance pursue men, the end of one trouble will be
the beginning of another.

3. His own servants conspired against him. Per-
haps he began to hope his disease would be cured,
he was but a middle-aged man, and might recover
it; but he that cometh up out of the pit, shall fall
into the snare; when he thought he should escape
death by sickness, he met it by the sword; they
slew him in his bed, for the blood of the sons of
Jehoiada; by which it should seem that he did not
only slay Zechariah, but others of the sons of
Jehoiada for his sake. Perhaps they that slew him,
intended to take vengeance for that blood; this,
however, was not that God intended, in permitting
them to do it. Those that drink the blood of the saints,
shall have their own blood given them to drink, for
they are worthy. The regicides are here named,
v. 26. and it is observable that the mothers of them
both were foreigners, one an Ammonitess, and the
other a Moabitess. The idolatrous kings, it is like-
ly, countenanced those marriages which the law
prohibited; and the prevention of idolatry; and see
how they resulted in their own destruction.

4. His people would not bury him in the sepul-
chres of the kings, because he had stained his ho-
nour by his mal-administration. Let him not be
written with the righteous, Ps. 69. 28. These judg-
ments are called the burdens laid upon him, v.
27. for the wrath of God is a heavy burden, too
heavy for any man to bear. Or it may be meant of
the threatenings denounced against him by the pro-
phets, for those are called burdens; usually God sets
some special marks of his displeasure upon apos-
etes, in this life, for warning to all to remember
Lot's wife.

CHAP. XXV.

Amaziah's reign is recorded in this chapter; none of the
worst, and yet far from good. Most of the passages in
this chapter we had before more briefly related, 2 Kings
15. Here we find Amaziah. I. A just reverent of his
father's death, v. 1—4. II. An obedient observer of the
command of God, v. 5—10. III. A cruel conqueror of
the Edomites, v. 11—13. IV. A foolish worshipper of
the gods of Edom, and impatient of reproof for it, v. 14. 16. V. Rashi challenging the king of Israel, and smarting for his rashness, v. 17. 24. And lastly, ending his days ingloriously, v. 25. 28.

1. A MAZIAH was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. 2. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart. 3. Now it came to pass, when the kingdom was established to him, that he slew his servants that had killed the king his father: 4. But he slew not their children, but did as it is written in the law in the book of Moses, where the Lord commanded, saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin. 5. Moreover, Amaziah gathered Judah together, and made them captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, according to the houses of their fathers, throughout all Judah and Benjamin: and he numbered them from twenty years old and above, and found them three hundred thousand choice men, able to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield. 6. He hired also a hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel for a hundred talents of silver. 7. But there came a man of God to him, saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the Lord is not with Israel, to wit, with all the children of Ephraim. 8. But if thou wilt go, do it, be strong for the battle: God shall make thee prevail before the enemy: for God hath power to help, and to cast down. 9. And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this. 10. Then Amaziah separated them, to wit, the army that was to come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again: wherefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in great anger. 11. And Amaziah strengthened himself, and led forth his people, and went to the valley of Salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand. 12. And other ten thousand left alive did the children of Judah carry away captive, and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, that they all were broken in pieces. 13. But the soldiers of the army which Amaziah sent back, that they should not go with him to battle, fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria even unto Beth-horon, and smote three thousand of them, and took much spoil.

Here is,

I. The general character of Amaziah. He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, worshipped the true God, kept the temple-service a-going, and countenanced religion in his kingdom; but he did not do it with a perfect heart, v. 2. that is, he was not a man of serious piety or devotion himself, nor had he any zeal for the exercises of religion. He was no enemy to it, but a cool and indifferent friend. Such is the character of too many in this Laodicean age: they do that which is good, but not with the heart, nor with a perfect heart.

II. A necessary piece of justice which he did upon the traitors that murdered his father; he put them to death, v. 3. Though we should suppose they intended to avenge on the king the death of the prophet, as was intimated, ch. 24. 25. yet that would by no means justify their wickedness; for they were not the avengers, but presumptuously took God's work out of his hands. And therefore Amaziah did what became one of God's anointed, calling to account for it; but kept within the rule of that law which forbade the putting of the children to death for the parents' sin, v. 4.

III. An expedition of his against the Edomites, who, some time ago, had revolted from under the dominion of Judah, to which he attempted to reduce them. Observe,

The first preparation he made for this expedition. (1.) He mustered his own forces, and marshalled them, v. 5. and found Judah and Benjamin in all but 300,000 men, that were fit for war, whereas, in Jehoshaphat's time, 50 or 60 years before they were four times as many; sin weakens a people, diminishes them, dispirits them, and lessens their number and figure. (2.) He hired auxiliary troops out of the kingdom of Israel, v. 6. Finding his own hand and defective in men, he thought to make it up with his money, and therefore took into his pay 100,000 Israelites. If he had advised with any of his prophets before he did this, or had but considered how little any of his ancestors got by their alliances with Israel, he would not have had this to undo again. But rashness makes work for repentance.

2. The command which God sent him by a prophet to dismiss out of his service the forces of Israel, v. 7. 8. He would not have him call in any assistance at all, it looked like distrust of God; if he made sure of his presence, the army he had of his own, was sufficient; but particularly, he must not take in their assistance, for the Lord is not with the children of Ephraim, because they are not with him, but worship the calves. This was a good reason why he should not make use of them, because he could not depend upon them to do him any service. What good could be expected from them that had not God with them; nor his blessing upon their undertakings? It is comfortable to employ those who, we have reason to hope, have an interest in heaven; and dangerous to associate with those from whom the Lord is departed. The prophet assured him that if he persisted in his resolution to take these idolatries at post, and make the Israelites with him, if he persisted in trying to make himself strong for the battle, it was at his peril, they would prove a dead weight to his army, would sink and betray it; "God shall make thee fall before the enemy, and these Israelites will be the ruin of thy cause; for God has power to help thee without them, and to cast thee down, though thou hast them with thee."

3. The objection which Amaziah made against this command, and the satisfactory answer which the prophet gave to that objection, v. 9. The King
had remitted 100 talents to the men of Israel for ad-
vance-money. "Now," says he, "I send them back, I shall lose nothing at all." 2. Do the hundred talents?" This is an excogition men of
often make against their duty, they are afraid of losing by it. "Regard not that," says the prophet, "the Lord is able to give us much more than this; and, thou mayest depend upon it, he will not see thee lose by him. What is one hundred talents between thee and him? He has ways enough to make up the loss to thee: it is below thee to speak of it." Note, A firm belief of God's all-sufficiency to bear us out in our duty, and to make up all the loss and damage we sustain in his service abundantly to our advantage, will make his yoke very easy, and his burden very light. What is it to trust in God, but to be willing to venture the loss of any thing for him, in confidence of the goodness of the security he gives us that we shall not lose by him, but that it shall be made up to us in kind or kindliness. When we grudge to part with any thing for God and our religion, this should satisfy us, that God is able to give us much more than this. He is just, and he is good, and he is solvent. The king lost 100 talents by his obedience; and we find just that sum given to his grandson Jotham as a present, ch. 27. 5. then the principal was repaid; and, for interest, 10,609 measures of wheat, and as many of barley. 4. His obedience to the command of God, which is sure reward. He that would not lose his money, disobeys his allies, and dismiss a fourth part of his army just as they were going to take the field, than offend God. He separated the army of Ephraim, to go home again, v. 10. And they went home in great anger, taking it as a great affront thus to be made fools of, and to be cashiered as men not fit to be employed, and being, perhaps, disappointed of the advantages they promised themselves in spoil and plunder, by joining with Judah against Edom. Men are apt to resent that which touches them in their profit or reputation, though it frees them from trouble. 5. His triumphs over the Edomites, v. 11, 12. He left dead upon the spot, in the field of battle, 10,609 men, 10,609 more he took prisoners, and barbarously killed them by throwing them down some deep and craggy precipice. What provocation is there to excommunicate this country and throw them out? We are not told; but it was certainly very severe. 6. The mischief which the disbanded soldiers of Israel did to the cities of Judah, either in their return or soon after, v. 13. They took it so ill to be sent home, that if they might not go to share with Judah in the spoil of Edom, they would make a prey of Judah. Several cities that lay upon the borders they plundered, and killed 2600 men that made resistance. But why should God suffer this to be done? Was it not in obedience to him that they were sent home; and yet shall the country suffer by it? Surely God's way is in the sea! Did not the prophet say that God was not with the children of Ephraim, and yet they are suffered to prevail against Judah? Doubtless God intended thereby to chastise those cities of Judah for their idolatries, which made resistance. But why should God suffer this to Israel. The men of Israel had corrupted them, and now they were made a plague to them: Satan both tempts and torments. 14. Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them. 15. Wherefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people which could not deliver their own people out of thy hand? 16. And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that the king said unto him, Art thou made of the king's counsel? forbear; why shouldst thou be smitten? Then the prophet forbade, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.

Here is, 1. The revolt of Amaziah from the God of Israel to the gods of the Edomites. Egregious folly! Ahaz worshipped the gods of those that had conquered him; he had some little colour for that, ch. 28. 23. But to worship the gods of those whom he had conquered, who could not protect their own worshippers, was the greatest absurdity that could be. What did he see in the gods of the children of Seir, that could tempt him to set them up for his gods, and bow himself before them? v. 14. If God had cast the idols into the fire, he would not have broken them to pieces, instead of the prisoners, he had discovered more of the piety, as well as more of the pity, of an Israelite; but, perhaps, for that barbarous inhumanity, he was given up to this ridiculous idolatry.

2. The reproof which God sent to him, by a prophet, for this sin. The anger of the Lord was kindled against him, and justly; yet before he sent to destroy him, he sent to convince and reclaim him, and so to prevent his destruction. The prophet reasoned with him very fairly, and very mildly; Why hast thou sought the favour of those gods which could not deliver their own people? v. 15. If men would but duly consider the inability of all these things to help them, which they have recourse to when they forsake God, they would not be such enemies to the good of their own souls.

3. The check he gave to the reprover, v. 16. He could say nothing in excuse of his own folly; the reproof was too just to be answered; but he fell into a passion with the repressor; (1.) He taunted him as saucy and impertinent, and meddling with that which did not belong to him; Art thou made of the king's counsel? Could not a man speak reason to him, but he must be upbraided as usurping the place of a privy-councillor? But, as a prophet, he really was made of the king's counsel by the King of kings, in duty to whom, the king was bound not only to hear, but to ask and take his counsel. (2.) He silenced him; bade him forbear, and say not a word more to him. He said to the Seer, See not, Is. 30. 10. Men would gladly have their prophets thus under their girdles, as we say, to speak just when and what they would have them speak, and not otherwise. (3.) He threatened him, Why shouldst thou be smitten? It is at thy peril, if thou sayest a word more of this matter." He seems to remind him of Zechariah's fate in the last reign, who was put to death for making bold with the king; and bids him take warning by him. Thus he justifies the killing of that prophet by menacing this, and so, in effect, makes himself guilty of the blood of both. The prophet who had ordered him to send back the army of Israel, though he contradicted his politics, and lost him 100 talents, yet he hearkened to, and was ruled by, v. 10. But this prophet, who dissuaded him from worshipping the gods of the Edomites, he ran upon with an unaccountable rage;
of Judah and Israel? 27. Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the Lord, they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; and he fled to Lachish: but they sent to Lachish after him, and slew him there. 28. And they brought him upon horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.

We have here this degenerate prince mortified by his neighbour, and murdered by his own subjects.

Never was proud prince more thoroughly mortified than Amaziah was by Joash king of Israel. This part of the story was as fully related, 2 Kings 14. 8, &c. as it is here—The foolish challenge which Amaziah sent to Joash, v. 17. his haughty scornful answer to it, v. 18. with the friendly advice he gave him to sit still and know when he was well off, v. 19. his wilful persisting in his challenge, v. 20. 21. the defeat that was given him, v. 22. and the lamentable destruction which thereby came upon his house, v. 23. 24. Now this story verifies two of Solomon's proverbs. (1.) That a man's pride will bring him low, Prov. 29. 23. it goes before his destruction, not only procures it meritoriously, but is often the immediate occasion of it. He that exalteth himself shall be abased. (2.) That he that goes hastily to strive, will, probably, not know what to do in the end; therefore, when his neighbour heareth it, he ought to shame, Prov. 25. 8. He that is fond of contention, may have enough of it, sooner than he thinks of.

But there are two passages in this story, which we had not before in the Kings. [1.] That Amaziah took advice, before he challenged the king of Israel. v. 17. But of whom? Not of the prophet, he was not made of the king's counsel; but of his statesmen that would flatter him, and bid him go up and prosper. It is good to take advice, but then it must be of those that are fit to advise us. Those that will not take advice from the word of God, which would guide them aright, will justly be left to the bad advice of those that will counsel them to their destruction. Let those be made fools, that will not be made wise. [2.] Amaziah's imprudence is here made the punishment of his iniquity, v. 20. It was of the Lord; he left him to himself to act thus foolishly, that he and his people might be delivered into the hands of their enemies, because they had forsaken God, and sought after the gods of Edom. They that will not be persuaded to do well for their souls, will justly be given up to their own counsels to do ill for themselves even in their outward affairs.

2. Never was poor prince more violently pursued by his own subjects; from the time that he departed from the Lord, (so it may be read, v. 27.) the hearts of his subjects departed from him, and they began to form a design against him in Jerusalem. It is probable that they were exasperated against him more for his rash engaging in a war against Israel, than for his worshipping the gods of Edom. But at length, the ferment grew so high, and he perceived the plot to be laid so deep, that he began to fear for his safety. He had hid, or fled to Lachish, either as a private place where he might be hid, or as a strong place where he might be guarded; but they sent after him thither, and slew him there. By this it seems to have been done deliberately, and to have been the act, not of a disgusted servant or two, but of a considerable body that durst avow it. How unrighteous soever they were here in, God was righteous.
CHAP. XXVI.

This chapter gives us an account of the reign of Uzziah, (Azariah he was called in the Kings,) more fully than we had it before; though it was long, and in some respects illustrous, yet it was very briefly related, 2 Kings 14. 21.—15. 1, &c. Here is, 1. His good character in general, v. 1. 5. II. His great prosperity in his wars, his buildings, and all the affairs of his kingdom, v. 6. 15. III. His presumption in invading the priest's office, for which he was struck with a leprosy, and confined by it, v. 16. 21. even to his death, v. 22, 23.

I. THEN all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah. 2. He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers. 3. Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign; and he reign'd fifty and two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. 4. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah did. 5. And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper. 6. And he went forth, and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines. 7. And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Mehmims. 8. And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad even to the entering in of Egypt; for he strengthened himself exceedingly. 9. Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem, at the corner-gate, and at the valley-gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them. 10. Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country and in the plains; husbandmen also, and vine-dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry. 11. Moreover, Uzziah had a host of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to the number of their account by the hand of Jeiel the scribe, and Maaseiah the ruler, under the hand of Hananiah, one of the king's captains. 12. The whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valour were two thousand and six hundred. 13. And under their hand was an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. 14. And Uzziah prepared for them, throughout all the host, shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings to cast stones. 15. And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal: and his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped till he was strong.

We have here an account of two things concerning Uzziah: 1. His piety. In this he was not very eminent or zealous; yet he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; he kept up the pure worship of the true God, as his father did, and herein better than his father—that we have no reason to think he ever worshipped idols as his father did, no not in his latter days, when his heart was lifted up. It is said, 5. He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who, some think, was the son of that Zechariah who was his grandfather Joash slew. He was one that had understanding in the visions of God; either the visions which he himself was favoured with, or the visions of the preceding prophets. He was well versed in prophecy, and conversed much with the upper world, was an intelligent, devout, good, man; and, it seems, had great influence with Uzziah. Happy was the great man who had such friends, and are willing to be advised by them; but unhappy those, who seek God only while they have such with them, and have not a principle in themselves to bear them out to the end. 2. His prosperity. In general, as long as he sought the Lord, and minded religion, God made him to prosper. Note, 1. Those only prosper, whom God makes to prosper; for prosperity is his gift. 2. Religion and piety are friendly to outward prosperity. Many have found and owned this, that as long as they sought the Lord, and kept close to their duty, they prospered; but since they forsake God, every thing has gone cross. Here are several particular instances of his prosperity. (1.) His success in his wars. God helped him, (v. 7.) and that he triumphed over the Philistines, those old enemies of God's people, demolished the fortifications of their cities, and put garrisons of his own among them, v. 6. He obliged the Ammonites to pay him tribute, v. 8. He made all quiet about him, and kept them in awe. (2.) The greatness of his fame and reputation. His name was celebrated throughout all the neighbouring countries, v. 8. and it was a good name, a name for good things with God and good people. This is true fame, and makes a man truly honourable. (3.) His buildings. While he acted offensively abroad, he did not neglect the defence of his kingdom at home, but built towers in Jerusalem, and fortified them, v. 9. Much of the wall of Jerusalem was, in his father's time, broken down, particularly at the corner gate, ch. 25. 25. probably, his father had repaired it, but he, to prevent the like mischief for the future, fortified it, and built a tower at the corner gate. But his best fortification of Jerusalem was his close adherence to the worship of God, which, if his father had not forsaken, the wall of Jerusalem had not been broken down. While he fortified the city, he did not forget the country, but built towers in the desert too, v. 10. to protect the country people from the broads of the plunderers, bands of which sometimes alarmed them and plundered them, as ch. 21. 16. (4.) His husbandry. He dealt much in cattle and corn, employed many hands, and got much wealth by it, for he took a pleasure in it, he loved husbandry, v. 10. and, probably, did himself in—

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spect his affairs in the country, which was no
disparagement to him, but an advantage, as it
couraged industry among his subjects. It is
an honour to the husbandman's calling, that one
of the most illustrious princes of the house of
David followed it and loved it. He was none of
those that delight in war, nor did he addict himself
to sport and pleasure, but delighted in the innocent
and quiet employments of the husbandman.
(5.) His standing armies. He had, as it should
seem, two military establishments. [1.] A host of
fighting men that were to make excursions abroad,
they went out to war by bands, v. 11. They fetch-
ed in spoil from the neighbouring countries by way
of reprisal for the depredations they had so often
made upon Judah. [2.] Another army for guards
and garrisons, that were ready to defend the coun-
try in case it should be invaded, v. 12, 13. So great
were their number and valour, that they made war
with mighty power; no enemy durst face them, or,
at least, could stand before them. Men unarmed
can do little in war; Uzziah therefore furnished
himself with a great armory, whence his soldiers
were supplied with arms offensive and defensive, v.
14. spears, bows, and slings, shields, helmets, and
halberds; swords are not mentioned, because it is
probable that every man had a sword of his own
which he wore constantly. Engines were invented,
in his time, for annoyance besiegers with darts and
stones shot from the towers and bulwarks, v. 15.
What pity it is that the wars and fightings which
come from men's lusts, have made it necessary for
cunning men to employ their skill in inventing
instruments of death!

II. CHRONICLES, XXVI.

16. But when he was strong, his heart was
lifted up to his destruction: for he trans-
gressed against the Lord his God, and went
into the temple of the Lord to burn incense
upon the altar of incense. 17. And Azara-
iah the priest went in after him, and with
him fourscore priests of the Lord, that were
valiant men: 18. And they withstood Uzz-
iah the king, and said unto him, It pertain-
eth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense
unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of
Aaron, that are consecrated to burn in-
cense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast
trespassed: neither shall it be for thine
honour from the Lord God. 19. Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censor in his
hand to burn incense; and while he was
wroth with the priests, the leprosy even
arose up in his forehead before the priests in
the house of the Lord, from beside the in-
cense-altar. 20. And Azariah the chief
priest, and all the priests, looked upon him,
and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead,
and they thrust him out from thence; yea,
himself hasted also to go out, because the
Lord had smitten him. 21. And Uzziah the
king was a leper unto the day of his
death, and dwelt in a several house, being
a leper; for he was cut off from the house of
the Lord; and Jotham his son was over
the king's house, judging the people of the
land. 22. Now the rest of the acts of Uz-

ziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet,
the son of Amoz, write. 23. So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with
his fathers in the field of the burial which
belonged to the kings; for they said, He is
a leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

Here is the only blot we find on the name of king
Uzziah, and it is such a one as lies not on any other
of the kings. Whoredom, murder, oppression,
persecution, and especially idolatry, gave charac-
ters to the bad kings, and some of them blemishes
to the good ones. David himself not excepted, wit-
ness the matter of Uriah. But we find not Uzziah
charged with any of these; yet he transgressed
against the Lord his God, and fell under the marks
of his displeasure for it; not, as other kings, in vexa-
tions wars or rebellions, but an incurable disease.

1. His sin was, invading the priests' office. The
good way is one, by-paths are many; the trans-
gressions of the successors of David, for instance,
of the Lord, were, in giving off from it, ch. 24. 18.
and burning incense upon idolatrous altars, ch. 25. 14.
His transgression was, intruding into the temple of
the Lord, further than was allowed him, and at-
ttempting to burn incense upon the altar of God, for
which, it is likely, he pretended an extraordinary
zeal and affectation. See how hard it is to avoid one
extreme, and not run into another.

1. His sin was, going into the temple of the Lord
to burn incense; probably, on some solemn feast
day, or when he himself had some special occasion
for supplanting the divine favour. What should
move him to this piece of presumption, or put it in-
to his head, I cannot conjecture: none of all his pre-
decessors, not the best, not the worst, attempted it:
the law, he knew, was express against him, and
there was no usage or precedent for him; but it was
not prevented by necessity, there was for David's
eating the show-bread. (1.) Perhaps he fancied the
priests did not do their office so dexterously, decen-
ty, and devoutly, as they ought, and he could do it
better. Or, (2.) He observed that the idolatrous
kings did themselves burn incense at the altars of
their gods; his father did so, and Jeroboam, 1 Kings
13. 1. an ambition of which honour was perhaps one
of the things that induced them from the house of God,
where it was not permitted them; and he, being re-
solved to cleave to God's altar, would try to break
through this restraint, and come as near it as the
idolatrous kings did to their altars. But it is called
a transgression against the Lord his God. He was
not content with the honours God had put upon him,
but would usurp those that were forbidden him,
like our first parents.

3. He was opposed in this attempt by the chief
priest and other priests that attended and assisted him, v. 17, 18. They were ready to burn incense for the king, according to the duty of their place; but if he offer to do it himself, they plainly let him know that he meddles with that which does not belong to him, and it is at his peril. They did not resist his admission to this ceremony; but they told him, though they were valiant men, but by reasoning with him, and showing him, (1.) That it was not lawful for him to burn incense: "It appertaineth not to thee, O Uzziah, but to the priests, whose birth-right it is, as sons of Aaron, and who are consecrated to the service." Aaron and his sons, were appointed by the law to burn incense, Exod. 30. 7. See Deut. 35. 10. If Uzziah had lived among the heathen, he might have allowed the people, Solomon and Jehoshaphat had prayed with one accord, 2 Chron. 20. 6, and preached to them; Uzziah might have done this, and it would have been to his praise; but for burning incense, that service was to be performed by the priests only. The kingly and priestly offices were separated by the law of Moses, not to be united again but in the person of the Messiah. If Uzziah did intend to honour God, and gain acceptance with him, and that he did, he was quite out in his aim; for being a service purely of divine institution, he could not expect it should be accepted, unless it was done in the way, and by the hands, that God had appointed. (2.) That it was not safe. It shall not be for thine honour from the Lord God; more is implied; "It will be thy disgrace, and it is thy peril." The law runs express against all strangers that came nigh, Num. 3. 10—16. 7. that is, all that were not priests. Korah and his accomplices, though Levites, paid dear for offering to burn incense, which was the work of the priests only, Num. 16. 35. The incense of our prayers must be, by faith, put into the hands of our Lord Jesus the great High Priest of our profession, else we cannot expect it should be accepted by God, Rev. 8. 3.

4. He fell into a passion with the priests that reproved him, and would push forward to do what he intended notwithstanding; v. 19. Uzziah was wroth, and would not part with the censor out of his hand: he took it ill to be checked, and would not bear it. 

Nimimur in vitium—We are prone to do what is forbidden.

II. Punishment was, an incurable leprosy, which rose up in his forehead while he was contending with the priests. If he had submitted to the priests' admonition, acknowledged his error and gone back, all had been well; but when he was wroth with the priests, and fell foul upon them, then God was wroth with him, and smote him with a plague of leprosy. Josephus says that he threatened the priests with death if they opposed him, and that then the earth shook, the roof of the temple opened, and through the cleft a beam of the sun darted directly upon the king's face, wherein immediately the leprosy appeared. And some conjecture, that that was the earthquake in the days of Uzziah which we read of Amos 1. 1. and Zech. 14. 5.

Now this sudden stroke,

1. Ended the controversy between him and the priests; for when the leprosy appeared, they were emboldened to thrust him out of the temple; nay, he himself hasted to go out, because the Lord had sentenced him to this punishment, which was a most singular manner, a token of his displeasure, and which he knew seclude him from common converse with men, much more from the altar of God. He would not be convinced by what the priests said, but God took an effectual course to convince him. If presumptuous men will not be made to see their error by the judgments of God's mouth, they shall be made to see it by the judgments of his hand. It evidenced some religious fear of God in the heart of this king, even in the midst of his transgression that, as soon as he found God was angry with him, he not only let fall his attempt, but retired with the utmost precipitation. Though he strove with the priests, he would not strive with his Maker.

2. It remained a lasting punishment of his transgression; he continued a leper to the day of his death, shut up in confinement as an outcast from society, and forced to leave it to his son to manage all his business, v. 21. Thus God gave an instance of his resisting the proud, and of his jealousy for the purity and honour of his own institutions: thus he gave fair warning even to great and good men to know and keep their distance, and not to intrude into those things which they have not seen: thus he taught Uzziah to be content with repentance, and a long space to repent, which we would not to hope he made a good improvement of. He had been a man of much business in the world, but being taken off from that, and confined to a several house, he had leisure to think of another world, and prepare for it. By this judgment upon the king, God intended to possess the people with a great veneration for the temple, the priesthood, and other sacred things, which he had hitherto thought meanly of. While the king was a leper, he was as good as dead, dead while he lived, and buried alive; and the law was, in effect, answered, that the stranger which cometh nigh, shall be put to death. The disgrace survived him; for when he was dead, they would not bury him in the sepultures of the kings, because he was a leper, which stained all his other glory and fame.

3. It was a punishment that answered the sin, as face does to face in a glass. (1.) Pride was at the bottom of his transgression, and thus God humbled him, and put dishonour upon him. (2.) He invaded the office of the priests in contempt of them, and God struck him with a disease, which in a particular manner made him subject to the inspection and sentence of the priests; for to them pertained the 

judgement of the leprosy, Deut. 24. 8. (3.) He thrust himself into the temple of God, whether the priests only had admission, and for that was thrust out of the very courts of the temple, into which the meannest of his subjects that were ceremonially clean, had free access. (4.) He confronted the priests that faced him and opposed his presumption, and for that the leprosy rose in his forehead, which, in Miriam's case, is compared to her father's desecration in Aaron's; Num. 12. 3. (5.) He invaded the dignity of the priesthood which he had no right to, and is for that deprived even of his royal dignity which he had a right to. They that covet forbidden honours, forfeit allowed ones. Adam, by catching at the tree of knowledge which he might not eat of, debarred himself from the tree of life which he might have eaten of. Let all that read it say, The Lord is righteous.

CHAP. XXVII.

Here is a very short account of the reign of Jotham, a pious prince, who lived in Josephus' time, and it is wished he had known more of, but we may better dispense with the brevity of his story, because that which lengthened the history of the three last kings, was, their degeneracy in their latter end, which we have here a faithful account of, but there was no occasion for such a melancholy conclusion of the history of this reign, which is only an account, I. Of the date and continuance of his reign, v. 1, 8. II. The general good character of Jotham, v. 3—6. III. The prosperity of Judah, v. 3—5. IV. The period of his reign, v. 7—9.

1. Jotham was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jerusalem, the
II. CHRONICLES, XXVIII.

daughter of Zadok. 2. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the Lord. And the people did yet corruptly.

3. He built the high gate of the house of the Lord, and on the wall of Ophel he built much. 4. Moreover, he built cities in the mountains of Judah: and in the forests he built castles and towers. 5. He fought also with the king of the Ammonites, and prevailed against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same year a hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of Ammon pay unto him, both the second year and the third. 6. So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God. 7. Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars, and his ways, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. 8. He was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. 9. And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

There is not much more related here concerning Jotham, than we had before, 2 Kings 15. 32, &c.

1. That he reigned well: he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; the course of his reign was good, and pleasing to God, whose favour he made his end, and his word his rule, and (which shows that he acted from a good principle) he prepared his ways before the Lord his God, v. 6. that is, He walked circumspectly and with much caution, contrived how to shun that which was evil, and compass that which was good: he looked before him, and cast his affairs into such a posture and method as made the regular management of them more easy. Or, he established or fixed his ways before the Lord, that is, he walked steadily and constantly in the way of his duty, was uniform, and resolute in it; not like some of those that went before him, who, though they had some good in them, lost their credit by their inconstancy, and inconsistence with themselves. They had run well, but something hindered them. It was not so with Jotham.

Two things are observed here in his character: (1.) What was amiss in his father he amended in himself, v. 2. He did according to all that his father did well and wisely; howbeit, he would not imitate him in what he did amiss; for he entered not into the temple of the Lord to burn incense as his father did; but took warning by his fate not to dare so presumptuous a thing. Note, We must not imitate the best men, and those we have the greatest veneration for, any further than they did well; but, on the contrary, try their bills, and the injurious consequences, must be warnings to us to walk the more circumspectly, that we stumble not at the same stone that they stumbled at.

(2.) What was amiss in his people he could not prevail to amend. The people yet did corruptly. Perhaps it reflects some blame upon him, that he was wanting in his part toward the reformation of the land. Men may be very good themselves, and yet not have courage and zeal to do what they might do toward the reforming of others. However, it certainly reflects a great deal of blame upon the people, and says not only what they might have done to improve the advantages of so good a reign: they had good instructions given them, and a good example set before them, but they would not be reformed; so that even in the reign of their good kings, as well as the bad ones, they were treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath; for they still did corruptly, and the Founder melted in vain.

2. That he prospered, and became truly reputable.

(1.) He built. He began with the gate of the house of the Lord, which he repaired, beautified and raised. He then fortified the wall of Ophel, and built cities in the mountains of Judah, v. 3, 4. took all possible care for the fortifying of his country and the replenishing of it.

(2.) He conquered. Prevailed against the Ammonites, v. 3. He invaded Judah in Jehoshaphat's time, ch. 20. 1. He triumphed over them, and exacted great contributions from them, v. 5.

(3.) He became mighty, v. 6. in wealth and power, and influence upon the neighbouring nations, who courted his friendship, and feared his displeasure; and this he got by preparing his ways before the Lord his God. The more steadfast we are in religion, the more mighty we are both for the reformation of that which is evil, and for the performance of that which is good.

3. That he finished his course too soon, but finished it with honour; he had the unhappiness to die in the midst of his days; but, to balance that, the happiness not to outlive his reputation, as his 3 last predecessors did. He died when he was but 41 years of age, v. 8. but his wars and his ways, his wars abroad and his ways at home, were so glorious, that they were recorded in the book of the kings of Israel, as well as the kings of Judah, v. 7. The last words of the chapter convey the painful intelligence, that Ahaz his son reigned in his stead, whose character, in all respects, was the reverse of his. When the wealth and power which wise men have done good with, devolve upon fools that will do hurt with them, it is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

CHAP. XXVIII.

This chapter is the history of the reign of Ahaz the son of Jotham: a bad reign it was, and which helped to support the vassals of the Lord. We have here, I. His great wickedness, v. 1-4. II. The trouble he brought himself into by it, v. 5-8. III. The reproof which God sent by a prophet to the army of Israel for trampling upon their brethren of Judah, and the obedient ear they gave to that reproof, v. 9-15. IV. The many calamities that followed after to Ahaz and his people, v. 16-21. V. The continuance of his idolatry notwithstanding, v. 22-26. and so his story ends, v. 26, 27.

1. A HAZ was twenty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, like David his father: 2. For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim. 3. Moreover, he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. 4. He sacrificed also,
and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree. 5. Wherefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus; and he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.

Never surely had a man a greater opportunity of doing well than Ahaz had, finding things in a good posture, the kingdom rich and strong, and religion established; and yet here we have him in these few verses.

1. Wretchedly corrupted and debauched. He had had a good education given him, and a good example set him; but parents cannot give grace to their children: all the instructions he had, were lost upon him, he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, v. 1. nay he did a great deal that was wrong, a wrong to God, to his own soul, and to his people; he walked in the way of the reverted Israelites, and the devoted Canaanites, made molten images, and worshipped them, contrary to the second commandment; nay he made them for Baalim, contrary to the first commandment. He forsook the temple of the Lord, and sacrificed and burnt incense on the hills, as if those would place him nearer heaven; and under every green tree, as if those would signify the protection and influence of heaven by their shade and dropping. To complete his wickedness, as one perfectly divorced of all natural affection as well as religion, and perfectly devoted to the service and interest of the great enemy of mankind, he burnt his children in the fire to Moloch, v. 3. not thinking it enough to dedicate them to that infernal fiend by causing them to pass through the fire. See what an absolute sway the prince of the power of the air bears among the children of disobedience.

2. Wretchedly spoiled and made a prey of. Where the forsaken God, and, at a vast expense, put himself under the protection of false gods, God, who, of right, was his God, delivered him into the hands of his enemies, v. 5. (1) The Syrians insulted him, and triumphed over him, beat him in the field, and carried away a great many of his people into captivity. (2) The king of Israel, though an idolator too, was made a scourge to him, and smote him with a great slaughter. The people suffered by these judgments, their blood was shed, their country wasted, their families ruined; for when they had a good king, though they did corruptly, ch. 27. 2. yet then his goodness sheltered them; but now that they had a bad one, all their defence was departed from them, and an inundation of judgments broke in upon them. They that knew not their happiness in the foregoing reign, were taught to value it by the miseries of this reign.

6. For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah a hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers. 7. And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king’s son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king. 8. And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thou-

sand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria. 9. But a prophet of the Lord was there, whose name was Oded; and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the Lord God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven. 10. And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: but are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God? 11. Now hear me, therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren; for the fierce wrath of God is upon you. 12. Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshilemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shalum, and Amaza the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war. 13. And said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against the Lord already, ye intend to add more to our sins and to our trespass; for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel. 14. So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation.

15. And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm-trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.

We have here,

1. Treacherous Judah under the rebukes of God’s providence, and they are very severe. Never was such bloody work made among them, since they were a kingdom, and by Israelites too. Ahaz walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and the king of Israel was the instrument God made use of for his punishment. It is just with God to make those our plagues, whom we make our patterns, or make ourselves partners with in sin. A war broke out between Judah and Israel, in which Judah was worsted. For, 1. There was a great slaughter of men in the field of battle; vast numbers; 120,000 men, and valiant men too at other times, were slain, v. 6. and some of them in the first rank; the king’s son for one. He had sacrificed some of his sons to Moloch, justly therefore is this sacrificed to the divine vengeance. Here is another that was next the king, his friend, the prime-minister of state, or perhaps next him in the battle, so that the king himself had a narrow escape, v. 7. The kingdom of Israel was not strong at this time, and yet strong enough to bring this great destruction upon Judah. But certainly so many men, great men, stout men, could
not have been cut off in one day, if they had not been strangely dispirited, both by the consciousness of their own guilt, and by the righteous hand of God upon them. Even valiant men were numbered as sheath for the slaughter, and became an easy prey to the enemy, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers, and he had therefore forsaken them. 2. There was a great captivity of women and children, v. 8. When the army in the field was routed, the cities, and towns, and country-villages, were all put to the sword, the inhabitants taken alive, and led away to their destruction.

II. Even victorious Israel under the rebukes of God's word, for the bad principle they had gone upon in making war with Judah, and the bad use they made of their success; and the good effect of this rebuke. Here is,

1. The message which God sent them by a prophet, who went out to meet them, not to applaud their success, but to show them the consequences of it, though they returned laden with spoils and triumphs, but in God's name to tell them of their faults, and warn them of the judgments of God.

(1.) He tells them how they came by this victory of which they were so proud; it was not because God favoured them, or that they had merited it at his hand, but because he was wroth with Judah, and made them the rod of his indignation. Not for your righteousness, and it knoweth me not for your wickedness, (Deut. 9. 5.) they are broken off; therefore be not ye high-minded, but fear, lest God also spare not you, Rom. 11. 20, 21.

(2.) He charges them with the abuse of the power God had given them over their brethren. They understand not what victory is, who think it gives them authority to do what they will, and that the longest sword is the clearest claim to lives and estates. Just is High-inferior, (Jer. 15.) (Might is right,) no, as it is impolitic not to use a victory, so it is impious to abuse it. The conquerors are here reproved, [1.] For the cruelty of the slaughter they had made in the field. They had indeed shed the blood of war, in war; we suppose that to be lawful, but it turned into sin to them, because they did it from a bad principle of enmity to their brethren, and after a bad manner, with a barbarous fury, a rage reaching up to heaven, that is, the cries of God for vengeance against such bloody men, that delighted in military execution. They that serve God's justice, if they do it with rage and a spirit of revenge, make themselves obnoxious to it, and forfeit the honour of acting for him: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. [2.] For the imperious treatment they gave their prisoners. "Ye revolved to enter them under, to use them or sell them as slaves, though they are your brethren and free-born Israelites" God takes notice of what men purpose, as well as what they say and do.

(3.) He reminds them of their own sins, by which they also were obnoxious to the wrath of God. Are they not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God? He appeals to their own consciences, and to the notorious evidence of the thing, "Though you are now made the instruments of correcting Judah for sin, yet do not think that you are therefore innocent yourselves; no, you also are guilty before God." This is intended as a check, [1.] To their triumph in their success; "You are sinners, and it ill becomes sinners to be proud; you have carried the day now, but be not secure, the wheel may ere long return upon yourselves, for if judgment begin thus with those that have the house of God among them, what shall be the end of such as worship the calves?" [2.] To their severity toward their brethren; "You have now got them under, but you ought to show mercy to them, for you yourselves are undone if you do not find mercy with God. It ill becomes sinners to be cruel. You have transgressions enough to answer for already, and need not add this to the rest." (4.) He commands them to release the prisoners, and to send them home again carefully, v. 11. for, you having sinned, the fierce wrath of God is upon you, and there is no other way of escaping it than by showing mercy.

2. The resolution of the princes, thereupon, not to detain the prisoners. They stood up against them that were the worst, though flushed with victory, and told them, plainly, that they would not bring their captives to Samaria, v. 12, 13. They had sin enough already to answer for, and would have nothing done to add to their trespass. In this they discovered an obedient regard to the word of God by his prophet, and a tender compassion toward their brethren, which was wrought in them by the tender mercy of God; for he regarded the affliction of this poor people, and heard their cry, and made them to be hitted of all them that carried them captives, Ps. 106. 44, 46.

3. The compliance of the soldiers with the resolution of the princes in this matter, and the dismissal of the captives thereupon. (1.) The armed men, though being armed, they might by force have maintained their title to what they got by the sword, acquiesced, and left their captives and the spoil to the princes, v. 14, and herein they showed a more true heroic bravery than they did in taking them. It is a great honour for any man to yield to the authority of reason and religion against his interest. (2.) The princes very generously sent home the poor captives well accommodated, v. 15. Those that hope to find mercy with God, must learn hence with what tenderness to carry themselves toward those that lie at their mercy. It is strange that these princes, who, in this instance, discovered such a deference to the word of God, and such an influence upon the people, had not so much grace, as, in obedience to the calls of God by so many prophets, to root idolatry out of their kingdom, which, soon after this, was the ruin of it.

16. At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him. 17. For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives. 18. The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof; Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there. 19. For the Lord brought Judah low, because of Ahaz king of Israel: for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the Lord. 20. And Tilgath pilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not 21. For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the Lord, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not. 22. And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord; this is that king Ahaz. 23. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote
him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel. 24. And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. 25. And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers. 26. Now the rest of his acts, and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. 27. And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem; but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

Here is, 1. The great distress which the kingdom of Ahaz, was reduced to for his sin. In general, 1. The Lord was against Judah low, v. 19. They had lately been very high in wealth, and power; but God found means to take them down, and make them as despicable as they had been formidable. They that will not humble themselves and fear the word of God, will justly be humbled by his judgments. Iniquity brings men low, Ps. 106. 43. 2. Ahaz made Judah naked. As his sin defiled them, so it exposed them. It made them naked to their shame; for it exposed them to contempt, as a man unclad. It made them naked to their danger; for it exposed them to assaults, as a man unarmed, Exod. 32. 25. Sin strips men. In particular, the Edomites, to be revenged for Amaziah’s cruel treatment of them, ch. 23. smote Judah, and carried off many captives, v. 17. The Philistines also insulted them, took and kept possession of several cities and villages that lay near them, v. 19. and so they were revenged for the incursions which Uzziah had made upon them, ch. 26. 6. And, to show that it was purely the sin of Ahaz that brought the Philistines upon his country, in the very year that he died, the prophet Isaiah foretold the destruction of the Philistines by his son, Isa. 14. 28, 29.

II. The addition which Ahaz made both to the national distress, and the national guilt.

1. He added to the distress, by making court to strange kings, in hopes they would relieve him. When the Edomites and Philistines were vexatious to him, he sent to the kings of Assyria to help him, v. 16. for he found his own kingdom weakened and made naked, and he could not put any confidence in God, therefore was at a vast expense to get an interest in the king of Assyria. He pillaged the houses of God and the kings, and squeezed the princes for money to hire these foreign forces into his service, v. 21. Though he had conformed to the idolatry of the heathen nations, his neighbours, they did not value him for that, nor love him the better, nor did his compliance, by which he lost God, gain them, nor could he make any interest in them but with his money. It is often found that wicked men themselves have no real affection for those that revolt to them, nor do they care to do them a kindness. A degenerate branch is looked upon, on all sides, as an abominable branch, Isa. 14. 19. But what did Ahaz get by the king of Assyria? Why, he came to him, but he distressed him, and strengthened him not, v. 20. helped him not, v. 21. The forces of the Assyrian quartered upon his country, and so impoverished and weakened it; they grew insolent and imperious, and created him a great deal of vexation, like a broken reed, which not only fails, but pierces the hand.

2. He added to the guilt, by making court to strange gods: for he hopes the kings will relieve him. In his distress, instead of repenting of his idolatry, which he had reason enough to see the folly of, he trespassed yet more, v. 22. was more mad than ever upon his idols: a brand of infamy is here set upon him for it. This is that king Ahaz, that wretched man, who was the scandal of the house of David, and the curse and plague of his generation. Note, Those will be the most easily seduced by their affections, instead of being made better by them; who, in their distress, trespassed yet more, have their corruptions exasperated by that which should mollify them, and their hearts more fully set in them to do evil. Let us see what his trespass was. (1.) He abused the house of God; for he cut in pieces the vessels of it, that the priests might not perform the service of the temple, nor as it should be, for want of vessels; and, at length, shut up the doors, that the people might not attend it, v. 24. This was worse than the worst of the kings before him had done. (2.) He contrived the altar of God, for he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem; so that, as the prophet speaks, they were like heaps in the furrows of the field, Hos. 12. 11. And in the cities of Judah, either by his power, or by his purse, or by both, he erected high places for the people to burn incense to what idol they pleased, as if on purpose to provoke the god of his fathers, v. 25. (3.) He cast off God himself; for he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, v. 23. not because he loved them, for he thought they smote him; but because he feared them, thinking that they helped his enemies, and that if he could bring them into his interest, they would help him. Foolish man! It was his own God that smote him and the Philistines, and the gods of Damascus; had he sacrificed to him, and to him only, he would have helped him. But no marvel that men’s affections and devotions are misplaced, when they mistake the author of their trouble and their help. And what comes of it? The gods of Syria befriend Ahaz no more than the kings of Assyria did; they were the ruin of him, and all Israel. They provoked God to bring them against him, to cut him off in the midst of his days, when he was but 36 years old; and it debauched the people so, that the reformation of the next reign could not prevail to cure them of their inclination to idolatry, but they retained that root of bitterness till the captivity in Babylon plucked it up.

The chapter concludes with the conclusion of the reign of Ahaz, v. 26, 27. For ought that appears, he died implemet, and therefore died ignobly; for he was not buried in the sepulchres of the kings. Justly was he thought unworthy to be laid among them, who was so unlike them; to be buried with kings, who had used his kingly power for the destruction of the church, and not for its protection or edification.

CHAP XXX.

We are here entering upon a pleasant scene, the good and glorious reign of Hezekiah; in which we shall find more of God and religion, than, perhaps, in any of the good reigns we have yet met with, for he was a very zealous, devout, good man, none like him. In this chapter, we have an account of the work of reformation which he
H. **HEZEKIAH** began to reign when he was five and twenty years old; and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. 2. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done. 3. He, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them. 4. And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, 5. And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites; Sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. 6. For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord, and turned their backs. 7. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burnt incense, nor offered burnt-offerings in the holy place, unto the God of Israel. 8. Wherefore the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes. 9. For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons, and our daughters, and our wives, are in captivity for this. 10. Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us. 11. My sons, be not now negligent: for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that you should minister unto him, and burn incense.

Here is,

1. Hezekiah's age when he came to the crown; he was 25 years old. Josiah, who came to the crown after two bad reigns, was but 7 years old; Josiah, who came after two bad reigns, was but 8; which occasioned the delay of the reformation. But Hezekiah was come to years, and so applied himself immediately to it. We may well think with what a sorrowful heart he beheld his father's idolatry and profaneness, how it troubled him to see the doors of the temple shut up, though, while his father lived, he durst not open them. His soul was not doubt, went in secret for it, and he vowed, that when he should receive the congregation, he would redress these grievances, which made him do it with more readiness and resolution.

2. His general character. He did that which was right, like David, v. 2. Of several of his predecessors it had been said that they did that which was right, but not like David, not with David's integrity and zeal. But here was one that had as hearty an affection for the ark and law of God as ever David had.

3. His speedy application to the great work of restoring religion. The first thing he did, was, to open the doors of the house of the Lord, v. 3. We are willing to hope his father had not quite suppressed the temple-service; for then the holy fire on the altar must have gone out, which we do not read of the rekindling of: but he had hindered the people from attending it, and the priests, except such of them as were of his own party, 2 Kings 15. But Hezekiah immediately threw the church doors open, and brought in the priests and Levites. He found Judah low and naked, yet he did not forsake it but engaged himself to revile the civil interests of his kingdom, but to restore religion to its good posture again. Those that begin with God, begin at the right end of their work, and it will prosper accordingly.

4. His speech to the priests and Levites. It was well known, no doubt, that he had a real kindness for religion, and was dissatisfied to the corruptions of the last reign; yet we do not find the priests and Levites among them, v. 4. Those that turn away from the habitation of the Lord, and turned their backs, those that turn their backs upon God's ordinances, may truly be said to forsake God himself. (2.) That the instilled worship of God there had been let fall; the lamps were not lighted, incense was not burnt; there are still such neglects as these, and they are no less culpable, if the word be not daily read and opened, for that was signified by the lighting of the lamps, and if prayers and sacrifices be not duly offered up, for that was signified by the burning of incense.

5. He shows the sad consequences of the neglect and decay of religion among them, v. 8, 9. This was the cause of all the calamities they had lain under; God had, in anger, delivered them to trouble, to the sword, and to captivity. When we are under the rebukes of God's providence, it is good for us to inquire whether we have not neglected God's ordinances, and whether that be not the controversy he has with us.

6. He declares his own full purpose and resolution to revive religion, and make it his business to promote it, v. 10. It is in my heart, that is, "I am fully resolved to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel," that is, "to worship him only, and in that way which he has appointed; for I am sure that, otherwise, his fierce anger will not turn away from us." This covenant he would not only make himself, but bring his people into the bond of

7. He engages and excites the Levites and priests to do their duty on this occasion. This he begins
with. v. 5. this he ends with, v. 11. calls them Levites, to remind them of their obligation to God, calls them his sons, to remind them of their relation to himself, that he expected that, as a son with the father, they should serve with him in the reformation of the land. (1.) He tells them what was their duty; to sanctify themselves first, by repenting of their neglects, reforming their own hearts and lives, and renewing their covenants with God, to do their duty better for the time to come; and then to sanctify the house of God, as his servants, to make it clean from every thing that was disagreeable, either through the disuse or the profanation of it, and to set it up for the purposes for which it was made. (2.) He stirs them up to it, (v. 11.) "Be not negligent, or remiss, in your duty. Let not this good work be retarded through your carelessness." Be not deceived, so the margin. They that by their negligence in the service of God, think to mock God, and put a cheat upon him, do but deceive themselves, and put a damming cheat upon their own souls. Be not secure, so some, as if there were no urgent call to do it, or no danger in not doing it. Men's negligence in religion is owing to their carnal security. The consideration he quickens them with, is, their office. God had herein put honour upon them; he has chosen you to stand before him. God expected work from them; they were not chosen to be idle, to enjoy the dignity, and leave the duty to be done by others, but to serve him, and to minister to him. They must therefore be ashamed of their late remissness, and now that the doors of the temple were opened again, set about their work with double diligence.

12. Then the Levites arose, Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites: and of the sons of Meran; Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehalelel: and of the Gershonites; Joshua the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Joah: 13. And of the sons of Elizaphan; Shimri, and Jeiel: and of the sons of Asaph; Zechariah, and Mattanah: 14. And of the sons of Heman; Jehiel, and Shimei: and of the sons of Jeduthun; Shemaiah, and Uzziel. 15. And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the Lord, to cleanse the house of the Lord. 16. And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanliness that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron. 17. Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the Lord: so they sanctified the house of the Lord in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end. 18. Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the Lord, and the altar of burnt-offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the showbread table, with all the vessels thereof. 19. Moreover, all the vessels, which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and, behold, they are before the altar of the Lord.

We have here busy work, good work, and needful work, the cleansing of the house of the Lord.

1. The persons employed in this work were the priests and Levites, who should have kept it clean, but had not done their duty, were concerned to make it clean. Several of the Levites were used against two of each of the three principal houses, Kohath, Gershom, and Merari, v. 12. And two of each of the three families of singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, v. 13. We cannot think these are named merely because they were chief in place, for then surely the High Priest, or some of the heads of the courses of the priests, would have been mentioned; but because they were more zealous and active than the rest. When God has work to do, he will raise up leading men to preside in it. And it is not always that the first in place and rank are most fit for service, or most forward to it. These Levites not only bestowed themselves but gathered their brethren, and quickened them to do according to the commandment of the king by the words of the Lord. Observe, They did according to the king's command, but they went a step further, and the king commanded them what was already their duty by the word of God, and, in doing it, they regarded God's word as a rule to them, and the king's commandment as a spur to them.

2. The work was cleansing the house of God. (1.) From the common dirt it had contracted while it was shut up, dust and cobwebs, and the rust of the vessels. (2.) From the idolatries and idolatrous altars that were set up in it, which, though kept ever so neat, were a greater pollution to it than if it had been made the common sewer of the city. The priests were none of them mentioned as leading men in this work, yet none but they durst go into the inner part of the house, no not to cleanse it, which they did, and, perhaps, the High Priest into the Holy of Holies, to cleanse that. And though the Levites had been commanded to be the leaders in this work, they did not disdain to be servitors to the priests according to their office; for what filth the priests brought into the court, the Levites carried to the brook Kidron. Let not men's usefulness, be it ever so eminent, make them forget their place.

3. The expedition with which they did this work, was very remarkable. They began on the first day of the first month, a happy beginning of the new-year, and that promised a good year; thus should every year begin with the reformation of what is amiss, and the purging away, by repentance, of all the defilements contracted the foregoing year. In eight days they cleared and cleansed the temple, and in eight days more the courts of the temple, v. 17. Let those that do good work, learn to rid work and get it done. Let what is amiss, be amended quickly.

4. The report they made of it to Hezekiah, was very agreeable, v. 18, 19. They gave him an account of what they had done, because it was he that set them on work, boasted not of their own care and pains, nor did they come to him to be paid, but to let him know that all the things that had been profaned, were now sanctified according to the king's command. It was very easy to do, as ever he pleased. They knew the good king had set his heart upon God's altar, and longed to be attending that, and therefore they insisted most upon the readiness they had put that into; that the ves-
sels of the altar were scorched and brightened; those which Ahaz in his transgressions, had cast away, as vessels in which there was no pleasure, those they gathered together, sanctified them, and laid them in their place before the altar. Though the vessels of the sanctuary may be profaned for a while, God will find a time and way to sanctify them. Neither his ordinances, nor his people, shall be suffered to fail for ever.

20. Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the Lord. 21. And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he-goats, for a sin-offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah: and he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer them on the altar of the Lord. 22. So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled it on the altar: likewise, when they had killed the rams, they sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the lambs, and they sprinkled the blood upon the altar. 23. And they brought forth the he-goats for the sin-offering before the king and the congregation; and laid their hands upon them: 24. And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel; for the king commanded, that the burnt-offering and the sin-offering should be made for all Israel. 25. And he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king’s seer, and Nathan the prophet; for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets. 26. And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. 27. And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt-offering upon the altar. And when the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel. 28. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt-offering was finished. 29. And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped. 30. Moreover, Hezekiah the king, and the princes, commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer: and they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped. 31. Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now have we consecrated ourselves unto the Lord, come near, and bring sacrifices and thank-offerings into the house of the Lord. And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank-offerings; and as many as were of a free heart, burnt-offerings. 32. And the number of the burnt-offerings, which the congregation brought, was three thousand bullocks, ten bullocks, a hundred rams, and two hundred lambs: all these were for a burnt-offering to the Lord. 33. And the consecrated things were six hundred oxen, and three thousand sheep. 34. But the priests were too few, so that they could not slay all the burnt-offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them till the work was ended, and until the other priests had sanctified themselves; for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests. 35. And also the burnt-offerings were in abundance, with the fat of the peace-offerings, and the drink-offerings for every burnt-offering. So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order. 36. And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly.

The temple being cleansed, we have here an account of the good use that was immediately made of it. A solemn assembly was called to meet the king at the temple, the very next day; (v. 20.) and very glad, no doubt, all the good people in Jerusalem were, when it was said, Let us go in to the house of the Lord, Ps. 122. 1. As soon as Hezekiah heard that the temple was ready for him, he lost no time, but made it appear that he was ready for it. He rose early to go up to the house of the Lord, earlier on that day than on other days, to show that his heart was upon his work there.

Now this day’s work was to look two ways: 1. Atonement must be made for the sins of the last reign. They thought it not enough to lament and forsake those sins, but they brought a sin-offering. Even our repentance and reformation will not obtain pardon but in and through Christ, who was made sin, that is, a sin-offering, for us. No peace but through his blood, not only for penitents.

Observe,

1. The sin-offering was for the kingdom, the sanctuary, and for Judah, (v. 21.) that is, to make atonement for the sins of princes, priests, and people, for they had all corrupted their way. The law of Moses appointed sacrifices for the sins of the whole congregation, (Lev. 4. 13. 14. Numb. 15. 24. 25.) that the national judgments which their national sins deserved, might be turned away: for this, we must now have an eye to Christ the great Propitiation, as well as for the remission and salvation of particular persons.

2. The law appointed only one goat for a sin-offering, as on the day of atonement, (Lev. 16. 15.) and the such in all the sabbatical years as this, Numb. 15. 24. But they here offered seven, (v. 21.) because the sins of the congregation had been very great, and long continued in. Seven is a number of perfection: our great sin-offering is but one, yet that one perfects for ever them that are sanctified.

3. The king and congregation (that is, the representatives of the congregation) laid their hands on the heads of the goats, that were for the sin-offering, (v. 25.) thereby owning themselves guilty before
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God, and expressing their desire that the guilt of the sinner might be transferred upon the sacrifice. By faith we lay our hands on the Lord Jesus, and so receive the atonement, Rom. 5. 11.

4. Burnt-offerings were offered with the sin-offerings, seven bullocks, seven rams, and seven lambs. The intention of the burnt-offerings was to give glory to the God of Israel, whom they own as the true God, which it was proper to do at the same time that they were by the sin-offering making atonement for their offences. The blood of those, as well as of the sin-offering, was sprinkled upon the altar, (v. 22.) to make reconciliation for all Israel. (v. 24.) and not for Judah only; Christ is a Propitiation not for the sins of Israel only, but of the whole world, 1 John 2. 1, 2.

While the offerings were burning upon the altar, the Levites sang the song of the Lord, (v. 27.) the Psalms come upon David's lips, (v. 36.) with the musical instruments which God had commanded the use of, (v. 25.) and which had been long neglected. Even sorrow for sin must not put us out of tune for praising God. By faith we must rejoice in Christ Jesus as our righteousness; and our prayers and praises must ascend with our offering, to be accepted only in the virtue of it.

6. The king and all the congregation testified their consent to, and concurrence in, all that was done, by bowing their heads and worshiping; expressing an awful veneration of the Divine Majesty, by postures of adoration. This is taken notice of, v. 28. - 30. It is not enough for us to be where God is worshipped, if we do not ourselves worship him, and that, not with bodily exercise only, which profits little, but with the heart.

II. The solemnities of this day did likewise look forward: the temple-service was to be set up again, that it might be continually kept up; and this Hezekiah calls them to, v. 31. "Now that ye have consecrated yourselves to the Lord, have both made an atonement and made a covenant by sacrifice, are solemnly reconciled and engaged to him; now come near and bring sacrifices." Note, Our covenant with God must be the bond and the means of communion with him. Having consecrated ourselves in the first place, to the Lord, we must bring the sacrifices of prayer, and praise, and alms, to his house. Now, in this work, it was found,

1. That the people were free. Being called to it by the king, they brought in their offerings, though not in such abundance as in the glorious days of Solomon, (for Judah was now diminished, impoverished, and brought low,) but according to what they had, and as much as one could expect, considering their poverty and the great decay of piety among them. (1.) Some were so generous as to bring burnt-offerings, which were wholly consumed to the honour of God, and of which the offering had no part: of this sort there were 70 bullocks, 100 rams, and 200 lambs, v. 32. (2.) Others brought peace-offerings, with which they satisfied the fat of which was burnt upon the altar, and the flesh divided between the priests and the offerers; (v. 35.) of this sort there were 600 oxen and 3000 sheep, v. 33. Perhaps the remembrance of their sin, in sacrificing on the high places, made them more willing to bring their sacrifices now to God's altar.

2. That the priests were few, too few for the service. v. 34. Many of them, it is likely, were suspended and laid aside as polluted and uncanonical, for having sacrificed to idols in the last reign, and the rest had not the zeal that one might have expected upon such an occasion; they thought that the king needed not to be so forward, that there was no such necessity for haste in opening the doors of the temple, and therefore took no care to sanctify them-

several, and, being unsanctified, and so unqualified, they made that their excuse for being absent from the service; as if their offence would be their defence. They were no more aware of the perpetual shame of the priests, that though they were so well provided for out of the offerings of the Lord made by fire, yet they did not mind their business! here was work to do, and there wanted proper hands to do it.

3. That the Levites were forward. They had been more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests, (v. 34.) were better affected to the work, and better prepared and qualified for it; this was their praise, and, in recompense for it, they had the honour to be employed in that which was the priests' work; they helped them to flatter the offerings. This was not according to the law, (Lev. 1. 5, 6.) but the irregularity was dispensed with in cases of necessity, and thus encouragement was given to the faithful zealous Levites, and a just disgrace put upon the careless priests. What the Levites wanted in the ceremonial advantages of their birth and consecration, was abundantly made up in their eminent qualifications of skill and will to do the work.

4. That all were pleased. The king and all the people rejoiced in this blessed turn of affairs, and the new face of religion which the Kingdom had put on, v. 36. Two things in this matter pleased them. (1.) That it was soon brought about; the thing was done suddenly, in a little time, with a great deal of ease, and without any opposition. Those that go about the work of God in faith and with resolution, will find that there is not that difficulty in it, which they sometimes imagine, but it will be a pleasing surprise to them to see how soon it is done. (2.) That the hand of God was plainly in it; God had prepared the people by the secret influences of his grace, so that many of those who had in the last reign doted on the idolatrous altars, were now as much in love with God's altar. This change which God wrought on their minds, did very much expedite and facilitate the work. Let magistrates and ministers do their part toward the reforming of a land, and then let them trust God to do his, and ascribe to him the glory of what is done, especially when it is done suddenly, and is a pleasing surprise. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous.

CHAP. XXX.

In this chapter, we have an account of the solemn passover which Hezekiah kept in the first year of his reign, 1. The consultation about it, and the resolution he and his people came to for the observance of it, v. 2. - 5. II. The invitation he sent to Judah and Israel to come and keep it, v. 1. 6. 12. III. The joyful celebration of it, v. 13. - 27. By this, the reformation, set on foot in the foregoing chapter, was greatly advanced, and that nail in God's holy place, clenched.

A ND Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel. 2. For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month. 3. For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem. 4. And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation.

5. So they established a decree, to make
proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel at Jerusalem; for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written. 6. So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. 7. And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who, therefore, gave them up to desolation, as ye see. 8. Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever; and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. 9. For if ye turn again unto the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him. 10. So the posts passed from city to city, through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them. 11. Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. 12. Also in Judah, the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the Lord.

Here is, 1. A passover resolved upon. The annual feast was instituted as a memorial of the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt; it happened that the reviving of the temple-service fell within the appointed days of that feast, the 17th day of the 1st month; this brought that forgotten solemnity to mind; “What shall we do,” says Hezekiah, “about the passover? It is a very comfortable ordinance, and has been long neglected; how shall we revile that? The time is lapsed, for this year; we cannot go about it immediately, the congregation is thin, the people have not got notice, the priests are not prepared, v. 3. Must we defer it till another year?” Many, it is likely, were for deferring it; but Hezekiah considered that by that time twelvemonth, the good affections of the people would cool, and it would be too long to want the benefit of the ordinance; and therefore, finding a proviso in the law of Moses, that particular persons who were unclean in the first month, might keep the passover the 14th day of the second month, and be accepted, (Numb. 9. 11.) he doubted not but that it might be extended to the congregation. Whereupon, they resolved to keep the passover in the 2d month. Let the circumstance give way to the substance, and let not the thing itself be lost upon a nicety about the time. It is good striking while the iron is hot, and keeping in mind that they are in a good mind. Delays are dangerous.

II. A proclamation issued out to give notice of this passover, and to summon the people to it. 1. An invitation was sent to the ten revolted tribes to stir them up to come, and attend this solemnity. Letters were written to Ephraim and Manasseh to invite them to Jerusalem to keep this passover, (v. 11.) not without politic design, to bring them back to the house of David, but with a plain design to bring them back to the Lord God of Israel; “Let them take whom they will for their king,” says Hezekiah, “so they will but take him for their God.” The matters in difference between Judah and Israel, either upon a civil or sacred account, shall not hinder, but that if the people of Israel will sincerely return to the Lord their God, Hezekiah will bid them as welcome to the passover as any of his own subjects. Expresses are sent post throughout all the tribes of Israel, with memorials earnestly pressing the people to take this opportunity of returning to the God from whom they had revolted. Now here we have, (1.) The contents of the circular letters that were despatched away upon this occasion, in which Hezekiah discovers a great concern both for the prosperity of the kingdom, the prosperity of which he seems passionately desirous of, though he not only received no toll, tribute, or custom, from it, but it had often, and not long since, been vexatious to his kingdom. This is rendering good for evil.

Observe, [1.] What it is, which he presses them to, (v. 8.) “Yield yourselves unto the Lord. Before you can come into communion with him, you must come into covenant with him.” Give the hand to the Lord; so the word is, that is, “Consent to take him for your God: a bargain is confirmed by giving the hand; “Strike this bargain. Join yourselves to him in an everlasting covenant. Subscribe with the hand to be his, Isa. 44. 5. Give him your hand in token of giving him your heart; lay your hand to his plough; devote yourselves to his service, to work for him.” Yield to him,” that is, “Come up to his terms, come under his yoke; submit it not out any longer against him. Yield to him, to be absolutely and universally at his command, at his disposal; to be, and do, and have, and suffer, whatever he pleases. In order to this, be not stiff-necked as your fathers were; let not your corrupt and wicked wills rise up in rebellion against the will of God. Say not that you will do what you please, but resolve to do what he pleases.” We perceive in the carnal mind a stiffness and obstinacy, an unaptness to comply with God; we have it from our fathers, it is bred in the bone with us; this must be conquered; and the will that had in it a spirit of contradiction, must be melted into the will of God; and to his yoke the neck that was an iron sinew, must be bowed and fitted. In pursuance of this resignation to God, he presses them to enter into this sanctuary, that is, to attend upon him in that place which he had chosen to put his name there, and serve him in the ordinances which he had appointed. “The doors of the sanctuary are now opened, and you have liberty to enter; the temple-service is now revived, and you are welcome to join in it.” The king says, Come; the princes and priests say, Come, wherever will all the congregation. “Yield to him,” (v. 6.) “Learning to the Lord God for the remnant of his flock, and worshipped other gods; Rejoice now and be converted.” Thus they who through grace have turned to God themselves, should do all they can to bring others back to him.
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[2.] What arguments he uses to persuade them to do this. First, "You are children of Israel, and therefore stand related, stand obliged, to the God of Israel; from whom you are not his;" Secondly, "The God you are called to return to, is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a God in covenant with your first fathers, who served him and yielded themselves to him; and it was their honour and happiness." Thirdly, "Your late fathers that forsook him and trespassed against him, have been given up to desolation; their apostasy and idolatry have been their ruin, as well as their calamities." Fourthly, "You yourselves are but a remnant narrowly escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria, (v. 6.) and therefore are concerned to put yourselves under the protection of the God of your fathers, that you be not quite swallowed up." Fifthly, "This is the only way of turning away the fierceness of God's anger from you, (v. 8.) which will certainly pursue you, if you continue stiff-necked." Lastly, "If you return to God in a way of duty, he will return to you in a way of mercy." This he begins with, v. 6. and concludes with, v. 9. In general, "You will find him gracious and merciful, and one that will not turn away his face from you, if you seek him, notwithstanding the provocations you have given him. Particularly, "You may hope that he will turn according to his captivity, and bring those that are carried away, and bring them back to their own land." Could any thing be expressed more pathetically, more movingly? Could there be a better cause, and better pleaded?

(2.) The entertainment which Hezekiah's messengers and message met with. It does not appear that Hoshea, who was now king of Israel, took any umbrage from, or gave any opposition to, the dispensations of these propositions through his kingdom, nor that he forbad his subjects to accept the invitation; he seems to have left them entirely to their liberty, they might go to Jerusalem to worship if they pleased; for though he did evil, yet not like the kings of Israel that were before him, 2 Kings 17. 2. He saw ruin coming upon his kingdom, and if any of his subjects would try this expedient to prevent it, he had his full permission. But, for the passover.

[1.] The generality of them slighted the call, and turned a deaf ear to it. The messengers went from city to city, some to one, and some to another, and used pressing entreaties with the people to come up to Jerusalem to keep the passover; but they were so far from complying with the message, that they abused them that brought it, laughed them to scorn, and mocked them, (v. 10.) he not only refused, but refused with disdain. Tell them of the God of Abraham, they knew him not, they had other gods to serve, Baal and Ashtron; tell them of the sanctuary, their high places were as good; of God's mercy and wrath, they neither dreaded the one, nor desired the other. No marvel that the king's messengers were thus despicablely used by this apostate race, even God's servants were thus used by the prophets who prevailed credentials from him. The destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes was now at hand; it was but two or three years after this, that the king of Assyria laid siege to Samaria, which ended in the captivity of those tribes; just before this, they had not only a king of their own that permitted them to return to God's sanctuary, but a king of Judah that earnestly invited them to do it; had they generally accepted this invitation, it might have prevented their ruin; but their contempt of it hastened and aggravated it, and left them inexorable.

[2.] Yet there was some few that accepted the invitation. The message, though to some it was a savour of death unto death, was to others a savour of life unto life, v. 11. In the west of times, God has had a remnant; so he had here, divers of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun, (here is no mention of any out of Ephraim,) humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem, that is, were sorry for their sins, and submitted to God. Pride keeps men from yielding themselves to the Lord; when that is brought down, the work is done.

2. A command was given to the men of Judah to attend this solemnity; and they universally obeyed it, v. 12. They did it with one heart, were all of a mind in it, and the hand of God gave them that one heart; for it is in the day of power that Christ's subjects are made willing. It is God that works both to will and to do. When people, at any time, discover an unexpected forwardness to that which is good, we must acknowledge the hand of God in it.

13. And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation. 14. And they arose, and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron. 15. Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt-offerings into the house of the Lord. 16. And they stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood, which they received of the hand of the Levites: 17. For there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified; therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passovers for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto the Lord. 18. For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written: but Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one. 19. That prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary, 20. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.

The time appointed for the passover is now come, and a very great congregation came together upon this occasion, v. 13. Now here we have,

I. The preparation they made for the passover; it was good preparation: they took away all the idolatrous altars that were found, not only in the temple, but in Jerusalem, v. 14. Before they kept the feast, they cast out this old leaven. This best preparation we can make for the gospel passover, is, to cast away our iniquities, our spiritual idolatries.

II. The celebration of the passover; in this the people were so forward and zealous, that the priests...
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and Levites blushed to see themselves outdone by the commonalty, to see them more ready to bring sacrifices, than they were to offer them. This put them upon sanctifying themselves, (v. 15.) that they might not stand still for want of hands to carry it on. The notice we take of the zeal of others, should make us ashamed of our own coldness, and quicken us not only to do our duty, but to do it well, and to sanctify ourselves to it. They did according to the duty of their place, (v. 16.) sprinkling the blood upon the altar, which was a type of Christ, our Passover sacrificed for us.

11. The Levites were guilty of this solemnity. The substance was well managed, and with a great deal of devotion; but beside being a month out of time, 1. The Levites killed the passover, which should have been done by the priests only, v. 17. They also assisted, more than the law ordinarily allowed, in offering the other sacrifices, particularly those that were for the purifying of the unclean, many of which there was now occasion for: Some think that it was the officers' work, not the priests', that the Levites had here the charge of. Ordinarily, every man killed his lamb, but now for those that were under any ceremonial pollution the Levites did it. 2. Many were permitted to eat the passover, who were not purified according to the strictness of the law, v. 18. This was the second month, and there was no warrant to put them off further to the third month, as, if it had been the second month, the law had permitted them to eat it the second. And they were loath to forbid them communicating at all, lest they should discourage new converts, and send them away complaining, whom they desired to send away rejoicing. Grotius observes from this, that ritual institutions must give way, not only to a public necessity, but to a public benefit and advantage.

12. Hezekiah's prayer to God for the forgiveness of this irregularity. It was his zeal that had called them together in such haste, and he would not that any should fare the worse for being straitened in time in their preparation: he therefore thought himself concerned to be an intercessor for those that ate the passover, otherwise than it was written, that there might not be wrath upon them from the Lord. His prayer was,

1. A short prayer to the purpose. The good Lord pardon every one in the congregation that has fixed, engaged, or prepared, his heart to those services, though the ceremonial preparation be wanting. Note, (1.) The great thing required in our attendance upon God in solemn ordinances, is that we prepare our hearts to seek him; that we be sincere and upright in all we do, that the inward man be engaged and employed in it, and that we make heart-work of it; it is all nothing without this, Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward part. Hezekiah does not pray that this might be dispensed with, nor that the want of other things might be pardoned where there was not this; for this is the one thing needful, that we seek God, his favour, his honour, and that we set our hearts to do it. (2.) Where this sincerity and fixedness of heart are, yet there may be many defects and infirmities, both in the frame of the spirit, and the performance of the service, short of the purifying of the sanctuary. Corruptions may not be so fully conquered, thoughts not so closely fixed, affections not so lively, faith not so operative, as they should be; here is a defect in the sanctuary-purification. There is nothing perfect under the sun, nor a just man that doeth good, and sinneth not. (3.) These defects are pardoning, healing, grace; for omissions in duty are sins, as well as omissions of duty. If God should deal with us in strict justice according to the best of our performances, we are undone. (4.) The way to obtain pardon for our deficiencies in duty, and all the inequities of our holy things, is, to seek it of God by prayer; it is not so a pardon of course, but that it must be obtained by petition through the blood of Christ. (5.) In this prayer, we must take encouragement from the goodness of God. The good Lord pardon; for when he proclaimed his goodness, he insisted most upon this breach of it, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. (6.) It is the duty of those that have the charge of others, not only to look to themselves, but to those also that are under their charge, to see wherein they are wanting, and to pray for them; as Hezekiah here. See Job 1. 5.

13. A successful prayer. The Lord heartened Hezekiah, was well pleased with his pious concert: for the congregation, and, in answer to his prayer, healeed the people, (v. 20.) not only did not lay their sin to their charge, but graciously accepted their services notwithstanding; for healing denotes not only forgiveness, Isa. 6. 10. Ps. 103. 5. but comfort and peace, Isa. 57. 18. Mal. 4. 2.

21. And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord. 22. And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the Lord: and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace-offerings, and making confession to the Lord God of their fathers. 23. And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept other seven days with gladness. 24. For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the congregation a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep: and the princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep; and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. 25. And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. 26. So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. 27. Then the priests and Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven.

After the passover followed the feast of unleavened bread, which continued seven days. How that was observed, we are here told, and every thing in this account looks pleasant and lively.

1. Abundance of sacrifices were offered to God in peace-offerings, by which they were acknowledged and implored the favour of God, and on part of which the offerings feasted with their friends during these seven days, (a. 22.) in token of their communion with God, and the comfort they took in his.
favour, and their reconciliation to him. To keep up this part of the service, that God's altar might be abundantly regaled with the fat and blood, and his priests and his people with the fruits of the peace-offerings, Hezekiah gave out of his own stock 1000 bullocks, and 7000 sheep; and the princes, exc-ited by his pious example, gave the same number of bullocks, and a greater number of sheep, and all for peace-offerings, v. 24. By this, God was ho-noured, the joy of the festival was kept up, and the strangers were encouraged to come again to Jerusa-lem. It was generously done of the king and the princes; that they might help to entertain the whole con-gregation: but what is a great estate good for, but that it puts men into a capacity of doing so much the more good. Christ feasted those that followed him. I believe neither Hezekiah nor his princes were the poorer at the year's end for this their pious liberality.

II. Many good prayers were put up to God with the peace-offerings, v. 22. They made confession, to the Lord God of their fathers, in which the intent and meaning of the peace-offerings were directed and explained. When the priests sprinkled the blood and burnt the fat, they made confession, so did the people when they feasted on their part. They made a religious confession of their relation to God and dependence upon him; a penitent confession of their sins and iniquities; a thankful confession of God's mercies and benefits; a confession of their wants and desires, and, in all these, they had an eye to God as the God of their fathers, as a God in covenant with them.

III. There was an abundance of good preaching. The Levites (whose office it was, Deut. 33. 10.) taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord, read and opened the scriptures, and instructed the congregation concerning God, and concerning Christ; and him; there was great need of it, after so long a fame of the word as had been in the last reign. Hezekiah did not himself preach, but he spake comfortably to the Levites that did, attended their preaching, commended their diligence, and assured them of his protection and countenance; hereby he encouraged them to study hard and take pains; and put a reputation upon them, that the people might respect, and regard, the mighty princes and magistrates, by owning and encouraging faithful and laborious preachers, greatly serve the interest of God's kingdom among men.

IV. They sang psalms every day, v. 21. The Levites and priests praised the Lord day by day, both with songs and musical instruments; thus expressing their own, and exciting another one's, joy in God, and thankfulness to him. Praise of God should be much of our work in our religious as-semblies.

V. Having kept the seven days of the feast in this religious manner, they had so much comfort in it, that they kept other seven days, v. 23. They did not institute any new modes of worship, but re-peated and continued the old. The case was extra-ordinary; men living without the ordinance, guilt had been contracted by the neglect of it. They had now got a very great congregation together, and were in a devout and serious frame; they knew not when they might have such another opportuni-ty, and therefore could not now find in their hearts to part till they had doubled the time. Many of them were a great way from home, and had business in the city; but after, for this being the second month, they were in the midst of their holi-ness; yet they were in no haste to return, the zeal of God's house made them forget themselves and their secular affairs. How unlike those who snuffed at God's service, and said, What a weariness is it! Or those who asked, When will the sabbath be gone? The servants of God should abound in his work.

VI. All this they did with gladness; (v. 23.) they all rejoiced, and particularly the strangers, v. 25. So there was great joy in Jerusalem, v. 27. It was the like since the dedication of the temple in Solomon's time. Note, Holy duties should be performed with holy gladness; we should be forward to them, and take pleasure in them, relish the sweetness of communion with God, and look upon it as a matter of unspeakable joy and comfort, that we are thus favoured, and have such earnest of everlasting joy.

VII. The congregation was at length dismissed with a solemn blessing, v. 27. 1. The priests pro-nounced it: for it was part of their office to bless the people, Num. 6. 22, 23, in which they were both the people's mouth to God, by way of prayer; and God's mouth to the people, by way of promise; for their blessing included both. In it they testified both their desire of the people's welfare, and their dependence on God, and thought on his grace, to which they commended them. What a comfort is it to a congregation to be sent home thus crowned! 2. God said Amen to it. The voice of the priests, when they blessed the people, was heard in heaven, and came up to the habitation of God's holiness. When they pronounced the blessing, God commanded it, and perhaps gave some sensible token of the ratification of it. The prayer that comes up to heaven in a cloud of incense, will come down again to this earth in showers of blessings.

CHAP. XXXI.

We have here a further account of that blessed reformation of which Hezekiah was a glorious instrument, and of the happy advances he made in it. 1. All the remnants of idolatry were destroyed and abolished, v. 1. II. The priests and Levites were set to work again, every man in his place, v. 2. III. Care was taken for their mainte-nance. 1. The royal bounty to the clergy, and for the support of the temple service, was duly paid, v. 3. 2. Orders were given for the raising of the people's quota, v. 4. The people therefore brought in their dues abundantly, v. 5. 10. 4. Commissioners were appointed for the due distribution of what was brought in, v. 11. 19. Lastly, Here is the general praise of Hezekiah's sincere-ty in all his undertakings, v. 20. 21.

1. NOW when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh; until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned every man to his possession into their own cities. 2. And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt-offerings and for peace-offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the Lord. 3. He appointed also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt-offerings, to wit, for the morning and evening burnt-offerings, and the burnt-offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the Lord. 4. Moreover, he commanded the people that
dwell in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord. 5. And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the first-fruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and all of the increase of the field; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly. 6. And concerning the children of Israel and Judah that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithes of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the Lord their God, and laid them by heaps. 7. In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month. 8. And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the Lord, and his people Israel. 9. Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. 10. And Azariah the chief priest, of the house of Zadok, answered him and said, Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the Lord hath blessed his people: and that which is left is this great store.

We have here an account of what was done after the passover; what was wanting in the solemnities of preparation for it before, was made up in that which is better, a due improvement of it after. When the religious exercises of a Lord’s day or a communion are finished, we must not think that then the work is done. No; then the hardest part of our work begins, which is to exemplify the impressions of the ordinance upon our minds in all the instances of a holy conversation. So it was here; when all this was finished, there was more to be done.

1. They applied themselves with vigour to destroy all the monuments of idolatry. The king had done what he could of this kind, (2 Kings 18. 4.) but the people could discover those profane relics which escaped the eye of the king’s officers, and therefore they went out to see what they could do, v. 1. This was done immediately after the passover. Note, The comfort of communion with God should kindle in us a holy zeal and indignation against every thing that is offensive to God. If our hearts have been made to burn within us at an ordinance, that spirit of burning will consume the dross of corruption: What have I now to do any more with idols? Their zeal here in destroying the images and groves, the high places and altars, appeared, 1. In that they did this, not only in the cities of Judah and Benjamin, but in those of Ephraim and Manasseh; some think that those cities are meant, which were under the jurisdiction and the jurisdiction of the kings of Judah; others think that, Hoshea, king of Israel, not forbidding it, their zeal carried them out to the destruction of idolatry, even in many parts of this kingdom. At least, those that came out of Ephraim and Manasseh to keep the passover, (as many did, ch. 30. 18.) destroyed all their own images and groves, and did the like for as many more as they had influence upon, or could make interest in for leave to do it: we should not only reform ourselves, but do all we can to reform others too. 2. They destroyed all, they utterly destroyed all, they spared none for favour or affection either to the images or to their worshippers; though every one so ancient, ever so costly, ever so beautiful, and ever so well patronised, yet they must all be destroyed. Those that sincerely set themselves against sin, will set themselves against all sin. 3. They would not return to their houses, though they had been long absent, till this was done: they could not be easy, nor think themselves safe, in their cities, as long as their images and groves, those betrayers and destroyers of their country, were left standing. Perhaps the prophet Isaiah pointed to this, when he mentions that nation’s make of a day in which men should cast away the very idols that themselves had made. So surprising was the blessed change, Isa. 2. 20.—31. 6, 7.

II. Hezekiah revived and restored the courses of the priests and Levites, which David had appointed, and which had of late been put out of course, v. 2. The temple-service was put into method again, to run in the old channel. Every man was made to know his own work, and to do it according to what he was expected from him. Good order contributes much to the carrying on of a good work. The priests were appointed in their courses for burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, the Levites in their courses were some to minister to the priests, others to give thanks and praise. See 1 Chron. 23. 4, 5. And all this in the gates or courts of the tents of the Lord. The temple is here called a tent, because the temple-privileges are moveable things, and this temple was shortly to be removed.

III. He appropriated a branch of the revenue of his crown to the maintenance and support of the altar. Though the people were to be at the charge of the daily offerings, and those on the sabbaths, new moons, and feasts, yet, rather than they should be burdened with the expense, he allowed out of his own estate, or out of his exchequer, for all those offerings, v. 3. It was a generous act of piety, wherein he consulted both God’s honour and his people’s ease, as a faithful servant to him, and a tender father to them. Let princes and great men reckon that well bestowed, and set out to the best interest, which they give for the support and encouragement of religion in their country.

IV. He issued out an order to the inhabitants of Jerusalem first, v. 4. (that they who were nearest the temple, and both saved and got by being so, might give a good example to others,) but which was afterward extended to, or, at least admitted by, the cities of Judah, that they should carefully pay in their dues, according to the law of the priests and Levites. This had been long neglected, which made the work to be neglected; for a scandalous maintenance makes a scandalous ministry. But Hezekiah, having himself been liberal, may with a good grace require his subjects to be just, to the temple-service. And observe the end he aims at in recovering and restoring to the priests and Levites their portion, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord, in the study of it, and in doing their duty according to it. Observe here, 1. It is fit that ministers should be not only maintained, but encouraged, that they should not only be kept to do their work and duty, but that, by every means, they should be put upon, and be able to work with to live comfortably, that they may do it with cheerfulness. 2. Yet they are to be maintained, not in idleness, pride, and luxury, but in the law of the Lord, in their observance of it themselves, and in teaching others the good knowledge of it.

V. The people, thereupon, brought in their tithes very readily; they wanted nothing but to be called upon; and therefore, as soon as the commandment
came abroad, the first-fruits and all the holy things were duly brought in, v. 5, 6. What the priests had occasion for, for themselves and their families, they made use of, and the surplus was laid in heaps, v. 6. All harvest-time, they were increasing these heaps, as the fruits of the earth were gathered in, for God was to have his dues out of them all. Though a prescription may be pleaded for a **modus decimandi—tything-modus**; yet it cannot be pleaded **pro non decimando—for the omission of tything**.

When harvest ended, they finished their heaps, v. 7. Now here we have, 1. The account given of Hezekiah concerning these heaps. He **gave them, with the priests and Levites** concerning them, why they did not use what was paid in, but hoarded it up thus, v. 9. To which it was answered, that they had made use of all they had occasion for, for the maintenance of themselves and their families, and for their winter-store, and this that was that which was left over above, v. 10. They did not hoard these heaps for covetousness, but to show what plentiful provision God by his law had made for them, if they could but have it collected and brought in; and that who conscientiously give God his dues out of their estates, bring a blessing upon all they have; **Since they began to bring in the offerings, the Lord had blessed his people.** See for this, Hag. 2. 19. **"Try me," says God, "if you will not otherwise trust me, whether, upon your bringing the tithes into the store-house, you have not a blessing poured out upon you."** Mal. 3. 10, 11. Ezek. 44. 30. 2. The acknowledgment which the king and princes made of it, v. 8. They gave thanks to God for his good provisio, which gave them something to bring, and his good grace which gave them hearts to bring it. And they also **blessed the people**, that is, commended them for their doing well, without approaching them for their former neglects. It is observable, that after they had tasted the sweetness of God's ordinance in the late comfortable passover, they were thus free in maintaining the temple-service. They that experience the benefit of a settled ministry, will not grudge the expense of it.

11. Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the Lord; and they prepared them, 12. And brought in the offerings, and the tithes, and the dedicated things, faithfully; over which Cononiah the Levite was ruler, and Shimei his brother was the next. 13. And Jehiel, and Azaziah, and Nahath, and Asahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eliel, and Ismachiah, and Mahath, and Benaiah, were overseers, under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God. 14. And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter toward the east, was over the free-will-offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of the Lord, and the most holy things. 15. And next him were Eden, and Miniamin, and Jeshua, and Shemaiah, and Amariah, and Shecaniah, in the cities of the priests, in their set office, to give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the small: 16. Besides their genealogy of males, from three years old and upward, **even unto every one that enthrall into the house of the Lord, his daily portion for their service in their charges, according to their courses; 17. Both to the genealogy of the priests by the house of their fathers, and the Levites from twenty years old and upward, in their charges by their courses: 18. And to the genealogy of all their little ones, their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, through all the congregation: for in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness:** 19. Also of the sons of Aaron the priests, which were in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every several city, the men that were expressly by name to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogies among the Levites. 20. And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God. 21. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.

Here we have,

1. Two particular instances of the care of Hezekiah concerning church-matters; having put them into good order, to keep them so. The tithes and other holy things being brought in, he provided, 1. That they should be carefully laid up, and not left exposed in loose heaps, liable to be wasted and embecause; he ordered chambers to be made ready in some of the courts of the temple for store-chambers, (v. 11.) and into them the offerings were brought, and there kept under lock and key, v. 12, 13. Treasurers or store-keepers were appointed, who had the oversight of them, to see that *moot and rust did not overthrow them, nor thieves break through to steal.* This wisdom of laying up the surplus in days of plenty, we may learn from the ant, who *provideth meat in summer.* The laying up in store what was brought in, was an encouragement to people to pay in their contributions. That will be given cheerfully by the public, which appears to be well-husbanded.

2. That they should be faithfully laid out, according to the uses they were intended for. Church-treasurers are not to be hoarded any longer, nor till there is occasion for them; even the rust will be a witness against them that do. Officers were appointed, men (no doubt) of approved wisdom and faithfulness, to distribute the oblations of the Lord, and the most holy things among the priests, (v. 14.) and to see that they all had a competent maintenance for themselves and their families. The law provided sufficient for them all, and therefore if some had too little, it must be because others had too much; to prevent such inequality, these officers were to go by some certain rule of proportion, in the disposal of the incomes of the temple. It is said of the priests here, (v. 18.) that in their set office they sanctified themselves; in faith they sanctified themselves, so the word is; that is, as Bishop Patrick explains it, they attended their several offices in the temple of the house of God, not doubting but they should be provided with all things necessary; now because they served God in that confidence, care was taken that they should not be made ashamed of their hope.

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They that sanctify themselves to God and his service in faith, believing that he will see them want nothing that is good for them, shall, verily, be fed.

Out of the offerings of the Lord distribution was made, (1.) To the priests in the cities (v. 13.) who stood at home, while their brethren went to Jerusalem, and did good there in teaching the good knowledge of the Lord; the preaching-priests were maintained as well as the sacrificing-priests, and they that abode by the stuff, as they that warred the warfare. (2.) To those that entered into the house of the Lord, all the males from three years old and upwards; for the male children even at that tender age, it seems, were allowed to come into the temple. (v. 17. 18.) The Levites, and Levite women, received this distribution, v. 16. (3.) Even the Levites from twenty years old and upward had their share, v. 17. (4.) The wives and children of the priests and Levites had a comfortable maintenance out of those offerings, v. 18. In maintaining ministers, regard must be had to their families, that not only they, but their's may have food convenient. In some countries where ministers have their salary paid them by the public treasury, and in addition to that, the support of the family of a child. (5.) The priests in the country, that lived in the fields of the suburbs, were not overlooked in this ministration, v. 19. They also had their share, who were inhabitants of the villages, though they might be supposed to live at a less expense.

II. A general character of Hezekiah's services for the support of religion, v. 20. 21. I. His priestly zeal extended to all the parts of his kingdom, thus he did throughout all Judah; every part of the country, and not those only that lay next him, shared in the good fruits of his government. 2. He sincerely desired to please God, and approved himself to him in all he did: he wrought that which was good before the Lord his God; all his care was to do that which should be accepted of God, which was right, (that is, agreeable to natural equity,) and truth, (that is, agreeable to divine revelation, and his covenant with God,) before the Lord; to do according to that law which is holy, just, and good. 3. What he began, he went through with, prosecuted it with vigour, and did it with all his heart. 4. All his good intentions were brought to good issue; whatever he did in the service of the house of God, and in the government of his kingdom, he prospered in. With this zeal he undertook with a sincere regard to the glory of God, will succeed to our own honour and comfort at last.

CHAP. XXXII.

This chapter continues and concludes the history of the reign of Hezekiah. I. The descent which Sennacherib made upon him, and the care he took to fortify himself, his city, and the minds of his people against that enemy, v. 1. 2. II. The insolent blasphemies of letters and messages which Sennacherib sent him, v. 9. 19. III. The real answer God gave to Sennacherib's blasphemies, and to Hezekiah's prayers, in the total rout of the Assyrian army, to the shame of Sennacherib, and the honour of Hezekiah. v. 20. 25. IV. Hezekiah's sickness and his recovery from that; his sin and his recovery from that; with the honours that attended him living and dead, v. 24. 33.

AFTER these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself. 2. And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, 3. He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains, which were without the city: and they did help him. 4. So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria, come and find much water? 5. Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance. 6. And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying, 7. Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him. 8. With him is an arm of flesh: but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

Here is, 1. The formidable design of Sennacherib against Hezekiah's kingdom, and the vigorous attempt he made upon it. This Sennacherib was now, as Nebuchadnezzar was afterward, the terror and scourge and great oppressor of that part of the world, that aimed to raise a boundless monarchy for himself upon the ruins of his neighbours; his predecessor Shalmaneser had lately made himself master of the kingdom of Israel, and carried the ten tribes captive: Sennacherib thought, in like manner, to win Judah for himself. Pride and ambition put men upon grasping at universal dominion; and it is observable that, just about this time, Rome was built by Romulus, a city which afterward came to reign more than any other had done over the great of the earth. Sennacherib invaded Judah immediately* after the reformation of it, and the re-establishment of religion in it; after these things, he entered into Judah, v. 1. 1. It was well ordered by the Divine Providence, that he did not give them this disturbance before the reformation was finished and established, which might have put a stop to it. 2. Perhaps he intended to chastise Hezekiah for destroying that idolatry to which he himself was devoted; he looked upon Hezekiah as profane in what he had done, and that he had thrown himself out of the divine protection, and might therefore be easily made a prey of. 3. God ordered it at this time, that he might have an opportunity or showing himself strong on the behalf of this returning re-forming people. He brought this trouble upon them, that he might have the honour, and might put an end to the honour of their deliverer. After these things, and the establishment thereof, one would expect to hear of nothing but perfect peace, and that none durst meddle with a people thus qualified for the divine favour; yet the next news we hear, is, that a threatening destroying army enters the country, and is ready to lay all waste. We may be in the way of our duty, and yet meet with trouble and danger; God orders it for the trial of our confidence

* From the 5 Kings 18. 13. we learn that it was in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign.—Ez.
in him, and the manifestation of his care concerning us. The little opposition which Sennacherib met with in entering Judah, possessed his mind with the conceit that all was his own. He thought to win all the fenced cities, (v. 1.) and purposed to fight against Jerusalem, v. 2. See 2 Kings 18. 7, 13.

II. The preparation which Hezekiah prudently made against this invasion, is described briefly in this verse: 1. He took counsel with his princes what he should do, what measures he should take; and with their advice, he provided, That the country should give him a cold reception, for he took care that he should find no water in it, (and then his army must perish for thirst,) or, at least, that there should be a scarcity of water, by which his army would be weakened, and unfit for service. A powerful army, if it was not encouraged from without, was a thing that might soon waste away, and fall by itself. 2. That the city should give him a warm reception; in order to this, he repaired the walls, raised the towers, and made the inhabitants in the midst of it ready to receive him. The Hiphil of this word signifies either to hearken, or to be attentive; and those who are attentive to receive him, are so by their fear of him. 

9. After this Sennacherib king of Assyria sent his servants to Jerusalem, (but he himself laid siege against Lachish, and all his power with him,) unto Hezekiah king of Judah, and unto all Judah that were at Jerusalem, saying, 10. Thus saith Sennacherib king of Assyria, Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide in the siege in Jerusalem? 11. Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give over yourselves to die by famine and by thirst, saying, The Lord our God shall deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 12. Hath not the same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall worship before one altar, and burn incense upon it? 13. Know ye not what I and my fathers have done unto all the people of other lands? were the gods of the nations of those lands any ways able to deliver their lands out of my hand? 14. Who was there among all the gods of those nations, that my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you out of my hand? 15. Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you on this manner, neither yet believe him; for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of my hand, and out of the hand of my fathers: how much less shall your God deliver you out of my hand? 16. And his servants spake yet more against the Lord God, and against his servant Hezekiah. 17. He wrote also letters to rail on the Lord God of Israel, and to speak against him, saying, As the gods of the nations of other lands have not delivered their people out of my hand, so shall not the God of Hezekiah deliver his people out of my hand. 18. Then they cried with a loud voice, in the Jews' speech, unto the people of Jerusalem that were on the wall, to affright them, and to trouble them, that they might take the city. 19. And they spake against the God of Jerusalem as against the gods of the people of the earth, which were the work of the hands of men. 20. For this cause Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven. 21. And the Lord sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains, in the camp of the king of Assyria: so he returned with shame of face to his own land.
And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword. 22. Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side. 23. And many brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah; so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.

This story of the rage and blasphemy of Sennacherib, Hezekiah's prayer, and the deliverance of Jerusalem by the destruction of the Assyrian army, we had more at large in the book of Kings, 2 Kings 18, 19. It is contracted here, yet large enough to show these three things: I. The impiety and malice of the church's enemies. Sennacherib has his hands full in besieging Lachish, v. 9, but hears that Hezekiah is fortifying Jerusalem, and encouraging his people to stand boldly out against the king's enemies. He sends messenger to besiege it, he sends messengers to make speeches, and himself writes letters to frighten Hezekiah and his people into a surrender of the city. See, 1. His great malice against the king of Judah, in endeavouring to withdraw his subjects from their allegiance to him. He does not treat with Hezekiah, as a man of honour would have done, nor propose any terms of friendship, but turns against him the sword of his army, at a season when he was most likely to succumb; to try his power, to terrify the common people, and persuade them to desert him. He represented Hezekiah as one who designed to deceive his subjects into their ruin, and betray them to famine and thirst; (v. 11.) as one who had done them great wrong, and exposed them already to the divine displeasure by taking away the high places and altars; (v. 12.) and who, against the common interest of his people, held out against a force that would certainly be their ruin, v. 15. 2. His great impiety against the God of Israel; the God of Jerusalem he is called, v. 19. because that was the place which he had chosen to put his name there, and because that was the place which was now threatened by the enemy, and which the Divine Providence had under its special protection. This proud blasphemer compares the great Jehovah, the Maker of heaven and earth, with the dunghill-gods of the nations, the work of men's hands, and thinks him no more able to deliver his worshippers, than they were to deliver their's, v. 19. As if an infinite and eternal Spirit had no more wisdom and power than a stone or the stock of a tree. He boasts of his triumphs over the gods of the nations, that they could none of them protect their people, v. 13-15, and thence infers rashly, How shall your God deliver you? v. 14, as if he were inferior to them all. How much less shall your God deliver you? As if he were less able to help than any of them. Thus did they rail; rail in writing, (which being more deliberate, is so much the worse,) on the Lord God of Israel, as if he were a cipher and an empty name, like all the rest, v. 17. Sennacherib, in the instructions he gave, said more than enough; but, as his imagination of his own strength was too little, his servants, who had learned insolence from their master, spake yet more than he bade them against the Lord God and his servant Hezekiah, v. 16. And God resents and will reckon for, what it said against his servants, as well as what is said against himself. All this was intended to frighten the people from their hope in God; which David's enemies sought to take him off from, (Ps. 11. 1.-42. 10.) saying, There is no help for him in God, Ps. 3. 27.-1. 11. Thus they hoped to take the city by weakening the hands of those that should defend it. Satan, in his temptations, aims to destroy our faith in God's all-sufficiency knowing that he gain his point, if he can do that; as we keep our ground, if our faith fail not, Luke 22. 22.

II. The duty and interest of the church's friends: and that is, in the day of distress to pray and cry to Heaven. So Hezekiah did, and the prophet Isaiah, v. 20. It was a happy time, when the king and the prophet join thus in prayer. Is any troubled? Is any terrified? Let them pray. So we engage God for us, so we encourage ourselves in him. Praying to God is here called crying to Heaven, because we are, in prayer, to eye him as our Father in heaven, whom we have all the more reason to believe is the being of men, and where he has prepared his throne.

III. The power and goodness of the church's God. He is able both to control his enemies, be they never so high, and to relieve his friends, be they never so low. As the blasphemies of his enemies engage him against them, (Deut. 32. 27.) so the prayers of his people engage him for them; v. 21. Hezekiah's prayer was cut off by the sword of an angel, which triumphed particularly in the slaughter of the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains, who defied the sword of any man. God delights to abase the proud and secure. The Targum says, The word of the Lord (the Eternal Word) sent Gabriel to do this execution, and that it was done with lightning, and in the passover-night; that was the night in which the angel destroyed the first-born of Egypt. But that was not all; 2. The king of the Assyrians, having received this disgrace, was cut off by the sword of his own sons. They that came forth of his own bowels, slew him, v. 21. Thus was he mortified first, and then murdered; shamed first, and then slain. Evil pursues sinners; and when they escape one mischief, they run upon another unseen.

22. Now, by this work of wonder, (1.) God was glorified, as the Protector of his people. Thus he saved Jerusalem, not only from the hand of Sennacherib, but from the hand of all others; for such a deliverance as this was an earnest of much mercy in store; and he guided them, that is, he guarded them, on every side. God defends his people by directing them, shows them what they should do, and so saves them from what is designed or done against them. For this, many brought gifts unto the Lord, when they saw the great power of God in the defence of his people. Strangers were thereby induced to supplicate his favour, and enemies to deprecate his wrath, and both brought gifts to his temple, in token of their care and desire. (2.) Hezekiah was magnified as the favourite and particular care of Heaven; many brought presents to him, as we say, to the Lord God of Jerusalem, (v. 29.) in token of the honour they had for him, and to make an interest in him. By the favour of God, enemies are lost, and friends gained.

24. In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the Lord: and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign. 25. But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. 26. Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, (both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem,)
so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah. 27. And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasures for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels; 28. Storehouses also for the increase of corn; and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks. 29. Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him substance very much. 30. This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper water-course of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works. 31. Howbeit, in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart. 32. Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they are written in the Vision of Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, and in the book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. 33. And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

Here we conclude the story of Hezekiah, with an account of three things concerning him: I. His sickness, and his recovery from it, v. 24. It is but briefly mentioned here; we had a large narrative of it, 2 Kings 20. His disease seemed likely to be mortal. In the extremity of it, he prayed. God answered him, and gave him a sign that he should recover; the going back of the sun ten degrees. II. His sin, and his repentance for that; this was also more largely related, 2 Kings 20. 12-18. Yet several things are here observed concerning it, which we had not there. 1. The occasion of it was the king of Babylon’s sending an honourable embassy to him, to congratulate him on his recovery. But here it is added, that they came to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, (v. 31.) either the destruction of the Assyrian army, or the going back of the sun. The Assyrians were their enemies, they came to inquire concerning their fall, that they might triumph in it. The sun was their god; they came to inquire concerning the favour he had shown to Hezekiah, of the great good he had done them; and the recovery of their god honoured, v. 31. These miracles were wrought to alarm and awake a stupid careless world, and turn them from dumb and idle idols to the living God; and men were startled by them, but not converted till a greater wonder was done in that land, in the appearing of Jesus Christ; Matt. 2. 1. 2. 2 God left him to himself in it, to try him, v. 31. God, by the power of his almighty grace, could have prevented the sin; but he permitted it for wise and holy ends, that, by this trial and his weakness in it, he might know, that is, it might be known, (an usual Hebraism,) what was in his heart; that he was not so perfect in grace as he thought he was, but had his follies and infirmities as well as other men. God left him to himself, to be proud of his wealth, to keep him from being proud of his power. It is good for us to know ourselves, and our own weakness and sinfulness, that we may not be conceited, or self-confident, but may always think meanly of ourselves, and live in a dependence upon divine grace. We know not the corruption of our own hearts, nor what we shall do if God leave us to ourselves. Lord, lead us not into temptation. 3. His sickness, that his heart was lifted up, v. 25. He was proud of the honour God had put upon him in so many instances; the honour his neighbours did him in bringing him presents; and now that the king of Babylon should send an embassy to him to caress and court him, this exalted him above measure. When Hezekiah had destroyed other idolatries, he began to idolize himself. O what need have great men, and good men, and useful men, to stand in their own importance and follies, and their obligations to free grace, that they may be ever so thankful for, and ever so happy of themselves, and to beg earnestly of God, that he will hide pride from them, and always keep them humble! 4. The aggravation of his sin, was, that he made so bad a return to God for his favours to him, making even those favours the food and fuel of his pride, v. 25. He rendered not again according to the benefit done to him. Note, It is justly expected that they who have received mercy from God, should study to make some suitable returns for the mercies they have received; and if they do not, their ingratitude will certainly be charged upon them. Though we cannot render an equivalent, or the payment of a debt, we must render the acknowledgment of a favour: What shall I render, that may be so accepted? Ps. 116. 12. 5. The divine displeasure he was under for this sin; though it was but a heart-sin, and the overt-act seemed not only innocent, but civil, (the showing of his treasures to a friend,) yet wrath came upon him and his kingdom for it, v. 25. Note, Pride is a sin that God hates as much as any other, and particularly in his own people. They that exalt themselves, must expect to be abused, and kept under humbling providences. Wrath came on David for his pride in himself, and the receiving the record. 6. His repentance for this sin. He humbled himself for the pride of his heart. Note, (1.) Though God may, for wise and holy ends, suffer his people to fall into sin, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it; they shall not be utterly cast down. (2.) Heart-sins are to be repented of, though they go no further. (3.) Self-humiliation is a necessary branch of all true penitence; or, how can we have lifted up ourselves, is sin, for which we ought, in a special manner, to humble ourselves. (4.) People ought to mourn for the sins of their rulers. The inhabitants of Jerusalem humbled themselves with Hezekiah; either because they knew they also had been guilty of the same sin, or, at least, feared they might share in the punishment of it: and when he judged they had offended, numbered the people, they all smote it for it. 7. The reprove granted thereupon. The wrath came not in his days; while he lived, there were peace and truth; so much does repentance avail to put by, or, at least, to put off, the tokens of God’s anger.

II. Here is the honour done to Hezekiah: 1. By the providence of God while he lived. He had exceeded in riches and honour, (v. 27.) He replenished his stores, victualled his camps, fortified
II. Chronicles, XXXIII.

In this chapter, we have the history of the reign, I. Of Manasseh, who reigned long. 1. His wrested apostasy from God, and revolt to idolatry, and all wickedness, v. 1-10. 2. His happy return to God in his affliction; his repentance, v. 11-13. his reformation, v. 15-17. and prosperity, v. 14, with the conclusion of his reign, v. 18 ... 20. II. Of Amon, who reigned very wickedly, v. 21 ... 29. and soon ended his days unhappily, v. 24, 25.

1. MANASSEH was twelve years old when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: 2. But did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. 3. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. 4. Also he built altars in the house of the Lord, whereof the Lord had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. 5. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. 6. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. 7. And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: 8. Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers: so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. 9. So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. 10. And the Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people; but they would not hearken.

We have here an account of the great wickedness of Manasseh; it is the same almost word for word with that which we had, 2 Kings 21. 1-9. and took a melancholy view of it; it is no such pleasing subject, that we should delight to dwell upon it again. This foolish young prince, in contradiction to the good example and good education his father gave him, abandoned himself to all impurity; transcribed the abominations of the heathen, (v. 2.) ruined the established religion, and unravell'd his father's glorious reformation, (v. 3.) profaned the house of God with his idolatry, (v. 4, 5.) dedicated his children to Moloch, and made the Devil's lying oracles his guides and his counsellors, v. 6. In contempt of God's choice, Manasseh had made of Sion to be his hire for ever, and Israel to be his covenant-people, (v. 8.) and the fair terms he stood upon with him, he embraced other gods, profaned God's chosen temple, and debauched his chosen people; he made them to err, and do worse than the heathen, (v. 9.) for if the unclean spirit return, he brings with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. That which aggravated the sin of Manasseh, was, that God spoke to him and his people, by the prophets, but they would not hearken, v. 10. We may here admire the grace of God in speaking to them, and their obstinacy in turning a deaf ear to him; that either their badness did not quite turn away his goodness, but still he waited to be gracious, or that his goodness did not turn them from their badness, but still they hated to be reformed.

Now from this let us learn, 1. That it is no new thing, but a very sad thing, for the children of godly parents to turn aside from that good way of God in which they have been trained up. Parents may give many good things to their children, but they cannot give them grace. 2. Corruptions in worship are such diseases of the church, as even then, when they seem to be cured, it is very apt to relapse into again. 3. That God has this world has strangely blinded men's minds, and has a wonderful power over those that are led captive by him; else he could not draw them from God their best Friend, to depend upon their sworn enemy.

11. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. 12. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. 13. And prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him.
and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God. 14. Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gibron, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish-gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. 15. And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the Lord, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the Lord, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. 16. And he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings and thank-offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel. 17. Nevertheless, the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the Lord their God only. 18. Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the Lord God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the Kings of Israel: 19. His prayer also, and how God was entreated of him, and all his sin, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled, behold, they are written among the sayings of the seers. 20. So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

We have seen Manasseh by his wickedness undoing the good that his father had done; here we have him by repentance undoing the evil that he himself had done. It is strange that this was not so much as mentioned in the book of Kings, nor does any thing appear there to the contrary, but that he persisted and perished in his sin. But, perhaps, the reason was, because the design of that history was to show the wickedness of the nation which brought destruction upon them; and this repentance of Manasseh, and the benefit of it, being personal only, and not national, it is overlooked there; yet here it is fully related, and a memorable instance it is of the riches of God’s pardoning mercy, and the power of his renewing grace. Here is, 1. The occasion of Manasseh’s repentance; and that was his afflictions. In his distress, he did not (like that king Ahaz) trespass yet more against God, but humbled himself, and returned to God. Sanc-tified afflictions often prove happy means of conver-sion. What his distress was, we are here told, v. 11. 11. God brought a foreign enemy upon him; the king of Babylon, that courted his father who faith-fully served God, invaded him now that he was treacherously departed from God. He is here called king of Assyria, because he had made himself master of Assyria, which he would the more easily do, for the defeat of Semacheth’s army, and its de-struction, before Jerusalem. He aimed at the trea-sures which the ambassadors had seen, and all those precious things; but God sent him to chastise a sin-ful people, and reduce a straying prince. The cap-

tains took Manasseh among the thorns, in some bush or other, perhaps in his garden, where he had hid himself. Or, it is spoken figuratively; he was per-plexed in his counsels, and embarrassed in his affairs. He was, as we say, in the woods, and knew not which way to extricate himself, and so became an easy prey to the Assyrian captains; who, no doubt, plundered his house, and took away what they pleased, as Isaiah had foretold, 2 Kings 20. 17, 18. What was Hezekiah’s pride, was their prey. They bound Manasseh, who had been held before with the cords of his own iniquity, and carried him prisoner to Babylon. And as at that time of his reign this was, we are not told; the Jews say, he was carried captive in 22d year.

II. The expressions of his repentance; (v. 12, 13.) when he was in affliction, he had time to bethink himself, and reason enough too. He saw what he had brought himself to by his sin; he found the gods he had served, unable to help him. He knew that repentance was the only way of restoring his affairs, and therefore to him he returned, from whom he had revolted. 1. He was convinced that Jehovah is the one only living and true God. Then he knew, that is, he believed and considered, that the Lord he was God; he might have known it at a less expense, if he would have given due attendance and credit to the word written and preached: but it was better to pay thus dear for the knowledge of God, than to perish in ignorance and unbelief. Had he never been a prince in the palace of Babylon, it is probable he had been convinced of his guilt; but, being a captive in the prisons of Babylon, he was convinced of it, and reclaimed from it. 2. He applied himself to him as his God now, renouncing all others, and resolving to cleave to him only; the God of his fathers, and a God in covenant with him. 3. He humbled himself greatly before him; was truly sorry for his sins, ashamed of them, and afraid of the wrath of God. It becomes sinners to hum-ble themselves before the face of that God when they have offended. It becomes sufferers to humble themselves under the hand of that God who corrects them, and to accept the punishment of their iniquity. Our hearts should be humble under humbling providences; then we accommodate ourselves to them, and answer God’s end in them. 4. He prayed to him for the pardon of sin, and the return of his favour; prayer is the relief of penitents, the relief of the afflicted. That was a good prayer, and very pertinent in this case, which we find among the apocryphal books, entitled, The prayer of Man-asseh, king of Judah, when he was held captive in Babylon; whether it was his or no, is uncertain; if it was, in it he gives glory to God, as the God of their fathers and their righteous seed: as the Creator of the world, a God whose anger is insupportable, and yet his good promise unmeasurable. He pleads that God has promised repentance and forgiveness to them that have sinned, and has appointed repentance unto sinners, that they may be saved; not unto the just, as to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but to me (says he) that am a sinner; for I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea: so he confesses his sin largely, and aggravates it. For-give me, O Lord, forgive me, and destroy me not; he pleads, Thou art the God of them that repent, &c.; and concludes, Therefore I will praise thee for ever, &c.

III. God’s gracious acceptance of his repentance. God was entreated of him, and heard his supplication. Though affliction drives us to God, he will not there fore reject us, if in sincerity we seek him, for afflic-tions are sent on purpose to bring us to him. As a token of God’s favour to him, he made a way for his escape; afflictions are continued no longer than till they have done their work; when Manasseh is brought back to his God and to his duty, he shall
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1. Manasseh was brought back to his kingdom. See how ready God is to accept and welcome returning sinners, and how just in the rejection of those who persist in their sin. Not great sinners are always despised, when Manasseh, himself upon his repentance, found favour with God; in him God showed forth a pattern of long-suffering, as 1 Tim. 1. 16. Isa. 1. 18.

IV. The fruits meet for repentance which he brought forth after his return to his own land, v. 15, 16. 1. He turned from his sins. He took away the strange gods, the images of them, and that idol (which he had set up with so much solemnity in the house of the Lord, as if it had been master of that house; he cast out all the idolatrous altars that were in the mount of the house and in Jerusalem, as detestable things; now (we hope) he loathed them as much as ever he had loved them, and said to them, Get ye hence, Isa. 30. 22. 1. What have I to do any more with idols? I have had enough of thee: 2. He returned to his duty; for he repaired the altar of the Lord, which had either been abused and broken down by some of the idolatrous priests, or, at least, neglected and gone out of repair. He sacrificed thereon peace-offerings to proclaim God's favour, and thank-offerings to praise him for his deliverance. Nay, he now used his power to reform his people, as before he had had it to corrupt them. He commanded Judah to serve the Lord, and humbld himself before God, when he truly repented of their sins, will not only return to God and themselves, but will do all they can to reduce those that have by their example been seduced and drawn away from God; else they do not thoroughly (as they ought) undo what they done amiss, nor make the plasters as wide as the wound. We find that he prevailed to bring them off from their false gods, but not from their high places, v. 17. They still sacrificed the Lord of the Lord, even though God said, Manasseh could not carry the reformation so far as he had carried the corruption. It is an easy thing to debauch men's manners, but not so easy to reform them again.

V. His prosperity, in some measure, after his repentance. He might plainly see it was sin that ruined him; for when he returned to God in a way of duty, God restored to him the increase of money: after which he built a wall about the city of David, v. 14. for by sin he had unwalled it, and exposed it to the enemy. He also put captains of war in the fenced cities, for the security of his country. Josephus says, that all the rest of his time, he was so changed for the better, that he was looked upon as a very happy man.

Lastly, Here is the conclusion of his history. The history of these three for a full narrative of which we are referred to the other writings that were then extant, are more than any of the kings, v. 18, 19. A particular account, it seems, was kept, 1. Of all his sins, and his trespass, the high places he built, the groves and images he set up, before he was humbled. Probably, this was taken from his own confession which he made of his sin, when God gave him repentance, and which he left upon record, and was inserted in a book, entitled, The words of the seers. To those seers that spake to him, v. 18. to repair him for his sin, he sent his confession, when he repented, to be inserted in their memoirs, as a token of his gratitude to them for their kindness in reproving him. Thus it becomes penitents to take shame to themselves, to give thanks to their reprovers, and warning to others. 2. Of the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the Lord, v. 10. the reproofs they gave him for his sin, and their exhortations to repentance. Note, Sinners ought to consider that how little notice soever they take of them, an account is kept of the words of the seers that speak to them from God, to admonish them of their sins, warn them of their danger, and call them to their duty, which will be produced against them in the great day. 3. Of his prayer to God, (that is twice mentioned, as a remarkable thing,) and how God was entreated of him. This was written for the generations to come, that the people that should be created, might praise the Lord for his readiness in receiving returning prodigals.

Notice is taken of the place of his burial, not in the sepulchres of the kings, but in his own house; he was buried privately, and nothing of that honour done to him after his death, that was done to his father. Penitents may recover their comfort sooner than their credit.

21. Amon was two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem. 22. But he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them: 23. And humbled not himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself: but Amon trespassed more and more. 24. And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house. 25. But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon: and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.

We have little recorded concerning Amon, but enough, unless it were better. Here is,

1. His great wickedness. He did as Manasseh had done in the days of his apostasy, v. 22. They who think this an evidence that Manasseh did not truly repent, forget how many good kings had wicked sons. Only, it should seem that Manasseh was in this defective, that when he cast out the images, he did not utterly deface and destroy them, according to the law which required them to burn them, and the images of them made after the image of any abomination. But that law was, this instance shows: for the carved images being only thrown by, and not burnt, Amon knew where to find them, soon set them up, and sacrificed to them. It is added, to represent him exceeding sinful, and to justify God in cutting him off so soon, (1.) That he outward his father in sinning; he trespassed more and more, v. 23. His father did ill, but he did worse. They that were joined to idols, grew more and more mad upon them. (2.) That he came short of his father in repenting; he humbled not himself before the Lord as his father had humbled himself. He fell like him, but did not get up again like him. It is not so much sin, as impenitence to sin, that ruins men; not so much that they offend, as that they do not humble themselves for their offences; not the disease, but the neglect of the remedy.

2. His speedy destruction. He reigned but two years, and then his servants conspired against him and slew him, v. 24. Perhaps when Amon sinned, as his father did, in the beginning of his days, he promised himself that he should repent, as his father did, in the latter end of his days. But his case shows what a madness it is to presume upon that; if he hoped to repent when he was old, he was hopelessly disappointed; for he was cut off when he was young. He rebelled against God, and his own servants rebelled against him. Herein God was righteous, but they were wicked, and justly did the people of the land put them to death as traitors.
Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. 2. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand nor to the left. 3. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. 4. And they brake down the altars of Baalim, in his presence; and the images that were on high above them he cut down: and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. 5. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. 6. And so did he in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about. 7. And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

Concerning Josiah we are told,

1. That he came to the crown when he was very young, but 8 years old; yet his infancy did not bar him from his right, and he reigned 31 years, (v. 1) a considerable time. I fear, however, that in the beginning of his reign, things went much as they had done in his father's time, because, being a child, he must have left the management of them to others; so that it was not till his 12th year, which was in the 4th of his reigns, that his information began, v. 3. He could not, as Hezekiah did, fall about it immediately.

2. That he reigned well, (v. 2) approved himself to God, tried in the steps of David, and did not decline either to the right hand or to the left; for there are errors on both hands.

3. That while he was young, about 16 years old, he began to seek after God, v. 3. We have reason to think he had not so good an education as Manasseh had; it is well if those about him did not endeavour to corrupt and debauch him; yet he thus sought God when he was young. It is the duty and interest of young people, and will particularly be the honour of young gentlemen, as soon as they come to years of understanding, to begin to seek God; for they that seek him early shall find him. 4. That in his 12th year, when, it is probable, he took the administration of the government entirely into his own hands, he began to purge his kingdom from the remains of Idolatry; he destroyed the high places, groves, images, altars, all the utensils of idolatry, v. 3, 4. He not only cast them out as Manasseh did, but brake them to pieces, and made dust of them. This destruction of Idolatry is here said to be in his 12th year, but it was said, 2 Kings 23. 23. to be in his 18th year; something was done toward it now in his 12th year; then he began to purge out idolatry, but, probably, that good work met with opposition, so that it was not thoroughly done till they had found the book of the law 6 years after; but here the whole work is laid together briefly, which was much more largely and particularly related in the Kings. His zeal carried him out to do this, not only in Judah and Jerusalem, but in the cities of Israel too, as far as he had any influence upon them.

8. Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God. 9. And when they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites that kept the doors had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin, and they returned to Jerusalem. 10. And they put it in the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the Lord, and they gave it to the workmen that wrought in the house of the Lord, to repair and mend the house; 11. Even to the artificers and builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone and timber for couplings, and to floor the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed. 12. And the men did the work faithfully; and the overseers of them were Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward: and other of the Levites, all that could skill of instruments of music. 13. Also were over the bearers of burdens, and were overseers of all that wrought the work in any manner of service; and of the Levites there were scribes, and officers, and porters.

Here, 1. Orders are given by the king for the repair of the temple, v. 8. When he had purged the house of the corruptions of it, he began to fit it
up for the services that were to be performed in it. Thus we must do by the spiritual temple of the heart; get it cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and then renewed, so as to be transformed into the image of God. Josiah, in this order, calls God the Lord his God; they that truly love God, will love the habitation of his house.

2. Care is taken about it, effectual care; the Levites went about the country, and gathered money towards it, which was referred to the three trustees mentioned, v. 3. They brought it to Hilkiah the High Priest, (v. 9.) and he and they put it into the hands of workmen, both overseers and labourers who undertook to do it by the great, as we say, or in the gross, v. 10, 11. It is observed that the workmen were industrious and honest, they did the work faithfully; (v. 12.) and workmen are not completely faithful if they are not both careful and diligent, for a confidence is reposed in them that they will be so. It is also intimated that the overseers were ingenious; for it is said that all those were employed to inspect this work, who could skill of instruments of music; not that their skill in music could be of any use in architecture, but it was an evidence that they were men of sense and ingenuity, and particularly that their genius lay toward the mathematics, which qualified them very much for this trust. Witty men are then wise men, when they employ their wit in doing good, in helping their friends, and, as they have opportunity, in serving the public. Observe, in this work, how God dispenses his gifts variously; here were some that were bearers of burthens, cut out for bodily labour, and fit to work. Here were others (made musici), of finer materials) that had skill in music, and they were overseers of them that laboured, and scribes and officers; the former were the hands, these were the heads; they had need of one another, and the work needed both. Let not the overseers of the work despise the bearers of burthens, nor let them that work in the service, grudge at those whose office is to direct; but let each esteem and serve the other in love, and God have the glory, and the church the benefit, of the different gifts and dispositions of both.

14. And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses. 15. And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. 16. And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it. 17. And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the Lord, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen. 18. Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king: 19. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes. 20. And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying, 21. Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book. 22. And Hilkiah, and they that the king had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college:) and they spake to her to that effect. 23. And she answered them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me, 24. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: 25. Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. 26. And as for the king of Judah, that sent you to inquire of the Lord, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, concerning the words which thou hast heard; 27. Because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou hearest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and wEEP before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. 28. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.

This whole paragraph we had just as it is here related, 2 Kings 22. 8-20, and have nothing to add here to what was there observed. 29. But, 1. We may hence take occasion to bless God that we have plenty of Bibles, and that they are, or may be, in all hands; that the book of the law and gospel is not lost, is not scarce; that, in this sense, that word of the Lord is not precious, as Bibles are to be; but, thanks be to God, they are not rarities. The fountain of the waters of life is not a spring shut up, or a fountain sealed, but the streams of it, in all places, make glad the city of God. 30. Annum communis aquarium—These waters flow for general use. What a great deal shall we have to answer for if the great things of God's laws, being thus made common, should be account ed by us as strange things!
2. We may hence learn, whenever we read or hear the word of God, to affect our hearts with it, and to get them possessed with a holy fear of that wrath of God, which is there revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, as Josiah’s tender heart was. When he heard the words of the law, he rent his clothes; (v. 19.) and God was well pleased with his doing so, v. 27. Were the things contained in the scripture new to us, as they were here to Josiah, surely they would make deeper impressions upon us than commonly they do; but they are never the less weighty, and therefore should not be the less considered by us, for their being well known. Rend the heart therefore, not the garment.

3. We are here directed, when we are under convictions of sin, and apprehensions of divine wrath, to inquire of the Lord; so Josiah did, v. 21. It concerns us to ask, as they did, Acts 2:37, Men and brethren, what shall we do? And more particularly, as the jailer, saying, What must I do to be saved? Acts 16. 30. If ye will thus inquire, inquire ye, Isa. 21. 12. and blessed be God, we have the lively Oracles to which to apply ourselves with these inquiries.

4. We are here warned of the ruin that sin brings upon nations and kingdoms. They that forsake God, bring evil upon themselves, (v. 24, 25,) and kindle a fire which shall not be quenched; such will the fire of God’s wrath be, when the decree is gone forth against those that obstinately and impetently persist in their wicked ways.

5. We are here encouraged to humble ourselves before God, and seek unto him, as Josiah did: if we cannot prevail thereby to turn away God’s wrath from our land, yet we shall deliver our own souls, v. 27, 28. And good people are here taught to be so far from fearing death, as to welcome it rather when it takes them away from the evil to come. See how the property of it is altered by making it the matter of a promise: Thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace; housed in that ark, as Noah, when a deluge is coming.

29. Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. 30. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord. 31. And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.

32. And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. 33. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.

We have here an account of the further advances which Josiah made toward the reformation of his kingdom, upon the hearing of the law read, and the receipt of the message God sent him by the prophetess. Happy the people that had such a king: for here we find,

1. That they were well taught. He did not go about to force them to their duty, till he had first impressed it on them. He called all the people together, great and small, rich and poor, high and low; He that hath ears to hear, let him hear the words of the book of the covenant; for they are all concerned in those words. To put an honour upon the service, and to engage attention the more, though there were priests and Levites present, the king himself read the book to the people, (v. 30.) and he read it, no doubt, in such a manner as to show that he was himself affected with it, which would be a means of affecting the hearers.

2. That they were well fixed. The articles of agreement between God and Israel being read, that they might intelligently covenant with God, both king and people here, with great solemnity, do as it were subscribe the articles. The king in his place was inclined to keep God’s commandments with all his heart, and soul, according to what was written in the book, (v. 31.) and urged the people to declare their consent likewise to this covenant, and solemnly to promise that they would faithfully perform, fulfil, and keep, all and every thing that was on their part to be done, according to the covenant: this they did; they could not for shame do otherwise. He caused all that were present to stand to it, (v. 32.) and made them all to serve, even to serve the Lord their God, (v. 33.) to do it, and to make a business of it; he did all he could to bring them to it; to serve, even to serve; the repetition denotes that that was the only thing his heart was set on; he aimed at nothing else in what he did, but to engage them to God and their duty.

3. That they were well tended; were honest with good looking to. All his days they departed not from following the Lord; he kept them, and much ado, from running into idolatry again. All his days were days of restraint upon them; but this intimated that there was in them a bent to backslide, a strong inclination to idolatry; many of them wanted nothing but to have him out of the way, and then they would have their high places and their images up again. And therefore we find that in the days of Josiah, Jer. 3. 6. God charged it upon treacherous Judah, that she had not returned to him with all her heart, but feignedly, (v. 10.) nay, had played the harlot, (v. 8.) and thereby had even justified backsliding Israel, v. 11. In the 23rd year of this reign, 4 or 5 years after this they had gone on to provoke God to anger with the works of their hands, Jer. 25. 5-7. And, which is very observable, it is from the beginning of Josiah’s reformation, his 12th or 13th year, that the interdict of the book of Judah, which brought ruin upon them, and which the prophet was to bear lying on his right side, was dated, Ezek. 4. 6. For from thence to the destruction of Jerusalem was just 40 years. Josiah was sincere in what he did, but the generality of the people were averse to it, and hankered after their idols still; so that the reformation, though well designed, and well prosecuted, by the prince, had little or no effect upon the people. It was with reluctance that they parted with their idols; still they were in heart joined to them, and wished for them again. This, God saw, and therefore, from that time, when one would have thought
the foundations had been laid for a perpetual security and peace, from that very time, did the decree go forth for their destruction. Nothing hastes the ruin of a people, nor ripens them for it more, than the baffling of hopeful attempts for reformation, and a hypocritical return to God. Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

CHAP. XXXV.

We are here to attend Josiah. I. To the temple, where we see his religious care for the due observance of the ordinance of the passover, according to the law, v. 1., 19. II. To the field of battle, where we see his rashness, in engaging with the king of Egypt, and how dear it cost him, v. 20., 23. III. To the grave, where we see him bitterly lamented, v. 24., 27. And so we must take our leave of Josiah.

Moreover, Josiah kept a passover unto the Lord in Jerusalem; and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. 2. And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the Lord, 3. And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the Lord, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders; serve now the Lord your God, and his people Israel, 4. And prepare yourselves by the houses of your fathers, after your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son; 5. And stand in the holy place, according to the divisions of the families of the fathers of your brethren the people, and after the division of the families of the Levites: 6. So kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren, that they may do according to the word of the Lord by the hand of Moses. 7. And Josiah gave to the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all for the passover-offerings, for all that were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks: these were of the king's substance. 8. And his princes gave willingly unto the people, to the priests, and to the Levites: Hilkiah and Zechariah and Je-hiel, rulers of the house of God, gave unto the priests for the passover-offerings two thousand and six hundred small cattle, and three hundred oxen. 9. Conaniah also, and Shemaiah, and Nethaneel, his brethren, and Hashabiah, and Jehiel, and Jozabad, chief of the Levites, gave unto the Levites, for passover-offerings, five thousand small cattle, and five hundred oxen. 10. So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their courses, according to the king's commandment. 11. And they killed the passover, and the priests sprinkled the blood from their hands, and the Levites flayed them. 12. And they removed the burnt-offerings, that they might give according to the divisions of the families of the people, to offer unto the Lord, as it is written in the book of Moses: and so did they with the oxen. 13. And they roasted the passover with fire, according to the ordinance: but the other holy offerings sod they in pots, and in caldrons, and in pans, and divided them speedily among all the people. 14. And afterward they made ready for themselves, and for the priests: because the priests the sons of Aaron were busied in offering of burnt-offerings and the fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared for themselves, and for the priests the sons of Aaron. 15. And the singers the sons of Asaph, were in their place, according to the commandment of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer: and the porters waited at every gate: they might not depart from their service; for their brethren the Levites prepared for them. 16. So all the service of the Lord was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt-offerings upon the altar of the Lord, according to the commandment of king Josiah. 17. And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. 18. And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel, from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 19. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept.

The destruction which Josiah made of idols and idolatry, was more largely related in the Kings, but just mentioned here in the foregoing chapter, v. 55. But his solemnizing of the passover, which was but touched upon there, (2 Kings 23. 21.) is very particularly related here. Many were the feasts of the Lord, appointed by the ceremonial law, but the passover was the chief; it began them all in the night wherein Israel came out of Egypt. It concluded them all in the night wherein Christ was betrayed; and in the celebration of it, Hezekiah and Josiah those two great reformers, revived religion in their day. The ordinance of the Lord's supper resembles the passover more than it does any of the Jewish festivals; and the due observance of that ordinance, according to the rule, is an instance and means both of the growing purity and beauty of churches, and of the growing piety and devotion of particular christians. Religion cannot flourish where that passover is either wholly neglected or not duly observed; return to that, revive that, make a solemn business of that affecting binding ordinance, and then, it is to be hoped, there will be a reformation in other instances also.
In the account we had of Hezekiah's passover, the great zeal of the people was observable, and the transcendent love of devotion that the Lord pleased to display, little of that appears here. It was more in compliance with the king that they all kept the passover, (v. 17, 18.) than from any great inclination they had to it themselves. Some pride they took in this form of godliness, but little pleasure in the power of it. But whatever defect there was among the people in the inside of the duty, both the magistrates and ministers did their part, and took care that the external part of the service should be performed with due solemnity.

1. The king exhorted and directed, quickened and encouraged, the priests and Levites to do their office in this solemnity. Perhaps he saw them remiss and indifferent, unwilling to go out of their road, or mend their pace; if ministers are so, it is not amiss for any, but most proper for magistrates, to stir them up to their business. Say to Archippus, Take heed to thy ministry, Col. 4. 17. Let us see how this good king managed his clergy upon this occasion.

1. He reduced them to the office they were appointed to by the law of Moses, (v. 6.) and the order they were put into by David and Solomon, v. 4. He set them in their charges, v. 2. He did not cut them out new work, nor put them into any new sort of service, but called them back to their institution. Their courses were settled in writing; let them have recourse to that writing, and marshal themselves according to the divisions of their families, v. 5. Our rule is settled in the written word; let magistrates take care that ministers walk according to that rule, and they do their duty.

2. He ordered the ark to be put in its place, which, it should seem, had of late been displaced, and perhaps the ark was too long turned abroad, but idols in the most holy place, or by Hezekiah, to make room for the workmen that repaired the temple. However it was, Josiah bids the Levites put the holy ark in the house, (v. 3.) and not carry it about from place to place, as perhaps of late they had done, justifying themselves therein by the practice before the temple was built. Now that the priests were discharged from this burden of the ark, they might be carried to their usual employment.

3. He charged them to serve God and his people Israel, v. 3. Ministers must look upon themselves as servants both to Christ, and to his church for his sake, 2 Cor. 4. 5. They must take care, and take pains, and lay out themselves to the utmost, (1.) For the glory and honour of God, and to advance the interests of his kingdom among men. Paul, a servant of God, Tit. 1. 1. (2.) For the welfare and benefit of his people, not having dominion over their faith, but as servants of their holiness and joy; and there will be no difficulty, in the strength of God, honestly to serve these two masters.

4. He charged them to sanctify themselves, and prepare their brethren, v. 6. Ministers' work must begin at home, and they must sanctify themselves in the first place, purify themselves from sin, sequester themselves from the world, and make themselves to God; but it must not end there, they must do what they can to prepare their brethren by admonishing, instructing, exhorting, quickening, and comforting them. The preperation of the heart is indeed from the Lord; but ministers must be instruments in his hand.

5. He encouraged them to the service, v. 2. He spoke comfortably to them, as Hezekiah did, ch. 29. 36. He.serialization. They, whom we charge, we should encourage. Most people love to be accosted kindly, and will be wrought upon by encouragement more than by threats.

II. The king, and the princes, influenced by his example, gave liberally for the bearing of the charges of this passover. The ceremonial services were expensive, which perhaps was one reason why they had been neglected. People had not zeal enough to be at the charge of them; nor were they now very fond of them, for that reason. And therefore,

1. Josiah, at his own proper cost, furnished the congregation with paschal lambs, and other sacrifices, to be offered during the seven days of the feast. He also paid out of his own estate, 30,000 lams for passover-offerings; which the offerers were to feast upon, and 3,000 bullocks, (v. 7.) to be offered during the following 7 days. Note, Those who are serious in religion, when they persuade others to that which is good, should make it as cheap and easy to them as may be. And where God sows plentifully, he expects to reap accordingly; it is to be feared that the congregation, generally, had not come provided; so that if Josiah had not furnished them, the work of God must have stood still.

2. The chief of the priests, that were men of great estates, contributed toward the priests' charges, as Josiah toward the people's. The princes, (v. 8.) that is, the chief of the priests, the princes of the holy tribe, rulers of the house of God, bore the priests' charges. And some of the rich and great men of the land furnished them also with cattle, both great and small, v. 9. For those that sincerely desire to be found in the way of their duty, Providence sometimes raises up friends to bear them out in it, beyond what they could have expected.

III. The priests and Levites performed their office very readily, v. 10. They killed the paschal lambs in the court of the temple, the priests sprinkled the blood upon the altar, the Levites flayed them, and then gave the flesh to the people according to their families, (v. 11, 12.) not fewer than ten, nor more than twenty, to a lamb; they took it to their several apartments, roasted it, and ate it according to the ordinance, v. 13. As for the other sacrifices that were eucharistical, the flesh of them was boiled according to the law of the peace-offerings, and was divided speedily among the people, that they might have joy in the atonement made, and their reconciliation to God thereby. And lastly, The priests and Levites took care to honour God by eating of the passover themselves, v. 14. Let not ministers think that the care they take for the souls of others, will excuse their neglect of their own; or that being employed so much in public worship will supersede the religious exercises of their closets and families. The Levites here made ready for themselves and for the priests, because the priests were wholly taken up all day in the service of the altar; therefore, that they might not have their lamb to dress when they should eat it, the Levites got it ready for them against supper-time. Let ministers learn hence to help one another, and to forward one another's work, as brethren, and fellow-servants of the same Master.

IV. The singers and porters attended in their places, and did their office, v. 15. The singers with their sacred songs and music expressed and excited the joy of the congregation, and made the service very pleasant to them; and the porters at the gates took care that there should be no breaking in of any thing, to defile or disquiet the assembly. They were going out of any from it, that one should steal away till the service was done. While they were thus employed, their brethren the Levites prepared paschal lambs for them.

V. The whole solemnity was performed with
and the account, there was none like it since Samuel's time, (v. 18.) for in Hezekiah's passover there were several irregularities. And Bishop Patrick observes, that in this also it exceeded the other passovers which the preceding kings had kept, that though Josiah was by no means so rich as David, and Solomon, and Jehoshaphat, yet he furnished the whole congregation with beasts for sacrifice, both paschal and eucharistical, at his own proper cost and charge, which was more than any king ever did before him.

20. After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. 21. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war; for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. 22. Nevertheless, Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. 23. And the archers shot at king Josiah: and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded. 24. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers: and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. 25. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; and all the singing-men and the singing-women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made him an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the Lamentations. 26. Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his goodness, according to that which was written in the law of the Lord, 27. And his deeds, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

It was 13 years from Josiah's famous passover to his death; during which time, we may hope, things went well in his kingdom; that he prospered, and religion flourished; yet we are not entertained with the pleasing account of those years, but they are passed over in silence, because the people, for all this, were not turned from the love of their sins, nor God, his kingdom: for they hearkened not to the news therefore we hear of Josiah, is, that he is cut off in the midst of his days and usefulness, before he is full 40 years old. We had this sad story, 2 Kings 23. 29, 30. here it is somewhat more largely related. That appears here, more than did there, which reflects such blame on Josiah, and such praise on the people, as one would not have expected.

I. Josiah was a very good prince; yet he is much to be blamed for his rashness and presumption in going out to war against the king of Egypt, without cause or call. It was bad enough, as it appeared in the Kings, that he meddled with strife which belonged not to him: but it looks worse; for, it seems, the king of Egypt sent ambassadors to him, to warn him against this enterprise, v. 21. He argues, 1. From principles of justice. The king of Egypt professes he had no design to do him any hurt, and therefore it was unfair, against common equity and the law of nations, for Josiah to take up arms against him. If even a righteous man engage in an unrighteous cause, let him not expect to prosper; God is no respecter of persons. (Prov. 13. 30—24. 8. 2. From principles of religion. “God is with me; nay, He commanded me to make haste, and therefore, if thou retard my motions, thou meddlest with God.” It cannot be that the king of Egypt only pretended this, (as Sennacherib did in a like case, 2 Kings 18, 22.) hoping thereby to make Josiah desist, because he knew he had a veneration for the word of God, for it is said here, (v. 22.) that the words of Necho were from the mouth of God, we must therefore suppose that either by a dream, or by a strong impulse upon his spirit, which he had reason to think was from God, or by Jeremiah; or some other prophet, he had ordered him to make war upon the king of Assyria. 3. From principles of policy. “That he destroy thee not; it is at thy peril, if thou engage against one that has both a better army, and a better cause, and God on his side.” It was by every pavement of Josiah's history amongst the Egyptians, of whom he was in dread, to come to battle in the sight of the Lord his God, but in wrath to a hypocritical nation, who were unworthy of so good a king, that he was so far infatuated, as not to hearken to those fair reasonings, and desist from his enterprise. He would not turn his face from him, but went in person, and fought the Egyptian army in the valley of Megiddo, v. 22. If perhaps he could not believe that the king of Egypt had a command from God to do what he did, yet, upon his pleading such a command, he ought to have consulted the oracles of God before he had gone out against him. His not-doing that, was his great fault, and of fatal consequence. In this matter, he walked not in the ways of David his father; for had it been his case, he would have inquired of the Lord, Shall I go up? Wilt thou deliver them into my hands? How can we think to prosper in our ways, if we do not acknowledge the guidance of God in them?

II. The people were a wicked people; yet they are much to be praised for lamenting the death of Josiah as they did. That Jeremiah lamented him, I do not wonder; he was the weeping prophet, and plainly foresaw the utter ruin of his country following upon the death of this good king. But it is strange to find that all Judah and Jerusalem, that stupid senseless people, mourned for him, (v. 24.) contrived how to have their mourning excited by singing-men and singing-women; how to have it spread through the kingdom; they made an ordinance in Israel, that the mournful ditties, penned on this sad occasion, should be learned and sung by all sorts of people. They contrived also how to have the remembrance of it perpetuated; these elegies were inserted in the collections of State Poems; they are written in the book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. 1. That they had some respect to their good prince, and that though they did not cordially comply with him in all his good designs, yet they could not but greatly honour him. Pious useful men will be manifested in the consciences even of those that will not be influenced by their example; and many that will not submit to the rules of serious godliness themselves, yet cannot but give it their good word, and esteem it in others. Perhaps those lamented Josiah when he was dead that were not thankful to God for him while he lived. The Israelites mur-
mured at Moses and Aaron while they were with them, and spoke sometimes of stoning them, and yet, when they died, they mourned for them forty days. We are often taught to value mercies by the loss of them, which, when we enjoyed them, we did not prize as we ought. 2. That they had some sense of their own danger, now that he was gone. Jeremiah told them, it is likely, of the evil they might now expect to come upon them, from which he was taken away; and so far they credited what he said, that they lamented the death of him that was their defence. Note, Many will more easily be persuaded to lament the miscarriages that are coming upon them, than to take the proper way by universal reformation to prevent them; will shed tears for their troubles, but will not be prevailed upon to part with their sins. But godly sorrow worketh repentance, and that repentance will be to salvation.

CHAP. XXXVI.

We have here, 1. A short but sad account of the utter ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, within a few years after Josiah's death. 1. The history of it in the unhappy reigns of Jehoahaz, for 3 months, v. 1. 4. Jehoiakim, v. 5. 8. for 11 years; Jehoiachin 3 months, v. 9. 10. and Zedekiah 11 years, v. 11. Additions were made to the national guilt, and advanced the general destruction, in each of those reigns. The destruction was, at length, completed in the slaughter of multitudes, v. 17. The plundering and burning of the temple and all the palaces, the death of the king's children, v. 18. 19. and the captivity of the people that remained, v. 20. Some remarks upon it; that herein sin was punished. Zedekiah's wickedness, v. 12. 13. The idolatry the people were guilty of, v. 14. And their abuse of God's prophets, v. 15. 16. The word of God was herein fulfilled, v. 21. 11. The dawning of the day of their deliverance in Cyrus's proclamation, v. 22. 23.

1. THEN the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's stead in Jerusalem. 2. Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. 3. And the king of Egypt put him down at Jerusalem, and condemned the land in a hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold. 4. And the king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and turned his name to Jehoiakim. And Neche took Jehoahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt. 5. Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God. 6. Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. 7. Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the Lord to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon. 8. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and his abominations which he did, and that which was found in him, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead. 9. Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. 10. And when the year was expired, king Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the Lord, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem.

The destruction of Judah and Jerusalem is here coming on by degrees. God so ordered it, to show that he has no pleasure in the ruin of sinners, but had rather they would turn and live, and therefore gives them both time and inducement to repent, and waits to be gracious. The history of these reigns was more largely recorded in the three last chapters of the second of Kings.

Jehoahaz was set up by the people, (v. 1.) but in one quarter of a year he was deposed by Pharaoh-necho, and carried a prisoner to Egypt, and the land fined for setting him up, v. 2. 3. Of this young prince we hear no more; had he trodden in the steps of his father's piety, he might have reigned long, and prospered; but we are told in the Kings, that he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and therefore his triumphing was short, and his joy but for a moment.

2. Jehoiakim was set up by the king of Egypt, and reigned 11 years. How low was Judah brought, when the king of Egypt, an old enemy to their land, gave what king he pleased to the kingdom, and what name he pleased to the king, v. 4. And he made Eliakim king, and called him Jehoiakim, in token of his authority over him. He did that which was evil, (v. 5.) any, we read of the abominations which he did, (v. 6.) he was very wild and wicked; idolatries generally go under the name of abominations. We hear no more of the king of Egypt, but the king of Babylon came up against him, (v. 6.) seized him, and bound him with a design to carry him to Babylon; but, it seems, he either changed his mind, and suffered him to reign as his vassal, or death released the prisoner before he was carried away. However, the best and most valuable vessels of the temple were now made use of in Nebuchadnezzar's temple in Babylon; (v. 7.) for, we may suppose, no temple in the world was so richly furnished as that of Jerusalem. The sin of Judah was, that they had brought the idols of the heathen into God's temple; and now their punishment was, that the vessels of the temple were carried away unto the service of the gods of the nations. If men will profane God's institutions by their sins, it is just with God to suffer them to be profaned by their enemies. These were the vessels which the false prophets flattered the people with hopes of the return of, Jer. 27. 16. But Jeremiah told them that the rest should go after them, (v. 22.) and they did so. But, as the carrying away of these vessels to Babylon began the calamity of Israel, so Nebuchadnezzar's daring proflimation of them there filled the measure of the iniquity of Babylon; for when he drank wine in them to the honour of his gods, the hand-writing on the wall presented him with his doom, Dan. 5. 2, &c. In the reference to the book of the Kings, concerning this Jehoiakim, mention is made of that which was found in him, (v. 8.) which seems to be meant of the treachery that was found in him toward the king of Babylon; but some of the Jewish writers understand it of certain private marks or signatures found in his dead body, in honour of his idol; such cuttings as God had forbidden, Lev. 19. 28.

3. Jehoichin, or Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, attempted to reign in his stead, and reigned long enough to show his evil inclination; but, after 3.
months and 10 days, the king of Babylon sent and fetched him away captive, with more of the goodly vessels of the temple. He is here said to be 8 years old, but in Kings he is said to be 18 when he began to reign, so that this seems to be a mistake of the transcriber, unless we suppose that his father took him at 8 years old to join in the government, as some think.

11. Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign; and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. 12. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord. 13. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel. 14. Moreover, all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much, after all the abominations of the heathen, and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. 15. And the Lord of God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: 16. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. 17. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age; he gave them all into his hand. 18. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. 19. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. 20. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon, where they were servants to him and his sons, until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: 21. To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil three score and ten years.

We have here an account of the destruction of the kingdom of Judah and the city of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. Abraham, God's friend, was called out of that country, from Ur of the Chaldees, when God took him into covenant and communion with himself; and now his degenerate seed were carried into that country again, to signify that they had forfeited all that kindness whereby they had been loved for the father's sake, and the benefit of that covenant into which he was called; all was now undone again. Here we have,

1. The sins that brought this desolation. 1. Zedekiah, the king, in whose days it came, brought it upon himself by his own folly. For he conducted himself very ill both toward God and toward the king of Babylon. (1.) If he had but made God his Friend, that would have prevented the ruin. Jeremiah buried the Lord God of Israel, but that he did not. 2. God, which, if he had given due regard to them, might have secured a lengthening of his tranquility, but it is here charged upon him, that he humbled not himself before Jeremiah, v. 12. It was expected that this mighty prince, high as he was, should humble himself before a poor prophet, when he spoke from the mouth of the Lord; should submit to his admonitions, and be amended by them, to his counsels, and be ruled by them; should lay himself under the commanding power of the word of God in his mouth: because he would not thus make himself a servant to God, he is made a slave to his enemies. God will find some way or other to humble them that will not humble themselves. Jeremiah, as a prophet, was set over the nations and kingdoms, (Jer. 1. 10,) and, as mean a figure as he made, whoever would not humble himself before him, found that it was their peril. (2.) If he had but been true to his covenant with the king of Babylon, that would have prevented his ruin; but he rebelled against him, though he had sworn to be his faithful tributary, and perfidiously violated his engagements to him, v. 13. This was it that provoked the king of Babylon to deal so severely with him as he did. All nations looked upon an oath as a sacred thing, and on the breach of it; and the Lord burst upon the nations of it, as the worst of men, abandoned of God, and to be abhorred of all mankind: if therefore Zedekiah falsify his oath, when, to, he has given his hand, he shall not escape, Ezek. 17, 18. Though Nebuchadnezzar was a heathen, an enemy, yet if, having sworn to him, he be false to him, he shall know there is a God to whom vengeance belongs. The thing that ruined Zedekiah, was, not only that he turned away the Lord God of Israel, but that he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart, from turning to him, that is, he was obstinately resolved not to return to him, would not lay his neck under God's yoke, nor his heart under the impressions of his word, and so, in effect, he would not be healed, he would not live.

2. The great sin that brought this destruction, was, idolatry; the priests and people went after the abominations of the heathen, forsook the pure worship of God for the lewd and filthy rites of the Pagan superstition, and so polluted the house of the Lord, v. 14. The priests, the chief of the priests, who should have opposed idolatry, were ringleaders in it. That place is not far from ruin, in which religion is already ruined.

3. The great aggravation of their sin, and that which filled the measure of it, was, the abuse they gave to God's prophets who were sent to call them to repentance, v. 15, 16. Where we have, (1.) God's tender compassion toward them in sending prophets to them. Because he was the God of their fathers, in covenant with them, and whom they worshipped, (though this degenerate race forsook him,) therefore he sent to them by his messengers, to convince them of their sin, and warn them of the ruin they would bring upon themselves by it; rising up betimes, and sending, which denotes not only that he did it with the greatest care and concern imaginable, as men rise betimes to set their servants to work, when their heart is upon their
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as we tender the comfort and continuance of our estates, keep that worm from the root of them.

5. The remainder of the people that escaped the sword, were carried captives to Babylon, v. 20. They were captives, enslaved, insulted, and exposed to all the miseries, not only of a strange and barbarous land, but of an enemy’s land, where those that hated them, bare rule over them. They were servants to those monarchs, and, no doubt, were ruled with rigour so long as that monarchy lasted. Now they sat down by the rivers of Babylon, with the streams of which they mingled their tears, Ps. 137.

4. And though there, it should seem, they were cured of idolatry; yet, as appears by the prophet Ezekiel, they were not cured of mocking the prophets.

5. The land lay desolate while they were captives in Babylon, v. 21. That fruitful land, the glory of all lands, was now turned into a desert, not tilled nor cultivated. The pastures were not clothed as they used to be, with flocks, nor the valleys with corn, but all lay neglected. Now this may be considered, (1.) As the just punishment of their former abuse of it. They had served Baal with its first fruits, cursed therefore is the ground for their sakes. Now the land enjoyed her sabbaths, v. 21. As God had threatened by Moses, Lev. 26. 34. and the reason there given, v. 35. is, “Because it did not rest on your sabbaths, you profaned the sabbath-day, did not observe the sabbatical year. They think a wrong plunged and sowed their land in the 7th year when it should have rested, and while it lay unploughed and unsown for 10 times 7 years. Note, God will be no lesor in his glory at last, by the disobedience of men: if the tribute be not paid, he will constrain and recover it, as he speaks, Hos. 2. 9. If they would not let the land rest, God would make it rest, whether they would or no. Some think they had neglected the observance of 70 sabbatical years in all, and just so many, by way of reparation, the land now enjoyed; or if those that had been neglected, were fewer, it was fit that the law should be satisfied, with interest. We find that one of the quarrels God had with them at this time, was, for not observing another law which related to the 7th year, and that was the release of servants; see Jer. 34. 13. &c. (2.) Yet we may consider it as a providential encouragement to their hopes, that they should, in due time, return to it again. Had others come and taken possession of it they might have despaired of ever recovering it; but, while it lay desolate, it did, as it were, lie waiting for them again, and refuse to acknowledge any other owners.

22. Now, in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, (that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished,) the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 23. Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me, and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.
had, by him, promised the restoring of the captives, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, at the end of 70 years; and that time to favour Sion, that set time, came at last. After a long and dark night, the day-spring from on high visited them. God will be found true to every word he has spoken.

2. They look forward to the history of Ezra, which begins with the repetition of these two last verses. They are there the introduction to a pleasant story, here they are the conclusion of a very melancholy one; and so we learn from them, that though God's church be cast down, it is not cast off; though his people be corrected, they are not abandoned; though thrown into the furnace, yet not lost there, nor left there any longer than till the dross be separated. Though God contend long, he will not contend always. The Israel of God shall be fetched out of Babylon in due time, and even the dry bones made to live. It may be long first; but the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and not lie; therefore, though it tarry, wait for it.
AN EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE BOOK OF

EZRA.

The Jewish church puts on quite another face, in this book, from what it had appeared with; its state is much better, and more pleasant, than it was of late in Babylon, and yet far inferior to what it had been formerly. The dry bones here live again, but in the form of a servant; the yoke of their captivity is taken off, but the marks of it in their galled necks remain. Kings we hear no more of, the crown is fallen from their heads. Prophets they are blessed with, to direct them in their re-establishment, but, after a while, prophecy ceases among them, till the great Prophet appears, and his fore-runner. The history of this book is the accomplishment of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the return of the Jews out of Babylon, at the end of 70 years, and a type of the accomplishment of the prophecies of the Apocalypse, concerning the deliverance of the gospel-church out of the New Testament Babylon. Ezra preserved the records of that great revolution, and transmitted them to the church in this book. His name signifies a helper; and so he was to that people. A particular account concerning him we shall meet with, ch. 7, where he himself enters upon the stage of action. The book gives us an account,

I. Of the Jews' return out of their captivity, ch. 1, 2.
II. Of the building of the temple, the opposition it met with, and yet the perfecting of it at last, ch. 3-6.
III. Of Ezra's coming to Jerusalem, ch. 7, 8.
IV. Of the good service he did there, in obliging those that had married strange wives, to put them away, ch. 9, 10. This beginning again of the Jewish nation was small, yet its latter end greatly increased.

EZRA, I.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter, we have I. The proclamation which Cyrus, king of Persia, issued out for the release of all the Jews that he found captives in Babylon, and the building of their temple in Jerusalem, v. 1-4. II. The return of many, thereupon, v. 5, 6. III. Orders given for the restoring of the vessels of the temple, v. 7-11. And this is the dawning of the day of their deliverance.

1. NOW in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, (that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled,) the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 2. Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah: 3. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and
let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (he is the God) which is in Jerusalem. 4. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the free-will-offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

It will be proper for us here to consider,
1. What was the state of the captive Jews in Babylon; it was upon many accounts very deplorable; they were under the power of those that hated them, had nothing they could call their own: they had no temple, no altar. So Dr. Lightfoot. It is charged upon Nebuchadnezzar, that he opened not the mouth of his prisoners, Isa. 14. 17. And if he had showed mercy to the poor Jews, Daniel told him it would have been the lengthening of his tranquility, Dan. 4. 27. But the measure of the sins of Babylon was, at length, full, and then destruction was brought upon them by Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian, which we read of, Dan. 5. Darius, being old, left the government to Cyrus, and he was employed as the instrument of the Jews' deliverance, which he gave orders for, as soon as ever he was master of the kingdom of Babylon, either in contradiction to Nebuchadnezzar, whose family he had cut off, and because he took a pleasure in undoing what he had done; or in policy, to recommend his newly-acquired dominion as merciful and gentle; or, as some think, in a pious regard to the prophecy of Isaiah, which had been published, 150 years before, where he was expressly named, as the man who should do this for God, and for whom God would do great things, Isa. 44. 28.—45. 1, &c. and which perhaps were showed him by those about him. His name, some say, in the Persian language, signifies the sun, for he brought light and healing to the church of God, and was an eminent type of Christ the Sun of Righteousness. Some say his name signifies a father, and Christ is the everlasting Father.

Now here we are told,
1. Whence this proclamation took its rise. The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus. Note, The hearts of kings are in the hand of the Lord, and, like the rivulets of water, he turneth them which way soever he will. It is said of Cyrus, that he knew not God, nor knew he to serve himself by Isa. 45. 4. God governs the world by his influence on the spirits of men, and, whatever good is done at any time, it is God that stirs up the spirit to do it, puts thoughts into the mind, gives to the understanding to form a right judgment, and directs the will which way he pleases. Whatever good offices therefore are, at any time, done for the church of God, he must have the glory of them.

2. The reference it had to the prophecy of Jeremiah, by whom God had not only promised that they should return, but had fixed the time, which set time to favour Sian, was now come. Seventy years were determined; (Jer. 25. 12.—29. 10.) and as that kept promise was the subject of Daniel's deliverance out of Egypt to a day, (Exod. 12. 41.) was, doubtless, as punctual to this. What Cyrus now did, was long since said to be the confirming of the word of God's servants, Isa. 44. 26. Jeremiah, while he lived, was hated and despised; yet thus did Providence honour him long after, that a mighty monarch shall act in pursuance of the word of the Lord out of his mouth.

3. The date of this proclamation. It was in his 1st year, not the 1st of his reign over Persia, the kingdom he was born to, but the 1st of his reign over Babylon, the kingdom he had conquered. Those are much honoured, whose spirits are stirred up to begin with God, and to serve him in their first years.

4. The publication of it; this was made by word of mouth: he caused a voice to pass throughout all his kingdom, like a jubilee trumpet (a joyful sabbatical year after many melancholy ones) proclaiming liberty to the captives; the publication was made also by writing, that it might be the more satisfactory, and might be sent to those distant provinces where the ten tribes were scattered, in Assyria and Media, 2 Kings 17. 6.

5. The purport of this proclamation of liberty.
1. The preamble shows the causes and considerations that moved him thereunto moving, v. 2. It should seem, his mind was enlightened with the knowledge of Jehovah, for so he calls him, the God of Israel, as the only living and true God, the God of heaven, who is the sovereign Lord and Disposer of all the kingdoms of the earth; of him he says, (v. 3.) He is the God, God alone, God above all: though he had not known God by education, God made him so far to know him now, as that he did this service with an eye to him. He professes that he does it, (1.) In gratitude to God for the favours he had bestowed upon him. The God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. This sounds a little vain-glorious, for there were many kingdoms of the earth which he had nothing to do with; but he means, that God had given him all that was given to Nebuchadnezzar, whose dominion, Daniel says, was to the end of the earth, Dan. 4. 17—19. Note, God is the Fountain of power; the kingdoms of the earth are at his disposal: whatever share any have of them, they have it from him: and those whom God has entrusted with great power and large possessions, should look upon themselves as obliged thereby to do much for him. (2.) In obedience to God. He hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem; probably, by a dream or vision of the night, confirmed by comparing it with the prophecy of Isaiah, where his doing it was foretold. Israel's disobedience to God's charge, which they were often told of, is aggravated by the obedience of this heathen king.

2. He gives free leave to all the Jews that were in his dominions, to go up to Jerusalem, and to build the temple of the Lord there, v. 3. His regard to God must have overtopped, (1.) The peculiar interest of his government. It had been his policy to keep so great a number of serviceable men in his dominions, and seemed impolitic to let them go and take root again in their own land; but piety is the best policy. (2.) The honour of the religion of his country. Why did he not order them to build a temple to the gods of Babylon or Persia? He believes the God of Israel to be the God of heaven,
and therefore obliges his Israel to worship him only; let them walk in the name of the Lord their God.

3. He subjoins a brief for a collection to bear the charges of such as were poor, and not able to bear their own, v. 4. "Whosoever remaineth, because he has not wherewithal to bear his charges to Jerusalem, let the men of his place help him:" some take it as an order to the king's officers to supply them out of his revenue, as ch. 6. 8. But it may mean a warrant to the captives, to ask and receive the alms and charitable contributions of all the king's loving subjects. And we may suppose the Jews had conducted themselves so well among their neighbours, that they would be as forward to accommodate them, because they loved them as the Egyptians were, because they were weary of them. At least, many would be kind to them, because they saw the government would take it well. Cyrus not only gave his good wishes with them that went, (Their God be with them, v. 3.) but took care also to furnish them with such things as they needed. He took it for granted that those among them who were of ability, would offer their free-will offering for the house of God, to promote the rebuilding of it. But believing that he would have them supplied out of his kingdom. Well-wishers to the temple should be well-doers for it.

5. Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. 6. And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered. 7. Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; 8. Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. 9. And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives; 10. Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. 11. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity, that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

We are here told,
1. How Cyrus's proclamation succeeded with others.
2. He having given leave to the Jews to go up to Jerusalem, many of them went up accordingly, v. 7. The leaders herein were the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, eminent and experienced men, from whom it might justly be expected, that as they were above their brethren in dignity, so they should go before them in duty. The priests and Levites were (as became them,) with the first that set their faces again toward Zion. If any good work is to be done, let ministers lead in it. They that accompanied them, were such as God had inclined to go up. The same God that had raised up the spirit of Cyrus to proclaim this liberty, raised up their spirits to take the benefit of it; for it was done, not by might, nor power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, Zech. 4. 6. The temptation perhaps was strong, to some of them, to stay in Babylon; they had convenient settlements there; they had contracted an agreeable acquaintance with the neighbours, and were ready to say, It is good to be here: the discouragements of their return were many and great, the journey long, their wives and children unfit for travelling, their own land was to them a strange land, the road to it an unknown road. Go up to Jerusalem! And what should they do there? It was all in ruins, and in the midst of enemies to whom they would be an easy prey. Many were wrought upon by these considerations to stay in Babylon, at least, not to go with the first; but there were some that got over those difficulties, that ventured to break the ice, and feared not the lion in the way, the lion in the streets; and they were those whose spirits God raised. He, by his Spirit, gave grace and grace, filled them with a spirit of liberty, a gracious affection to their own land, and a desire of the free and public exercise of their religion. Had God left them to themselves, and to the counsels of flesh and blood, they had staid in Babylon; but he put it into their hearts to set their faces Zion-ward, and as strangers, to ask the way thither; (Jer. 50. 5.) for they, being a new generation, went out, like their father Abraham, from this land of the Chaldees, not knowing whither they went, Heb. 11. 8. Note, Whatever good we do, it is owing purely to the grace of God, and he raises up our spirits to the doing of it, works in us both to will and to do. Our spirits naturally incline to this earth and the things of it; if they move upward, in any good affections or good actions, it is God that raises them.

The call and offer of the gospel are like Cyrus's proclamation; deliverance is preached to the captives, Luke 4. 18. Those that are bound under the unrighteous dominion of sin, and bound over to the righteous judgment of God, may be made free by Jesus Christ. Whoever will, by repentance and faith, return to God, his duty to God, his happiness in God, Jesus Christ has opened the way for him, and lets him go up out of the slavery of sin, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The same mighty act of God, which Christ makes it, in pursuance of the grant which the Father has made him of all power both in heaven and in earth, (a much greater dominion than that given to Cyrus; v. 2.) and of the charge given him to build God a house, to set him up a church in the world, a kingdom among men. Many that hear this joyful sound, choose to sit still in Babylon, they live in love with the world; but God's people are set upon the difficulties of a holy life; but some there are, that break through the discouragements, and resolve to build the house of God, to make heaven of their religion, whatever it cost them; they are those whose spirit God has raised above the world and the flesh, and whom he has made willing in the day of his power, Ps. 110. 3. Thus will the heavenly Canaan be replenished, though many perish in Babylon; and the gospel-offer will not be made in vain.
the first temple built by the labours of the strangers, so the second by the contributions of the Chaldeans; all intimating the admission of the Gentiles into the church, in due time. God can, where he pleases, incline the hearts of strangers to be kind to his people, and make those to strengthen their hands, that have weakened them; the earth helped the woman. Beside what was willingly offered by the Jews themselves, who staid behind, from a principle of love to God and his house, much was offered, as one may say, unwillingly by the Babylonians, who were influenced to do it by a divine power to their minds, which they themselves could give no account of.

II. How this proclamation was seconded by Cyrus himself. To give proof of the sincerity of his affection to the house of God, he not only released the people of God, but restored the vessels of the temple, v. 7, 8. Observe here, 1. How careful Providence was of the vessels of the temple, that they were not lost, melted down, or so mixed with other vessels, that they could not be known, but that they were all now forth-coming; such care God has of the living vessels of mercy, vessels of honour, of whom it is said, (2 Tim. 2. 19.) The Lord knows them that are his, and they shall none of them perish. 2. Though they had been put into an idol’s temple, and, probably, used in the service of idols, yet they were given back, to be used for God. God will recover his own; and the spoil of the strong man armed shall be converted to the use of the conqueror. 3. Judah had a prince, even in captivity. Sheshbazzar, supposed to be the same with Zerubbabel, is here called prince of Judah; the Chaldeans called him Sheshbazzar, which signifies joy in tribulation; but among his own people he went by the name of Zerubbabel, a stranger in Babylon; so he looked upon himself, and that Jerusalemites, to whom we speak, thought, as this says, he was captain of the life-guard to the king of Babylon. He took care of the affairs of the Jews, and had some authority over them, probably, since the death of Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah, who made him his heir, he being of the house of David. 4. To him the sacred vessels were numbered out, (v. 8.) and he took care for their safe conveyance to Jerusalem. Cyrus encouraged them to build the temple, that they had so much rich furniture ready to put in it when it was built. Though God’s ordinances, like the vessels of the sanctuary, may be corrupted and profaned by the New Testament Babylon, they shall, in due time, be restored to their primitive use and intention, for not one jot or title of divine institution shall fall to the ground.

CHAP. II.

That many returned out of Babylon upon Cyrus’s proclamation, we were told in the foregoing chapter; we have here a catalogue of the several families that returned, v. 1. I. The leaders, v. 2. II. The people, v. 3. 35. III. The priests, Levites, and retainers to the temple, v. 36. 63. IV. The sum total, with an account of their return, v. 64. 67. V. Their offerings to the service of the temple, v. 68. 70.

1. Now these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; 2. Which came with Zerubbabel. Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mizpar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel. 3. The children of Parosh, two thousand a hundred seventy and two. 4. The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. 5. The children of Ara, seven hundred seventy and five. 6. The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve. 7. The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 8. The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. 9. The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. 10. The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two. 11. The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. 12. The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two. 13. The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. 14. The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six. 15. The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. 16. The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. 17. The children of Bezeai, three hundred twenty and three. 18. The children of Jorah, a hundred and twelve. 19. The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three. 20. The children of Gibbar, ninety and five. 21. The children of Beth-lehem, a hundred twenty and three. 22. The children of Netophah, fifty and six. 23. The men of Anathoth, a hundred twenty and eight. 24. The children of Aznaveth, forty and two. 25. The children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty and three. 26. The children of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one. 27. The men of Michmas, a hundred twenty and two. 28. The men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty and three. 29. The children of Nebo, fifty and two. 30. The children of Magbish, a hundred fifty and six. 31. The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 32. The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. 33. The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five. 34. The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. 35. The children of Sennah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty.

We may observe here, 1. That an account was kept in writing of the families that came up out of captivity, and the numbers of each family, (1.) For their honour, as part of their recompence for their faith and courage, their confidence in God, and their affection to their own land, and to stir up others to follow their good example. Those that honour God, he will thus honour. The names of all these Israelites indeed, that accept the offer of deliverance by Christ,
shall be found, to their honour, in a more sacred record than this even in the Lamb's book of life.
(2.) For the benefit of posterity, that they might know from whom they descended, and to whom they were allied.
2. That they are called children of the province. Judah, that had been an illustrious kingdom, to which other kingdoms had been made provinces, subject to it and dependent on it, was now itself made a province, to receive laws and commissions from the king of Persia, and to be accountable to him, how sin diminishes and debases a nation, which righteousness would exalt. But by thus being made servants, (as the patriarchs by being sojourners in a country which was their's by promise,) they were reminded of the better country, that is the heavenly, (Heb. 11. 16.) a kingdom which cannot be moved, or changed into a province.
3. That they are said to come every one to his city, that is, the city appointed them, in which appointment an eye, no doubt, was had to their former settlement by Joshua; and that to as near as might be, they returned, for it does not appear that any others, at least, any that were able to oppose them, had possessed them in their absence.
4. That the leaders are first mentioned; (v. 2.) Zerubbabel and Jeshua were their Moses and Aaron, the former their chief prince, the latter their chief priest. Nehemiah and Mordecai are mentioned here; but it is not the same with the famous men we afterward meet with of those names: probably, they were the same; but afterward returned to court for the service of their country.
5. Some of these several families are named from the persons that were their ancestors, others from the places in which they had formerly resided; as with us many surnames are the proper names of persons, others of places.
6. Some little difference there is between the numbers of some of the families here, and in Neh. 7. where this catalogue is repeated; which might arise from this, that some that had given in their names, at first, to come, afterward drew back. — said, I go, Sir, but went not, which would lessen the number of the families they belonged to; others that declined, at first, afterward repented and went, and so increased the number.
7. There are two families that are called the children of Elam, one, v. 7. another v. 31. and, which is strange, the number of both is the same, 1254.
8. The children of Adonikam, which signifies a rich lord, were 666, just the number of the beast, (Rev. 13. 18.) which is there said to be the number of a man, which, Mr. Hugh Broughton thinks, has reference to this man.
9. The children of Bethlehem (v. 21.) were but 125, though it was David's city: for Bethlehem was little among the thousands of Judah, yet there must the Messiah arise, Mic. 5. 2.
10. Anathoth had been a famous place in the tribe of Benjamin, and yet here it numbered but 128, (v. 23.) which is to be imputed to the divine curse which the men of Adonikam brought upon themselves by persecuting Jeremiah, who was of their city, Jer. 11. 23. There shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth. And see Isa. 10. 36, O fear Anathoth! Nothing brings ruin on a people sooner than persecution.
36. The priests: the children of Jedediah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. 37. The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. 38. The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. 39. The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen. 40. The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four. 41. The singers: the children of Asaph, a hundred twenty and eight. 42. The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hagita, the children of Shobani, in all a hundred thirty and nine. 43. The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabobaith, 44. The children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon. 45. The children of Lebannon, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub. 46. The children of Hagab, the children of Shalmai, the children of Hanan. 47. The children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reiah. 48. The children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam. 49. The children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai. 50. The children of Asnah, the children of Meunim, the children of Nephusim. 51. The children of Bakkuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harbur. 52. The children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha. 53. The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Themah. 54. The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha. 55. The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Peruda. 56. The children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel. 57. The children of Shephathiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami. 58. All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hundred ninety and two. 59. And these were they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer; but they could not show their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel. 60. The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two. 61. And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; (which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name;) 62. These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. 63. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.
Here is, 
I. An account of the priests that returned, and those not a considerable number; about a tenth part of the whole company: for the whole were above forty-two thousand, (v. 64,) and four families of priests made up above forty-two hundred, (v. 36—39,) thus was the tenth God's part; a blessed decimation. Three of the fathers of the priests here named, were heads of courses, 1 Chron. 24. 7, 8, 14. The fourth was Pashur, v. 38. If these were of the posterity of that Pashur that abused Jeremiah, (Jer. 26.) it is sure, that so to a man should have so good a seed, and so numerous.

II. Of the Levites; I cannot but wonder at the small number of them, for, taking in both the singers and the porters, (v. 40—42,) they did not make 350. Time was, when the Levites were more forward to their duty than the priests, (2 Chron. 29. 34.) but they were not so now. If one place, one family, has a pretention for praise, he glorified in another may have it another time. The wind blows where it listeth, and shifts its points.

III. Of the Nethinims, who, it is supposed, were the Gibeonites, given (so their name signifies) by Joshua first, (Joshua 9. 27.) and again by David, (Ezra 8. 20.) when Saul had expelled them, to be employed by the Levites in the work of God's house as hewers of wood and drawers of water; and with them the chief officers of the Nethinims, who, it seems, he gave for the like use, (whether they were Jews or Gentiles, does not appear,) and who are here taken notice of among the retainers of the temple, and numbered with the Nethinims, v. 55, 58. Note, It is an honour to belong to God's house, though in the meanest office there.

IV. Of some that were looked upon as Israelites by birth, as children of priests, and yet could not make out a clear title to the honour.
1. There were some that could not prove themselves Israelites; (v. 59, 60.) a considerable number, who presumed they were of the seed of Jacob, but could not produce their pedigrees, and yet would go up to Jerusalem, having an affection to the house and people of God: these shamed those who were true-born Israelites, and yet were not called Israelites; but out of the Nethinims, (2 Chron. 29. 34.) but had lost the relish of those water-courses. That was the end of the temple and temple service.
2. There were others that could not prove themselves priests, and yet were supposed to be of the seed of Aaron. What is not preserved in black and white, will, in all likelihood, be forgotten in a little time. Now we are here told, (1.) How they lost their evidence. One of their ancestors married a daughter of Barzillai, that great man whom we read of in David's days, and got a place in an alliance that honourable family, and, preferring that before the dignity of his priesthood, would have his children called after Barzillai's family, and their pedigree preserved in the registers of that house, not of the house of Aaron, and so they lost it. In Babylon, there was nothing to be got by the priesthood, and therefore they cared not for being akin to it. Those who would now get interest in the relation to ministers, a diminution or disengagement from them, forgot who it was, that said, I magnify my office. (2.) What they lost with it. It should not be taken for granted that they were priests, when they could not produce their proofs, but they were as polluted, put from the priesthood.

Now that the priests had recovered their rights, and had the altar to live upon, they would gladly be ranked upon as priests. But they had sold their birth-right for the honour of being gentlemen, and therefore were justly degraded, and forbidden to eat of the most holy things. Note, Christ will be ashamed of those that are ashamed of him and his service. It was the Tirshatha, or governor, that put them under this sequestration, which some understand of Zerubbabel the present governor, others of Nehemiah, who is so called, (Neh. 8. 9—10. 11) and gave this order when he came some years after. But the prohibition was not absolute, it was only a suspension, till there should be a High Priest with Urim and Thummim, by whom they might know God's mind in this matter. This, it seems, was expected and desired, but it does not appear that ever they were blessed with it under the second temple. They had the canon of the Old Testament complete, which was better than Urim and Thummim and by the want of that oracle, were taught to expect the Messiah the great Oracle, which the Urim and Thummim was but a type of. Nor does it appear that the second temple had the ark in it, either the old one or a new one; those shadows, by degrees, vanished, as the substance approached; and God, by the prophet, intimates to his people, that they might sustain no damage by the want of the ark, Jer. 3. 16. In those days, when they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord neither shall it come to mind, for they shall do well without it.

64. The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore. 65. Besides their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: there were among them two hundred singing-men and singing-women. 66. Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five; 67. Their camels, four hundred thirty and five; and their asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty. 68. And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the Lord which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place: 69. They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work, threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pounds of silver, and one hundred priests' garments. 70. So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

Here is,
I. The sum total of the company that returned now out of Babylon. The particular sums before mentioned amount not quite to 30,000, (29,818,) so that there were above 12,000 that came not into any of those accounts, who, it is probable, were of the rest of the tribes of Israel, beside Judah and Benjamin, that could not tell of what particular family or city they were, but that they were Israelites, and of what tribe. Now, 1. This was more than double the number that were carried captive into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, so that, as in Egypt, the time of their affliction was the time of their increase. 2. These were but few to begin a nation with, and yet, by virtue of the old promise made to their fathers, they multiplied so soon, before their destruction by the Romans, about 500 years after, to be a very populous country. When God says, "Increase and multiply," a little one shall become a thousand.
II. Their returne. They were themselves little better than servants, and therefore no wonder that their servants were comparatively but few (v. 65.)
and their beasts of burthen about as many, v. 66, 67. It was not with them now, as in days past. But notice is taken of 200 singing-men and women whom they had among them, who, we will suppose, intended, as those, 2 Chron. 35. 25. to excite their mourning, for it was foretold, they should, upon this occasion, go weeping, (Jer. 50. 4.) with ditties of lamentation.

III. Their oblations. It is said, (v. 68, 69.) 1. That they came to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem; and yet that house, that holy and beautiful house, was now in ruins, a heap of rubbish; but, like their father Abraham when the altar was gone, they came with devotion to the place of the altar; (Gen. 13. 4.) and it is the character of the genuine sons of Zion, that they favour even the dust thereof; Ps. 102. 14. 2. That they offered freely toward the setting of it up in its place. That, it seems, was the first house they talked of setting up; and though they came off a journey, and were beginning the world, (two chargeable things,) yet they offered, and offered freely, toward the building of the temple. Let none complain of the necessary expenses of their religion, but believe that when they come to balance the account, they will find that it clears the cost. Their offering was nothing in comparison with the offerings of the princes in David's time; then they offered by-talents, (1 Chron. 29. 7.) now by drams, yet these drams, being after their ability, were as acceptable to God as those talents, like the widow's two mites. The 61,000 drams of gold amount, by Cumberland's calculation, to so many pounds of our money, and so many groats. Every manch, or pound of silver, he reckons to be 60 shekels, namely, 50 ounces, which we may reckon 7 pounds of our silver, so that this 5,000 pounds of silver will be above 37,000 of our money. It seems, God had blessed them with the increase of their wealth, as well as of their numbers, in Babylon; and, as God had prospered them, they gave cheerfully to the service of his house. 3. That they dwelt in their cities, v. 70. Though their cities were out of repair, yet, because they were their cities, such as God had assigned them, they were content to dwell in them; and were thankful for liberty and propriety, though they had little of pomp, plenty, or power. Their poverty was a bad cause, but their unity and unanimity were a good effect of it. Here was room enough for them all, and all their substance, so that there was no strife among them, but perfect harmony, a blessed passage of their settlement, as their discords, in the latter times of that state, were of their ruin.

CHAP. III.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we left Israel in their cities, but we may well imagine what a bad posture their affairs were in, the ground untilled, the cities in ruins, all out of order; but here we have an account of the early care they took about the re-establishment of religion among them. Thus did they lay the foundation well, and begin their work at the right end. 1. They set up an altar, and offered sacrifices upon it, kept the feasts, and contributed toward the rebuilding of the temple, v. 1._7. II. They laid the foundation of the temple with a mixture of joy and sorrow, v. 8._13. This was an example of small things, which was not to be despised, Zech. 4. 10.

1. AND when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. 2. Then stood up Jeshua the son of Joza- dak, and his brethren the priests, and Zeruababel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. 3. And they set the altar upon his bases; (for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries;) and they offered burnt-offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt-offerings morning and evening. 4. They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt-offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required; 5. And afterward offered the continual burnt-offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the Lord that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a free-will-offering unto the Lord. 6. From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid. 7. They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar-trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.

Here is, 1. A general assembly of the returned Israelites at Jerusalem in the seventh month, v. 1. We may suppose that they came from Babylon, in the spring, and must allow at least 4 months for the journey, for, so long, Ezra and his company were in coming, ch. 7. 9. The seventh month therefore soon came, in which many of the feasts of the Lord were to be solemnized; and then they gathered themselves together by agreement among themselves, rather than by the command of authority, to Jerusalem. Though they were newly come to their cities, and had their hands full of business there, to provide necessaries for themselves and their families, which might have excused them from attending on God's altar till the hurry was a little over, as many foolishly put off their coming to the communion till they are settled in the world, yet such was their zeal for religion, now that they were newly come from under correction for their irreligion, that they left all their business in the country to attend God's altar; and (which is strange) in this pious zeal they were all of a mind, they came as one man. Let worldly business be postponed to the business of religion, and it will prosper the better. II. The care which their leading men took to have an altar ready for them to attend upon. Jeshua and his brethren the priests, Zerubabel and his brethren the princes, built the altar of the God of Israel, (v. 2.) in the same place (it is likely) where it had stood; upon the same bases, v. 3. Bishop Patrick, observing that before the temple was built, there seems to have been a tabernacle pitched for the divine service, as was in David's time, not on mount Moriah, but on mount Sion, supposes that this altar was erected there, to be used while the temple was in building. Let us also learn hence, 1. To begin with God. The more difficult and necessitous our case is, the more concerned we are to take him along with us in all our ways. If we expect to be directed by his oracles, let him be honoured by our offerings. 2. To do what we can in the worship of God, when we can.
not do what we would. They could not immediately have a temple, but they would not be without an altar. Abraham, wherever he came, built an altar; and, wherever we come, though we may, perhaps, want the benefit of the candlestick of preaching, and the show-bread of the eucharist, yet if we bring not the sacrifices of prayer and praise, we are wanting in our duty, for we have an altar that sanctifies the gift, ever ready.

Observe the reason here given why they hastened to set up the altar. Fear was upon them, because of the people of the land; they were in the midst of enemies that bore ill will to them and their religion, for whom they were an unequal match. And, (1.) Though they were so, yet they built the altar, so some read it; they would not be frightened from their religion by the opposition they were like to meet with in it. Never let the fear of man bring us into this snare. (2.) Because they were so, therefore before they set up the altar. Apprehension of danger should stir us up to our duty. Have we many enemies? Then it is good to have God our Friend, and to keep up our correspondence with him. This good use we should make of our fears, we should be driven by them to our knees. Even Saul would think himself undone, if the enemy should come upon him before he had made his supplication to God. 1 Sam. 12.13.

III. The sacrifices they offered upon the altar.
The altar was reared to be used, and they used it accordingly. Let not those that have an altar, starve it.

1. They began on the first day of the seventh month, v. 6. It doth not appear that they had any fire from heaven to begin with, as Moses and Solomon had, but common fire served them, as it did the patriarchs.

Having begun, they kept up the continual burnt-offering, (v. 5.) morning and evening, v. 3. They had known by sad experience what it was to want the comfort of the daily sacrifice, to plead in their daily prayers, and now that it was received, they resolved not to let it fall again. The daily lamb typified the Lamb of God, whose righteousness must be our confidence in all our prayers.

3. They observed all the set feasts of the Lord, and offered the sacrifices appointed for them each, and particularly the feast of tabernacles, v. 4. 5. Now that they had received such great mercy from God, that joyful feast was, in a special manner, seasonable. And now that they were beginning to settle in their cities, it might serve well to remind them of their fathers dwelling in tents in the wilderness. That feast also, which had a peculiar reference to gospel-times, (as appears, Zech. 14. 18.) was brought, in a special manner, into reputation, now that those times drew on. Of the services of this feast, which continued seven days, and had peculiar sacrifices appointed, it is said that they did as the duty of every day required. See Numb. 29. 13. 17, &c. So it is in the original, Verbum diei in die suo—The word, or matter, of the day in its day. A phrase that has become proverbial with those that have used themselves to scripture-language. If the feast of tabernacles was a figure of gospel-conversation, in respect of continual weakness from the world, and joy in God; we may infer that it concerns us all to do the work of the day in its day, according as the duty of the day requires, that is, (1.) We must improve time, by finding some business to do every day, that will turn to a good account. (2.) We must improve opportunity, by accommodating ourselves to that which is the proper business of the present day. Every thing is beautiful in its season. The tenth day of this month was the day of atonement, a solemn day, and very seasonable now: it is very probable that they observed it, yet it is not mentioned, nor indeed in all the Old Testament do I remember the least mention of the observance of that day; as if it were enough, that we have the law of it, (Lev. 16.) and the gospel of it, which was the chief intention of it in the New Testament.

4. They offered every man's free-will offering, v. 5. The law required much, but they brought more; for though they had little wealth to support the expense of their sacrifices, they had much zeal, and, we may suppose, spared at their own tables, that they might plentifully supply God's altar. Happy they that bring with them out of the furnace of affliction such a holy heat as this!

IV. The preparation they made for the building of the temple, v. 7. This they applied themselves immediately to; for, while we do what we can, we must still be aiming to do more and better. Tyre and Sidon must now, as of old, furnish them with workmen, and Lebanon with timber, orders for both which they had from Cyrus; what God calls us to, we may depend upon his providence to furnish us with.

3. Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the Lord. 9. Then stood Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God; the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites. 10. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. 11. And they sung together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord, because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever towards Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. 12. But many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: 13. So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.
I. When it was begun; in the second month of the second year, as soon as every season of the year would permit, (v. 8.) and when they had ended the solemnities of the passover. They took little more than half a year for making preparation of the ground and materials; so much were their hearts upon it. Note, When any good work is to be done, it will be our wisdom to set about it quickly, and not to lose time; yea, though we foresee difficulty and opposition in it. Thus we engage ourselves to it, and commit ourselves to God for us. Well begun, (we say,) is half ended.

II. Those who began it; Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and their brethren. Then the work of God is likely to go on well, when magistrates, ministers, and people, are hearty for it, and agree in their places to promote it. It was God that gave them one heart for this service, and it boded well.

IV. How God was praised at the laying of the foundation of the temple. 1. The Levites and the priests, with the trumpets appointed by Moses, and the Levites with the cymbals appointed by David, made up a concert of music, not to please the ear, but to assist the singing of that everlasting hymn which will never be out of date, and to which our tongues should never be out of tune; God is good, and his mercy endureth for ever: the burden of Ps. 135. Let the streams of mercy be traced up to the fountain. Whatever our condition is, how many soever our griefs and fears, let it be owned that God is good; and, whatever fails, that his mercy fails not. Let this be sung with application, as here; not only his mercy endures for ever, but it endures for ever toward Israel; when captives in a strange land, and strangers in their own land. 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Judah, and troubled them in building; 5. And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

We have here an instance of the old enmity that was put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. God's temple cannot be built, but Satan will rage, and the gates of hell will fight against it. The gospel-kingdom was, in like manner, to be set up with much struggle and contention. In this respect the glory of the latter house was greater than the glory of the former, and it was more a figure of the temple of Christ's church, in that Solomon built his temple when there was no adversary, nor evil occurrence, 1 Kings 5. 4. But this second temple was built notwithstanding great opposition, in the removing and conquering of which, and the bringing of the work to perfection, at last, in despite of it, the wisdom, power, and goodness, of God, were much glorified, and the church encouraged to trust in him.

I. The undertakers are here called the children of captivity, (v. 1.) which makes them look very little. They were newly come out of captivity, were born in captivity, had still the marks of their captivity upon them; though they were not now captives, they were under the control of those whose captivities they had lately been. Israel was God's son, his first-born, but by their iniquity they sold and enslaved themselves, and so became children of the captivity; but it should seem, the thought of their being so, quickened them to this work, for they were not under the neglect of the temple that they lost their freedom.

II. The opposers of the undertaking are here said to be the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, not the Chaldeans or Persians, they gave them no disturbance, ("Let them build and welcome," ) but the relics of the ten tribes, and the foreigners that had joined themselves to them, and patched up that old religion, which had an abode of its own, Kings 17. 53. They feared the Lord, and served their own gods too. They are called the people of the land, v. 4. The worst enemies Judah and Benjamin had, were these that said they were Jews, and were not, Rev. 3. 9.

III. The opposition they gave, had in it much of the subtilty of the old serpent. When they heard that the temple was in building, they were immediately aware that it would be a fatal blow to their superstition, and set themselves to oppose it. They had not power to do it forcibly, but they tried all the ways they could, to do it effectually.

1. They offered their service to build with them, only that thereby they might get an opportunity to retard the work, while they pretended to further it. Now, (1.) Their offer was plausible enough, and looked kind; "We will build with you, will help you to build, and will contribute toward the expense; for we seek your God as you do," v. 2. This was false, for though they sought the same God, they did not seek him only, nor seek him in the way he appointed, and therefore did not seek him as they did. Herein they designed, if it were possible, to hinder the building of it, at least, to hinder their comfortable enjoyment of it; as good almost not have it, as not have it to themselves, for the people worshipped the true God, and him only. Thus are the kisses of an enemy deceitful; his words smoother than butter, when war is in his heart.

But, (2.) Their refusal of their proffered service was very just, v. 3. The chief of the fathers of Israel were soon aware that they meant them no kindness, whatever they pretended, but really designed to do them a mischief, and therefore (though they had need enough of help, if it had been such as they could confide in) told them plainly, "You have nothing to do with us, have no part nor lot in this matter, are not true-born Israelites, nor faithful worshippers of God, you worship you know not what, John 4. 22. You are none of those with whom we will build and contend, we ourselves will build." They plead not to them the law of their God, which forbade them to mingle themselves with strangers, (though that especially they had an eye to,) but that which they would take more notice of, the king's commission, which was directed to them only, "The king of Persia has commanded us to build this house, and we shall distrust and affront him, if we call in a foreign aid." Note, In doing good, there is need of the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the innocence of the dove, and we have need, as it follows there, to beware of men, Matth. 10. 16. 17. We should carefully consider with whom we are associated, and on whose hand we lean. While we trust God with a pious confidence, we must trust men with a prudent jealousy and caution.

2. When this plot failed, they did what they could to hinder the work, from the work, and discourage them in it: they weakened their hands, by telling them it was in vain to attempt it, calling them foolish builders, who began what they were not able to finish, and by their insinuations troubled them, and made them drive heavily in it: all were not alike zealous in it: those that were cool and indifferent, were by these artifices drawn off from the work which wanted their help, v. 4. And because what they themselves said, the Jews would suspect to be ill grounded, they set not to be influenced by, they, under-hand, hired counsellors against them, who, pretending to advise them for the best, should dissuade them from proceeding, and so frustrate their purpose; (v. 5.) or dissuade the men of Tyre and Sidon from furnishing them with the timber they had bargained for; (ch. 5. 7.) or, whatever business they had at the Persian court, to solicit for any particular good, or favour, that would contribute to the general interest for their liberty, there were those that were hired, and lay ready, to appear of counsel against them. Wonder not at the restlessness of the church's enemies in their attempts against the building of God's temple: he whom they serve, and whose work they are doing, is unsawed in walking to and fro through the earth to do mischief. And let those who discourage a good work, and weaken the hands of them that are employed in it, see whose pattern they follow.

6. And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. 7. And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue. 8. Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort: 9. Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dimites, the Apharsathites, the Tarpelites, the Aparisites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the
Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites, 10. And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnapper brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and at such a time. 11. This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king: Thy servants on this side the river, and at such a time. 12. Be it known unto the king, that if the Jews, which came up from thee to us, are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations. 13. Be it known now unto the king, that if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endanger the revenue of the kings. 14. Now, because we have maintenance from the king's palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king, 15. That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know, that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed. 16. We certify the king, that if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.

Cyrus steadfastly adhered to the Jews' interest, and supported his own grant; it was to no purpose to offer any thing to him in prejudice of it, what he did was from a good principle of the fear of God, and therefore he adhered to it; but though his reign, in all, was 30 years, yet, after the conquest of Babyl on, and his decree for the release of the Jews, some think that he reigned but 3 years, others 7, and then either died, or gave up that part of his government, in which his successor was Ahasuerus, (v. 6) called also Artaxerxes, (v. 7.) supposed to be the same that in heathen authors is called Cambyses, who had never taken that cognizance of the despised Jews, as to concern himself for them, nor had he that knowledge of the God of Israel that his predecessor had; to him these Samaritans applied themselves by letter for an order to stop the building of the temple; and they did it in the beginning of his reign, being resolved to lose no time, when they thought they had a king for their purpose. See how watchful the church's enemies are to take the first opportunity of doing it a mischief; let not its friends be less careful to do it a kindness. Here is, I. The general purport of the letter which they sent to the king, to inform him of this matter. It is called, (v. 6.) an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. The Devil is the accuser of the brethren, Rev. 12. 10. And he carries on his malicious designs against them, not only by accusing them himself before our God, as he did Job, but by acting as a lying spirit in the mouths of his instruments, whom he employs to accuse them before magistrates and kings, and to make them odious to the many, and obnoxious to the mighty. Marvel not, if the same arts be still used to run down serious godliness.

II. The persons concerned in writing this letter. The contrivers are named, (v. 7.) that plotted the thing; the writers, (v. 8.) that put it into form, and the subscribers, (v. 9.) that concurring in it, and joined with them in this representation, this misrepresentation I should call it. Now see here, 1. How the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and his temple, with their companions: the building of the temple would do them no harm, yet they appear against it with the utmost concern and violence, perhaps because the prophets of the God of Israel were foreordained to shew the destruction of all the gods of the heathen, Zeph. 2. 11. Jer. 10. 11. 2. How the people concerned with them in imagining this vain thing. They followed the cry, though ignorant of the merits of the cause: all the several colonies of that plantation, (nine are here mentioned,) who had their denomination from the cities or countries of Assyria, Chaldea, Persia, &c. whence those names were taken, and by their representatives, to this letter. Perhaps they were incensed against these returned Jews, because many of the ten tribes were among them, whose estates they were got into the possession of, and of whom they were therefore jealous, lest they should attempt the recovery of them hereafter. III. A copy of the letter itself, which Ezra inserts here out of the records of the kingdom of Persia, into which he had been sent, and by which we see how well we have it, that we may see whence the like methods, still taken to expose good people, and baffle good designs, are copied. 1. They represent themselves as very loyal to the government, and mightily concerned for the honour and interest of it; and would have it thought that the king had no such loving faithful subjects in all his dominions as they were, none so sensible of their obligations to him, v. 14. Because we are salted with the salt of the palace, so it is in the margin: "We have our salary from the court, and could no more live without it, than flesh could be preserved without salt; or, as some think, their pay or pension was sent them in salt; or, "Because we had our education in the palace, and were brought up at the king's table," as we find, Dan. 1. 3. These were the very men, when he intended to prefer; they did eat their portion of the king's victual. Now, in consideration of this, it is not meet for us to see the king's dishonour; and therefore they urge him to stop the building of the temple, which would certainly be the king's dishonour more than any thing else. Note, A secret enmity to Christ and his gospel, is often gilded over with a pretended affection to Caesar and his power. The Jews hated the Roman, they hated and yet, to serve a turn, they could cry, We have no king but Caesar. But, (to allure to this,) if they lived upon the crown, thought themselves bound in gratitude thus to support the interests of it, much more reason have we thus to argue ourselves into a pious concern for God's honour; we have our maintenance from the God of heaven, and are salted with his salt, live upon his bounty, and are the care of his providence; and therefore it is not meet for us to see his dishonour, without resenting it, and doing what we can to prevent it.

2. They represent the Jews as disloyal, and dangerous to the government; that Jerusalem was the rebellious and bad city, (v. 12.) hurtful to kings and provinces, v. 15. See how Jerusalem, the joy of the whole earth, (Ps. 48. 2.) is here reproached as the scandal of the whole earth. The enemies of the church could not do the bad things they design against it, if they did not first give it a bad nan-
Jerusalem had been a loyal city to its rightful princes, and its present inhabitants were as well affected to the king and his government, as any of his provinces whatsoever. Daniel, who was a Jew, had lately approved himself so faithful to his prince, that his worst enemies could find no fault in his management, Dan. 6. 4. But thus was Elijah most unjustly charged with troubling Israel, the apostles with turning the world upside down, and Christ himself with perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar; and we must not think it strange, if the same game be still played ever hear.

(1.) The history of what was past, is inviolable; that within this city, sedition had been moved of old time, and, for that cause it was destroyed, v. 15. It cannot be denied but that there was some colour given for this suggestion by the attempts of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah to shake off the yoke of the king of Babylon, which, if they had kept close to their religion and the temple they were now rebuilding, they had never come under. But it must be considered, [1.] That they were themselves, and their ancestors, sovereign princes, and their efforts to recover their rights, if there had not been in them the violation of an oath, for aught I know, had been justifiable, and successful too, had they taken the right method, and made their peace with God first. [2.] Though these Jews, and their princes, had been guilty of rebellion, yet it was unjust therefore to be punished for the rebellion of another upon this city, as if that must, for ever after, go under the name of the rebellious and bad city. The Jews, in their captivity, had given such specimens of their good behaviour, as were sufficient, with any reasonable men, to roll away that one reproach; for they were instructed (and we have reason to hope that they observed their instructions) to seek the peace of the cities where they were captives, and pray to the Lord for it, Jer. 29. 7. It was therefore very unjust, yet not uncommon, for them to impute the iniquity of the fathers to the children.

(2.) Their information concerning what they were now doing, was grossly false, in matter of fact. Very carefully they are to inform the king that they had set up the walls of this city, may, had finished them, so it is in the margin, and joined the foundations, (v. 12.) when it was far from being the case. They were ordered to build the temple, which Cyrus commanded them to do, but as for the walls, there was nothing done, nor designed, toward the repair of them, as appears by the condition they were in, many years after, (Neh. 1. 3.) all in ruins. What shall be given, and what done, to these false tongues; these false pens, sharp arrows, doubtless, of the mighty, and coals of juniper? Ps. 120. 3. 4. If they had not been permitted to lose all virtue and honour, they would not, and if they had not been very secure of the king's countenance, they durst not, have written that to the king which all their neighbours knew to be a notorious lie. See Prov. 29. 12.

(3.) Their prognostics of the consequences were altogether groundless and absurd. They were very confident, and would have the king believe it upon their word, that if this city be burnt, not only the Jews would pay no toll, tribute, or custom, (v. 13.) but (since a great lie is as soon spoken as a little one) that the king would have no portion at all on this side the river, (v. 16.) that all the countries on this side the Euphrates would instantly revolt, drawn to it by their example; and if the prince in possession should conjoin at this, he could wrong, not only himself, but his successors. They shall entice the revenue of the kings. See how every line of this letter breathes both the subtilty and malice of the old serpent. 17. Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and unto the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time.

18. The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me. 19. And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein. 20. There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them. 21. Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me. 22. Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings? 23. Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem, unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. 24. Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Here we have,

1. The orders which the king of Persia gave, in answer to the information sent him by the Samaritans against the Jews. He suffered himself to be imposed upon by their fraud and falsehood, took no care to examine the allegations of their petition concerning this which the Jews were now doing, but executed it, for granted that the charge was true, and was very willing to gratify them with an order of council to stay proceedings.

2. He consulted the records concerning Jerusalem, and found that it had indeed rebelled against the king of Babylon, and therefore that it was, as they called it, a bad city, v. 19. And withal, that, in times past, kings had reign there, whom all the countries on that side the river had been tributaries, (v. 20.) and that therefore there was danger, that if ever they were able, (which they were never likely to be,) they would claim them again. Thus he says as they said, and pretends to give a reason for it. See the hard fate of princes, who must see and hear with other men's eyes and ears, and give judgment upon things as they are represented to them, which things are often represented falsely. Therefore God's judgment is always just, because he sees things as they are, and is according to truth.

2. He appointed these Samaritans to stop the building of the city immediately, till further orders should be given about it, v. 21, 22. Neither they, in their letter, nor he, in his order, make any mention of the temple, and the building of that, because they knew that they had not only a permission, but a command, from Cyrus to rebuild that, which even these Samaritans had not the confidence to move for the repeal of; they spake only of the city, "Let not that be built," that is, "as a
city with walls and gates; whatever you do, prevent that, lest damage grow to the hurt of the kings:]
he would not that the crown should lose by his wearing it.
11. The use which the enemies of the Jews made of these orders so fraudulently obtained; upon the receipt of them, they went up in haste to Jeru-


calam. v. 23. Their feet run to evil, Prov. 1. 16. They were impatient till the builders were served with this prohibition, which they produced as their warrant to make them cease by force and power. As they abused the king in obtaining this order, by their mis-informations, so they abused him in the execution of it: for the order only, was to prevent the wailing of the city; but, having force and power on their side, they construed it as relating to the temple, for that was it which they had an ill will to, and which they only wanted some colour to hinder the building of. There was indeed a general clause in the order, to cause these men to cease, which had reference to their complaint about building the walls; but they applied it to the building of the temple. See what need we have to pray, not only for kings, but for all in authority under them, and the governors sent by them, because the quietness and peaceableness of our lives, in all godliness and honesty, depend very much upon the integrity and wisdom of inferior magistrates, as well as the su-


The consequence was, that the work of the house of God ceased, for a time, through the power and insolence of its enemies; and so, through the coldness and indifference of its friends, it stood still till the 2d year of Darius Hystaspes, for to me it seems clear by the thread of this sacred history, that it was that Darius, v. 24. Though now a stop was put to it by the violence of the Samaritans, yet that, soon after, they might have gone on by conncssance, if they had had a due affection to the work, ap-


1. They had two good ministers, who, in God's name, earnestly persuaded them to put the wheel of business in motion again; these were Haggai and Zechariah, who both began to prophesy in the 2d year of Darius, as appears, Hag. 1. 1. Zech. 1. 1. Observe, (1.) The temple of God among men is not to be built by prophecy, not by secular force, (that often hinders it, but seldom furthers it,) but by the word of God; as the weapons of our war-


II. We left the temple-work at a full stop; but, being God's work, it shall be revived, and here we have an account of the reviving of it. It was hindered by might and power, but it was set a going again by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. Now here we are told how that blessed Spirit, I. Warmed its cool-hearted friends, and excited them to build, v. 1, 2. II. Cooled its hot-headed ene-


1. Then the prophets, Haggai the pro-


Some reckon that the building of the temple was suspended for only 9 years; I am willing to believe that 15 years were the utmost; during which time they had an altar, and a tabernacle, which, no doubt, they made use of. When we cannot do what we would, we must do what we can, in the service of God, and be sorry we can do no better. But the counsellors that were hired to hinder the work, (ch. 4. 5.) told them, and perhaps, with a pretence to inspiration, that the time was not come for the building of the temple, Hag. 1. 2. They might observe that it was not God's time for the temple to be built. It is the business of God's prophets to stir up God's people to that which is good, and to help them in it, to strengthen their hands, and by suitable consid-


II. Then the sons of the prophets rose up, and Jesus, the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them. 3. At the same time came to them Tat-


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Ezra, governor on this side the river, and Sheshbazzar, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall? 4. Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building? 5. But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter. 6. The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Sheshbazzar, and his companions the Apharsachites, which were on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king: 7. They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus: Unto Darius the king, all peace. 8. Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands. 9. Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls? 10. We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them. 11. And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up. 12. But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. 13. But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon, the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God. 14. And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple, that was in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor; 15. And said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place. 16. Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem: and since that time, even until now, hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished. 17. Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure-house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.

We have here,

I. The cognizance which their neighbours soon took of the reviving of this good work; a jealous eye, it seems, they had upon them, and no sooner did the Spirit of God stir up the friends of the temple to appear for it, than the evil spirit stirred up its enemies to appear again against it. While the people built and reared their houses, their enemies gave them no molestation, (Hag. 1. 4.) though the king's order was to put a stop to the building of the city, ch. 4. 21. But when they fell to work again at the temple, then the alarm is taken, and all heads are at work to hinder it, v. 3, 4. The adversaries are here named, Tatnai and Sheshbazzar; thus the governors were ever raised against any work that was in progress, as is probable, displaced at the beginning of this reign, as it usual; it is the policy of princes often to change their deputies, procurers, and rulers of provinces. These, though real enemies to the building of the temple, were men of better temper than the other, and that made some conscience of telling truth; if all men have not faith, (2 Thess. 3. 2.) it is well some have, and a sense of honour. The church's enemies are not all alike wicked and unreasonable. The historian begins to relate what passed between the builders and those inquirers, (v. 3, 4.) but breaks off his account, referring himself to the ensuing copy of the letter they sent to the king, where the same appears more fully and at large, which he began to abridge, (v. 4.) or to make an extract out of, though, upon second thoughts, he inserted the whole.

II. The care which the Divine Providence took of this good work, v. 5. The eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, who were active in the work, so that their enemies could not cause them to cease, as they would have done, till the matter came to Darius. They desired they would only cease, till they had instructions from the king about it. But they would not so much as yield to make it appear there was no eye of God upon them, even to their God. And, 1. That baffled their enemies, infatuated and enfeebled them, and protected the builders from their malicious designs. While we are employed in God's work, we are taken under his special protection; his eye is upon us for good, seven eyes upon one stone in his temple; see Zech. 3. 9.—4. 10. 2. That quickened them; the elders of the Jews saw the eye of God upon them, to oblige them to proceed, and they did, and wrought well, and then they had courage enough to face their enemies, and to go on vigorously with their work, notwithstanding all the opposition they met with. Our eye upon God, observing his eye upon us, will keep us to our duty and encourage us in it, when the difficulties are ever so discouraging.

III. The account they sent to the king of this matter which we may observe,

1. How fully the elders of the Jews gave the Samaritans an account of their proceedings. They finding them both busy and prosperous, that all hands were at work to run up this building, and that it went fast on, put these questions to them. "By what authority do you these things, and who gave you that authority? Who set you to work? Have you that which will bear you out?" To this they answered, that they had sufficient warrant to do what they did; for, (1.) "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth: the God we wor
ship, is not a local deity, and therefore we cannot be charged with making a fiction or setting up a sect, in building this temple to his honour; but we pour homage to a God on whom the whole creation depends, and therefore ought to be protected and assisted by all, and hindered by none." It is the wisdom, as well as duty, of kings, to countenance the servants of the God of heaven. (2.) "We have a prescription to this house; it was built for the honour of God by Solomon, many ages ago. It is no novel invention of our own; we are but imitating the foundation laid by our god-fathers;" Isa. 58. 12. (3.) "It was to punish us for some fault that we were, for a time, put out of the possession of this house; but because the gods of the nations had prevailed against our God, but because we had provoked him, (v. 12.) for which he delivered us and our temple into the hands of the king of Babylon, but never intended thereby to put a final period to our religion. We were only suspended for a time, not deprived for ever." (4.) "We have the royal decree of Cyrus, to justify us and bear us out in what we do. He not only permitted and allowed us, but charged and commanded us, to build this house, (v. 13.) and to build it in its place, (v. 15.) the same place where it had stood before." He ordered this, not only in compassion to the Jews, but in veneration of their God, saying, Ps. 109. 17. Darius, I delivered, and Belsazar, the temple to one whom he instructed to see the restored to their ancient place and use, v. 14. And they had these to show in confirmation of what they alleged, (5.) "The building was begun according to this order, as soon as we were returned, so that we have not forfeited the benefit of the order, for want of pursuing it in time; still it has been in building, but, because we have met with opposition, it is not finished." But observe, they mention not the falsehood or malice of the former governors, nor make any complaint of that, though they had cause enough; to teach us not to render bitterness for bitterness, nor the most just reproach for that which is most unjust, but think it enough, if we can obtain fair treatment for the future, without an invidious repetition of former injuries, v. 16. This is the account they give of their proceedings; not as if the king had ordered it, or upbraiding them with their idolatry, and superstitions, and medley religion. Let us learn hence, with meekness and fear to give a reason of the hope that is in us, (1 Pet. 3. 15.) rightly to understand, and then readily to declare, what we do in God's service, and why we do it.

2. How fairly the Samaritans represented this to the king. (1.) They call the temple at Jerusalem, the house of the great God; (v. 8.) for though the Samaritans, as it should seem, had yet gods many and lords many, they owned the God of Israel to be the great God, that is, above all gods, "It is the house of the great God, and therefore we dare not oppose the building of it, without orders from thee." (2.) They tell him truly what was done, not as their predecessors did, that they were fortifying the city, as if they intended war, the only reason of the temple, as those that intended worship, v. 8. (3.) They fully represent their plea, tell him what they had to say for themselves, and are willing that the cause should be set in a true light. Lastly, They leave it to the king to consult the records, whether Cyrus had indeed made such a decree, and then to give directions as he should think fit, v. 17. We have reason to think that if Artaxerxes, in the foregoing chapter, had had the Jews' cause as fairly represented to him, as it was here to Darius, he would not have ordered the work to be hindered. God's people could not be persecuted, if they were not dressed up in bears' skins. Let but the cause of God and truth be fairly stated, and fairly heard, and it will keep its ground.

CHAP. VI.

How solemnly the foundation of the temple was laid, we read, ch. 3. How slowly the building went on, and with how much difficulty, we found ch. 4. and 5. but how gloriously the topstone was, at length, brought forth with shoutings, we find in the three following verses, when we, at this distance of time, when we read of it, may cry, Grace, Grace, to it. As for God, his work is perfect; it may be slow work, but it will be sure work. We have here, 1. A recital of the decree of Cyrus for the building of the temple, v. 1-5. II. The enforcing of that decree by a new order from Darius for the perfecting of that work, v. 6.-12. III. The finishing of it, thereupon, v. 13.-18. IV. The solemn dedication of it when it was built, v. 16.-18. And the handwriting of it (as I may say) with the celebration of the passover, v. 19.. 22. And now we may say, that in Judah and Jerusalem things went well, very well.

1. THEN Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasuries were laid up in Babylon. 2. And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written: 3. In the first year of Cyrus the king, the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem. Let the house be built, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits; 4. With three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber; and let the expenses be given out of the king's house: 5. And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God. 6. Now therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Aplbaschites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from hence; 7. Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews, and the elders of the Jews, build this house of God in his place. 8. Moreover, I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews, for the building of this house of God: that, of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forsooth expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered. 9. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail; 10.
That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons. 11. Also I have made a decree, that whoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and, being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this. 12. And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there, destroy all kings and people that shall put their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. 13. Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed.

We have here,

I. The decree of Cyrus for the building of the temple repeated. To this, the Samaritans referred themselves, because the Jews pleaded it, and perhaps hoped it would not be found, and then their plea would be overruled, and a stop put to their work. Search was ordered to be made for it among the records, for, it seems, the tribes had not taken care to provide themselves with an authentic copy of it, which might have stood them in good stead, but they must appeal to the original. It was looked for in Babylon, (v. 1.) where Cyrus signed it. But when it was not found there, Darius did not make that a pretence to conclude that therefore there was no such decree, and, therefore, to give judgment against the Jews; but, it is probable, having himself heard that such a decree was certainly made, he ordered the rolls in other places to be searched, and, at length, it was found at Achmetha, in the province of the Medes, v. 2. Perhaps some that durst not destroy it, yet hid it there, and delivered it to the Jews, that they might lose the benefit of it. But Providence so ordered, that it came to light; and it is here inserted, v. 5.

5. 1. Here is a warrant for the building of the temple, Let the house of God at Jerusalem be built; so it may be read, within such and such dimensions, and with such and such materials. 2. A warrant for the taking of the expenses of the building out of the King's revenue, v. 4. 3. A warrant to do all that they had received what was here ordered them, the face of things at court being soon changed. 3. A warrant for the restoring of the vessels and utensils of the temple, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away, (v. 5.) with an order that the priests, the Lord's ministers, should return them each to their place in the house of God.

II. The confirmation of it by a decree of Darius, granted upon it, and in pursuance of it. By which, 1. He forbids his officers to do any thing in opposition to the building of the temple. The manner of expression intimates that he knew they had a mind to hinder it: Be ye far from thence; (v. 6.) Let the work of this house of God alone, v. 7. Thus was the wrath of the enemy made to praise God, and the remainder thereof did the Lord restrain.

2. Orders that the money which came out of his own revenue to assist the builders with money. (1.) For carrying on the building, v. 8. Herein he pursues the example of Cyrus, v. 4. (2.) For maintaining the sacrifices there, when it was built, v. 9. He orders that they should be supplied with every thing they wanted, both for burnt-offerings and meat-offerings. He was content it should be a rent-charge upon his revenue, and orders it to be paid every day, and this, without fail, that they may offer sacrifices, and prayers with them, (for the patriarchs, when they offered sacrifices, called on the name of the Lord, so did Samuel, Elijah, and others,) for the life of the king, that is, the happiness and prosperity, of the king and his sons, v. 10. (3.) Herein he gives honour to Israel's God, whom he calls once and again the God of Heaven. (2.) To his ministers, in ordering his commissioners to give out supplies for the temple-service, at the appointment of the priests; they that thought to have controlled them, now must be, in this matter, at their command. It was a new thing for God's priests to have such an interest in the public money. (3.) To pray, That they may pray for the life of the king. He knew they were a praying people, and had heard that God was nigh to them in all that which they called upon him for. He was sensible he needed their prayers, and might receive benefit by them; and was therefore kind to them, that he might have an interest in their prayers. It is the duty of God's people to pray for those that are in authority over them, not only for the good and gentle, but also for the froward; but they are particularly bound, in gratitude, to pray for their protectors and benefactors; and it is the wisdom of princes to desire their prayers, and to engage them. Let not the greatest princes despise the prayers of the meanest saints; it is desirable to have them for us, and dreadful to have them against us. 3. He enforces his decree with a penalty, (v. 11.) Let none either oppose the work and service of the temple, or withhold the supports granted it by the court, and turns, when he had, by his former act, made Nebuchadnezzar; (hanged before his own door, as we say) "hanged upon a beam of his own house, and, as an execrable man, let his house be made a dunghill." 4. He entails a divine curse upon all those kings and people that should ever have any hand in the destruction of this house, v. 12. What he could not do by himself, he purposed not to fail in by his successors. By this act, after this decree, let him be (hanged before his own door, as we say) "hanged upon a beam of his own house, and, as an execrable man, let his house be made a dunghill."
nions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily. 14. And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo: and they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. 15. And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. 16. And the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy, 17. And offered at the dedication of this house of God a hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and, for a sin-offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. 18. And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses. 19. And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. 20. For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. 21. And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel, did eat, 22. And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Here we have,

1. The Jews' enemies made their friends. When they received this order from the king, they came with as much haste to encourage and assist the work, as their predecessors had to put a stop to it, ch. 4. 23. What the king ordered, they did, and, because they would not be thought to do it with reluctancy, they did it speedily, v. 15. The king's moderation made them, contrary to their own inclination, moderate too.

II. The building of the temple carried on, and finished, in a little time, v. 14, 15. Now the elders of the Jews builded with cheerfulness. For aught I know, the elders themselves laboured at it with their own hands; and if they did, it was no disparagement to their eldership, but an encouragement to the other workmen. 1. They found themselves bound to it by the commandment of the God of Israel, who had given them power, that they might use it in his service. 2. They found themselves shamed into it by the commandment of the heathen kings, Cyrus formerly, Darius now, and Artaxerxes some time after. Can the elders of the Jews be remiss in this good work, when these foreign princes appear so speedily in it? Shall native Israelites grudge their pain and care this building, when strangers grudge not to be at the expense of it? 3. They found themselves encouraged in it by the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah, who it is likely, represented to them (as Bishop Patrick suggests) the wonderful goodness of God in inclining the heart of the king of Persia to favour them thus. And now the work went on so prosperously, that in four years' time, it was brought to perfection. As for God, his work is hereafter; the gospel-church, that spiritual temple, is long in the building, but it will be finished at last, when the mystical body is completed. Every believer is a living temple, building up himself in his most holy faith; much opposition is given to this work by Satan and our own corruptions; we strive, and proceed in it with many stops and pauses; but he that has begun the good work, will see it performed, and will bring forth judgment unto victory. Spirits of just men will be made perfect.

III. The dedication of the temple. When it was built, being designed only for sacred uses, now they showed by an example how it should be used, which (says Bishop Patrick) is the proper sense of the word dedicate. They entered upon it with solemnity, and, probably, with a public declaration of the separating of it from common uses, and the surrender of it to the honour of God, it be employed in his worship. 1. The persons employed in this service were not only the priests and Levites who officiated, but the children of Israel, some of each of the twelve tribes, though Judah and Benjamin were the chief, and the rest of the children of the captivity or transportation; which intimates that there were many beside the children of Israel, of other nations, who transported themselves with them, and became proselytes to their religion; unless we read it, even the remnant of the children of the captivity, and then, we may suppose, notice is hereby taken of their mean and afflicted condition, because the consideration of that helped to make them devout and serious in this and other religious exercises. A sad change! The children of Israel are become children of the captivity, and there appears but a remnant of them, according to that prediction, (Isa. 7: 2.) Sho - rah-bôth, The remnant shall return. 2. The sacrifices that were offered upon this first dedication, were, bullocks, rams, and lambs, (v. 17.) for burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; not to be compared, in number, with what had been offered at the dedication of Solomon's temple, but, being according to their present ability, it was accepted, for, after a great trial of affection, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded to the riches of their liberality. 3. The sacrifices were more to them, than Solomon's the third and fourth in order to him. But, beside these, they offered twelve he-goats for sin-offerings, one for every tribe, to make atonement for their sins, which they looked upon as necessary, in order to the acceptance of their services. Thus, by getting iniquity taken away, they would free themselves from that which had been the sting of their late troubles, and which, if removed, they were too well aware, would take away present comforts. 3. This service was performed with joy; they were all glad to see the temple built, and the concerns of it in so good a posture. Let us learn to welcome holy ordinances with joy, and attend on them with pleasure; let us serve the Lord with gladness. Whatever we dedicate to God, let it be done with joy, that he will please to accept of it. 4. When they dedicated the house, they settled the household; small comfort could they have in
the temple, without the temple-service, and therefore they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, v. 18. Having set up the worship of God in this dedication, they took care to keep it up, and made the book of Moses their rule, to which they had an eye in this establishment. Though the temple-service could not now be performed with so much pomp and plenty as formerly, because of their poverty, yet, perhaps it was performed with as much purity, and close adherence to the divine institution as ever, which was the true glory of it. No beauty like the beauty of holiness.

IV. The celebration of the passover in the newly-erected temple. Now that they were newly delivered out of their bondage in Babylon, it was seasonable to commemorate their deliverance out of their bondage in Egypt. Fresh mercies should put us in mind of former mercies. We may suppose that they had kept the passover, after a sort, every year since their return, for they had an altar and a tabernacle. But they were liable to frequent disturbances from their enemies, were straitened for room, and had not conveniences about them, so that they could not do it with due solemnity till the temple was built; and now they made a joyful festival of it, it falling out in the next month after the temple was finished and dedicated, v. 19.

Notice is here taken, 1. Of the purity of the priests and Levites that killed the passover, v. 20. In Hezekiah's time, they were many of them under blame for not purifying themselves. But now it is observed, to their praise, that they were purified together, as one man, so the word is; they were unanimous both in their resolutions, and in their endeavours, to make and keep themselves ceremonially clean for this solemnity; they joined together in their preparations, that they might help one another, so that all of them were pure, as a man. Purity of ministers adds much to the beauty of their ministration; so does their unity.

2. Of the proselytes that communicated with them in this ordinance. *All such as had separated themselves unto them,* had left their country and the superstitions of it, and cast in their lot with the Israel of God, and had turned from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, both their idolatries and their immoralities, to seek the Lord God of Israel. They did not cast the passover, nor keep the feast of unleavened bread, v. 22. The Lord had made them joyful, had given them both cause to rejoice, and hearts to rejoice. It was now about 20 years since the foundation of this temple was laid, and we may suppose the old men that then were dead at the remembrance of the first priests, were most of them dead by this time, so that there were no tears mingled with their joy. The glory of God is therefore reason to be thankful, because it is God that makes them rejoice. He is the Fountain whence all the streams of our joy flow.

God has promised to all those who take hold of his covenant, that *he will make them joyful in his house of prayer.* The particular occasion they had for joy at this time, was, that God had turned the heart of the emperor to them, to strengthen their hands. If those that have been, or we feared, would have been, against us, prove to be for us, we may rejoice in it as a token for good, that *our ways please the Lord,* (Prov. 16. 7.) and he must have the glory of it.

**CHAP. VII.**

Ezra's precious name saluted us, at first, in the title of the book; but in the history we have not met with it, till this chapter introduces him into a public action in another reign, that of Artaxerxes. Zerubbabel and Joshua we will suppose, by this time, to be grown old, if not gone off; nor do we hear any more of Haggai and Zechariah; they have finished their testimony. What shall become of the cause of God and Israel, when these monuments are laid aside? Trust God, who has the residue of the spirit, to raise up others in their room. Ezra here, and Nehemiah in the next book, are as serviceable in their day as those were in their. Here we have an account, in general, of Ezra himself, and of his expedition to Jerusalem for the public good, v. 1. 10. II. A copy of the commission which Artaxerxes gave him, v. 11. 20. III. Of his return to Jerusalem, v. 27. 28. The next chapter will give us a more particular narrative of his associates, his journey, and his arrival at Jerusalem.

1. **NOW after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra** the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, 2. The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Abitub, 3. The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Merioth, 4. The son of Zeriahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, 5. The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest: 6. This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. 7. And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. 8. And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9. For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. 10. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

Here is,

I. Ezra's pedigree. He was one of the sons of Aaron, a priest; his God chose him as an instrument of good to Israel, that he might put him in the office of the priesthood, the glory of which had been much eclipsed by the captivity. He is said to be the son of Seraiah, that Seraiah, as is supposed, when the king of Babylon put to death, when he suck'd Jerusalem, 2 Kings 25. 18, 21. If we take the shortest computation, it was 75 years since Seraiah died; many reckon it much longer, and, because they suppose Ezra called out, in the prime of his time, to public service, do therefore think that Seraiah was not his immediate parent, but his grand-father, or great-grand-father; but that he was the first
eminent person that occurred in his genealogy upward, which is carried up here as high as Aaron, yet leaving out many, for brevity's sake, which may be supplied from 1 Chron. 6. 4 &c. He was a younger brother, or his father was Jozadak, the father of Jeshua, so that he was not High Priest, but nearly allied to the High Priest.

II. His character; though of the younger house, his personal qualifications made him very eminent.

1. He was a man of great learning. A scribe, a ready scribe in the law of Moses, v. 6. He was very much conversant with the scriptures, especially the writings of Moses, had the words by heart, was very well acquainted with the sense and meaning of them. It is to be feared that learning ran low among the Jews in Babylon; but Ezra was instrumental to revive it. The Jews say that he collected and collated all the copies of the law he could find out, and published an accurate edition of it, with all the prophetic books, historical and poetical, that were given by divine inspiration, and so made up the canons of the Old Testament, with the addition of the prophecies and histories of his own time; if he was raised up of God, and qualified and inclined to do this, all generations have reason to call him blessed, and to bless God for him. God sent to the Jews prophets and scribes, Matth. 23. 34. Ezra went under the latter denomination; now that prophecy was about to cease, it was time to promote scripture knowledge among them by the instrument of the last of the prophets, M. a. 4. 4. Remember the law of Moses. Gospel-ministers are called scribes instructed to the kingdom of heaven, (Matth. 13. 52.) New Testament scribes. It was a pity that such a worthy name as this, should be worn as it was, in the degenerate ages of the Jewish church, by men who were professed enemies to Christ and his gospel. (Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees,) who were learned in the letter of the law, but strangers to the spirit of it.

2. He was a man of great piety and holy zeal, v. 10. He had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, &c. (1.) That which he chose for his study, was, the law of the Lord. The Chaldeans, among whom he was born and bred, were famed for literature, especially the study of the stars, to which, being a studious man, we may suppose that Ezra was conversant himself; but when his own spirit revolted from the temptation; the law of his God was more to him than all the writings of the magicians and astrologers, which he knew enough of with good reason to despise them. (2.) He sought the law of the Lord, that is, he made it his business to inquire into it; searched the scriptures, and sought the knowledge of God, and his mind and will, in the scriptures, which was to be found there, but not without seeking. (3.) He made it his business of doing that which he set it before him as his rule, formed his sentiments and temper by it, and managed himself in his whole conversation according to it. This use we must make of our knowledge of the scriptures; for happy are we, if we do what we know of the will of God. (4.) He set himself to teach Israel the statutes and judgments of that law. What he knew, he was willing to do; he was ready to give the mind of others; for the ministration of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. But observe the method; he first learned, and then taught; sought the law of the Lord, and so laid up a good treasure, and then instructed others, and laid out what he had laid up. He also first did, and then taught, practised the commandments himself; and then directed others in the practice of them. His own example confirmed his doctrine. (5.) He prepared his heart to do all this; or, he fixed his heart. He took pains in his studies, and thoroughly furnished himself for what he designed, and then put on resolution to proceed and persevere in them, and thus he became a ready scribe. Moses in Egypt, Ezra in Babylon, and both in captivity, were wonderfully fitted for eminent services to the church.

III. His expedition to Jerusalem, for the good of his country. He went up from Babylon, (v. 6.) and, in four months' time, came to Jerusalem, v. 8. It was strange that such a man as he, staid so long in Babylon, after his brethren were gone up; but God sent him not thither, till he had work for him to do there; and none went, but those whose spirits God raised to go up. Some think that this Artaxerxes was the same with that Darius whom we decreed at Babylon, that Ezra came the very year after the temple was finished, that was the 6th year, this the 7th, v. 8. So Dr. Lightfoot. My worthy and learned friend, lately deceased, Mr. Tallents, in his chronological tables, places it about 57 years after the finishing of the temple; others further on. I have only to observe, 1. How kind the king was to him, he granted him all his request, whatever he desired, to put him into a capacity to serve his country. 2. How kind his people were to him; when he went, many more went with him, because they desired not to stay in Babylon when he was gone thence, and because they would venture to dwell in Jerusalem when he was gone thither. 3. How kind his God was to him; he obtained this favour from his king and country, by the good hand of the Lord that was upon him, v. 6, 9. Note, Every creature is that to us, that God makes it to be, and from him our judgment proceeds. As we must see the events that shall occur in the hand of God, so we must see the hand of God in the events that do occur, and acknowledge him with thankfulness, when we have reason to call it his good hand.

11. Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to Israel. 12. Artaxerxes, king of kings, Unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time. 13. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own free will to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee. 14. Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thy hand; 15. And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem; 16. And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the free-will-offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem; 17. That thou mayest buy speedily with this money, bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat-offerings, and their drink-offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem. 18. And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and thy brethren, to do with
the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God. 19. The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. 20. And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's treasure-house. 21. And I, even I, Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily, 22. Unto a hundred talents of silver, and to a hundred measures of wheat, and to a hundred baths of wine, and to a hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much. 23. Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? 24. Also we certify you, that, touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God; it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them. 25. And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thy hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not. 26. And whosoever will not do the law of God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

We have here the commission which the Persian emperor granted to Ezra, giving him authority to act for the good of the Jews; and it is very ample and full, and beyond what could have been expected. The commission runs, we suppose, in the usual form. Artaxerxes, king of kings, that is too high a title for any mortal man to assume; he was indeed king of some kings, but to speak as if he were king of all kings, is to usurp his prerogative, who hath all power both in heaven and in earth. He sends greeting to his trusty and well-beloved Ezra, whom he calls a scribe of the law of the God of Heaven, (v. 12.) a title which (it seems by this) Ezra valued himself by, and desired no other, no not when he was advanced to the proconsular dignity. He reckoned it more his honour to be a scribe of God's law, than to be a peer or prince of the empire. Let us observe the articles of this commission:

I. He gives Ezra leave to go up to Jerusalem, and as many of his countrymen as pleased, to go up with him, v. 13. He and they were captives, and therefore they would not quit his dominions without his royal license.

II. He gives him authority to inquire into the affairs of Judah and Jerusalem, v. 14. The rule of the inquiry was to be the law of his God, which was in his hand; whether the Jews, in their religion, had, and did, according to that law; whether the temple was built, the priesthood settled, and the sacrifices offered conformable to the divine appointment; if, upon inquiry, he found any thing amiss, he must see to it being amended, and, like Titus in Crete, must set in order the things that were wanting, Tit. 1. 5. Thus is God's law magnified and made honourable, and thus are the Jews restored to their ancient privilege of governing themselves by that law, and are no longer under the statutes that were not good, the statutes of their oppressors, Est. 20. To lay out this money, and give them power for the support and encouragement of religion. What else are great revenues good for, but to enable men to do much good of this kind, if they have but hearts to do it?
V. He charges him that nothing should be wanting, that was requisite to be done in or about the temple, for the honour of the God of Israel. Observe, in this charge, Ezra 25. 1. How unambiguously he speaks of God; he had called him before the God of Jerusalem, but here, lest it should be thought that he looked upon him as a local deity, he calls him twice, with great veneration, the God of heaven.

2. How strictly he eyes the word and law of God, which, it is likely, he had read and admired; "Whatsoever is commanded by your God, 26.) I. How solemnly he professed that he, the king, or his judges, take it for the law of God. Let it be done, let it be diligently done, with care and speed." And, 3. How solicitously he deprecates the wrath of God; Why should there be wrath against the realm? The neglect and contempt of religion bring the judgments of God upon kings and kingdoms; and the likeliest expedient to turn away his wrath, when it is ready to break out against a people, is, to suppress, and encourage religion. Would we secure our peace and prosperity? Let us take care that the cause of God be not starved.

VI. He discharges all the ministers of the temple from paying taxes to the government; from the greatest of the priests to the least of the Nethinims, it shall not be lawful for the king's officers to impose that toll, tribut, or custom, upon them, which the king's subjects are paid, v. 24. Thus put a great honour upon them, as free denizens of the empire, and would gain them respect as favorites of the crown; and it gave them liberty to attend their ministry with more cheerfulness and freedom. We suppose it was only what they needed for themselves, and their families, and the maintenance of their ministry, that was hereby allowed to continue; if any of them should supply themselves, from this privilege, to meddle in trade and merchandise, they justly lost the benefit of it.

VII. He impowers Ezra to nominate and appoint judges and magistrates for all the Jews on that side the river, v. 25, 26. It was a great favour to the Jews, to have such nobles of themselves, and especially to have them of Ezra's nomination. 1. All those whom Ezra designated to fill the places of the professed Jewish religion, were to be under the jurisdiction of these judges, which intimates that they were exempted from the jurisdiction of the heathen magistrates. 2. These judges were allowed, and encouraged, to make proselytes; Let them teach the laws of God to those that do not know them. Though he would not turn Jew himself, he cared not how many of his subjects did. 3. They are authorized to enforce the judgments they give, and the orders they make, conformable to the law of God, (which was hereby made the law of the kings,) with severe penalties—imprisonment, banishment, fine, or death, according as their law directed. They are not allowed to make new laws, but must see the laws of God duly executed; and therefore they are intrusted with the sword, that they may be a terror to evil doers. What could Jehoshaphat do, or Hezekiah, or David himself, do, in the king's hand, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem; 28. And hath extended mercy unto me before the king and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthned as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me; and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

Ezra cannot proceed in his story, without inserting his thankful acknowledgment of the goodness of God to him and his people, in this matter. As soon as he has concluded the king's commission, instead of subjoining, God save the king, (though that might have been added,) he adds, Blessed be the Lord; for we must now carry out his command, give thanks, and, whatever occurrences please us, we must own God's hand in them, and praise his name. Two things Ezra blessed God for,

1. For his commission. We suppose he kissed the king's hand for it, but that was not all; Blessed be God (says he) that put such a thing as this into the king's heart. God can put things into men's hearts, which would not be there of themselves, and into their heads too, both by his providence and by his grace, in things pertaining both to life and godliness. If any good appear to be in our own hearts, or in the hearts of others, we must own it was God that put it there, and bless him for it; for it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do that which is good. When princes and magistrates act for the suppression of vice, and the encouragement of religion, we must thank God that put it into their hearts to do so, as much as if they had attributed some particular favour. When God's house was built, Ezra rejoiced in what was done to beautify it. We read not of any orders given to paint or gild it, or garnish it with precious stones, but to be sure that the ordinances of God were administered there constantly, and carefully, and exactly according to the institution; and that was indeed the beautifying of the temple.

2. For the encouragement he had to act in pursuance of his commission, v. 28. He has extended mercy to me. The king, in the honour he did him, we may suppose, had an eye to his merits, and preferred him because he looked upon him to be a very sensible ingenious man; but he himself ascribes it purely to God's mercy, that was it, that recommenced to the king of his prince. Ezra himself was a man of courage, and must have had great encouragement, not to his own heart, but to God's hand; I was strengthened to undertake the services, as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me, to direct and support me. If God gives us his hand, we are bold and cheerful; if he withdraw it, we are weak as water. Whatever service we are enabled to do for God and our generation, God must have all the glory of it. Strength for it is derived from him, and therefore the praise of it must be given to him.

CHAP. VIII.

This chapter gives us a more particular narrative of Ezra's journey to Jerusalem, which we had a general account of in the foregoing chapter. I. The company that went up with him, v. 1. 20. II. The solemn fast which he kept with his company, to implore God's presence with them in this journey, v. 21. 33. III. The care he took of the treasure he had with him, and the charge he gave the priests concerning it, to whose custody he committed it, v. 24. 30. The care he took of him and his company in the way, v. 31. V. Their arrival in Jerusalem, where they delivered their treasure to the priests; (v. 33, 34.) their commissions to the king's lieutenants; (v. 36.) the service they did to God, (v. 35.) and then applied themselves to their business.

1. These are now the chieft of their fathers, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king. 2. Of
the sons of Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the sons of David; Hattush: 3. Of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons of Pharosh; Zechariah: and with him were reckoned, by genealogy, of the males a hundred and fifty. 4. Of the sons of Pahath-moab; Elioenai the son of Zerariah, and with him two hundred males. 5. Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jaaziel, and with him three hundred males. 6. Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males. 7. And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males. 8. And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebediah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males. 9. Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males. 10. And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josiphiah, and with him a hundred and threescore males. 11. And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males. 12. And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan the son of Hakketan, and with him a hundred and ten males. 13. And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names are these, Elpelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males. 14. Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabud, and with them seventy males. 15. And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi. 16. Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elhanan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief men; also for Joharib, and for Elathan, men of understanding. 17. And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief, at the place Casiphia; and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, and to his brethren the Nethinims, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God. 18. And, by the good hand of our God upon us, they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen; 19. And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiah, of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty; 20. Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinims: all of them were expressed by name.

Ezra, having received his commission from the king, beats up for volunteers, as it were, sets up an ensign to assemble the outcasts of Israel, and the dispersed of Judah, Isa. 11. 12. "Whoever of the sons of Sith, that dwell with the daughters of Babylon, is disposed to go to Jerusalem, now that the temple there is finished, and the temple-service set a-going, now is their time." Now, one would think that under such a leader, with such encouragements, all the Jews should, at length, have shaken themselves from their dust, and loosed the bands of their neck, according to that call, Isa. 52. 1, 2, &c. I wonder how any of them could read that chapter, and yet stay behind. But multitudes did, who loved their ease better than their religion, thought themselves well off where they were, and either believed not that Jerusalem would better their condition, or durst not go therither through any difficulties. But here we are told, 1. That some offered themselves willingly to go with Ezra. The heads of the several families are here named, for their honour, and the numbers of the males that each brought in, amounting in all to 1496. Two priests are here named, (v. 2.) and one of the sons of David, but, it should seem, they came without their families, probably, intending to see how they liked Jerusalem, and then either to send for their families, or to return to them, as they saw cause. Several of their families, or clans, here named, we had before, ch. 2. 5. But now the name was not given of them all, as it is now, as God inclined their hearts; some were called into the vineyard at the third hour, others not till the eleventh, yet even those were not rejected. But here we read of the last sons of Adonikam, (v. 13.) which some understand to their dispraise, that they were the last that enlisted themselves under Ezra; I rather understand it to their honour, that now all the sons of that family returned, and none stayed behind. 2. That the others of this company, were, in a manner, pressed into the service. Ezra appointed a general rendezvous of all his company, at a certain place upon New-year's day, the first day of the first month; (ch. 7. 9.) then and there he took a view of them, and muster'd them, and (which was strange) found there none of the sons of Levi, v. 15. Some priests there were, but none other that were Levites; where was the spirit of that sacred office? Ezra was there, like the king himself, on the Lord's side? They, unlike to Levi, shrink, and desire to abide among the shep-folds to hear the bleatings of the flock; synagogues we suppose they had in Babylon, in which they prayed and preached, and kept sabbaths; (and when they could not have better, they had reason to be thankful for them,) but now that the temple at Jerusalem was opened, to the service of which they were ordained, they ought to have preferred the gates of Zion before all those synagogues; it is upon record here, to their reproach, but tell it not in Gath. Ezra, when he observed that he had no Levites in his retinue, was much at a loss; he had money enough for the service of the temple, but wanted men. The king and princes had more than done their part, but the sons of Levi had not half done their's. Eleven men, chief men and men of understanding, lie thieves out of his company, to be employed for the filling up of this lamentable vacancy. And here we are informed. 1. Of their being sent; Ezra sent them to a proper place, where there was a college of Levites, the place Casiphia, probably, a street, or square in Babylon allowed for that purpose; (Silver-street, one may call it, for Joseph signifies silver;) he sent them to a proper person, to Iddo the chief priest of the college, not to urge him to come himself, (we will suppose him to be old, and unfit for such a remove,) but to send some of the juniors, ministers for the house of our God, v. 17. The furnishing
of God’s house with good ministers, is a good work, which will redound to the comfort and credit of all that have a hand in it.

2. We are informed of their success; they did not return without their errand, but, though their warning was short, they brought about 40 Levites to attend Ezra; Sherebiah, \_ted as a very intelligent man, and 18 with him; (v. 18.) Hashabiah, and Jeshiaiah, and 20 with them, v. 19. By this it appears that they were not averse to go, but were solicitous and attentive, and only wanted to be called upon and invited to go. What a pity is it that good men should omit a good work, merely for want of being spoken to! What a pity that they should need it, and if they do, what a pity that they should want it! Of the Nehemiah, the servitors of the sacred college, the species infima—the lowest order of the temple-ministers, more appeared forward to go than of the Levites themselves; of them 220, upon this hasty summons, enlisted themselves, and had their names to be expressed by name in Ezra’s muster-roll, v. 20. "Thus" (says Ezra) "were we furnished with Levites, by the good hand of our God upon us." If, where ministers have been wanting, the vacancies are well supplied, let God have the glory, and his good hand be acknowledged as qualifying them for the service, inclining them to it, and then opening a door of opportunity for them.

21. Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. 22. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. 23. So we fasted, and besought our God for this; and he was entreated of us.

Ezra hurried some Levites to go along with him, but what will that avail, unless he have God with him? That is therefore his chief care; in all our ways, we must acknowledge God, and in those particularly wherein we are endeavouring to serve the interest of his kingdom among men; Ezra does so here. Observe,

1. The steadfast confidence he had in God, and in his gracious protection; he told the king, (v. 22.) what principle he went upon, that those who seek God may go safe under the shadow of his wings, even in the greatest dangers; but that those who forsake him, are continually exposed, even when they are most secure. God’s servants have his power engaged for them, his enemies have it engaged against them. This, Ezra believed with his heart, and with his mouth made confession of it before the king; and therefore he was ashamed to ask of the king a convocation therefor, lest thereby he should give occasion to the king, and those about him, to suspect either God’s power or his desire to help his people, or Ezra’s confidence in that power. They that trust in God, and triumph in him, will be ashamed of seeking to the creature for protection, especially of using any sorry shifts for their own safety, because thereby they contradict themselves and their own confidence. Not but that those who depend upon God, must use proper means for their preservation, and they need not be ashamed to do it; but when the honour of God is concerned, one would rather expone one’s self than do any thing to the prejudice of that, which ought to be dearer to us than our lives.

2. The solemn application he made to God in that confidence; he proclaimed a fast, v. 21. No doubt, he had himself begged of God direction in this affair, from the first time he had it in his thoughts, but, for public mercies, public prayers must be made, that all who are to share in the comfort of it, may join in the request for it. Their fasting was,

(1.) To express their humiliation; this he declares to be the intent and meaning of it, that we might afflict ourselves before our God for our sins, and so be qualified for the pardon of them. When we are entering upon any new condition of life, our care should be to bring none of the guilt of the sins of our former condition into it. When we are in any imminent peril, let us be sure to make our peace with God, and then we are safe, nothing can do us any real hurt. (2.) To excite their supplications; prayer was always joined with religious fasting; their errand to the throne of grace was, to seek of God the right way, that is, to commit themselves to the guidance of the Divine Providence, to put themselves under the divine protection, and to beg of God to guide and keep them in their journey, and bring them safely to their journey’s end. They were strangers in the road, were to march through their enemies’ countries, and had not a pillar of cloud and fire to lead them, as their fathers had; but they believed that the power and favour of God, and the ministration of his angels, would be to them instead of that, and hoped by prayer to engage this for them. Note, All our concerns about ourselves, our families, and our estates, it is our wisdom and duty by prayer to commit to God, and leave the care of with him, Phil. 4. 6.

3. The good success of their doing so, v. 23, we besought our God by joint-prayer, and he was entreated of us; they had some comfortable assurance in their own minds, that their prayers were answered, and the event declared it; for never any that sought God in earnest, sought him in vain.

24. Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, 25. And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered; 26. I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels a hundred talents, and of gold a hundred talents; 27. Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold. 28. And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a free-will-offering unto the Lord God of your fathers: 29. Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord. 30. So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem, unto the house of our God.
We have here an account of the particular care which Ezra took of the treasure he had with him, that belonged to God's sanctuary. Observe, 1. Having committed the keeping of it to God, he committed the keeping of it to prudent men, wise-businessmen, as he watched it; though, without God, they would have watched in vain. Note, Our prayers must always be seconded with our endeavours; the care of Christ's gospel, his church, and ordinances, must not be left with him, but that it must also be committed to faithful men, 2 Tim. 2. 2. Having prayed to God to preserve all the substance they had with them, he shows himself especially solicitous for that part of it, which belonged to the house of God, and was so offering to him. Do we expect that God should, by his providence, keep that which belongs to us? Let us, by his grace, keep that which belongs to him: let God's honour and interest be our care; and then we may expect that our lives and comforts will be his. Observe, (1.) The persons to whom he delivered the offerings of the house of God. Twelve chief priests, and as many Levites, he appointed to take care of the things of God, and were, in a particular manner, to have the benefit of these sacred treasures. Ezra tells them why he put those things into their hands; (v. 28.) Ye are holy unto the Lord, the vessels are holy also; and who so fit to take care of holy things, as holy persons? Those that have the dignity and honour of the priesthood, must take along with it the trust and duty of it. The prophet is foretelling the return of G d's people and ministers out of Babylon, when he gives the solemn charge, (Isa. 52. 11.) Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord. (2.) The great exactness with which he lodged this trust in their hands; he weighed to them the silver, the gold, and the vessels, (v. 25.) because he expected to have it from them again by weight. In all trusts, but especially sacred ones, we ought to be punctual, and preserve a right understanding on both sides. In Zerubbabel's time, the vessels were delivered by number, here, by weight, that all might be forth-coming, and it might easily appear if any were missing; to intimate that such as are intrusted with holy things, (as all the stewards of the mysteries of God are,) are concerned to remember, both in receiving their trust, and in discharging it, that they must shortly give a very particular account of it, that they may be faithful to it, and so give up their account with joy. (3.) The charge he gave them with these treasures; (v. 29.) "Watch ye, and keep them, that they be not lost, or embezzled, or mingled with the other articles; keep them together, keep them by themselves, keep them safe, till you weigh them in the temple, before the great men there;" hereby indicating that it was their concern to be careful and faithful, and that their honour to be found so. Thus when St. Paul charges Timothy with the gospel-treasure, he bids him keep it until the appearing of Jesus Christ, and his appearing before him to give an account of his trust, when his fidelity would be his crown. 31. Then we departed from the river of Ahava, on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way. 32. And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days. 33. Now on the fourth day was the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, weigh-
steal the glory of the God of God, furthered them, (v. 56.) purely in compliance to the king; when he appeared moderate, they all coveted to appear so too. Then had the churches rest.

CHAP. IX.

The affairs of the church were in a very good posture, we may well suppose, now that Ezra presided in them. Love without the exercise of justice was business to them, and they heard no complaints of persecution and oppression, their enemies had either their hearts turned, or, at least, their hands tied; their neighbours were civil, and we hear of no more of such rumours of wars; there were none to make them afraid; all was as well as could be, considering that they were few, and poor, and subjects to a foreign prince. Look at home; we hear nothing of Baal, or Asherah, or Moloch, no images, or groves, or golden calves, no not so much as high places, (not only no idolatrous altars, but no separate ones,) but the temple was duly respected, and the temple-service carefully kept up; yet there was some mixture of evil; the purest ages of the church have had some corruptions, and it will never be presented without spot or wrinkle, till it is a glorious church, a church triumphant, Eph. 5. 27. We have here, 1. A complaint brought to Ezra of the many marriages that had been made with strange wives, v. 1. 2. 3. The great trouble which he, and others influenced by his example, were in, upon this information, v. 3. 4. III. The solemn confession which he made of this sin to God, with godly sorrow and shame, v. 5.-15.

1. NOW when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. 2. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons; so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. 3. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. 4. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.

Ezra, like Barnabas, when he came to Jerusalem, and saved the grace of God to his brethren there, no doubt, was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord, Acts 11. 23. He saw nothing amiss; many corruptions lurk out of the view of the most vigilant rulers: but here is a dam upon his joys, information is brought him, that many of the people, yea, and some of the rulers, had married wives out of heathen families, and joined themselves in affinity with strangers, v. 1. 2.

I. What the sin was, that they were guilty of, it was mingling themselves with the people of those lands, (v. 2.) associating with them both in trade and in conversation, making themselves familiar with them, and, to complete the affinity, taking their daughters in marriage to their sons. We are willing to hope that they did not worship their gods, but that their captivity had cured them of their idolatry: it is said indeed that they did according to their abominations; but that (says Bishop Patrick) signifies here only the imitation of the heathen in promiscuous marriages with any nation whatsoever; which, by degrees, would lead them to idolatry against their fates. They disobey the express command of God, which forbade all intimacy with the heathen, and particularly in matrimonial contracts, Deut. 7. 3. 2. They profaned the crown of their peculiarity, and set themselves upon a level with those, above whom God had, by singular marks of his favour, of late, as well as formerly, dignified them. 3. They distrusted the power of God to protect and advance them, and were led by the appearance of policy, hoping to strengthen themselves, and make an interest among their neighbours, by these alliances. A practical disbelief of God's all-sufficiency is at the bottom of all the sorry shifts we make to help ourselves. 4. They exposed themselves, and much more their children, to the peril of idolatry, the very sin, and introduced by this very way, that had once been the ruin of their church and nation.

II. Whence were the persons that were guilty of this sin; not only some of the unthinking people of Israel, that knew no better, but many of the priests and Levites, whose office it was to teach the law, and this law among the rest, and whom, by reason of their elevation above common Israelites, it was a greater crime. It was a diminution to the sons of that tribe, to match into any other tribe, and they seldom did, except into the royal tribe; but for them to match with heathens, with Canaanites, and Hittites, and I know not whom, was such a disparagement, as, if they had had any sense, though not of duty, yet of honour, one would think, they would never have been guilty of: yet this was not the worst; The hand of the princes and rulers, who by their power should have prevented, or reformed, this high misdemeanor, was chief in this trespass. If princes be in a trespass, they will be charged as chief in it, because of the influence of their example will have upon others; many will follow their pernicious ways. But miserable is the case of that people, whose leaders debauch them, and cause them to err.

III. The information that was given of this to Ezra; it was given by the persons that were most proper to complain, the princes, those of them that had kept their integrity, and with it their dignity; they could not have accused others, they themselves had not been free from blame. It was given to the person who had power to mend the matter, who, as a ready scribe in the law of God, could argue with them, and, as king's commissioner, could awe them. It is probable that these princes had often endeavoured to redress this grievance, and could not; but now they apply themselves to Ezra, hoping that his wisdom, authority, and interest, would persuade them to do it. The interest of themselves, the reform public abuses, may yet do good service by giving information to those that can.

IV. The impression this made upon Ezra; (v. 3.) he rent his clothes, plucked off his hair, and sat down astonished. Thus he expressed the deep sense he had, 1. Of the dishonour hereby done to God. It grieved him to the heart, to think that a people called by his name, should so grossly violate his laws, should so scandalize his service, and, by this example, and make such bad returns for his favours. 2. Of the mischief the people had hereby done to themselves, and the danger they were in of the wrath of God breaking out against them. Note, (1.) The sins of others should be our sorrow, and the injury done by them to God's honour, and to the souls of men, is what we should lay to heart. (2.) Sorrow for sin must be great sorrow, such Ezra's was, as for an only son or a first-born. (3.) The
scandalous sins of professors are what we have reason to be astonished at. We may stand amazed to see men contradict, disparage, prejudice, ruin, themselves. Strange that men should act so inconsistently, and so inconsistently with themselves! Upright men are astonished at it.

V. The influence which Ezra’s grief for this, had upon others; we may suppose that he went up to the house of the Lord, there to humble himself, because he had an eye to God in his grief, and that was the proper place for deprecating his displeasure; public notice was soon taken of it, and all the devout serious people that were at hand assembled themselves to him. It should seem of their own accord, for nothing is said of their being sent to, v. 4.

Note, 1. It is the character of good people, that they tremble at God’s word; they stand in awe of the authority of his precepts, and the severity and justice of his threatenings, and to them that do so will God look, Isa. 66. 2. 2. They that tremble at the word of God, cannot but tremble at the sins of men, by which the law of God is broken, and his wrath and curse incurred. 3. The pious zeal of one against sin, may perhaps provoke very many to the like, as the apostle speaks in another case, 2 Cor. 9. 2. Many will follow, who have not consideration, conduct, and courage, enough to lead in a good work. 4. All good people ought to own those that appear and act in the cause of God against vice and profaneness, to stand by them, and do what they can to strengthen their hands.

5. And at the evening-sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God; 6. And said, O my God! I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. 7. Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day: and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. 8. And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. 9. For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. 10. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments, 11. Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. 12. Now, therefore, give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever; that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. 13. And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; 14. Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations, wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping! 15. O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous; for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day; behold, we are before thee in our trespasses; for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

What the meditations of Ezra’s heart were, while, for some hours, he sat down astonished, we may guess by the words of his mouth, when, at length, he shake with his tongue; and a most pathetic address he here makes to Heaven, upon this occasion. Observe,

I. The time when he made this address; at the evening-sacrifice, v. 5. Then (it is likely) devout people used to come into the courts of the temple, to grace the solemnity of the sacrifice, and to offer up their own prayers to God in concurrence with it. In their hearing, Ezra chose to make this confession, that they might be made duly sensible of the sins of their people, which, hitherto, they had either not taken notice of, or had made light of. Prayer may preach. The sacrifice, and especially the evening-sacrifice, was of the type of the great preparation, that blessed Lamb of God, who, in the evening of the world, was to take away our sins by sacrifice of himself, to which we may suppose that Ezra had an eye of faith in this penitential address to God; he makes confession with his hand, as it were, upon the head of that great Sacrifice, through which we receive the atonement. Certainly Ezra was no stranger to the message which the angel Gabriel had, some years ago, delivered to Daniel, at the time of the evening-sacrifice, and, as it were, in expectation of it, concerning Messiah the Prince; (Dan. 9. 24.) perhaps he had regard to that in choosing this time.

II. His preparation for this address. 1. He rose up from his heaviness, and so far shook off the burden of his grief, as was necessary to the lifting up of his heart to God. He recovered himself from his astonishment, got the tumult of his troubled spirits somewhat stilled, and his spirit composed for communion with God. 2. He fell upon his knees, put himself into the posture of a penitent humbling himself, and a petitioner suing for mercy; in both, representing the people for whom he was now an intercessor. 3. He spread out his hands, as one affected with what he was going to say, offering it up unto God, waiting, and reaching out, as it were, with an earnest expectation, to receive a gracious answer: in this he had an eye to God, as the Lord, and his God, a God of power, but a God of grace.

III. The address itself. It is not properly to be
called a prayer, for there is not a word of petition in it; but if we give prayer its full latitude, it is the offering up of pious and devout affections to God, and very devout, very pious, are the affections which Ezra here expresses. His address is a penitent confession of sin, not his own, (from a conscience burthened with its own guilt, and apprehensive of his own danger,) but the sin of his people, from a gracious concern for the honour of God, and the welfare of Israel. Here is a lively picture of ingenuous repentance. Observe in this address,

I. The confession he makes of the sin, and the aggravations of it, which he insists upon, to affect his own heart, and their's that joined with him, with holy sorrow and shame and fear, in the consideration of it, that they might be deeply humbled for it. And it is observable that though he himself was not more troubled with this guilt, yet he had clothed himself into the number of the sinners, because he was a member of the same community, our sins, and our trespass.

Perhaps he now remembered it against himself as his fault, that he had steid so long after his brethren in Babylon, and had not separated himself so soon as he might have done, from the people of those lands. When we are lamed only with the sinfulness of the wicked, it may be, if we duly reflect upon ourselves, and give our own hearts leave to deal faithfully with us, we may find something of the same nature, though in a lower degree, that we also have been guilty of. However, he speaks that which was, or should have been the general complaint.

(1.) He owns their sins to have been very great; "Our iniquities are increased over our heads, (v. 6.) They are recondite in the earth, and are deep waters;' so general was the prevalency of them, so violent the power of them, and so threatening were they of the most pernicious consequences. "Iniquity is grown up to that height among us, that it reaches to the heavens, so very impudent that it dures heaven, so very provoking that, like the sin of Sodom, it cries to heaven for vengeance." But let this be the comfort of true penitents, that though they trench in the sea of God, yet mercy is in the heavens, Ps. 36. 5. Where sin abounds, grace will much more abound.

(2.) Their sin had been long persisted in; (v. 7.) "Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great transgression. The example of those that were gone before them, he thought so far from excusing their fault, that it aggravated it; we should take warning not to stumble at the same stone. The correction is only for the worse, that it has taken deep root, and begins to plead prescription, but by this means we have reason to fear that the measure of the iniquity was nearly full.

(3.) The great and sore judgments which God had brought upon them for their sins, did very much aggravate them. For our iniquities we have been delivered to the sword and to captivity, (v. 7.) and yet not reformed; it was not reformed, nor yet the folly not gone; (Prov. 27. 22.) corrected, but not reclaimed.

(4.) The late mercies God had bestowed upon them, did likewise very much aggravate their sins. This he insists largely upon, v. 8, 9. Observe, [1.] The time of mercy; Now for a little space, that is, "It is but a little while since we had our liberty, and it is not likely to continue long." This greatly aggravated their sin, that they were so lately in the furnace, and that they knew not how soon they might return to it again; and could they yet be secure! [2.] The fountain of mercy; Grace has been showed us from the Lord. The kings of Persia were the instruments of their enlargement; but he ascribes it to God, and to his grace, his free grace without any merit of their's. [3.] The streams of mercy; they were not forsaken in their bondage, but even in Babylon had the tokens of God's presence, inasmuch as they were a remnant of Israel left, a few out of many; and those narrowly escaped of the hands of their enemies, by the favour of the kings of Persia. But Ezra was more especially struck with the consideration that they had a nai in his holy place, that is, (as it is explained, v. 9.) that they had set up the house of God, They had raised their religious settled, and the service of the temple in a climate. We are to reckon it a great comfort and advantage, to have stated opportunities of worshipping God. Blessed are they that dwell in God's house, like Anna that departed not from the temple. "This is my rest forever, says the gracious soul. [4.] The effects of all this; it enlightened their eyes, and it revived their hearts; that is, it was very comforting to them, and the more so, for as it was in their bondage, it was life from the dead to them: though but a little reviving, it was a great favour, considering that they deserved none, and the day of small things was an earnest of greater. "Now," (says Ezra) "how ungrateful are we to offend a God that has been so kind to us; how dishonouring to mingle ourselves in sin with these nations from among whom we have been, in wonderful mercy, delivered; how unwise to expose ourselves to God's displeasure, when we are tried with the returns of his favour, and are upon our good behaviour for the continuance of it!"

(5.) It was a great aggravation of the sin, that it was against an express command. We have for taken thy commandments, v. 10. It seems to have been an ancient law of the house of Jacob, not to mix with the families of the uncircumcised, Gen. 14. But beside that, God had strictly forbidden it. He recites the command, v. 11, 12. For them sin appears sin, appears exceeding sinful, when we compare it with the law which is broken by it: nothing could be more express, Give not your daughters to their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons. The reason given, is, because if they mingled with these nations, they would pollute themselves; it was an uncleanness, and God's holy people; but if they kept themselves distinct from them, it would be their honour and safety, and the perpetuating of their prosperity. Now, to violate a command so express, backed with such reasons, and a fundamental law of their constitution, was very provoking to the God of heaven.

(6.) That in the judgments by which they had already smarted for their sin, God had punished them less than their iniquity deserved, so that he looked upon them to be still in debt upon the old account. "What! And yet shall we run up a new score? Has God dealt so gently with us in correcting us, and shall we thus abuse his favour, and turn his grace into wantonness?" God, in his grace and mercy, had said concerning Sion's captivity, She hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sin. Isa. 40. 1. So here he removes the great malignity that was in their sin, though the punishment was very great, owns it less than they deserved.

2. The devout affections that were working in him, in making this confession. Speaking of sin, (1.) He speaks as one much ashamed. With this he begins, (v. 6.) O my God, I am much ashamed and blush. I have sinned, (so the woorden, placed,) to lift up my face unto thee. Note, [1.] Sin is a shameful thing; as soon as ever our first parents had eaten forbidden fruit, they were ashamed of themselves. [2.] Holy shame is as necessary an ingredient in true and ingenuous repentance as holy sorrow. [3.] The sins of others should be our
shame, and we should blush for those who do not blush for themselves. We may well be ashamed that we are any thing related to those who are so ungrateful to God, and unwise for themselves. This is clearing ourselves, 2 Cor. 7. 11. [4.] Penitent sinners never see so much reason to blush and be ashamed, as when they come to lift up their faces before God. A natural sense of our own honour which we have injured, will make us ashamed, when we have done a wrong, and we will not be able to look God in the face; but a gracious concern for God's honour will make us much more ashamed to look him in the face. The publican, when he went to the temple to pray, hung down his head more than ever, as one ashamed, Luke 18. 13. [5.] An eye to God as our God, will be of great use to us in the exercise of repentance. Ezra begins, O my God; and again, in the same breath, My God. This is the true relation to God as our's will help to humble us, and break our hearts for sin, that we should violate both his precepts to us, and our promises to him: it will also encourage us to hope for pardon, upon repentance. He is my God, notwithstanding this, and every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant.

(2.) He speaks as one much amazed, (v. 10.) "What shall we say after this?" I know not what to say: if God do not help us, we are undone." The discoveries of guilt excite amazement, the more we think of sin, the worse it looks; the difficulty of the case excites amazement, How shall we recover ourselves? Which way shall we make our peace with God? [1.] True penitents are at a loss what to say: Shall we say, We have not sinned, or, God will not require it? If we do, we deceive ourselves, and the truth be not in us. Shall we say, Have we sinned with ease, and we will pay thee all, with thousands of rams, or our first-born for our transgression? God will not thus be mocked, he knows we are insensible. Shall we say, There is no hope, and let come on us what will? That is but to make bad worse. [2.] True penitents will consider what to say, and should, as Ezra, beg of God to teach them, What shall we say? Say, I have sinned; I have done foolishly, I have been unfaithful to my master; and the like. See Hos. 14. 2.

(3.) He speaks as one much afraid, ver. 13, 14. "After all the judgments that are come upon us, to reclaim us from sin, and all the deliverances that have been wrought for us, to engage us to God and duty, if we should again break God's commandments, by joining in affinity with the children of disobedience, and learning their ways, what could we do except, that God should be angry with us till he had consumed us, and there should not be so much as a remnant left, nor any to escape the destruction? There is not a surer or sadder presage of ruin to any people, than revolting to sin, to the same sins again, after great judgments, and great deliverances. They that will be wrought upon neither by the one nor by the other, are fit to be rejected, as reprobae silver, for the founder melteth in them."

(4.) He speaks as one much assured of the righteousness of God, and resolved to acquiesce in that, and to leave the matter with him, whose judgment is according to the truth, (v. 13.) "Thou art righteous, wise, just, and good; thou wilt neither do us wrong, nor be hard upon us, and therefore, behold, we are before thee; stand at thy feet, waiting our doom; we cannot stand before thee, assisting upon any righteousness of our own, having no plea to support us or bring us off, and therefore we fall down before thee, in our terrors, and cast ourselves on thy mercy, do unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee." Job. 9. 15. Thus does this good man lay his grief before God, and then leave it with him.

CHAP. X.

In this chapter, we have that grievance redressed, which was complained of, and lamented, in the foregoing chapter, the people are great, 1. How the people's hearts were prepared for the redress of it, by their deep humiliation for the sin, v. 1. II. How it was proposed to Ezra by Shechaniah, v. 2—4. III. How the proposal was put in execution. 1. The great men were sworn to stand by it, v. 5—8. Ezra appeared first in it, v. 6. 3. A general assembly was called, v. 7—9. 4. They all, in compliance with Ezra's cohabitation, agreed to the reformation, v. 10—14. 5. Contemners were appointed to sit, as in an accident, day after day, to inquire who had married strange wives, and to oblige them to put them away, which is done accordingly, (v. 14—17.) and a list of the names of those that were found guilty, given in, v. 18—44.

1. NOW when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men, and women, and children: for the people wept very sore. 2. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. 3. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. 4. Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee also we will be with thee; be of good courage, and do it. 5. Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they sware.

We are told, 1. What good impressions were made upon the people by Ezra's humiliation and confession of sin. No sooner was it noised in the city, that their new governor, whom they rejoiced in, was himself in grief, and to so great a degree, for them and their sin, than presently there assembled to him a very great congregation, to see what the matter was, and to mingle their tears with his, v. 1. Our weeping for other people's sins may perhaps set those a weeping for themselves, as this would otherwise have continued senseless and remorseless. See what a happy influence the good examples of great ones may have upon their inferiors. When Ezra, a scribe, a scholar, a man in authority under the king, so deeply lamented the public corruptions, they concluded that they were indeed very grievous, else he would not have thus grieved for them; and this drew tears from every eye; men, women, and children, were all very sore, when he wept thus.

II. What a good motion Shechaniah made, upon this occasion. The place was Bochim, a place of weepers; but for aught that appears, there was a profound silence among them, as among Job's friends, who spake not a word to him, because they saw that his grief was very great, till Shechaniah
is no pardon, no peace. What has been unjustly got, cannot be justly kept, but must be restored; but as to the case of being "unequally yoked with unbelievers," Shechaniah's counsel, which he was then so clear in, will not hold now; such marriages, it is certain, are sinful, and ought not to be made, but they are not null. Our rule, under the gospel, is, Quod fieri non debuit, factum valet.—That which ought not to have been done, must, when done, abide. If a brother has a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away, 1 Cor. 7, 12, 13.

4. He puts them into a good method for the effecting of this reformation, and shows them not only that it must be done, but how. (1.) "Let Ezra, and all those that were present in this assembly, agree in a resolution that this must be done; pass a vote immediately to this effect, it will now pass ne-minus contradicente—unanimously, that it may be said to be done according to the counsel of my lord, the president of the assembly, with the unanimous concurrence of those that tremble at the commandment of our God, which is the description of those that were gathered to him, ch. 9. 4. Declare it to be the sense of all the sober serious people among us, which cannot but have a great sway among Israelites." (2.) "Let him recommend God in this matter, which Ezra had recited in his prayer, be laid before the people, and let them see that it is done according to the law; we have that to warrant us, nay, that binds to what we do; it is not an addition of our own to the divine law, but the necessary execution of it." (3.) "While we are in a good mind, let us bind ourselves by a solemn vow and covenant, that we will do it, lest, when the present impressions are worn off, the thing be left undone. Let us covenant, not only that, if we have strangers with ourselves, we will put them away, but that, if we have not, we will do what we can in our places to oblige others to put away their's." (4.) "Let Ezra himself preside in this matter, who is authorized by the king's commission, to inquire whether the law of God was duly observed in Judah, and Jerusalem, (ch. 7, 14.) and let us all resolve to stand by him in it, (v. 4.) Arise, be of good courage. Weeping in this case, is good, but reforming is better." See what God said to Joshua in a like case, Josh. 7, 10, 11.

III. What a good reformation they came to, upon this good motion, v. 5. They not only agreed that it should be done, but bound themselves with an oath that they would do according to this word. Fust bind, fast find.

6. Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water; for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away. And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; and that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away. Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three
days: it was the ninth month, and the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain. 10. And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives to increase the trespass of Israel. 11. Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure; and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. 12. Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do. 13. But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two; for we are many that have transgressed in this thing. 14. Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us.

We have here an account of the proceedings upon the resolutions lately taken up concerning the strange wives: no time was lost; they struck when the iron was hot, and soon set the wheels of reformation a going.

I. Ezra went to the council-chamber, where, it is probable, the priests used to meet upon public business. And till he came there, (so Bishop Patrick thinks it should be read,) till he saw something done, and more likely to be done, for the redress of this grievance, he did neither eat nor drink, but continued mourning. Sorrow for sin should be abiding sorrow; be sure to let it continue till the sin be put away.

II. He sent orders to all the children of the captivity to attend him at Jerusalem within three days; (v. 7, 8) and, being authorized by the king to enforce his orders with penalties annexed, (ch. 7. 26.) he threatened, that whoever refused to obey the summons, should forfeit his estate, and be outlawed. The doom of him that would not attend on this religious occasion, should be, that his substance should, in his stead, be, ever after, appropriated to the service of their religion, and he himself, for his contempt, should for ever after, be excluded from the honors and privileges of their religion; he should be excommunicated.

III. Within the time limited, the generality of the people met at Jerusalem, and made their appearance in the street of the house of God, v. 9. They that had no zeal for the work they were called to, nay, perhaps had a dislike to it, being themselves delinquents, yet paid such a deference to Ezra's authority, and were so awed by the penalty, that they durst not stay away.

IV. God gave them a token of his displeasure, in the great rain that happened at that time, (v. 9.) and again, (v. 13.) which perhaps kept some away; it was, however, grievous to them that met in the open street: yet the circumstance of the heavens weeping, when they wept, might signify that though God was angry with them for their sin, yet he was well pleased with their repentance, and (as it is said, Judg. 10. 16.) his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel; it was also an indication of the good fruits of their repentance, for the rain makes the earth fruitful.

V. Ezra gave the charge at this great assize; he told them that he called them together now, because he found that since their return out of captivity, they had increased the trespass of Israel by marrying strange wives, that they had added to their former sins this new transgression, which would certainly be the means of introducing idolatry again, the very sin they had smarted for, and which he feared, they had become cured of in their captivity. He informed them too that he called them together, that they might confess their sins to God, and, having done that, might declare themselves ready and willing to do his pleasure, as it should be made known to them, (which all those will do, that truly repent of what they have done to incur his displeasure,) and particularly, that they might separate themselves from all idolaters, especially idolatrous wives, v. 10. 11. On these heads, we may suppose, he enlarged, and, probably, made such another confession of the sin now, as he made, ch. 9. which he required them to say Amen to.

VI. The people submitted themselves, not only to Ezra's jurisdiction in general, but to his inquisition and determination in this matter; "As thou hast said, so must we do. We must not only separate ourselves, but make thorough separation in mingling ourselves with the heathen, and have thereby been in danger, not only of being corrupted by them, for we are frail, but, of being lost among them, for we are few; we are therefore convinced that there is an absolute necessity of our separating from them again." There is then hope concerning people, when they are convinced, not only that it is good to part with their sins, but that it is indispensably necessary; we must do it, or we are undone.

VII. It was agreed that this affair should be carried on, not in a popular assembly, nor that they should think to go through with it all on a sudden, but that a court of delegates should be appointed to receive complaints, and to hear and determine upon them. It could not be done at this time, for it was not put into a method, nor could the people stand out of doors in the rain had deluges in them; and it would require time to discover and examine them. Nice cases would arise, which could not be adjudged without debate and deliberation, v. 13. "And therefore let the crowd be dismissed, and the rulers stand to receive informations; let them proceed city by city, and let the offenders be convicted before them in the presence of the judges and elders of their own city; and let them be instructed to see the orders executed; thus take time, and we shall have done the sooner; whereas, if we do it in a hurry, we shall do it by halves, v. 14. If, in this method, a thorough reformation be made, the fierce wrath of God will be turned from us, which, we are sensible, is ready to break forth against us for this transgression.

Ezra was willing that his zeal should be guided by the people's prudence, and put his matter into this method; he is not ashamed to own that the advice came from them, any more than he was to comply with it.

15. Only Jonathan the son of Asahel, and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah, were employed about this matter; and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them. 16. And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their
fathers, and all of them by their names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. 17. And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the month. 18. And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives; namely, of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. 19. And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they gave a ram of the flock for their trespass. 20. And of the sons of Immer; Hanani, and Zebadiah. 21. And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemariah, and Jehiel, and Uzziyah. 22. And of the sons of Pashur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nathaneel, Jozabad, and Elasah. 23. Also of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah (the same is Kelita,) Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. 24. Of the singers also; Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri. 25. Moreover of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Jeziah, and Malchiah, and Miamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Beniah. 26. And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Elijah. 27. And of the sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. 28. Of the sons also of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai. 29. And of the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jasub, and Sheal, and Ramoth. 30. And of the sons of Pahath-moab; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manasseh. 31. And of the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon. 32. Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah. 33. Of the sons of Hashum; Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphlet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei. 34. Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Amran, and Uel. 35. Benjamin, Bedeiah, Chelluh. 36. Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, Mattanai, Mattenai, and Jaasau. 38. And Bani, and Binnui, Shimei. 39. And Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adahia, 40. Machniadebe, Shashai, Shari, 41. Azareel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah, 42. Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph. 43. Of the sons of Nebo; Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, Benaiah. 44. All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children.

The method of proceeding in this matter being concluded on, and the congregation dismissed, that each in his respective place might gain and give intelligence, to facilitate the matter; we are here told, 1. Who were the persons that undertook to manage the matter, and bring the cause regularly before the commissioners; Jonathan and Jehoziah, two active men, whether of the priests or of the people, does not appear; probably, they were the men that made that proposal (v. 13, 14.) and were, therefore, the fittest to be employed; for, as they were joined with them, and helped them, v. 15. Dr. Lightfoot gives a contrary sense of this; Only (or nevertheless) Jonathan and Jehoziah stood against this matter, (which reding the original will very well bear,) and these two Levites helped them, in opposing it, either the thing itself, or this method of proceeding. It was straighe, if a work of this kind was carried on, and met with no opposition.

II. Who were the commissioners that s.t upon this matter; Ezra was president, and with him certain chief of the fathers who were qualified with wisdom and zeal, above others, for his service, v. 16. It was happy for them that they had such a man as Ezra to head them; they could not have done it well without his direction, yet he would not do it without their concurrence.

III. How long they were about it; they began, the first day of the tenth month, to examine the matter, (v. 16.) which was but ten days after this method was proposed, (v. 9.) and they finished in three months, v. 17. They sat close, and minded their business, otherwise they could not have despotted so many causes as they had before them, in so little time; for we may suppose that all who were impeached, were fairly asked what cause they could show why they should not be parted. If we may judge by other cases, provided the wife were proselyted to the Jewish religion, she was not to be put away; the trial of which would require great care.

IV. Who the persons were, that were found guilty of this crime; their names are here recorded to their perpetual reproach; many of the priests, any, of the family of Jeshua, the High Priest, were found guilty, (v. 18.) though the law had particularly provided for the preserving of their honour in their marriages, that, being holy themselves, they should not marry such as were profane. Lev. 21. 7. They that should have taught others the law, brake it themselves, and by their example emboldened others to do likewise. But, having lost their innocency in this matter, they did well to repent, and give an example of repentance; for, 1. They promised under their hand to put away their strange wives; some think that they swore it with their hands lifted up. 2. They took the appointed way of obtaining pardon, bringing the ram which was appointed by the law for a trespass-offring, (Lev. 6. 6.) so owning their guilt, and the desert of it, and humbly suing for forgiveness.

About 113 in all; who had married strange wives, and some of them, it is said, (v. 44.) had children by them, which implies that not many of them had, God not crowning those marriages with the blessing of increase. Whether the children were turned off with the mothers, as Shechaniah proposed, does not appear: it should seem not; it is, however, probable that the wives which were put away were well provided for, according to their rank. One would think this grievance was now thoroughly redressed, yet we meet with it again, Neh. 13. 22. and Mal. 2. 11. for such corruptions are easily and insensibly brought in, but not without great difficulty purged out again. The best reformers can but do their endeavor, but when the Redecemer himself shall come to Sion, he shall effectually turn away ungodliness from Jacob.
This book continues the history of the children of the captivity; the poor Jews that were lately returned out of Babylon to their own land. At this time, not only the Persian monarchy flourished in great pomp and power, but Greece and Rome began to be very great, and make a figure. Of the affairs of those high and mighty states, we have authentic accounts extant; but the sacred and inspired history takes cognizance only of the state of the Jews, and makes no mention of other nations, but as the Israel of God had dealings with them; for the Lord's portion is his people, they are his peculiar treasure, and, in comparison with them, the rest of the world is but as lumber. In my esteem, Ezra the scribe, and Nehemiah the Tirshatha, though neither of them ever wore a crown, commanded an army, conquered any country, or were famed for philosophy or oratory, yet both of them, being pious praying men, and very serviceable in their day to the church of God and the interests of religion, were really greater men, and more honourable, not only than any of the Roman consuls or dictators, but than Xenophon, or Demosthenes, or Plato himself, who lived at the same time, the bright ornaments of Greece. Nehemiah's agency for the advancing of the settlement of Israel we have a full account of in this book of his own commentaries or memoirs, wherein he records not only the works of his hands, but the workings of his heart, in the management of public affairs; inserting in the story many devout reflections and ejaculations, which discover in his mind a very deep tincture of serious piety, and are peculiar to his writings. Twelve years he was governor of Judea, under Artaxerxes king of Persia, from his twentieth year, (ch. 1. 1.) to his thirty-second year, ch. 13. 6. Dr. Lightfoot supposes this to be Artaxerxes from whom Ezra had his commission. This book relates,

I. Nehemiah's concern for Jerusalem, and the commission he had obtained from the king to go thither, ch. 1, 2.

II. His building of the wall of Jerusalem, notwithstanding the opposition he met with, ch. 3, 4.

III. His redressing the grievance of the people, ch. 5.

IV. His finishing the wall, ch. 6.

V. The account he took of the people, ch. 7.

VI. The religious solemnities of reading the law, fasting and praying, and renewing their covenants, which he called the people to, ch. 8--10

VII. The care he took for the replenishing of the holy city, and the settling of the holy tribe, ch. 11, 12.

VIII. His zeal in reforming divers abuses, ch. 13. Some call this the second book of Ezra, not because he was the penman of it, but because it is a continuation of the history of the foregoing book, with which it is connected, v. 1. This was the last historical book that was written, as Malachi the last prophetic book, of the Old Testament.
NEHEMIAH, I.

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CHAP. I.

Here we first meet with Nehemiah at the Persian court, where we find him, 1. Inquisitive concerning the state of the Jews and Jerusalem, v. 1, 2. II. Informed of their deplorable state, v. 3. III. Fasting and praying, thereupon, (v. 4.) with a particular account of his prayer, v. 5-11. Such is the rise of this great man, by piety, and by policy.

1. THE words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, 2. That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. 3. And they said unto me, the remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire. 4. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, 

What tribe Nehemiah was of, does no where appear; but if it be true, (which we are told by the author of the Maccabees, Book 2. ch. 1. 18.) that he offered sacrifice, we must conclude him to be a priest. We are here told that he was in Shushan, the palace, or royal city, of the king of Persia, where the court was ordinarily kept, (v. 1.) that he was the king's cup-bearer. Kings and great men, probably, looked upon it as a piece of state to be attended by those of other nations. By this place at court, 1. He would be the better qualified for the service of his country, in that post for which God had designed him; as Moses was the fitter to govern, for being bred up in Pharaoh's court, and David in Saul's. 2. He had the fairer opportunity of serving his country by his interest in the king and those about him. Observe, He is not forward to tell us what great preferment he had at court; it is not till the end of the chapter, that he tells us he was the king's cup-bearer, (a place of great trust, as well as of honour and profit,) when he could not avoid the mentioning of it, because of the following story; but, at first, he only says, I was in Shushan the palace; whence we may learn to be humble and modest, and slow to speak of our own advancement. But in the providences of God concerning him, we may observe, to our comfort, (1.) That when God has work to do, he will never want instruments to do it with. (2.) That those whom God designs to employ in his service, he will find out proper ways both to fit for it, and to call to it. (3.) That God has his remnant in all places; we read of Obadiah in the house of Ahab, savant in Cæsar's household, and a devout Nehemiah in Shushan the palace. (4.) That God can make the courts of princes sometimes nursery, and sometimes sanctuaries, to the friends and patrons of the church's cause.

Now here we have, Nehemiah tender and compassionate inquiry concerning the state of the Jews in their own land, v. 2. It happened that a friend and relation of his came to the court with some other company, by whom he had an opportunity of inquiring himself fully how it went with the children of the captivity, and what posture Jerusalem, the beloved city, was in. Nehemiah lived at ease, in honour and fulness, himself, but cannot forget that he is an Israelite, nor shake off the thoughts of his brethren in distress, but, in spirit, (like Moses, Acts 7. 23.) visiteth them, and looketh upon their brothers. As distance of place did not alienate his affections from them, (though they were out of sight, yet not out of mind,) so neither did, 1. The dignity to which he was advanced. Though he was a great man, and, probably, rising higher, yet he did not think it below him to take cognizance of his brethren that were low and despaired, nor was he ashamed to own his relation to them, and concern for them. 2. The diversity of their sentiments and affections, the difference of their practice accordingly. Though he did not go to settle at Jerusalem himself, (as we think he ought to have done, now that liberty was proclaimed,) but confined to the court, and staid there, yet he did not therefore judge or despise them that were returned, or upbraided them as impolitic, but kindly concerned himself for them, was ready to do them all the good offices he could, and, that he might know which way to do them a kindness, asked concerning them. Note, It is lawful and good to inquire, "What news?" We should inquire especially concerning the state of the church and religion, and how it fares with the people of God; and the design of our inquiry must be, not, that, like the Athenians, we may have something to talk of, but that we may know how to direct our prayers and prayers.
took the right method of fetching in relief for his people, and direction for himself in what way to serve them. Let those who are forming any good designs for the service of the public, take God along with them from the first conception of them, and utter all their projects before him; that is the way to prosper in them.

5. And said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments; 6. Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. 7. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandest thy servant Moses. 8. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: 9. But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. 10. Now these are thy servants, and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. 11. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name; and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man: For I was the king's cup-bearer.

We have here Nehemiah's prayer; a prayer that has reference to all the prayers which he had, for some time before, been putting up to God day and night, while he continued his sorrows for the desolations of Jerusalem; and withal to the petition he was now intending to present to the king his master for his favour to Jerusalem.

We may observe in this prayer.

1. His humble and reverent address to God, in which he prostrates himself before him, and gives him the glory due unto his name, v. 5. It is much the same with that of Daniel, ch. 9. 4. It teaches us to draw near to God, 1. With a holy awe of his majesty and glory; remembering that he is the God of heaven, infinitely above us, and sovereign Lord over us, and that he is the great and terrible God, infinitely excelling all the principalities and powers, both of the upper and of the lower world, angels and kings; and he is a God to be worshipped with fear by all his people, and whose powerful wrath all his enemies have reason to be afraid of. Even the terrors of the Lord are improbable, for the comfort and encouragement of those that trust in him. 2. With a holy confidence in his grace and truth, for he keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him; not only the mercy that is promised, but even more than he promised: nothing shall be thought too much to be done for them that love him, and keep his commandments.

2. His penitent confession of sin; not only Israel has sinned, (it was no great mortification to him to own that,) but I and my father's house have sinned, v. 6. Thus does he humble himself, and take shame to himself, in this confession: We have (i and my family among the rest) dealt very corruptly against thee, v. 7. In the confession of sin, both these, viz. those who are censured as the malignity of it, that it is a corruption of ourselves, and an affront to God; it is dealing corruptly against God, setting up the corruptions of our own hearts in opposition to the commands of God.

IV. The plea he urges for mercy for his people Israel.

1. He pleads what God had of old said to them, the rule he had settled of his proceedings toward them, which might be the rule of their expectations from him, v. 8, 9. He had said indeed that, if they brake covenant with him, he would scatter them among the nations, and that threatening was fulfilled in their captivity: never was people so widely dispersed as Israel was at this time, though, at first so closely incorporated; but he had said, that, if they turned to him, (as now they began to do, having renounced idolatry and kept to the temple-service) he would gather them again. This he quotes from Deut. 30. 1.-5. and begs leave to put God in mind of it, (though the Eternal Mind needs no remembrance,) as that which he guided his desires by, and grounded his faith and hope upon, in praying this prayer; Remember, I beseech thee, that word; for thou hast said, Put me in remembrance. He had owned, (v. 7.) We have not kept the judgments which thou commandest thy servant Moses; yet he begs, (v. 8.) Lord, remember the word which thou commandest thy servant Moses; for the covenant is often said to be commanded. If God were not more mindful of his promises, than we are of his precepts, we were undone. Our best pleas therefore, in prayer, are those that are taken from the promise of God, the word on which he has caused us to hope, Ps. 119. 49.

2. He pleads the relation wherein of old they stood to God, These are thy servants and thy people, (v. 10.) whom thou hast set apart for thyself, as I shall take thy covenant in the midst of thy sworn enemies to trample upon and oppress thy sworn servants? If thou wilt not appear for thy people, whom wilt thou appear for? See Isa. 65. 19. As an evidence of their being God's servants, he gives them this character, (v. 11.) They desire to fear thy name: they are not only called by thy name, but really have a reverence for thy name; they now want that, and desire to be delivered, look to will, and have an awe of all the discoveries thou art pleased to make of thyself; this they have a desire to do, which denotes, (1.) Their good-will to it; (2.) It is their constant care and endeavor to be found in the way of their duty, and so sit at it, though in many instances they come short.

(2.) Their complacency in it: "They take plea
sue to fear thy name," so it may be read; "They not only do their duty, but do it with delight."

Those shall graciously be accepted of God, that truly desire to fear his name; for those desires are his own work.

3. He pleads the great things God had formerly done for them, (v. 10.) "Whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, in the days of old; thy pow-
er is still the same, wilt thou therefore still re-
dem them, and perfect their redemption? Let not them be overpowered by the enemy, that have a God of infinite power on their side."

Lastly, He concludes with a particular petition, that God would prosper him in his undertaking, and give him favour with the king: This move
ed the heart of the greatest of men but men before God; they must know themselves to be so, (Ps. 9. 20.) and others must know themselves to be so; Who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid of a man? Mercy in the sight of this man, is what he prays for, meaning not the king's mercy, but mercy from God, in his address to the king. Favour with men is then comfortable, when we can see it springing from the mercy of God.

CHAP. II.

How Nehemiah wrestled with God and prevailed, we read in the orologing chapter; now here we are told how, like Jacob, he prevailed with men also, and so found that his prayers were heard and answered. 1. He prev-
ailed with the king to send him to Jerusalem with a commission to build a wall about it, and grant him what was necessary for it, v. 1-8. II. He prevailed against the enemies that would have obstructed him in his journey, (v. 9-11.) and laughed him out of his under-
taking, v. 10, 20. III. He prevailed upon his own peo-
ple to join with him in this good work, viewing the de-
solations of the wall, (v. 12, 16.) and then gaining them to lend every one a hand toward the rebuilding of it, v. 17, 18. Thus did God own him in the work to which he called him.

And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been before time sad in his presence. 2. Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid. 3. And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? 4. Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. 5. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. 6. And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him.) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. 7. Moreover, I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over, till I come into Judah; 8. And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which app-
pointed to the house, and for the wall of the

When Nehemiah had prayed for the relief of his countrymen, and perhaps in David's words, (Ps. 51. 18.) Build thou the walls of Jerusalem, he did not sit still, and say, "Let God now do his own work, for I have no more to do;" but set himself to fore-
cast what he should do towards it. Our prayers
must be seconded with our serious endeavours, else we mock God. Near four months passed from Chisleu to Nisan, (from November to March,) be-
fore Nehemiah made his application to the king for leave to go to Jerusalem; either because the winter was not a proper time for such a journey, and he would not make the motion till he could pursue it, or because it was so long before his month of pr-
ceing came, and the name prevailing was that the king's presence uncalled, Esth. 4. 11. Now that he at-
tended the king's table, he hoped to have his ear; we are not thus limited to certain moments in our addresses to the King of kings, but have liberty of access to him at all times; to the throne of grace we never come unseasonably. Now here is.

I. The occasion which he gave the king to inquire into his cares and griefs, by appearing sad in his presence. Those that speak to such great
men, must not fall abruptly upon their business, but fetch a compass. Nehemiah would try whether he was in a good humour, before he ventured to tell him his errand, and this method he took to try him. He took up the wine and gave it to the king when he called for it, expecting that then he would lock him in the face. He had not used to be sad in the king's presence, but conformed to the rules of the court, (as courts must do,) which would admit no sorrows, Esth. 4. 2. Though he was a stranger, a captive, he was easy and pleasant. Good men should do what they can by their cheerfulness to convince the world of the pleasantness of religious ways, and to roll away the reproach cast upon them as melancholy; but there is a time for all things, Ecc. 3. 4. Nehemiah could not say, I am sad, and this miseries of Jeru-
salem gave him cause to be sad, and his showing it will give occasion to the king to inquire into the cause: he did not resemble sadness, for he was really in grief for the afflictions of Joseph, and was not like the hypocrites who disfigure their faces; yet he could have concealed his grief if it had been necessary, (the heart knows its own bitterness, and in the midst of laughter is often so sad, that it is not now discovered) he had wine before him, and, probably, according to the office of the cup-bearer, did himself drink of it before he gave it the king, yet it would not make his heart glad, while God's Israel was in distress. II. The kind notice which the king took of his sadness, and the inquiry he made into the cause of it, (v. 2.) Why is thy countenance sad, seeing that thou art not sick? Neh. 1. We ought, from a principle of christian sympathy, to concern ourselves in the sorrows and sadness of others, even of our inferiors, and not say, What is it to us? Let not mas-
despite their servants' griefs, but desire to make them easy. The great God is not pleased with the dejections and discontent of his people, but would have them both serve him with gladness, and eat their bread with joy. 2. It is not strange if
those that are sick, have sad countenances, because of what is felt, and what is feared; sickness will make those grave, that were most airy and gay; yet a good man, even in sickness, may be of good cheer, if he knows that his sins are forgiven. 3. Freedom from sin and sorrow, is desired by many; it is yet, wrought not to be inordinately dejected under any outward burthen; yet sorrow for our own sins, the sins of others, and the calamities of God's church, may well sadden the countenance without sickness.

III. The account which Nehemiah gave the king of the cause of his sadness, which he gives with meekness and fear. 1. With fear; he owns that now (though it appears by the following story that he was not afraid) he was afraid, perhaps of the king's wrath, (for those eastern monarchs assumed an absolute power of life and death, D n. 2. 12. 13.—5. 19.) or of misplacing a word, and losing his request by the mismanagement of it: though he was a wise man, he was jealous of himself, lest he should say anything imprudently; it becomes us to be so. A good assurance is indeed a good accomplishment, yet a humble self-diffidence, and a suppliant spirit, without reflection upon any man, and with all the respect, deference, and good-will, imaginable to the king his master, he says, "Let the king live for ever; he is wise and good, and the fittest man in the world to rule." He modestly asked, "Why should not my countenance be sad as it is, when (though I myself am well, and at ease) the city, (the king knew what city he meant,) the place of my fathers' sepulchres, doth mourn?" Many are melancholy and sad, but can give no good reason for it, cannot tell why or wherefore; such should chide themselves for, and chide themselves out of, their unjust and unreasonable griefs and fears; but Nehemiah could give so good a reason for his sadness, as to appeal to the king himself concerning it. Observe, (1.) He calls Jerusalem the place of his fathers' sepulchres, the place where his ancestors were buried; it is good for us to think often of our fathers' sepulchres; we are apt to dwell in our thoughts upon their honours and titles, their houses and estates, but let us also think of their sepulchres, and consider that they who have gone before us in the world, have also gone before us out of the world, and their monuments are mementos to us; there is a great respect owing to the memory of our fathers, that be not injured. All nations, even those that have had no expectation of the resurrection of the dead, have looked upon the sepulchres of their ancestors as in some degree sacred, and not to be violated. (2.) He justifies himself in his grief: "I do well to be sad. Why should I not be so? There is a time even for pious and prosperous men to be sad, and to show it. The best men must not think to antedate heaven by banishing all sorrowful thoughts out of their hearts. (2 Cor. 7. 10.) Let us submit to the temper of the times. (3.) He assigns the ruins of Jerusalem as the true cause of his grief. Note, All the grievances of the church, but especially its desolations, are, and ought to be, matter of grief and sadness to all good people, to all that have a concern for God's honour, and that are living members of Christ's mystical body, and are of a public spirit; they favour even Zion's dust, Ps. 69. 21. 22.

IV. The encouragement which the king gave him to tell his mind, and the application he thereupon, made in his heart to God, v. 4. The king had an affection for him, and was not pleased to see him melancholy; it is also probable that he had a kindliness for the Jews' religion; he had discovered it before in the commission he gave to Ezra, who was a churchman, and now again in the power he put Nehemiah into, who was a statesman, not wanting therefore only to know how he might be serviceable to Jerusalem, he asks this its anxious friend, "For what dost thou make request? Something thou wouldst have; what is it?" He was afraid to speak, (v. 2.) but this gave him boldness; he put his mind to pray, and to promise that he would speed, enable us to come boldly to the throne of grace. Nehemiah immediately prayed to the God of heaven, that he would give him wisdom to act properly, and incline the king's heart to grant him his request. They that would find favour with kings, must secure the favour of the King of kings. He prayed to the God of heaven, as infinitely above even this mighty monarch, that he might not be afraid, and that, if he had not an opportunity for that, but a secret sudden execution; he lifted up his heart to that God who understands the language of the heart, Lord give me a mouth and wisdom; Lord, give me favour in the sight of this man. Note, It is good to be much in pious ejaculations, especially on particular occasions: wherever we are, we have a way open heaven-ward; this will hinder no business, butGr will help it. It was good for Nehemiah to pray this, but give rise to it rather. Nehemiah had prayed very solemnly with reference to this very occasion; (ch. 1. 12.) yet when it comes to the push, he prays again. Ejaculations and solemn prayers must not justly out one another, but each have its place.

V. His humble petition to the king, when he had this encouragement, he presents it very modestly, and with submission to the king's wisdom, v. 3. But he is very particular; he asks for a commission to go as governor to Judah, to build the wall of Jerusalem, and to stay there for a certain time, so many months, we may suppose; and then either he had his commission renewed, or he went back, and was sent again, so that he presided there twelve years at least, ch. 5. 14. He also asked for a convey, (v. 7.) and an order upon the governors, not only to permit and suffer him to pass through their respective provinces, but to supply him with what he had occasion for; with another order upon the keeper of the forest of Lebanon to give him timber for the work he designed.

VI. The king's great favour to him, in asking him when he would return, v. 6. He intimated that he would not lose him, nor could be long without him; yet was in order to give him all the benefit of kind to his people, he would spare him a while, and let him have what clauses he pleased, inserted in his commission, v. 8. Here was an immediate answer to his prayer, for the seed of Jacob never sought the God of Jacob in vain. In the account he gives of the success of his petition, he takes notice, 1. Of the presence of the queen; she sat by; (v. 6.) which they said was not usual in the Persian court, (Esth. 1. 3.) Whether queen Esther was his adversary, that would have hindered him, and he observes it, to the praise of God's powerful providence, that though she was by, yet he succeeded, or whether she was his true friend, and it is observed to the praise of God's kind providence, that she was present to help forward his request, is not certain. 2. Of the power and grace of God; he gained her heart, not by the office of his minister, but by the grace of his patron, his grace was accepted; as he was usual in business, so in this matter of the grant, and he had obtained a commission accordingly, and the power and grace of God was manifest in it. Gracious souls take notice of God's hand, his good hand, in all events which turn in favour of them; This is the Lord's doing, and therefore doubly acceptable.

9. Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters.
1. By the Jews and their friends at Jerusalem, we are told,

(1.) That while he concealed his errand, they took little notice of him; he was at Jerusalem three days, (v. 11.) and it does not appear that any of the great men of the city waited on him to congratulate him on his arrival, but he remained unknown: the king sent horsemen to attend him, but the Jews sent none to meet him, he had no beast with him, but that which the king gave him to ride on. v. 12. 

(2.) An evil men, and those who are worthy to die hopeless, yet covet not to come with observation, to make a show, or make a noise, no not when they come with the greatest blessings. They that shortly are to have the dominion in the morning, the world now knows not, but they lie hid, 1 John 3. 1.

(3. ) That when he discovered his design to the rulers and people, they cheerfully concurred with him in it. He did not tell them, at first, what he came about, (v. 16.) because he would not seem to do it for ostentation, and that if he found it impracticable, he might retreat the more honourably: upright humble men will not sound a trumpet before their aims, or any other of their good offices. But when he had viewed and considered the thing, and, probably, felt the pulse of the rulers and people, he told them what God had put into his heart, (v. 12.) even to build up the wall of Jerusalem, v. 17. 

Observe, [1.] How fairly he proposed it to them: "Ye see the distress we are in, how we lie exposed to the enemies that are round about us, how justly they reproach us, as foolish and despicable, how easily they may make a prey of us whenever they have a mind. Come therefore and let us build up the wall." He does not undertake to do it without them; (it could not be the work of one man;) nor does he charge or command imperiously, though he had the king's commission, but in a friendly brotherly way, exhorts and excites them to join with him in this work. To encourage them hereto, he speaks of the design; First, As that which owed its original to the special grace of God. He takes not the least advantage of the thought of his own, but acknowledges that God put it into his heart, and therefore they all ought to countenance it, (whatever is of God must be promoted,) and might hope in prosper in it, for what God puts men upon, he will own them in. Secondly, As that which owed its progress hitherto to the special providence of God. He produced the king's commission, told them how readily it was granted, and how forward the king was to favour his design, in which he saw the hand of his God good upon him. It would encourage both him and them to proceed in an undertaking which God had so remarkably smiled upon. Thus he proposed it to them; and, [2.] They presently came to a resolution, one and all, to concur with him; Let us
NEHEMIAH, III.

rise up and build. They are ashamed that they have sat still so long without so much as attempting this needful work, and now resolve to rise up out of their slothfulness, to bestir themselves, and to stir up one another. "Let us rise up," that is, "Let us do it with vigour, and diligence, and resolution, as those that are determined to go through with it." So they agreed, their own and another's interest as well for this good work. Note, First, Many a good work would find hands enough to be laid to it, if there were but one good head to lead in it. They all saw the desolations of Jerusalem, yet none proposed the repair of them. But when Nehemiah proposed it, they all consented to it. It is pity that a good motion should be lost, purely for want of one to move it, and to break the ice in it. Secondly, By stirring up ourselves and one another to that which is good, we strengthen ourselves and one another for it; for the great reason why we are weak in our duty, is because we are cold to it, indifferent and unresolved.

2. Let us now see how Nehemiah was received by those that wished ill to the Jews; whom God and his Israel blessed, they cursed. (1.) When he did but show his face, it vexed them, v. 10. Sanballat and Tobiah, two of the Samaritans, but, by birth, the former a Moabite, the latter an Ammonite, when they saw that he came armed with a commission from the king to do service to Israel, were vexed exceedingly, that all their little paltry arts to weaken Israel were thus baffled and frustrated by a fair, and noble, and generous, project to strengthen them. Nothing is a greater vexation to the enemies of good people, who have misrepresented them to princes as turbulent, and factious, and not fit to live, than to see them stirred up to the opposite, their rulers, their innocence cleared, and their reproach rendered away, and that they are thought not only fit to live, but fit to be trusted. When they saw a man come in that manner, who professedly sought the welfare of the children of Israel, it vexed them to the heart; The wicked shall see it, and be grieved. (2.) When he began to act, they set themselves to hinder him; but in vain, v. 19, 20. [1.] See here with what little reason the enemies discouraged them. They represented the undertaking as a silly thing; they laughed us to scorn, and despised us as foolish builders, that could not finish what we began. They represented the undertaking also as a wicked thing, no better than treason: Will ye rebel against the king? Because this was the old invinuous charge, though now they had a commission from the king, and were taken under his protection, yet still they must be called rebels. [2.] See also with what good reason, yea, with what weight, these discouragements. They bear up themselves with this, that they were the servants of the God of heaven, the only true and living God, that they were acting for him in what they did, and that therefore he would bear them out, and prosper them, though the heathen raged, Ps. 2. 1. They consider also that the reason why these enemies did so malign them, was, because they had no right in Jerusalem to have anything to do in it. Thus may the impatient menaces of the church's enemies be easily despised by the church's friends.

CHAP. III.

Saying and doing are often two things; many are ready to say, Let us rise up and build, who sit still and do nothing; like that fair-spoken son who said, I go Sir, but went not: the undertakers here were none of those. As soon as they had resolved to build the wall about Jerusalem, they lost no time, but set about it presently, as we find in this chapter. Let it never be said that we left the good work to be done to-morrow, which we might as well have done to-day. This chapter gives an account of two things. 1. The names of the builders, which are recorded here to their honour, for they were such as herein discovered a great zeal for God and their country; of a good courage and a public spirit; a great degree both of industry and courage; and what they did, was fit to be thus largely registered, both for their praise, and for the encouragement of others to follow their example. 11. The order of the building, they took it before them, and ended where they began. They repaired. 1. From the sheep-gate, to the fish-gate, v. 1, 2. Thence to the old-gate, v. 3, 4. Thence to the valley-gate, v. 6, 12. 4. Thence to the dung-gate, v. 13. 5. Thence to the gate of Ephraim, v. 14. 6. Thence to the water-gate, v. 15, 26. 7. Thence by the horse-gate, to the sheep-gate, again, where they began; (v. 27, 32.) and so they brought their work quite round the city.

1. THEN Elissance the high priest rose up, with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep-gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel. 2. And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Jezreel the son of Imri. 3. But the fish-gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who also laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. 4. And next unto them repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz. And next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezbabeel. And next unto them repaired Jedaiah the son of Bani. 5. And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord. 6. Moreover, the old gate repaired Jehoida the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. 7. And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibonite, and Jadan the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, unto the throne of the governor on this side the river. 8. Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Hanahiah, of the goldsmiths. Next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of one of the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall. 9. And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem. 10. And next unto them repaired Jedaiah the son of Harim, even over against his house. And next unto him repaired Hattush the son of Hashabniah. 11. Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hashub the son of Phahath-moab, repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces. 12. And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Haloshah, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters. 13. The valley-gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah; they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof
and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung-gate. 14. But the dung-gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Beth-haccerem; he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. 15. But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallum the son of Col-hozech, the ruler of part of Mizpah: he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king’s garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David. 16. After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half part of Beth-zur, unto the place over against the sepulchres of David, and to the pool that was made, and unto the house of the mighty. 17. After him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani. Next unto him repaired Hashabiah, the ruler of the half part of Keilah, in his part. 18. After him repaired their brethren, Bava the son of Henadad, the ruler of the half part of Keilah. 19. And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, another piece over against the going up to the armoury, at the turning of the wall. 20. After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning of the wall unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. 21. After him repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz, another piece, from the door of the house of Eliashib even to the end of the house of Eliashib. 22. And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain. 23. After him repaired Benjamin and Hashub, over against their house. After him repaired Azariah the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, by his house. 24. After him repaired Binui the son of Henadad, another piece, from the house of Azariah unto the turning of the wall, even unto the corner. 25. Palal the son of Uzia, over against the turning of the wall, and the tower which lieth out from the king’s high house, that was by the court of the prison. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh. 26. Moreover, the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel, unto the place over against the water-gate toward the east, and the tower that lieth out. 27. After them the Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel. 28. From above the horse-gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house. 29. After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer, over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate. 30. After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hamum the sixth son of Zalaph, another piece. After him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, over against his chamber. 31. After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith’s son, unto the place of the Nethinims, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the going up of the corner. 32. And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep-gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.

The best way to know how to divide this chapter, is, to observe how the work was divided among the undertakers, that every one might know what he had to do, and mind it accordingly with a holy emulation, and desire to excel, yet without any contention, animosity, or separate interest. No strife appears among them, but which should do most for the public good.

Several things are observable in the account here given of the building of the wall about Jerusalem.

1. That Eliashib the High Priest, with his brethren the priests, led the van in this troop of builders, v. 1. Ministers should be first and foremost in every good work, for their office obliges them to teach and quicken by their example, as well as by their doctrine. If there be labour in it, who so fit as they to work? If danger, who so fit as they to venture? The dignity of the High Priest was very great, and obliged him to signalize himself in this service. The priests repaired the sheath-gate, so called, because through it the sheep were brought, that were to be sacrificed in the temple, and therefore the priests undertook the repair of it, whose inheritance the offerings of the Lord made by fire were. And of this gate only, it is said that they sanctified it with the word and prayer, and perhaps with sacrifices; either, (1.) Because it led to the temple; or, (2.) Because with this the building of the wall began, and it is probable (though they were at work in all parts of the wall at the same time) that was first finished, and therefore at this gate they solemnly committed their city and the walls of it to the divine protection; or, (3.) Because the priests were the builders of it, and it becomes ministers above others, being themselves in a peculiar manner sanctified to God, to sanctify to him all their performances, and to do even their common actions after a godly sort.

2. That undertakers were very many, who each took their share, some more and some less, in this work, according as their ability was. Note, What is to be done for the public good every one should assist in, and further to the utmost of his place and power. United force will conquer that which no individual dares venture on. Many hands will make light work.

3. That many were active in this work, who were not themselves inhabitants of Jerusalem, and therefore consulted purely the public welfare, and not any private interest or advantage of their own. Here are the men of Jericho with the first, (2.) the men of Gibeon and Mizpah, (v. 7.) and Zanoah, v. 13. Every Israelite should lend a hand toward the building up of Jerusalem.

4. That several rulers, both of Jerusalem and of other cities, were active in this work, thinking themselves bound in honour to do the utmost that their wealth and power enabled them to do, for the furtherance of this good work. But it is observa-
ble that they are called rulers of part, or the half part, of their respective cities. One was ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, v. 12. Another part of Beth-haccerem, v. 14. Another part of Mizpah, v. 15. Another of the half part of Beth-zur, v. 16. One was ruler of one half part, and another of the other half part, at Keilah, v. 17, 18. Perhaps the Persian government would not intrust any one with a strong city, but appointed two to be a watch upon each other. Rome had two consuls.

5. Here is a just reproach fastened upon the nobles of Tekoa, that they put not their necks to the work of their Lord, (v. 5.) that is, they would make it a mark of their nobility to be excused from the yoke of an obligation to this service; as if the dignity and liberty of their person were an excuse from discharging from serving God and doing good, which are indeed the highest honour and the truest freedom. Let not nobles think any thing below them, by which they may advance the interests of their country; for what else is their nobility good for, but that it puts them in a higher and larger sphere of usefulness, than that in which licentious noblemen live.

6. Two persons joined in repairing the old gate, (v. 6.) and so were co-founders, and shared the honour of it between them. The good work which we cannot compass ourselves, we must be thankful to those that will go partners with us. Some think that this is called the old gate, because it belonged to the ancient Salem, which was said to be built by Machir the father of Gilead.

7. Several good honest tradesmen, as well as priests and rulers, were active in this work, goldsmiths, apothecaries, merchants, v. 8. 32. They did not think their callings excused them, nor plead that they could not leave their shops to attend the public business; knowing that what they lost, would certainly be made up to them by the blessing of God upon their callings.

8. Some ladies are spoken of as helping forward this work, Shattail and his daughters, (v. 12.) who, though not capable of personal service, yet, having their portions in their own hands, or being rich widows, contributed money for buying materials and paying workmen. St. Paul speaks of some good women that laboured with him in the gospel, Phil. 4. 3.

9. Of some it is said, that they repaired over again, his brethren, v. 10, 23, 28, 29.) and one, who, it is likely, was only a lodger, that he repaired over against his chamber, v. 30. When a general good work is to be done, each should apply himself to that part of it, that falls nearest him, and is within his reach. If every one will sweep before his own door, the street will be clean; if every one will mend one, we shall be all mended. If he that has but a chamber, will repair before that, he does his part.

10. Of one it is said, that he earnestly repaired that which fell to his share, (v. 20.) he did it with an inflamed zeal; not that others were cold and indifferent, but he was most vigorous of any of them, and made himself remarkable for it. It is good to be thus zealously affected in a good thing; and it is probable that this good man's zeal provoked persons very much to take the more pains, and make the more haste.

11. Of one of these builders it is observed, that he was the sixth son of his father, v. 30. His five elder brethren, it seems, laid not their hand to this work, but he did. In doing that which is good, we need not stay to see our elders go before us; if they decline it, it does not therefore follow that we must. Thus the younger brother, if he be the better man, and does God and his generation better service, is indeed the better gentleman; those are most honourable, that are most useful.

12. Some of them that had first done, helped their fellows, and undertook another share, where they saw there was most need. Meremoth repaired, (v. 4.) and again v. 21. And the Tekites, beside the piece they repaired, (v. 5.) undertook another piece, (v. 27.) which is the more remarkable, because their nobles set them a bad example by withdrawing from the service; which instead of serving them for an excuse to sit still, perhaps made them the more forward to double work, that by their zeal they might either shame, or atone for, the covetousness and carelessness of their nobles.

Lastly. Here is no mention of any particular share that Nehemiah himself had in this work. A namesake of his is mentioned, v. 16. But instead of doing nothing? Yes, though he undertook no particular piece of the wall, yet he did more than any of them, for he had the oversight of them all; half of his servants worked where there was most need, and the other half stood sentinel, as we find after; (ch. 4. 16.) while he himself in his own person walked the rounds, directed and encouraged the builders, set his hand to the work where he saw occasion, and kept a watchful eye upon the motions of the enemy, as we shall find in the next chapter. The pilot needs not hale at a rope, it is enough for him to steer.

CHAP. IV.

We left all hands at work for the building of the wall at Jerusalem. But such good work is not wont to be carried on without opposition; now here we are told what opposition was given to it, and what methods Nehemiah took to forward the work, notwithstanding that opposition. I. Their enemies reproached and ridiculed their undertaking, but they did not yield to their revilings. II. The prayers, they heeded them not, but went on with their work notwithstanding, v. 1. 6. 11. They formed a bloody design against them, to hinder them by the force of arms, v. 17. 10. 12. To guard against this, Nehemiah prayed, (v. 3.) set guards, (v. 13.) and encouraged them to fight, (v. 14.) by which the design was broken, (v. 15.) and so the work was carried on with all needful precaution against a surprise, v. 16. 23. In all this Nehemiah approved himself a man of great conduct and courage, as well as great piety.

1. But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. 2. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt? 3. Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone-wall. 4. Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: 5. And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders. 6. So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.
NEHEMIAH, IV.

They were very angry at the undertaking, and had great indignation.

1. The spiteful scornful reflection which Sanballat and Tobiah cast upon the Jews, for their attempt to build the wall about Jerusalem. The country rang at present, intelligence was conveyed to them, that the Jews, in their zeal for the temple of God, had set about the work of repair at Jerusalem, and were not only perfecting the task of Samaria, that nest of enemies to the Jews and their prosperity; and here we are told how they received the tidings. 1. In heart, they were very angry at the undertaking, and had great indignation, v. 1.

It vexed them that Nehemiah came to seek the welfare of the children of Israel; (ch. 2. 10.) but when they heard of this great undertaking of their good, they were out of all patience. They have not a little turned themselves with the thought that while Jerusalem was unwall ed, they could swallow it up, and make themselves masters of it when they pleased; but if it be walled, it will not only be fenced against them, but, by degrees, become formidable to them. The strength and safety of the church are the grief and vexation of its enemies. 2. In word, they despised it, and made it the subject of their ridicule, in which they did sufficiently display their venom; but good was brought out of it, for, looking upon it as a foolish undertaking that would sink under its own weight, they did not go about to obstruct it till it was too late. Let us see with what pride and malice they set themselves publicly to banter it. (4.) Sanballat speaks with scorn of the workmen, These feeble Jews, (v. 2.) "What do they think they will do for mischief, will they drive the stones out of the rubbish? And what mean they by being so hasty? Do they think to make the walling of a city but one day's work? And to keep the feast of dedication with sacrifice the next day? Poor silly people! See how ridiculous they make themselves!"

2. Tobiah speaks with no less scorn of the work itself. He has his jest too, and must show his wit, v. 3. To make scholars sharper one another. "Sir, work," says he, "they are like to make it; if they themselves will be ashamed of it; if a fox go up, not with his subtilty, but with his weight, he will break down their stone-wall." Many a good work has been thus looked upon with contempt by the proud and haughty scorers.

11. Nehemiah's humble and devout address to God, when he heard of these reflections. He had not brought them to him as what they said; it is probable that they themselves sent him a message to this purport, to discourage him, hoping to jeer him out of his attempt; but he did not answer these fools according to their folly; he did not upbraid them with their weakness, but looked up to God by prayer. 1. He begs of God to take notice of the indignities that were done them, (v. 4.) and in this we are to imitate him; Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Note, (1.) God's people have often been a despised people, and loaded with contempt. (2.) God does, and will, hear all the slights that are put upon his people, and it is their comfort that he does so, and a good reason why they should be as though they were dead, Ps. 38. 13, 14. Thou art our God to whom we appeal; our cause needs no more than a fair hearing.

2. He begs of God to avenge their cause, and turn the reproach upon the enemies themselves; (v. 4, 5.) and this was spoken rather by a spirit of prophecy than by a spirit of prayer, and is not to be imitated by us who are taught of Christ to pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us; Christ himself prayed for those that reproach him, Father, forgive them. Nehemiah here prays, O come, and let us exhort God against those that vex us. They that revenge their cause, and turn contempt on God's people, do out prepare everlasting shame for themselves.

7. But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabsians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, 8. And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. 9. Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. 10. And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall. 11. And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. 12. And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto them will they be upon you. 13. Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your houses. 15. And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

We have here

1. The conspiracy which the Jews' enemies formed against them, to stay the building by slaying the builders. The conspirators were not only Sanballat and Tobiah, but other neighboring people whom they had drawn into the plot. They flattered themselves with a fancy that the work would soon
stand still of itself; but when they heard that it went on and prospered, they were angry at the Jews for being so hasty to push the work forward, and angry at themselves for being so slow in opposing it, (v. 7.) they were very wrath. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath was it cruel. Nothing would serve but they would fight against Jerusalem, v. 8. Why, what quarrel had they with the Jews? Had they done them any wrong? Or did their design any? No, they lived peaceably by them; but it was merely out of envy and malice; they hated the Jews' piety, and were therefore vexed at their prosperity; and sought their ruin. Observe 1. How unanimous they were; They conspired all of them together, though of different interests among themselves, yet one in their opposition to the word of God. 2. How close they were; they said, "They so much honesty neither see, till we have them to our mercy." Thus they took crafty counsel, and digged deep, to hide it from the Lord, and promised themselves security and success from the secrecy of their management.

3. How cruel they were; We will come and slay them. If nothing less than the murder of the workmen will put a stop to the work, they will not stick at that; nay, it is their blood they thirst for, and their ruin of God's church, and all their designs, is with it. 4. What the design was, and how confident they were of success; it was to cause the work to cease, (v. 11.) and this they were confident that they should effect. The hindering of good work is that which bad men aim at and promise themselves; but good work is God's work, and it shall prosper.

II. The discouragements which the builders themselves laboured under. At the very time when the adversaries said, Let us cause the work to cease; Judah said, "Let us even let it fall, for we are not able to go forward with it," v. 10. They represent the labourers as tired, and the remaining difficulties, even of that first part of their work, the removing of the rubbish, as insuperable, and therefore they think it advisable to desist for the present. Can Judah, that warlike valiant tribe, sneak this? Active leading men have many times as much ado with them, and with their friends, as with the terrors of their enemies.

III. The information that was brought to Nehemiah of the enemies' designs, v. 12. There were Jews that dwelt by them, in the country, who, though they had not zeal enough to bring them to Jerusalem, to help their brethren in building the wall, yet, having by their situation opportunity to discover the enemies' motions, had much leisure and affections to the cause, and gave intelligence of it; nay, that it might be the more credited, they came themselves to give notice of it; and they said it ten times, repeating it as men in earnest, and under a concern, and the report was confirmed by many witnesses; the intelligence they gave, is expressed abruptly, and finds work for the critics, to make out the sense of it; which perhaps is designed to give the greater circumference and confusion of breath and in confusion, whose very looks would make up the deficiencies of their words. I think it may be read, without supplying any thing, "Whatever place ye turn to, they are against us, so that you have need to be upon your guard on all sides." Note, God has many ways of bringing to light, and so bringing to nought, the devices and designs of his and his church's enemies. Even cold and feeble Jews, that contentedly dwell by them, shall be made to serve as spies upon them; nay, rather than fail, a bird of the air shall carry their voice.

V. The pious and prudent methods which Nehemiah, hereupon, took to baffle the designs, and to cure his work and workmen; it is said, (v. 14.) he looked. 1. He looked up, and gave God for him, and put himself and his cause under the divine protection, (v. 9.) We made our prayer unto our God. That was the way of this good man, and should be our way; all his cares, all his griefs, all his fears, he spread before God, and thereby made himself easy. This was the first thing he did; before he used any means, he made his prayer to God, and God would be his help. He then looked about him. Having prayed, he went out against them. The instructions Christ has given us in our spiritual warfare, agree with this example, Matth. 26. 41. Watch, and pray. If we think to secure ourselves by prayer only, without watchfulness, we are slothful, and tempt God. If by watchfulness, without prayer, we are proud, and slight God; and, either way, we forfeit his protection.

Observe (1.) How he posted the guard, v. 13. In the lower places, he set them behind the wall, that they might annoy the enemy over it, as breastwork; but in the higher places, where the wall was raised to its full height, he set them upon it, that from the top of it they might throw down stones or darts upon the heads of the assailants: he set them after their families, that mutual relation might engage them to mutual assistance. (2.) He armed himself with secrecy, and his noble spirit. He obtained even the nobles and rulers themselves, as well as the rest of the people, to be in a great consternation upon the intelligence that was brought them, and ready to conclude that they were all undone, by which their hands were weakened both for work and war, and therefore he endeavours to silence their fears; "Come," says he, "be not afraid of them, for I will be with you, says the Lord your God." 1. Whom you fight under, you cannot have a better Captain, remember the Lord, who is great and terrible; you think your enemies great and terrible, but what are they in comparison with God, especially in opposition to him? He is great above them to control them, and will be terrible to them when he comes to reckon with them. These that with an eye of faith see the church's God to be great and terrible, will not be afraid of her enemies, for they know them to be mean and desppicable. The reigning fear of God is the best antidote against the ensnaring fear of man. He that is afraid of a man that shall die, forgets the Lord his maker, Isa. 51. 12, 13. [2.] "Whom you fight for; you cannot have a better cause, you fight for your brethren, (Ps. 122. 8.) your soins, and your daughters. All that is dear to you in this world, lies at stake, therefore behave yourselves valiantly, considering.

V. The happy disappointment which this gave to the enemy, v. 15. When they found that their design was discovered, and that the Jews were upon their guard, they concluded that it was to no purpose to attempt any thing, but that God had brought their counsel to nought. They knew they could not gain their point but by surprise, and if their plot was known, they knew it was quashed; the Jews, hereupon, returned every one to his work, with so much the more cheerfulness, because they saw plainly that God owned it, and owned them in the doing of it. Note, God's care of our safety should engage and encourage us to go on with vigour in our duty. As soon as ever a danger is over let us return to our work, and trust God another time.

16. And it came to pass, from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. 17 They
which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. 18. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. 19. And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another: 20. In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us. 21. So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears, from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. 22. Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. 23. So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing.

When the builders had so far reason to think the design of the enemies broken, as to return to their work, yet they were not so secure as to lay down their arms, knowing how restless and unwarried they were in their attempts, and that, if one design failed, they would be hatching another. Thus must we watch always against our spiritual enemies, and not expect that our warfare will be accomplished till our work is. See what course Nehemiah took, that the people might hold themselves in a readiness, in case there should be an attack.

While one half was at work, the other half was under their arms, holding spears, and shields, and bows, not only for themselves but for the labourers too, who would immediately quit their work, and betake themselves to their weapons, upon the first alarm, v. 16. It is probable that they changed services at such and such hours, which would relieve the fatigue of both, and particularly would be an ease to the bearer of burdens, whose strength was decayed; (v. 10.) while they held the weapons, they were eased and yet not idle. They thus dividing their time between the tovrels and the spears, are said to work with one hand, and hold their weapons with the other, (v. 17.) which cannot be understood literally, for the work would require both hands, but it intimates that they were equally employed in both. Thus must we work out our salvation with the weapons of our warfare in hand; in every duty we must expect to meet with opposition from our spiritual enemies, against whom we must still be fighting the good fight of faith. 2. Every builder had a sword by his side, (v. 18.) which he could carry without hindering his labour. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit, which we ought to have always at hand, and ever to seek, both in our labours, and in our conflicts, as Christians. 3. Care was taken both to get, and give, early notice of the approach of the enemy, in case they should endeavour to surprise them. Nehemiah kept a trumpet always by him to sound an alarm upon the first intimation of danger. The work was large, and the builders were dispersed, for in all parts of the wall they were labouring at the same time. Nehemiah continually walked round to oversee the work, and encourage the workmen, and so would have speedy intelligence if the enemy made an attack, of which, by sound of trumpet, he would soon give notice to all, and they must immediately repair to him with a full assurance that their God would fight for them, v. 18. 20. When they acted as workmen, it was requisite they should be dispersed wherever there was work to do; but when, as soldiers, it was requisite they should come into close order, and be found in a body. Thus should the labourers in Christ's building be ready to unite against a common foe. 4. The inhabitants of the villages were ordered to lodge within Jerusalem, with their servants, not only that they might be the nearer to their work in the morning, but that they might be ready to help in case of an attack in the night, v. 22. The strength of a city lies more in its hands than in its walls; secure them, and God's blessing upon them, and be secure. 5. Nehemiah himself, and all his men, kept close to their business. The spears were held up, with the sight of them to terrify the enemy, not only from sun to sun, but from twilight to twilight, every night being, v. 21. Thus ought we always to be upon our guard against our spiritual enemies, not only (as here) while it is light, but when it is dark, for they are the rulers of the darkness of this world. Nay, so very intent was Nehemiah upon his work, and so fast did he hold his servants to it, that while the heat of the business lasted, neither he himself, nor his attendants, went into bed, but every night lay and slept in their clothes, (v. 23.) except that they shifted them now and then, either for cleanliness or in a case of ceremonial pollution. It was a sign that their heart was upon their work, when they could not find time to dress and undress, but resolved they would be at all times ready for service. Then good work is likely to go on successfully, when these that labour in it, thus make a business of it.

CHAP. V.

How bravely Nehemiah, as a wise and faithful governor, stood upon his guard against the attacks of enemies abroad, we read in the foregoing chapter. Here we have him no less bold and active to redress grievances at home, and having kept them from being destroyed by their enemies, to keep them from destroying one another. Here is, I. The complaint which the poor made to him, of the great hardships which the rich (of whom they were forced to borrow money) put upon them, v. 1. II. The effectual course which Nehemiah took both to reform the oppressors, and to relieve the oppressed, v. 8. 13. III. The good example which he himself, as governor, set them of compassion and tenderness, v. 14. 15.

1. AND there was a great cry of the people, and of their wives, against their brethren the Jews. 2. For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many; therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat and live. 3. Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. 4. There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. 5. Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our
brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already, neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards.

We have here the tears of the oppressed, which Solomon considered, Eccl. 4. 1. Let us consider them as here they are dropped before Nehemiah, wherein it was, as they say, to deliver the poor and needy, and rid them out of the hand of the wicked oppressors, Ps. 82. 4. Hard times and hard hearts made the poor miserable.

I. The times they lived in, were hard. There was a dearth of corn, (v. 3.) probably for want of rain, with which God had chastised their neglect of his house, (Hag. 1. 9-11.) and the non-payment of their church-dues, Mal. 3. 9, 10. Thus foolish sinful men bring God’s judgments upon themselves, and then fret and complain of them. When the markets are high, and provisions scarce and dear, the poor soon feel it, and are pinched by it. Blessed be God for the mercy, and God deliver us from the sin, of fulness of bread, Ezek. 16. 49. That which made the scarcity here complained of, the more grievous, was, that their sons and their daughters were many, v. 2. The families that were left were very numerous: but, if we had no corn, what were the months, but where was the meat? Some have estates and no children to inherit them, others have children and no estates to leave them; those who have both, have reason to be thankful, those who have neither, may the more easily be content. Those who have great families and little substance, must learn to live by faith in God’s providence and promise; and he who has little families and great substance, must make their abundance a sufficiency for the wants of others. But this was not all, as corn was dear, so the taxes were high: the king’s tribute must be paid, v. 4. This mark of their captivity still remained upon them. Perhaps it was a poll-money that was required, and then, their sons and their daughters being many, it rose the higher. The more they had to maintain, (a hard case it was,) the more they had to pay. Now it seems, they had not wherewithal of their own to buy corn and pay taxes, but were necessitated to borrow. Their families came poor out of Babylon, they had been at great expense in building them houses, and had not yet got up their strength when these new burthens came upon them. The straits of poor housekeepers who make hard shift to get an honest livelihood, and sometimes want what is fitting for them and their families, are well worthy the compassionate consideration of those, who either with their wealth, or with their power, are in a capacity to help them.

II. The persons they dealt with, were hard. Money must be had, but it must be borrowed, and they that lent them money, taking advantage of their necessity, were very hard upon them, and made a prey of them. 1. They exacted interest from them at twelve per cent. The hundredth part every month, v. 11. If men borrow large sums, to trade with, to increase their stocks, or to purchase land, there is no reason but the lender should share with the borrower in his profit; or if to spend upon their lusts, or repair what they have so spent, why should they not pay for their extravagancies? But if the poor borrow, to maintain their families, and we be able to help them, it is certain we ought either to lend freely what they have occasion for, or (if they be not likely to repay it) to give freely something towards it. Nay, 2. They forced them to mortgage to them their lands and houses for the securing of the money, (v. 3.) and not only so, but took the profits of them for interest, (v. 3. compare v. 11.) that by degrees they might make themselves masters of all they had. Yet this was not the worst. 3. They took their children for bond-servants, to be enslaved or sold at pleasure, v. 5. This they complained of most sensibly, as that which touched them in a tender part, and they aggravate it with this, “Our children are as their children, as dear to us as their’s are to them; not only of the same human nature, and entitled to the honours and liberties of that (Mal. 2. 10. Job 31. 15.) but of the same holy nation, free-born Israelites, and dignified with the same privileges. Our flesh carries in it the sacred seal of the covenant of circumcision, as well as the flesh of our brethren; yet our heirs must be their slaves, and it is not in our power to redeem them.” This they made an humble remonstrance of to Nehemiah, not only because they saw he was a great man that could relieve them, but a good man that would. Whither should the injured poor flee for succour but to the shields of the earth? Whither but to the chancery, to the charity, in the royal breast, and those debited by it for relief against the sumnum justicis—extremity of the laws?

We will leave Nehemiah hearing the complaint, and inquiring into the truth of the complainants’ allegations, (for the clamours of the poor are not always just,) while we set down what (1.) they had a gracious compassion upon the oppressed, and lament the hardships which many in the world are groaning under, putting our souls into their souls’ stead, and remembering in our prayers and councils them that are burdened, as burdened with them. (2.) With a gracious indignation at the oppressors, and abhorrence of their pride and cruelty. While we sit down, and breathe, (1.) that they have under their feet. But let those who show no mercy, expect judgment without mercy. It was an aggravation of the sin of these oppressing Jews, that they were themselves so lately delivered out of the house of bondage, which obliged them in gratitude to undo the heavy burden, Isa. 58. 6.

6. And I was very angry when I heard their cry, and these words. 7. Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, You exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them: 8. And I said unto them, We, after our ability, have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will you even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? They held their peace, and found nothing to answer. 9. Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? 10. I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. 11. Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive-yards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. 12. Then said they, We:
will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord. And the people did according to this promise.

It should seem, the foregoing complaint was made to Nehemiah, at the time when he had his head and hands as full as possible of the public business, but building the wall; yet, perceiving it to be just, he did not reject it because it was unreasonable; he did not chide the petitioners, nor fall into a passion with them, for disturbing him, when they saw how much he had to do; a fault which men of business are too often guilty of, nor did he so much as admire the hearing of the causes or proceedings upon it till he had more leisure. The case called for lenity, for in general captives were not to be heard himself immediately to the consideration of it, knowing that, let him build Jerusalem's walls ever so high, thick, so strong, the city could not be safe while such abuses as these were tolerated.

Now observe, What method he took for the redress of this grievance, which was so threatening to the public.

I. He was very angry; (v. 6.) he expressed a great displeasure at it, as a very bad thing. Note, It well becomes rulers to show themselves angry at sin, that by the anger itself they may be excited to their duty, and by the expressions of it others may be deterred from evil.

II. He consulted with himself, v. 7. By this it appears that his anger was not excessive, but kept within bounds, that though his spirit was provoked, he did not say or do any thing unadvisedly. Before he rebuked the nobles, he consulted with himself what to say, and when, and how. Note, Reproofs must be given with great consideration, that what is well-meant, may not come short of its end, for want of being well managed. It is the reproofs of instruction, that given life. Even wise men lose the benefit of their wisdom sometimes for want of consulting with themselves, and taking time to deliberate.

III. He rebuked the nobles and rulers, who were the monied men, and whose power perhaps made them the more bold to opprесс. Note, Even nobles and rulers, if they do that which is evil, ought to be told of it by proper persons. Let no man imagine that his dignity sets him above reproof. Note, Even nobles and rulers, if they do that which is evil, ought to be told of it by proper persons. Let no man imagine that his dignity sets him above reproof.

IV. He set a great assembly against them; he could not with any method of the proper expression of what he said, and to bear their testimony (which the people will generally be forward to do) against the oppressions and exertions their rulers were guilty of. Ezra and Nehemiah were both of them very wise, good, useful, men, yet, in cases not unlike, there was a great deal of difference between their management: when Ezra was told of the sin of the twelve princes, he brought the matter to judgment, and they took all the ransom that was brought in, and committed it to God. Nehemiah did the same, he gathered a great assembly, and laid open the great enormity of the abuse, and the law they were guilty of, and put it upon record, and caused it to be published, and to be publickly a reproach to those that were guilty of it. Ezra and Nehemiah were both of them very wise, good, useful, men, yet, in cases not unlike, there was a great deal of difference between their management: when Ezra was told of the sin of the twelve princes, he brought the matter to judgment, and they took all the ransom that was brought in, and committed it to God. Nehemiah did the same, he gathered a great assembly, and laid open the great enormity of the abuse, and the law they were guilty of, and put it upon record, and caused it to be published, and to be publickly a reproach to those that were guilty of it. Ezra and Nehemiah were both of them very wise, good, useful, men, yet, in cases not unlike, there was a great deal of difference between their management: when Ezra was told of the sin of the twelve princes, he brought the matter to judgment, and they took all the ransom that was brought in, and committed it to God. Nehemiah did the same, he gathered a great assembly, and laid open the great enormity of the abuse, and the law they were guilty of, and put it upon record, and caused it to be published, and to be publickly a reproach to those that were guilty of it. Ezra and Nehemiah were both of them very wise, good, useful, men, yet, in cases not unlike, there was a great deal of difference between their management: when Ezra was told of the sin of the twelve princes, he brought the matter to judgment, and they took all the ransom that was brought in, and committed it to God. Nehemiah did the same, he gathered a great assembly, and laid open the great enormity of the abuse, and the law they were guilty of, and put it upon record, and caused it to be published, and to be publickly a reproach to those that were guilty of it. Ezra and Nehemiah were both of them very wise, good, useful, men, yet, in cases not unlike, there was a great deal of difference between their management: when Ezra was told of the sin of the twelve princes, he brought the matter to judgment, and they took all the ransom that was brought in, and committed it to God. Nehemiah did the same, he gathered a great assembly, and laid open the great enormity of the abuse, and the law they were guilty of, and put it upon record, and caused it to be published, and to be publickly a reproach to those that were guilty of it. Ezra and Nehemiah were both of them very wise, good, useful, men, yet, in cases not unlike, there was a great deal of difference between their management: when Ezra was told of the sin of the twelve princes, he brought the matter to judgment, and they took all the ransom that was brought in, and committed it to God. Nehemiah did the same, he gathered a great assembly, and laid open the great enormity of the abuse, and the law they were guilty of, and put it upon record, and caused it to be published, and to be publickly a reproach to those that were guilty of it. Ezra and Nehemiah were both of them very wise, good, useful, men, yet, in cases not unlike, there was a great deal of difference between their management: when Ezra was told of the sin of the twelve princes, he brought the matter to judgment, and they took all the ransom that was brought in, and committed it to God. Nehemiah did the same, he gathered a great assembly, and laid open the great enormity of the abuse, and the law they were guilty of, and put it upon record, and caused it to be published, and to be publickly a reproach to those that were guilty of it.

V. He earnestly pressed them not only not to make their poor neighbours any more such hard bargains, but to restore those which they had got into their hands, v. 11. See how familiarly he speaks to them; Let us leave off this usury, putting himself in, as becomes reprovers, though far from being any way guilty of the crime. See how earnestly, and yet humbly, he persuaded them; I pray you leave off; and, I pray you restore; though he had authority to command, yet, for love's sake, he rather beseeches. See how particularly he presses
them to be kind to the poor; to give them up their mortgages, put them again in possession of their estates, remit the interest, and give them time to pay in the principal. He urged them to their lost, yet, urging them to their duty, it would be, at length, to their advantage. What we charitably forgive will be remembered and recompensed, as well as what we charitably give.

VII. He laid them under all the obligations possible to do what he pressed them to. 1. He got a promise from them; (v. 12.) We will restore them. 2. He sent for the priests to give them their oath, that they would perform this promise; now that their convictions were strong, and they seemed resolved, he would keep to it. 3. He bound them by a solemn curse or execution, hoping that would strike some awe upon them; So let God shake out every man that performeth not this promise, v. 13. This was a threatening that he would certainly do so, to which the people said, Amen, as to those curses at mount Ebal, (Deut. 27.) that their throats might be cut with their own tongues, if they should falsify their engagement, and that by the dread of that they might be kept to their promise: with this Amen the people praised the Lord: so far were they from promising with regret, that they promised with all possible expressness and joy and thankfulness. Thus David, when he took God's vows upon him, sang and gave praises, Ps. 56. 12. This was well, but that which follows, was better: they did according to his promise, and adhered to what they had done, not as their ancestors in a like case, who re-enlisted those whom, a little before, they had released, Jer. 34. 10, 11, 18. Good promises are good things, but good performances are all in all.

14. Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. 15. But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God. 16. Yea, also, I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work. 17. Moreover, there were at my table a hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, besides those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us. 18. Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine; yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people. 19. Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.

Nehemiah had mentioned his own practice, as an inducement both to his successors, and to the inferior magistrates, to be as tender as might be of the people's ease.

1. He intimates what had been the way of his predecessors, v. 15. He does not name them, but cause what he had to say of them, was not to their honour, and, in such a case, it is good to spare names; but the people knew how chargeable they had been, and how dear the country paid for all the benefit of their government. The government allowed them forty shekels of silver, which was near five pounds, (so much a day, it is probable,) but beside that, they obliged the people to furnish them with bread, and wine, insisting upon it as perquisites of their office, and not only so, but they suffered their servants to squeeze the people, and to get all they could out of them. Note, 1. It is no new thing for those who are in public places, to seek themselves more than the public welfare, and to serve themselves by the public loss. 2. Masters must be accountable for all the acts of fraud and injustice, violence and oppression, which they converse in their servants.

11. He tells us what had been his way. In general, he had not done as the former governors did; he would not, he durst not, because of the fear of God. He had an awe of God's majesty, and a dread of his nation, and a regard for the people oppressing the people; those that truly fear God, will not dare to do any thing cruel or unjust. 2. It was purely that which restrained him; he was thus generous, not that he might have praise of men, or serve a turn by his interest in the people, but purely for conscience-sake, because of the fear of God; that will not only be a powerful, but an accepted, principle both of justice and charity. What a good hand his predecessors made of this; it was appearing by the estates they raised; but Nehemiah, for his part, got nothing, except the satisfaction of doing good; Neither bought we any land, v. 16. Say not then that he was a bad husband, but that he was a good governor, who aimed not to feather his own nest.

Let us remember the words of the Lord, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive, Acts 20. 35. Let us serve him. (1.) How little Nehemiah received of what he might have required; he did not do the work of the governor, but he did not eat the bread of the governor, (v. 14.) did not require it, v. 18. So far was he from extorting more than his due, that he never demanded that, but lived upon what he had got in the king of Persia's court, and his own estate in Judaea: the reason he gives for this piece of self denial, is, Because the bread was heavy upon the people. He might have used the common excuse for rigour in cases, that it would be a wrong to his successors not to demand his dues; but let them look to themselves, he considers the present state of the Jews and while they groaned under so much hardship, he could not find in his heart to add to their burthen, but would rather lessen his own estate than ruin them. Note, In our demands, we must consider not only the justice of them, but the ability of those on whom we make them; where there is nothing to be had, we know who loses his right. (2.) How much he gave, which he might have withheld. [1.] His servants' work, v. 16. The servants of princes think themselves excused from labour; but Nehemiah's servants, by his order, no doubt, were all gathered to the work. Those that have many servants, should contrive how they may do with them, and let them help under their moderate allowance, and not make them work for nothing. [2.] His own meat, v. 17, 18. He kept a very good table, not on certain days, but constantly; he had many honourable guests, at least, 150 of his own countrymen, persons of the first rank, beside strangers that came to him.
upon business; and he had plentiful provisions for his guests, beef, and mutton, and fowl, and all sorts of wine. Let these public places remember that they were preferred to do good, not to enrich themselves; and let lesser people learn to use hospitality one to another without grudging, 1 Pet. 4. 9.

Lastly, He concludes with a prayer; (v. 19.) Think upon me, my God, for good. 1. Nehemiah here mentions what he had done for his people, not in pride, as boasting of himself, nor in passion, as upbraiding them in public, but in order to do it in his own vindication, as Paul had to relate his like self-denying tenderness toward the Corinthians, but to shame the rulers out of their oppressions; let them learn of him to be neither greedy in their demands, nor paltry in their expenses, and then they would have the credit and comfort of it, as he had. 2. He mentions it to God, in prayer, not as if he thought he had hereby merited any favour from God, as a debt, but to show that he looked not for any recompense of his goodness from men, but depended upon God only to make up to him what he had lost and laid out for his honour; and he reckoned the favour of God toward enough; "If God do but think upon me for good, I have enough." His thoughts to us-ward are our happiness, Ps. 40. 5. He refers himself to God, to recompense him in such a manner as he pleased; "If men forget me, let my God think on me, and I desire no more."

CHAP. VI.
The cries of oppressed poverty being stilled, we are now to inquire how the building of the wall goes forward, and, in this chapter, we find it carried on with vigour, and finished with joy, notwithstanding the restless attempts of his enemies to hinder it. How the Jews' enemies were baffled in their design to put a stop to it by force, we read before, ch. 4. Here we find how their endeavours to drive Nehemiah off from it, were frustrated. 1. When they courted him to an interview, with design to do him a mischief, he would not stir, v. 1. 4. II. When they would have made him believe his undertaking was represented as seditious and treasonable, he regarded not the insinuation, v. 5. 9. III. When they hired pretended prophets to advise him to retire into the temple for his own safety, still he kept his ground, 10. 14. IV. Notwithstanding the secret correspondence that was kept up between them, and false reports that were made out, the Jews, the work was finished in a short time, v. 15. 19. Such as these were the struggles between the church and its enemies; but great is God's cause, and will be prosperous and victorious.

NOW it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had built the wall, and that there was no breach left therein, (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates,) 2. That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. 3. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? 4. Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner. 5. Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me, in like manner, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand; 6. Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. 7. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. 8. Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. 9. For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

Two plots upon Nehemiah we have here an account of; how cunningly they were laid by his enemies, and how happily frustrated by God's good providence, and his prudence.

I. A plot to trepan him into a snare. The enemies had an answer to the good forwardness the work was in, that all the breaches of the wall were made up, so that they looked upon it as good as done; though at that time the doors of the gates were off the hinges, v. 1. They must therefore, now or never, by one bold stroke, take off Nehemiah; they heard how well guarded he was, so that there was no attacking him upon the spot; they will therefore try by all the arts of wheedling to get him among them. Let us, then, v. 2. With what hellish subtlety they courted him to meet them, not in any city, lest that should have given cause to suspect that they intended to secure him, but in a village in the lot of Benjamin, "Come, let us meet together to consult about the common interests of our provinces;" or they would have him think that they coveted his friendship, and would be glad to be better acquainted with him, in order to a good understanding between them, and the settling of a correspondence. But they thought to do him a mischief; it is probable that he had some secret intelligence given him, that they designed to imprison or murder him; or, he knew them so well, that, without breach of charity, he concluded they aimed at his life, and therefore, when they spake fair, he believed them not. 2. See with what heavenly wisdom he declined the motion. His God did instruct him how to give them that prudent answer by messengers of his own, "I am doing a great work, am very busy, and am loath to let the work stand still while I leave it to come down to you," v. 3. His care was, that the work might not cease; he knew it would if he left it ever so little; and why should it cease while I come down to you? He says nothing of his jealousies, nor reproaches them for their treacherous designs, but gives them a good reason, and one of the true reasons, why he would not come. Compliment must always give way to business. Let those that are tempted to idle merry meetings by their vain companions, thus answer the temptation, "We have work to do, and must not neglect it." Four times they attacked him with the same solicitation, and he as often returned the same answer, which, we may suppose, for them, for it was the closing of the work that they aimed at, and it would make them despair of breaking the undertaking, to see the undertaker so intent upon it. I answered them (says he) after the same manner, v. 4. Note, We must never suffer ourselves to be overcome by the greatest
importunity to do any thing sinful or imprudent; but, when we are attacked with the same temptation, must still resist it with the same reason and resolution.

II. A plot to terrify him from his work. Could they but drive him off, the work would cease of course. This therefore Sanballat attempts, but in vain. 1. He endeavours to possess Nehemiah with an apprehension that his undertaking to build the walls of Jerusalem was generally represented as factious and seditious, and would be resented accordingly at court, v. 5-7. The best men, even in their most innocent and excellent performances, have lain under this imputation. Here this is written to him as engaging generally known, and talked of, that it was reported among the nations, and Gashmu will aver it for truth, that Nehemiah was aiming to make himself king, and to shake off the Persian yoke. Note, It is common for that which is the sense only of the malicious, to be falsely represented by them as the sense of the many. Now Sanballat pretends to inform Nehemiah of this as a friend, that he might hasten to court, and bring down his worldly interest, or suppress such a plot as they are afraid they should be thus misconstrued; at least, upon this surmise, he urges him to give him the meeting. "Let us take counsel together, how to quell the report;" hoping by this means either to take him off, or, at least, to take him off from his business. Thus were his words softer than oil, and yet war was in his heart, and he hoped, like Judas, to kiss and kill. But surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird; Nehemiah was soon aware what they aimed at, to weaken their hands from the work, (v. 9) and therefore not only denied that such things were true, but that they were reported; he was better known than to be thus suspected.

2. Thus he escaped the snare, and kept his ground, nor would he be frightened by winds and clouds from sowing and reaping. Suppose it was thus reported, we must never omit known duty merely for fear it should be misconstrued, but, while we keep a good conscience, let us trust God with our good name. But indeed it was not thus reported. God's people, though sufficiently loaded with reproach, yet are not really fallen so low in reputation as some would have them thought to be.

In the midst of his complaint of their malice, in endeavouring to frighten him, and so weaken his hands, he lifts up his heart in this solemn prayer. Now, therefore, O God, strengthen my hands. It is the great support and relief of good people, that in all their straits and difficulties they have a good God to go to; from whom by faith and prayer, they may fetch in grace to silence their fears, and strengthen their hands, when their enemies are endeavouring to fill them with fears, and weaken their hands. When, in our Christian work and warfare, we are met by any particular services or conflicts, this is a good prayer for us to put up, "I have such a duty to do, such a temptation to grapple with; now, therefore, O God, strengthen my hands." Some read it, not as a prayer, but as a holy resolution, (for O God, is supplied in our translation,) Now therefore I will strengthen my hands. Note, Christian fortitude will be sharpened by opposition. Every temptation to draw us from our duty, should quicken us so much the more to duty.

10. Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Deliaiah, the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple; and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yet, in the night will they come to slay thee. 11. And I said, Should such a man as I flee, and is there that is there that being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. 12. And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. 14. My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets that would have put me in fear.

The Jews' enemies leave no stone unturned, no way untried, to take Nehemiah off from building the wall about Jerusalem; in order to this, they had tried to get him into the temple by the court, in vain; now they try to drive him into the temple for his own safety; let him be any where but at his work. Observing him to be a cautious man, they will endeavour to gain their point by making him cowardly. Observe,

1. How basely the enemies managed this temptation.

2. That which they designed, was, to bring Nehemiah to do a foolish thing, that they might laugh at him, as a dolt over him for doing it, and so lessen his interest and influence; (v. 13.) that I should be afraid and so they might have matter for an evil report, and might reproach me. This was indeed doing the Devil's work, who is men's tempter, that he may be their accuser, draw men to sin, that he may glory in their shame. The greatest mischief our enemies can do us, is, to frighten us from our duty, and bring us to do what is sinful.

3. The tools they made use of, were, a pretended prophet and prophetess, whom they hired to persuade Nehemiah to quit his work, and retire for his own safety. The pretended prophet was Shemaiah, of whom it was said that he was shut up in his own house, either under pretence of retirement for meditation and to consult the mind of God, or to give Nehemiah a sign in like manner to make himself a refuge. It should seem, Nehemiah had a friend or a protector for him, for he went to his house to consult with him, v. 10. Other prophets there were, and one prophetess, Noadiah, (v. 14.) that were in the interest of the Jews' enemies, pensioners to them, and traitors to their country. Whether they pretended to inspiration, does not appear; they do not say, Thus saith the Lord, as the false prophets of old did; if none to let him be put to death, and to take out our hand; but, as is usual, they only talked of it. They accused him, and told lies about him, as they had done about Shemaiah. Who can say but they were false and perjured?
and slay him, in the night they would slay him, which he had reason enough to believe was true; they would, if they could, if they durst. They found it to be much concerned for his safety; they were all undone, if any harm should come to him; and therefore they very gravely advised him to hide himself in the temple till the danger was over; that was a strong and sacred place, where he would be under the special protection of Heaven, Ps. 27. 5. If Nehemiah had been prevailent with to do this, immediately the people would both have left off their business, and every one would have shifted for his own safety; and then the enemies might easily, and without opposition, have demolished the works, broken down the wall again, and so gained their point. Though self-preservation is a fundamental principle of the law of nature, yet that is not always the best and wisest counsel, which pretends to go upon that principle.

II. See how bravely Nehemiah vanquished this temptation, and came out a conqueror.

1. He immediately resolved not to yield to it, v. 11. See here, (1.) What his reasonings are; "Should such a man as I flee? Shall I desert God's work, or discourage my own workmen whom I have employed and encouraged? Shall I be over-credu- lous of report, and over-solicitous of my own life? It is not for me to work, but to receive the fruits of other men's eyes and to be called the friends and foes? Another might flee, but not I. Who is there, that being as I am, in my post of honour, and power, and trust, would go into the temple, and lurk there, when business is to be done, yea, though it were to save his life." Note, When we are tempted to sin, we should remember who, and what, we are, that we may not do any thing unbecoming us, and the profession we make. It is not for us to work, but to receive the fruits of other men's eyes and to be called the friends and foes. Another might flee, but not I.

2. He was immediately aware of what was the risk he ran; v. 12. "I perceived..." Note, Sin is that which, above any thing, we should dread; and a good preservative it is against sin, to be afraid of nothing but sin. (2.) Shameing himself; "that they might retract me." Note, Next to the sinfulness of sin, we should dread the scandalousness of it.

3. He humbly begs of God to reckon with them for their base designs upon him; v. (14.) "My God, think thou upon Tobiah, and the rest of them, according to their works." (15.) Then he had mentioned his own good services, he did not covetously or ambiously prescribe to God what reward he should give him, but modestly prayed, Think upon me, my God; (ch. 5. 19.) so here he does not revengefully impute any particular judgment upon his enemies, but refers the matter to God; "Thou knowest their hearts, and art the Avenger of falsehood and wrong; take cognizance of this cause, judge between me and them, and take whatever way and time thou pleasest to call them to an account for it." Note, Whatever injuries are done us, we must not avenge ourselves, but commit our cause to him that judgeth righteously.

and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. 16. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God. 17. Moreover, in those days, the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. 18. For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. 19. Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

Nehemiah is here finishing the wall of Jerusalem, and yet still has trouble created by his enemies.

1. Tobiah, and the other adversaries of the Jews, had the mortification to see the wall built up, notwithstanding all their attempts to hinder it. The wall was begun and finished in 52 days, and yet we have reason to believe they rested on the sabbaths, v. 15. Many were employed, and there was room for them; what they did, they did cheerfully, and minded their business, because they loved it. The threats of their enemies, which were intended to weaken them, it is likely, quickened them to go on with their work the more vigorously, that they might get it done before the enemies could come, and the workmen out of the eater came forth meat. See what a great deal of work may be done in a little time, if we would set about it in earnest, and keep close to it.

When the enemies heard that the wall was finished before it was well begun, and when they doubted not but to have put a stop to it, they were much cast down in their own eyes, v. 16. (1.) They were ashamed of their own design, that they should cause the work to cease; they were cast- fallen upon the disappointment. (2.) They envied the prosperity and success of the Jews, grieved to see the walls of Jerusalem built, which, it may be, the kings of Persia had not permitted them thus to fortify the cities of Samaria. When Cain envied his brother, his countenance fell, Gen. 4. 5. (3.) They despaired of ever doing them the mischief they designed them, of bringing them down, and making a prey of them; and well they might, for they perceived, by the wonderful success, that the work was wrought of God. Even these heathens had so much sense, as [1.] To see a special providence of God conversant about the affairs of the church, when they did remarkably prosper. They sought among the enemies of God, the goods things for them, it is his doing, Ps. 126. 2: God figheth for Israel, and worketh with them. [2.] To believe that God's work would be perfect; when they perceived that the work was of God, they expected no other than that it would go on and prosper. [3.] To conclude that if it were of God, it was to no purpose to think of opposing it, it would certainly prevail and of them, and a great grief and discouragement, no doubt, it was to him. (1.) Even of the nobles of Judah, there were those who had so little sense of honour and their country's good, as to communicate with-
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Nebiah by letter, v. 17. They wrote with all the freedom and familiarity of friends to him, and welcomed his letters to them. Could nobles do a thing so mean? Nobles of Judah so wicked a thing? It seems, great men are not always wise, nor always honest. (2.) Many in Judah were in a strict but secret confederacy with him, to advance the interest of his country, though it would certainly be the ruin of their own. They were sworn unto him, not as their prince, but as their friend and ally, because both he and his son had married daughters of Israel, v. 18. See the mischief of marrying with strangers; for one heathen that was converted by it, ten Jews were perverted. When once they became akin to Tobiah, they soon became sworn to him. A sinful love leads to a sinful league. (3.) They had the impudence to court Nehemiah himself into a friendship with them; they reported his good deeds before me; represented him as an ingenious person, and well worthy my acquaintance; as an honest person, and one that I might confide in. We are bid indeed to speak ill of no man, but never to speak well of bad men; they that forsake the law, praise the wicked, Prov. 29. 4. (4.) They were so false as to betray Nehemiah's counsels to him; they uttered Nehemiah's words to him, perverting them, no doubt, and putting false constructions upon them, which disqualified Tobiah with matters for letters to put him in fear, and so drive him from his work, and discourage him in it. Thus were all their thoughts against him for evil, yet God thought upon him for good.

CHAP. VII.

The success of one good design for God and our generation, should encourage us to proceed, and form some other: Nehemiah did so; having forthtold Jerusalem with gates and walls, his next care is, 1. To see the city well kept, v. 1. - 4. 11. To see it well peopled, in order whereat he here reviews, and calls over, the register of the children of the captivity, the families that returned at first, and records it, v. 5. - 73. It is the same, in effect, with that which we had, Ezra 2. What use he made of it, we shall find afterward, when he brought one of ten to live in Jerusalem, ch. 11. 1.

Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters, and the singers, and the Levites were appointed, 2. That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem; (for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many:) 3. And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house. 4. Now the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded.

God saith concerning his church, (Isa. 62. 6.) I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem; that is Nehemiah's care here; for dead walls, without living watchmen, are but a poor defence to a city. 1. He appointed the porters, singers, and Levites, in their places to their work; it is meant of their work in general, which was to attend the temple-service, that had been neglected in some degree, but now was revived. God's worship is the defence of a place, and his ministers, when they mind their duty, are watchmen on the walls. Or, in particular, he ordered them to be ready against the wall was to be dedicated, that they might perform that service in an orderly and solemn manner; and the dedication of it was its strength. That is likely to be beneficial to us, which is devoted to God.

2. He appointed two governors or consuls, to whom he committed the care of the city, and gave them an charge to provide for the public peace and safety. Hanani, his brother, who came to him with the tidings of the desolations of Jerusalem, was one, a man of approved integrity, and affection to his country; the other was Hananiah, that had been ruler of the palace, for he that has approved himself faithful in less, shall be intrusted with more. Of this Hananiah it is said, that he was a faithful man, and feared God above many.)

Note, (1.) Among those who fear God truly, there are some who fear him greatly, and excel others in the expressions and instances of that fear; and they are worthy a double portion of that honour which is due to them that fear the Lord, Ps. 15. 4. There were many in Jerusalem that feared God, but this good man was more eminent for religion and serious godliness than any. (2.) Those that fear God, and are most acceptable to him, are exalted above the meanest and universally conscientious. (3.) God's Jerusalem is then likely to flourish, when those rule in it, and have charge of it, who excel in virtue, and are eminent both for godliness and honesty. It is supposed, by some, that Nehemiah was now about to return to the Persian court to have his commission renewed, and that he left these two worthy men in charge with the affairs of the city in his absence. Good government is necessary, and where they cannot act themselves, must be very careful whom they depute.

3. He gave orders about the shutting of the gates, and the guarding of the walls, v. 3. - 4. See here, (1.) What the present state of Jerusalem was. The city, in compass, was large and great, the walls enclosed the same ground as formerly, but much of it lay waste, for the houses were not built, few, at least, in comparison with what they had been; so that Nehemiah was to see the city in full, and was expected to bring to that promise of the repleishment of it, which God had lately made by the prophet, Zech. 8. 3, &c.

Though the people were now few, he believed they would be multiplied, and therefore built the walls so as to make room for them; had he not depended upon this, he might have thought walls without a city as great a reproach as a city without walls. What was that fear of God that was, those that feared God, and stood up to the charge of the cities themselves, [1.] To stand by, and see the city-gates shut up and barred every night; for in vain had they a wall, if they were careless of their gates. [2.] To take care that they should not be opened in the morning, till they could see that all was clear and quiet. [3.] To set sentinels upon the walls, or elsewhere, at convenient distances, who should, in case of the approach of the enemy, give timely notice to the city of the danger; and, as it came to their turn to watch, they must post themselves over against their own houses, because of them, it might be presumed, they would be in a particular manner careful. The public safety depends upon every one's particular care to guard himself and his own family against sin, that common enemy. It is every one's interest to take care of his watch, but many understand not the danger; and, as it came to their turn to watch, they must post themselves over against their own houses, because of them, it might be presumed, they would be in a particular manner careful.

4. Set persons, or, rather, as elsewhere, or elsewhere, at convenient distances, who should, in case of the approach of the enemy, give timely notice to the city of the danger; and, as it came to their turn to watch, they must post themselves over against their own houses, because of them, it might be presumed, they would be in a particular manner careful.

The public safety depends upon every one's particular care to guard himself and his own family against sin, that common enemy. It is every one's interest to take care of his watch, but many understand not the danger; and, as it came to their turn to watch, they must post themselves over against their own houses, because of them, it might be presumed, they would be in a particular manner careful.

5. The public safety depends upon every one's particular care to guard himself and his own family against sin, that common enemy. It is every one's interest to take care of his watch, but many understand not the danger; and, as it came to their turn to watch, they must post themselves over against their own houses, because of them, it might be presumed, they would be in a particular manner careful.
5. And my God put into my heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy: and I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein, 6. These are the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city; 7. Who came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah: the number, I say, of the men of the people of Israel, was this: 8. The children of Parosh, two thousand a hundred seventy and two. 9. The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. 10. The children of Araah, six hundred fifty and two. 11. The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand and eight hundred and eighteen. 12. The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 13. The children of Zattu, eight hundred forty and five. 14. The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and three score. 15. The children of Binnui, six hundred forty and eight. 16. The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and eight. 17. The children of Azgad, two thousand three hundred twenty and two. 18. The children of Adonikam, six hundred threescore and seven. 19. The children of Bigvai, two thousand threescore and seven. 20. The children of Adin, six hundred fifty and five. 21. The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. 22. The children of Hashum, three hundred twenty and eight. 23. The children of Bezial, three hundred twenty and four. 24. The children of Hariph, a hundred and twelve. 25. The children of Gibeon, ninety and five. 26. The men of Beth-lehem, and Netophah, a hundred fourscore and eight. 27. The men of Anathoth, a hundred twenty and eight. 28. The men of Beth-azmaveth, forty and two. 29. The men of Kirjath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty and three. 30. The men of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one. 31. The men of Michmas, a hundred and twenty and two. 32. The men of Bethel and Ai, a hundred twenty and three. 33. The men of the other Nebo, fifty and two. 34. The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. 35. The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. 36. The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. 37. The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and one. 38. The children of Sennaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty. 39. The priests: the children of Jediael, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. 40. The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two. 41. The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. 42. The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen. 43. The Levites: the children of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, and of the children of Hodevah, seventy and four. 44. The singers: the children of Asaph, a hundred forty and eight. 45. The porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, a hundred thirty and eight. 46. The Nethinims: the children of Zia, the children of Hashub, the children of Tabbaoth, 47. The children of Keros, the children of Sia, the children of Padon. 48. The children of Lebana, the children of Hagaba, the children of Shalmai, 49. The children of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, 50. The children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, 51. The children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the children of Phaseah, 52. The children of Besai, the children of Meunim, the children of Nephehesim, 53. The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur, 54. The children of Bazlith, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha, 55. The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Tamah, 56. The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha. 57. The children of Solomon’s servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Perida, 58. The children of Jaala, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel, 59. The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattin, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Amon. 60. All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon’s servants, were three hundred ninety and two. 61. And these were they which went up also from Tel-melah, Tel-haresha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer: but they could not show their father’s house, nor their seed, whether they were of Israel. 62. The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred forty and two. 63. And of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai, which took one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife and was
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called after their name. 64. These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. 65. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim. 66. The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore; 67. Besides their man-servants and their maid-servants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred forty and five singing-men and singing-women. 68. Their horses, seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five; 69. Their camels, four hundred thirty and five; six thousand seven hundred and twenty asses. 70. And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work. The Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drams of gold, fifty basons, five hundred and thirty priests' garments. 71. And some of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand and two hundred pounds of silver. 72. And that which the rest of the people gave was twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand and two hundred pounds of silver, and threescore and seven priests' garments. 73. So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and some of the people, and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities.

We have here another good project of Nehemiah's: for wise and zealous men will be always contriving something or other for the glory of God and the edification of his church. He knew very well that the safety of a city, under God, depends more upon the number and valour of the inhabitants, than upon the height or strength of its walls; and therefore, observing that the people were few that dwelt in it, he thought fit to take an account of the people, that he might find what families had formerly had their settlement in Jerusalem, but were now removed into the country, that he might bring them back; and what families could any other way be influenced by their religion, or by their business, to come and rebuild the houses in Jerusalem, or dwell in them. So little reason have we to wish that we may be placed alone in the earth, or in Jerusalem itself, that much of our safety and comfort depend upon our neighbours and friends; the more the stronger, the more the merrier. It is the wisdom of the governors of a nation, to keep the balance even between city and country; that the metropolis be not so extravagantly large as to drain and impoverish the country, nor yet so weak as not to be able to protect it. Now observe,

I. Whence this good design of Nehemiah's came; he owns, (v. 5.) My God put it into my heart. Note, Whatever good motion is in our minds, either prudent or pious, we must acknowledge it to come from God. It was he that put it into our hearts, for every good gift and every good work are from above; he gives knowledge, he gives grace; all is of him, and therefore all must be to him. What is done by human prudence, must be ascribed to the direction of Divine Providence; he that teaches the husbandman his discretion, (Isa. 28. 26.) teaches the statesman his.

II. What method he took in prosecution of it.

1. He called the rulers together, and the people, that he might have an account of the present state of their families, their number and strength, and where they were settled; which it is likely, when he summoned them to come together, he ordered them to bring along with them out of their several districts. And I doubt they were not so many but that it might be soon done.

2. He required from the old register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and compared the present accounts with that; and here we have the repetition of that out of Ezra 2. The title is the same here, (v. 6, 7.) as there, (v. 1, 2.) These are the children of the province, &c. Two things are here repeated and recorded a second time from hence; (1.) The names and numbers of their several families; and (2.) Their oblations to the service of the Lord. The latter accounts may intimate to us the delight which the great God is pleased to take in the persons, families, and services, of his spiritual Israel, and the particular notice he takes of them. He knows them that are his, knows them all, knows them by name, has his eye on the register of those children of the captivity, and does all according to the ancient counsel of his will concerning them.

[1.] Here is an account of the heads of the several families that first came up, v. 6. 69. As to this, First, Though it seem of little use to us now, yet then it was of great use, to compare what they had been with what they now were. We may suppose they were much increased by this time; but it would do well for them to remember their small beginnings, that they might acknowledge God in multiplying their families, and building them up. By this means likewise their genealogies would be preserved, and the distinction of their families kept up, till the Messiah should come, and then an end be put to all their genealogies, which were preserved for his sake, but afterwards were needless. But Secondly, There are many differences in the numbers between this catalogue and that in Ezra. Most of them indeed are exactly the same, and some others within a very few under or over; (one or two perhaps;) and therefore I cannot think as some do, that that was the number of these families at their first coming, as they were now, which was at least 40 years after, (some make it much more,) for we cannot suppose so many families to be not at all, or but little, altered in their numbers in all that time; therefore what differences there are, we may suppose to arise either from the mistakes of those repeatings, which daily happen, or from the diversity of the copies from which they were taken, or perhaps one was the account of them when they set out from Babylon with Zerubbabel, the other when they came to Jerusalem. The sum totals are all just the same there and here, except of the singing-men and singing-women, which there are 200, here 245. Those were of not such importance, as that they should be noted out distinct as such.

[2.] Here is an account of the offerings which were given toward the work of God, v. 70, &c. This differs much from that, Ezra 2. 68, 69. and it may be questioned whether it refers to the same contribution; here, the Tirshatha, or chief governor, begins the offering, who was not mentioned. And the single sum mentioned there, ex
ceeds all those here put together: yet it is probable that it was the same, but that followed one copy of the lists, this another; for the last verse is the same here that it was in Ezra 2. 70. adding, ch. 3. 1. Blessed be God that our faith and hope are not built upon the niceties of names and numbers, genealogy and chronology, but on the great things of the law and gospel. Whatever is given to the work of God, he is not unrighteous to forget it: nor shall even a cup of cold water, wherewith he is honoured, go without its reward.

CHAP. VIII.

Ezra came up out of Babylon thirteen years before Nehemiah came, yet we have here a piece of good work which he did, that might have been done before, but was not, till Nehemiah came, who, though he was not such a scholar, nor such a divine, as Ezra, nor such a scribe in the law of his God, yet was a man of a more lively active spirit. His zeal set Ezra’s learning on work, and then great things were done; as we find here, where we have,

I. The public and solemn reading and expounding of the law, v. 1. 8. II. The joy which the people were ordered to express upon that occasion, v. 9. 12. III. The solemn keeping of the feast of tabernacles according to the law, v. 15. 18.

1. And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water-gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. 2. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. 3. And he read therein before the street that was before the water-gate, from the morning until mid-day, before the men and the women, and those that could understand: and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. 4. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkhia, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaijah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. 5. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 6. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God: and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. 7. Also Jeshaia, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jaamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. 8. So they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

We have here an account of a solemn religious assembly, and the good work that was done in that assembly, to the honour of God, and the edification of the church.

1. The time of it was the first day of the seventh month, v. 1. That was the day of the feast of trumpets, which is called a sabbath, and on which they were to have a holy convocation, Lev. 23. 24. Numb. 29. 1. But that was not all; it was on that day that the altar was set up, and they began to offer their burnt-offerings after their return out of captivity, a late mercy in the memory of many then living; in a thankful remembrance of that, it is likely, they had kept this feast, ever since, with more than ordinary solemnity. Divine favours which are fresh in mind, and which ourselves have been witnesses of, should be, and are, most affecting.

II. The place was in the street that was before the water-gate, (v. 1.) a spacious broad street, able to contain so great a multitude, which the court of the temple was not, for, probably, it was not now built near so large as it had been in Solomon’s time. Sacrifices were here offered at the door of the temple, but praying, and praising, and preaching, were, and are, services of religion as acceptably performed in one place as in another. When this congregation was thus met in the street of the city, no doubt, God was with them.

III. The persons that met, were all the people, who were not compelled to come, but voluntarily gathered themselves together by common agreement, as one man: not only men came, but women and children, even as many as were capable of understanding what they heard. Masters of families should bring their families with them to the public worship of God. Women and children have souls to save, and are therefore concerned to acquaint themselves with the word of God, and attend on the means of knowledge and grace. Little ones, as they come to the exercise of reason, must be trained up in the exercises of religion.

IV. The master of this assembly was Ezra the priest, he presided in this service. None so fit as he to expound and preach, who was such a ready scribe in the law of his God. 1. His call to the service was very clear; for, being in office as a priest, and qualified as a scribe, the people spake to him to bring the book of the law, and read it to them, v. 1. 2. He gave him ability and authority, and then the people gave him opportunity and invitation. Knowledge is spiritual alms, which they that are able should give to every one that needs, to every one that asks. 2. His post was very convenient, he stood in a pulpit or tower of wood, which they had made for the word; so it is in the original; for the preaching of the word, that what he said, might be the more gracefully delivered and better heard. Ezra was given to the work of the Lord, and there might be upon him, which would engage their attention; as Luke 4. 20. 3. He had several assistants, some that stood with him; (v. 4. six) on his right hand, and seven on his left: either his pulpit was so contrived as to hold them all in a row, as in a gallery, (but then it would scarcely have been called a tower,) or they had desks a degree lower. Some think that he appointed them to read when he was weary; at least, his taking them as assessors with him, put an honour upon them before the people, in order to their being employed in the same service another time. Others who are mentioned, (v. 7.) seem to have been employed at the same time in other places near at hand, to read and expound to those who could not come within hear-
ing of Ezra. Of those also there were 13 priests, whose lips were to keep knowledge, Mal. 2. 7. It is a great mercy to a people thus to be furnished with ministers that are apt to teach; happy was Ezra in having such assistants as these, and happy those in having such a guide as Ezra.

V. The religious exercises prosecuted in this assembly were of a solemn and religious kind; and moral, praying, and preaching. Ezra, as president of the assembly, was, 1. The people's mouth to God, and they affectionately joined with him, v. 6. He blessed the Lord as the great God, gave honour to him, by praising his perfections, and praying for his favour; and the people, in token of their concurrence with him, both in prayers and praises, said, Amen, Amen, and lifted up their hands in token of their desire to be with God, and all their expectation from him; they also bowed their heads, in token of their reverence of him and subjection to him. Thus we must adore God, and address ourselves to him, when we are going to read and hear the word of God, as those that see God in his word, very great and very good. 2. God's mouth to the people, and they attentively hearkened to him. This was the chief business of the assembly (v. 1.); Ezra brought the law before the congregation, v. 2. He had taken care to provide himself with the best and most correct copies of the law; and what he had laid up for his own use and satisfaction, he here brought forth, as a good householder, out of his treasury, for the benefit of the church. Observe, [1.] The book of the law is not to be confined to the scribes' studies, but to be brought before the congregation, and read to them in their own language. [2.] Ministers, when they go to the pulpit, should take their Bibles with them; Ezra did so; whence they must fetch their knowledge, and according to that rule they must speak, and must show that they do so. See 2 Chron. 17. 9, 19.

(2.) He opened the book with great reverence and solemnity, in the sight of all the people, v. 5. He brought it forth with a sense of the great mercy of God to them in giving them that book: he opened it with a sense of his mercy to them in giving them leave to read it, that it was not a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed. The taking of the book, and the opening of the seals, we find celebrated with joy and praise, Rev. 5. 9. Let us learn to address ourselves to the services of religion with solemn steps and pauses, and not go about them rashly; let us consider what we are doing, when we take God's book into our hands, and open it, and so also when we bow our knees in prayer; and what we do, let us do it deliberately, Excl. 5. 1.

(3.) He and others read in the book of the law, from morning till noon, (v. 3.) and they read distinctly, v. 8. Reading the holy scriptures in religious assemblies, is an ordinance of God, whereby he is honoured, and his church edified. And, upon special occasions, we must be willing to attend for many hours together on the reading and expounding of the word of God: they here were thus employed six hours. Let those that read and preach the word, learn also to deliver themselves distinctly; as those who understand what they say, and are affected with it themselves, and who desire that those they speak to, may understand it, retain it, and be affected with it likewise. It is a snare for a man to dwell upon things that are holy.

(4.) What they read, they expounded, showed the intent and meaning of it, and what use was to be made of it; they gave the sense in other words, that they might cause the people to understand the reading, v. 7, 8. Note, [1.] It is requisite that those who hear the word, should understand it, else it is to them but an empty sound of words, Math. 24. 15. [2.] It is therefore required of those who are teachers by office, that they explain the word, and give the sense of it. Understand thou what thou readest? And, Have ye understood all these things? are good questions to be put to the hearers; but, How should we, except some one guide us? is as proper a question for them to put to their teachers, Acts 8. 30, 31. Reading is good, and preaching good, but expounding brings the reading and the preaching together, which makes the reading the more intelligible, and the preaching the more convincing.

(5.) The people conducted themselves very properly, when the word was read and opened to them.

[1.] With great reverence. When Ezra opened the book, all the people stood up, (v. 5.) thereby showing respect both to Ezra and to the word he was about to read. It becomes servants to stand when their master speaks to them; in honour to their master, and to show a readiness to do as they are bidden.

[2.] With what fixedness and composedness they stood in their place; (v. 7.) several ministers were reading and expounding at some distance from each other, and yet the people kept his post, did not go to hear first one and then another, they made no remarks upon them, but stood in his place, that he might neither give disturbance to another, nor receive any disturbance himself.

[3.] With great attention and a close application of mind; the ears of all the people were unto the book of the law, (v. 3.) were even chained to it, they heard readily, and minded every word. The word of God commands attention, and deserves it. If through carelessness we let much slip in hearing, there is danger that through forgetfulness we shall let all slip after hearing.

9. And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshath, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. 10. Then he said unto them, Go your way; eat the far, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength. 11. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace; for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. 12. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: and there was great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

We may observe here,

1. How the people were wounded with the words of the law, that were read to them. The law works death, and speaks terror, shows men their sins, and their misery and danger because of sin, and thereby is a curse against every one that continues not in every part of his duty. Therefore when they heard it, they all wept; (v. 9.) it was a good sign that their hearts were tender, like Josiah's, when he heard the words of the law. They wept to think how they had offended God, and exposed themselves, by their many violations of the law; when some wept, all wept, for they all saw themselves guilty before God.
II. How they were healed and comforted with the words of peace, that were spoken to them. It was well that they were so much affected with the word of God, and received the impressions of it; but they must not exceed in their mourning; especially not at this time, because the day was holy to the Lord, it was one of the solemn feasts on which it was their duty to rejoice. And even sorrow for sin must not hinder our joy in God, but rather lead to repeated exercises.

1. The masters of the assembly endeavoured to pacify them, and encourage them. Now Nehemiah is brought in, and not before in this chapter: he took notice of the people's weeping, Ezra was pleased to see them so affected with the word, but Nehemiah observed to him, and Ezra concurred in the thought, that it was now unseasonable; this day was holy, it is called a sabbath, (Lev. 23. 24.) and therefore was to be celebrated with joy and praise, not as if it were a day to afflict the soul. (1.) They forbade the people to mourn and weep: (v. 9.) Be not sorry, (v. 10.) Hold your peace, neither be ye grieved, v. 11. Every thing is beautiful in its season; as we must not be merry when God calls to mourning; so we must not frighten and afflict ourselves when God has given us occasion to rejoice. We may now forego our former things, and hinder our joy in God, and our cheerfulness in his service. (2.) They commanded them to testify their joy, to put on the garments of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness. They allowed them, in token of their joy, to feast themselves, to eat and drink better than on other days, to eat the fat, and drink the sweet: but then it must be, [1.] With charity to the poor; Send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared, that your abundance may supply their want; that they may rejoice with you, and their loins may bless you. Christ directs those that make feasts, to invite their poor neighbours, Luke 14. 13. But it is especially the duty of a religious feast, as well as of a religious fast, to draw out the soul to the hungry, Isa. 58. 7, 10. God's bounty should make us bountiful. Many will eat the fat, and drink the sweet themselves, even to their abundance, but we must not allow poverty, either in our persons, or scarsely crumbs, to the poor, who may read their own doom in the parable of the rich man, Luke 16. 19, &c. But such know not, or consider not, what God gave them their estates for. Observe, We must not only give to those that offer themselves, but send to those that are out of sight. The liberal devises liberal things, and seeks objects of charity. [2.] It must be with piety and devotion; the joy of the Lord is your strength. Let it not be a carnal sensual joy, but holy and spiritual, the joy of the Lord, joy in the goodness of God, under the conduct and government of the grace of God; joy arising from our interest in the love and favour of God, and the tokens of his favour. This joy will be your strength, therefore encourage it; it will be your strength, First, For the performance of the other duties of the sabbath, we are more able to attend to these exercises, the more we shall abound in them. Secondly, For all which you have to do, in conformity to the law of God which has been read to you. Holy joy will be oil to the wheels of our obedience. Thirdly, For the resisting of your enemies that are plotting against you. The joy of the Lord will arm us against the assaults of our spiritual enemies, and put our most out of taste for those pleasures with which the tempter baits his hooks.

2. The assembly complied with the directions that were given them. Their weeping was stilled, (v. 11.) and they made great mirth, v. 12. Note, We ought always to have such a command of every passion, as that, however it may break out, it may soon be restrained and called in again, when we are convinced that it is either unreasonably or unseasonably. He that has such a rule as this over his own spirit, is better than the mighty. Observe, (1.) After they had wept, they rejoiced; holy mourning makes way for holy mirth; they that sow in tears, shall reap in joy; they that tremble at the convictions of the word, may triumph in the consolations of it. (2.) The ground of their joy was very good; they made mirth, not because they had the fat to eat, and the sweet to drink, and a deal of good company, but because they had understood the words that were declared to them. Note, [1.] To have the holy scriptures with us, and helps to understand them, is a very great mercy, which we have abundant reason to rejoice in. Bibles and ministers are the joy of God's Israel. [2.] The better we understand the word of God, the more comfort we shall find in it; for the darkness of trouble arises from the darkness of ignorance and mistake. When the words were first declared to them, they wept, but when they understood them, they rejoiced, finding, at length, precious promises made to those who repented and reformed, and therefore there was hope in Israel.

13. And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law. 14. And they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: 15. And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive-branches, and pine-branches, and myrtle-branches, and palm-branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. 16. So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water-gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. 17. And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. 18. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

We have here,
I. The people's renewed attendance upon the word. They had spent the greatest part of one day in praying and hearing, and yet were so far from being weary of that new moon and sabbath, that, the next day after, though it was no festival, the chief of them came together again to hear Ezra expound, (v. 13.) which they found more de
NEHEMIAH, IX.

lightful and gainful than any worldly pleasure or profit whatsoever. Note, The more we converse with the word of God, if we rightly understand it, and be affected with it, the more we shall covet to converse with it, and to increase in our acquaintance with it, saying, How sweet are thy words unto my mouth! They that understand the scriptures well, will still be desirous to converse with them they love.

Now the priests and the Levites themselves came with the chief of the people to Ezra, that prince of expositors, to understand the words of the law, or, as it is in margin, that they might instruit in the words of the law; they came to be taught themselves, that they might be qualified to teach others. Observe, 1. Though, on the first day, Ezra’s ministry had set them on his right hand, on his left, and to converse with them (v. 4, 7.) yet now, they being by trial more sensible than ever of their own deficiencies, and his excellencies, on the second day, their humility set them at Ezra’s feet, as learners of him. 2. Those that would teach others, must themselves receive instruction. Priests and Levites must be taught first, and then teach.

II. The people’s ready obedience to the word was a remarkable instance, as soon as they were made sensible of their duty; there is good reason to believe that Ezra, after the wisdom of his God that was in his hand, (Ezra 7. 25.) when they applied themselves to him for instruction out of the law on the second day of the seventh month, read to them those laws which concerned the feasts of that month, and, among the rest, that of the feast of tabernacles, Lev. 25. 34. Deut. 16. 13. Ministers should preach not only that which is true and good, but that which is seasonable, directing to the work of the day in its day.

Here is, 1. The divine appointment of the feast of tabernacles reviewed, v. 14, 15. They found written in the law a commandment concerning it. They that diligently search the scriptures, will find these things written there, which they had forgotten, or not duly considered. This feast of tabernacles was a memorial of their dwelling in tents in the wilderness, a representation of our tabernacle-state in this world, and a type of the holy joy of the gospel-church. The conversion of the nations to the faith of Christ is foretold under the figure of this feast; (Zech. 14. 16.) they shall come to keep the feast of tabernacles, as having no continuing city. This feast was to be proclaimed in all their cities. The people were themselves to fetch boughs of trees (such as were on the mount of Olives,) and to make booths or arbours, of them, in which they were to lodge, (as much as the weather would permit,) and to make merry during the feast.

2. This appointment religiously observed, v. 16, 17. Then we read and hear the word acceptably and profitably, when we do according to what is written therein; when what appears to be our duty, we take it, and neglect what is not.

(1.) They observed the ceremony; they sat in booths, which the priests and Levites set up in the courts of the temple; those that had houses of their own, set up booths on the roofs of them, or in their courts; and those that had not such conveniences, set them up in the streets. This feast had usually been observed, (2 Chron. 5. 3. Ezra 3. 4.) but now with such solemnity as now, since that time, when they were newly settled, as they were now newly re-settled in Canaan. That man loves his house too well, that cannot find in his heart to quit it, a while in compliance either with an ordinance or with a providence of God.

(2.) They minded the substance; see the ceremony, how significant severer, had been insigne-ificant. [1.] They did it with gladness; with very great gladness, rejoicing in God, and his goodness to them. All their holy feasts, but this especially, were to be celebrated with joy, which would be much for the honour of God, and their encouragement in his service. [2.] They attended the reading and expounding of the word of God, during all the days of the feast, v. 16. They improved their leisure for this good work: spare hours cannot be better spent than in studying the scriptures, and conversing with them. At this feast of tabernacles, God appointed the law to be read, once in seven years: whether this was that year of release in which that service was to be performed, (Deut. 31. 10, 11.) does not appear: however they spent all the days of the feast in good work, and on the eighth day, as was the solemn assembly, as God had appointed, in which they finished the solemnity the 22d day of the month, yet did not scatter, for the 24th day was appointed to be spent in fasting and prayer. Holy joy must not indispose us for godly sorrow, any more than godly sorrow for holy joy.

CHAP. IX.

The tenth day of the seventh month between the feast of Trumpets, (ch. 8. 2.) and the feast of Tabernacles, (v. 14.) was an appointed day to be set apart to the Lord, no reason to think but that it was religiously observed, though it is not mentioned. But here we have an account of an occasional fast that was kept a fortnight after, with reference to the present posture of their affairs, and it was, as that, a day of humiliation. There is a time to weep as well as a time to laugh. We have here an account, I. How this fast was observed, v. 1. 3. II. What were the heads of the prayer that was made to God on that occasion, wherein they made a thankful acknowledgment of God’s mercies, a penitent confession of sin, and a humble submission to the righteous hand of God in the judgments that were brought upon them, concluding with a solemn resolution of new obedience, v. 4. 38.

1. NOW in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. 2. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. 3. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God one fourth part of the day, and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the Lord their God.

We have here a general account of a public fast which the children of Israel kept, probably, by order from Nehemiah, by and with the advice and consent of the chief of the fathers. It was a fast that was repeated, but such a fast as God had chosen; for,

1. It was a day to afflict the soul, Isa. 58. 5. Probably they assembled in the courts of the temple, and they there appeared in sackcloth, and in the posture of mourners, with earth on their heads, v. 1. By these outward expressions of sorrow and humiliation they gave glory to God, tack shame to themselves, and stir up one another to repentance. They were restrained from weeping, ch. 8. 9, but now they were directed to weep. The joy of our holy feasts must give way to the sorrow of our solemn fasts when they come. Every thing is beautiful in its season.

2. It was a day to loose the bands of wickedness, and that is the fast that God has chosen, Isa. 58. 6. Without this, spreading sackcloth and ashes under
us, is but a jest. The seed of Israel, because they were a holy seed, appropriated to God, and more excellent than their neighbours, separated themselves from all strangers, with whom they had mingled themselves, and joined in affinity. v. 2. Ezra had separated them from their strange wives some years before, but they had relapsed into the same sin, and had either made marriages, or at least, made friendships, with them, and contracted such an intimacy as was a snare to them. But now they separated themselves from the strange children, as well as from the strange wives. They that intend by prayers and covenants to join themselves to God, must separate themselves from sin and sinners; for what communion hath light with darkness?

3. It was a day of communion with God; they fasted to him, even to him; (Zech. 7. 5.) for, (1.) They spake to him in prayer, offered their pious and devout affections to him, in the confession of sin, and the adoration of him as the Lord and their God. Fasting without prayer, is a body without a soul, a worthless carcasse. (2.) They heard him speaking to them by his word, for they read in the book of the law, which is very proper on fasting days, that, in the glass of the law, we may see our deformities and defilements; and know what to acknowledge, and what to amend. The word will direct and quicken prayer, for by it the Spirit helps our praying infirmities. Observe how the time was equally divided between these two. Three hours (for that is the fourth part of a day) they spent in reading, expounding; and applying the scriptures; and three hours in confessing sin, and praying; so that they stayed together six hours, and spent all the time in the solemn acts of religion, without saying, Behold what a weariness is it! The varying of the exercises made it less tedious, and, as the word they read, would furnish them with matter for prayer, so prayer would make the word more profitable. Bishop Patrick thinks that they spent the whole twelve hours of the day in devotion, that from six o'clock in the morning till nine they read, and then from nine to twelve they prayed; from twelve to three they read again, and from three till six they took the temperance of fasting. Thus a day, is a good work, and therefore we should endeavour to make a day's work, a good day's work of it.

4. Then stood upon the stairs of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Che- nani, and cried with a loud voice unto the Lord their God. 5. Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodjah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, Stand up, and bless the Lord your God for ever and ever; and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. 6. Thou, even thou, art Lord alone: thou hast made heaven, the heavens of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. 7. Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chal-dees, and gavest him the name of Abraham: 8. And founded his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him, to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Peri-zites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous: 9. And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red Sea: 10. And showedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his ser vants, and on all the people of his land; for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them; so didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day. 11. And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters. 12. Moreover, thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar, and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go. 13. Thou camest down also upon mount Sini, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments and true laws, good statutes and commandments: 14. And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant: 15. And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them. 16. But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, 17. And refused to obey, neither were mindful of the wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not. 18. Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy god that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations; 19. Yet thou, in thy manifold mercies, forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go. 20. Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them, and withheldst not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. 21. Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their
clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not. 22. Moreover, thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and dividest them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan. 23. Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it. 24. So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduest before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would. 25. And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and olive-yards, and fruit-trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. 26. Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets, which testified against them to turn them to thee; and they wrought great provocations. 27. Therefore thou delivest them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou hearest them from heaven; and, according to thy manifold mercies, thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies. 28. But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou hearest them from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them, according to thy mercies; 29. And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them,) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear: 30. Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets; yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands. 31. Nevertheless, for thy great mercies’ sake, thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God. 32. Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day. 33. Howbeit, thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: 34. Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them. 35. For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works. 36. Behold, we are servants this day; and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers, to eat the fruit thereof, and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it: 37. And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress. 38. And because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it: and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.

We have here an account how the work of this fast-day was carried on.

I. The names of the ministers that were employed. They are twice named, (v. 4, 5,) only with some variation of the names. Either they prayed successively, according to that rule which the apostle gives, (1 Cor. 14. 31.) Ye may all prophesy one by one; or, as some think, there were eight several congregations at some distance from each other, and each had a Levite to preside in it.

II. The work itself they employed themselves in: 1. They prayed to God, cried to him with a loud voice, (v. 4,) for the pardon of the sins of Israel, and God’s favour to them. They cried aloud, not that God might the better hear them, as Baal’s worshippers, but that the people might, and to excite their fervency. 2. They praised God; for the work of praise is not unseasonable on a fast-day: in all acts of devotion, we must aim at this, to give unto God the glory due to his name.

The summary of their prayers we have here upon record; whether drawn up before, as a directory to the Levites what to enlarge on, or collected after, as the heads of what they had in prayer enlarged upon, is uncertain. Much more, no doubt, was said than is here recorded; else confessing and worshipping God had not taken up a fourth part of the day, much less two-fourths.

In this solemn address to God, we have,

1.) An awful adoration of God, as a perfect and glorious Being, and the Fountain of all beings,

2.) The congregation is called upon to signify their concurrence herewith, by standing up; and so the minister directs himself to God, Blessed be thy glorious name. God is here adored, [1.] As the one only living and true God; Thou art Jehovah alone, self-existent and independent; there is
no God beside thee. [2.] As the Creator of all things; Thou hast made heaven, earth, and seas, and all that is in them. The first article of our creed is fitly made the first article of our praises. [3.] As the great Protector of the whole creation; "Thou preservest in being all the creatures thou hast given being to." God's providence extends itself to the highest beings, for they need it, and to the meanest, for they are not slighted by it. What God has made, he will preserve; what he does, he will firm, Eecl. 3. 14. [4.] As the Object of the creatures' praises; The host of heaven, the world of holy angels, worshipfeth thee, v. 6. But the name is exalted above all blessing and praise; it needs not the praises of the creatures, nor is any addition made to its glory by those praises. The best performances in the praising of God's name, even those of the angels themselves, fall infinitely short of what it deserves. Abraham's exalted above our blessing, but above all blessing. Put all the praises of heaven and earth together; and the thousandth part is not said of what might and should be, said of the glory of God. Our goodness extended not to him.

(2.) A thankful acknowledgment of God's favours to Israel, many of which are here reckoned up in order before him, and very much to the purpose. They were interceding for their meeting the loving kindness of the Lord, and in every prayer give thanks. [2.] When we are confessing our sins, it is good to take notice of the mercies of God, as the aggravations of our sins, that we may be more humbled and ashamed, and call ourselves by the scandalous name of ungrateful. [3.] When we are seeking to God for mercy and relief in the time of distress, it is an encouragement to our faith and hope, to remember our own and our fathers' experiences; "Lord, thou hast done well for us formerly, shall it be all undone again? Art thou not the same God still?"

Let us briefly observe the particular instances of God's goodness to Israel here recounted.

Firstly, The call of Abraham, v. 7. God's favour to him was distinguishing; Thou didst choose him; his grace in him was powerful to bring him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and in giving him the name of Abraham, he put honour upon him as his own, and assured him that he should be the father of many nations. Look unto Abraham your father, (Isa. 51. 2.) and see free grace glorified in him. Secondly, The covenant God made with him, to give the land of Canaan to him and his seed, a type of the better country, v. 8. And this covenant was not in vain upon earth, the very promises found before God, and therefore found it so, because he made it so, (for faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God,) and therefore performed his words; for with the rightcous he will show himself upright, and wherever he finds a faithful heart, he will be found a faithful God.

Thirdly, The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, v. 9.-11. It was seasonable to remember this, now that the We are including all for the benefit of their deliverance out of Babylon. They were then delivered, in compassion to their affliction, in answer to their cry, and in resistance of the pride and insolence of their persecutors: wherein they dealt proudly, God showed himself above them, (Exod. 18. 11.) and so got him a name; for he said, I will get me honour upon Pharaoh; even to this day, the name of God is glorified for that wonderful, miraculous deliverance. And wonders were showed for the effecting of it; their deliverance was in the destruction of their enemies; they were thrown into the deeps, as irrecoverably as a stone into the mighty waters.

Fourthly, The conducting of them through the wilderness, by the pillar of cloud and fire, which showed them which way they should go, when they should remove, and when and where they should rest; directed all their stages, and all their steps, v. 12. It was also a visible token of God's presence with them, to guide and guard them. They mention this again, (v. 19.) observing, that though they had by their sins provoked God to withdraw from them, and leave them to wander and perish in the wilderness, yet in his manifold mercy he continued to lead them, and took not away the pillar of cloud and fire, v. 19. When mercies, though forfeited, are continued, we are bound to be doubly thankful.

Fifthly, The plentiful provision made for them in the wilderness, that they might not perish for hunger; Thou gavest them bread from heaven, and water out of the rock, (v. 15.) and, to keep up their spirits, a promise that they should go in, and possessed the land of Canaan. They had meat and drink, food convenient in the way, and the good land at their journey's end; what would they more? This also is repeated, (v. 20, 21.) as that which was continued, notwithstanding their provocations; Forty years didst thou sustain them. Never was so people long nursed, and so tenderly; they were done tenderly provided for, given their clothes waxed not old, and, though the way was rough and tedious, their feet sweated not, for they were carried as upon eagles' wings.

Sixthly, The giving of the law upon mount Sinai. This was the greatest favour of all that was done them, and the greatest honour that was put upon them. The Lawgiver was very glorious, v. 13. Thou didst not send only, but camest down with them, and spakest with them in a cloud, and with their clothes waxed not old, and, though the way was rough and tedious, their feet sweated not, for they were carried as upon eagles' wings.
happy than they were, or might have been, in Canaan, had it not been their own fault.

Eighthly, God's great readiness to pardon their sins, and work deliverance for them, when they had, by their provocations, brought judgments upon themselves. When they were in the wilderness, they found him a God ready to pardon, (v. 17.) a God of pardons, so the margin reads it, who had proclaimed his name there, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; who has power to forgive sin, is willing to forgive, and glories in it. Though they forsok him, he did not forsake them, as justly he might have done, but continued his care of them, and favour to them. Afterward, when they were settled in Canaan, and sold themselves by their sins into the hands of their enemies, upon their submission and humble request, he gave them saviours, (v. 27.) the judges, by whom God wrought many a great deliverance for them, when they were on the brink of ruin. This he did, not for any merit of their's, for they deserved nothing but ill, but according to his mercies, his manifold mercies.

Ninthly, The admonitions and fair warnings he gave them by his servants the prophets. When he delivered them from their troubles, he testified against their sins, (v. 28, 29.) that they might not misconstrue their deliverances as concomitances at their wickedness. That which was designed in all the testimonies which the prophets bore against them, was, to bring them again to God's law, to lay their necks under its yoke, and to do his will by its rule. The will of God, is, to bring people to God, by bringing them to his law, not to bring them to ourselves, by bringing them under any law of our's. This we have again, v. 30. Thou testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets. The testimony of the prophets was the testimony of the Spirit in the prophets, and it was the spirit of Christ in them. 1 Pet. 1. 10, 11. They shake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and what they will is to be received accordingly. God gave them his Spirit to instruct them, (v. 20.) but they not receiving that instruction, he did by his Spirit testify against them; if we will not suffer God's word to teach and rule us, it will accuse and judge us. God sends pr phets, in compassion to his people, (2 Chron. 30. 15.) that he may not send judgments. Teniths, The lengthening out of his patience, and the moderating of his rebukes. Many years did he forbear to punish them, (v. 30.) as long to punish them as they were waiting to see if they would repent; and when he did punish them, he did not utterly consume them nor forsake them, v. 31. Had he forsaken them, they had been utterly consumed; but he did not stir up all his wrath, for he designed their reformation, not their destruction.

Thus do they multiply, thus do they magnify, the more to the good-will to Israel, and we should do in like manner, that the goodness of God, duly considered by us, may lead us to repentance, and overcome our badness; the more thankful we are for God's mercies, the more humbled we shall be for our own sins.

3. Here is a penitent confession of sin, their own sins, and the sins of their fathers. The mention of these is interwoven with the memorials of God's favours. God's readiness to pardon their provocations, might appear the more illustrious, and their sins, notwithstanding his favours, might appear the more heinous. Many passages in this acknowledgment of sins and mercies are taken from Ezek. 20. 5-26. as will appear by comparing these verses with these; for the word of God is of use to direct us in prayer, and by what he says to us, we may learn what to say to him.

[1.] They begin with the sins of Israel in the wilderness; they, even our fathers, (so it might better be read,) dealt proudly, (though, considering what they were, and how lately they were come out of slavery, they had no reason to be proud,) and hardened their necks, v. 16. Pride is at the root of men's obstinacy and disobedience; they think it be sufficient to bring them to their necks for God's yoke, and a piece of state to set up their own will in opposition to the will of God himself. There were two things which they did not duly give heed to, else they had not done as they did. The word of God they heard, but they did not hearken to God's commandments. And the works of God they saw, but they were not mindful of their wonders; had they duly considered them as miracles, they would have obeyed from a principle of gratitude and holy love. But when men make no right use either of God's ordinances, or of his providences, what can be expected from them? Two great sins are here specified, which they were guilty of in the wilderness; meditating a return, First, To Egyptian slavery, which, for the sake of the garlic and onions, they preferred before the gift liberty of the Israel of God, attended with some difficulty and inconvenience. In their rebellion, they appointed a captain to return to their bondage, in distrust of God's power, and contempt of his good promise, v. 17. Secondly, To Egyptian idolatry; they made a molten calf, and were so sottish as to say, This is thy God. [2.] They next bewail the provocations of their fathers after they were put in possession of Canaan. Though there they delighted themselves in God's great goodness, yet that would not prevail to keep them close to him; for, nevertheless they were disobedient, (v. 26.) and wrought great provocations. For, First, They abused God's prophets, slew them because they testified against them, to turn them to God, (v. 28.) so returning the greatest injury for the greatest kindness. Secondly, They abused his favours, after they had rest, they did evil again, (v. 28.) not wrought upon, either by their troubles, or their deliverances out of trouble. Neither fear nor love would hold them to their duty.

[3.] They, at length, come nearer to their own day, and lament the sins which had brought these judgments upon them, which they had long been groaning under, and were now but in part delivered from; I say, but in part delivered from; for, notwithstanding God's favours, we, his priests, and our fathers, have all been guilty, and we in them, v. 34. Two things they charge upon themselves, and their fathers, as the cause of their troubles, First, A contempt of the good law God had given them. They sinned against thy judgments, the dictates of divine wisdom, and the demands of divine sovereignty; though they were told how much it would be for their own advantage, and the good of their nation, to observe their statutes, and laws, we, their priests, and our fathers, have had two sons to the stock for many years, to bring the world to the meridian of glory. They pretended to lay their shoulders under the burden of God's law, and put their shoulders to the work, but they proved withdrawing shoulders, they soon flew off, would not keep to it, would not abide by it; when it came as we say, to the settin to them, they shrunk back, and would not hear; they had a backsliding heart. And though God by his prophets called them to return, they would not hear; (v. 30.) he stretched out his hands, but no one regarded. Secondly, A contempt of the good land
God had given them, (v. 35.) "Our kings have not served us in their kingdom, nor used their power for the support of religion; our people have not served thee in the use of the gifts of thy great goodness, and in that large and fat land which thou not only gavest them by thy grant, but gavest before them by the expulsion of the natives, and the complete possession by them of their land, that would not serve God in their own land, were made to serve their enemies in a strange land, as was threatened, Deut. 28. 47, 48. It is a pity that a good land should have bad inhabitants, but so it was with S-dom; faithness and fulness often make men proud and sensual.

(4.) Here is a humble representation of the judgment of God, which they had been, and were now, under.

[1.] Former judgments are remembered as aggravations of their sins, that they had not taken warning. In the days of the judges, their enemies vexed them; (v. 27.) and when they did evil again, God did again leave them in the hands of their enemies, who could not have touched them, if God had not given them up; but when God left them, they got and kept them in the hands of their enemies; and so God will have them to reap the fruits of their sins, for God is neither so just, nor so merciful, as to do what is just, and leave the fruits of sin to be suffered by the children.

[2.] Their present calamitous state is laid before the Lord; (v. 36, 37.) We are servants this day. Free-born Israelites are enslaved, and the land which they had long held by a much more honourable tenancy than grand seragancy itself, even by immediate grant from the crown of Heaven to them as a peculiar people above all people of the earth, that was held by as base a tenure as villainage itself, by, from, and under, the kings of Persia, whose vassals they were. A sad change! But see what work sin makes! They were bound to personal service; they have dominion over our bodies; they held all they had, precariously, were tenants at will, and the land-tax that they paid, was so great, that it amounted even to a rack-rent; so that all the rents, issues, and profits of their land, did, in effect, come, and go, into the king’s hands, in such a manner as much as they could do to get a bare subsistence for themselves and their families out of it; this, they honestly own, was for their sins; poverty and slavery are the fruits of sin; it is sin that brings us unto all our distresses.

(5.) Here is their address to God under these calamities.

[1.] By way of request, that their trouble might not increase. little, v. 32. It is the only petition in all this prayer. The trouble was universal; it was come on their kings, princes, priests, prophets, fathers, and all their people; they had all shared in the sin, (v. 34.) and now all shared in the judgment. It was of long continuance, from the time of the king of Assyria, who carried the ten tribes captive, unto this day, "Lord, let it not all seem little, and not worthy to be regarded, or not needing to be relieved." They do not subscribe to God, that they shall do for them, but leave it to him only desiring he would please to take cognizance of it, remembering that when he saw the affliction of his people in Egypt to be great, he came down to deliver them, Exod. 3. 7, 8. In this request, they have an eye to God, as one that is to be feared, for he is the great, the mighty, and the terrible, God; and as one that is to be obeyed, for it is our God in covenant; and a God that keeps covenant and mercy.

[2.] By way of acknowledgment notwithstanding, that really it was less than they deserved, v. 33. They own the justice of God in all their troubles, that he had done them no wrong; "We have done wickedly in breaking thy laws, and therefore thou hast done right in bringing all these miseries upon us." Note, It becomes us, when we are under the rebukes of Divine Providence, though ever so sharp, and ever so long, to justify God, and to judge ourselves; for he will be clear when he judgeth, Ps. 61. 4.

(6.) Here is the result and conclusion of this whole matter; after this long presentation of their case, they came, at last, to this resolution, that they would return to God and to their duty, and oblige themselves never to forsake God, but always to continue in their duty. Because God will make a sure covenant with; God in consideration of our frequent departures from God, we will now more firmly than ever bind ourselves to him. Be cause we have smarted so much for sin, we will now steadfastly resolve against it, that we may not any more withdraw the shoulder. Observe, [1.] This covenant was made with serious consideration; it is the result of many serious thoughts, and so a reasonable service. [2.] With great resolution; it was written, in perpetuum, rei memoriam—that it might remain a memorial for all ages; it was sealed too, and left upon record, that it might be a witness against them if they dealt deceitfully. [3.] With joint-consent; "We make it, we are all agreed in it, and do it unanimously, that we may strengthen the bands one of another." [4.] With fixed resolution; It is a sure covenant, without renewing a power of revocation. It is what we live and die by, and never go back from." A certain number of the princes, priests, and Levites, were chosen as the representatives of the congregation, to subscribe and seal it, and in the name of the rest. Now was fulfilled that promise concerning the Jews, that when they were returned out of captivity, they should join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, (Jer. 50. 5.) and that (Isa. 44. 5.) that they should subscribe with their hand unto the Lord; he that bears an honest mind, will not startle at assurances; nor will those that know the deceitfulness of their own hearts, think them needless.

CHAP. X.

We have, in this chapter, a particular account of the covenant which, in the close of the foregoing chapter, was resolved upon; they struck while the iron was hot, and immediately put that good resolve in execution, when they were in a good frame, lest, if it had been delayed, it had been dropped. Here we have, I. The names of those that set their hands and seals to it, v. 1-27. II. An account of how they were so confirmed in their covenant and concurrence, v. 28, 29. III. The whole article of the covenant, and the articles of it in general, that they would keep God’s commandments; (v. 28.) in particular, that they would not marry with the heathens, (v. 30.) nor profane the sabbath, nor be rigorous with their debts, (v. 31.) and that they would carefully pay their church-duities, for the maintenance of the temple-service, which they promise faithfully to adhere to, v. 32-39.

Zadok, Ananiah, and Jaddua. Two of these names are repeated, 19. 21.

And Nehemiah, Hanun, and the others, all of whom were not mentioned, ch. 7. 8, &c. as heads of houses or clans, are here mentioned among the first of the chief of the people that subscribed; whoever was the present head bearing the name of him that was head when they came out of Babylon, and these were fittest to subscribe for all those of their father's house. Here are Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zatthu, Bani, (v. 14.) Azgad, Bebai, Bigvai, Adin, Ater, Hashum, Bebai, Jeshua, Haaliah, Hashabnath, Meonothai, Jadan, and others mentioned in the following verses, which are all found in that catalogue. They that have interest, must use it for God.

II. The concurrence of the rest of the people with them, and the rest of the priests and Levites, who signified their consent to what their chiefs did. With them joined, 1. Their wives and children, for they had transgressed, and they must reform; every one that had knowledge and understanding must covenant with God. As soon as young people grow up to be capable of distinguishing between good and evil, and of acting intelligently, they ought to make it their own act and deed, to join themselves to the Lord.

The proselytes of other nations, all that had separated themselves from the people of the lands, their gods and their worship, under the law of God, and the observance of that law. See what conversion is; it is separating ourselves from the course and custom of this world, and devoting ourselves to the conduct of the word of God. And as there is one law, so there is one covenant, one baptism, for the stranger, and for him that is born in the land.

Observe how the concurrence of the people is expressed, v. 29. (1.) They clave to their brethren; one and all. Here, whom the court blessed, the country blessed too! The commonalty agreed with their nobles in this good work. Great men never look so great, as when they encourage religion, and are examples of it; and they would by that, as much as any thing, secure an interest in the most valuable of their inferiors. Let but the nobles cordially espouse religious causes, and perhaps they will find people cleave to them therein closer than they can imagine. Observe, Their nobles are called their brethren, for in the theocracy of God, the poor, and high and low, meet together. (2.) They entered into a curse and an oath. As the nobles confirmed the covenant with their hands and seals, so the people with a curse and an oath; solemnly appealing to God concerning their sincerity, and imprecating his just revenges if they dealt deceitfully. Every oath has in it a conditional curse upon the soul, which makes it a strong bond upon the soul; for our own tongues, if false and lying tongues, will fall, and fall heavy, upon ourselves.

III. The general purport of this covenant. They laid upon themselves no other burden than this necessary thing, which they were already obliged to by all other engagements of duty, interest, and gratitude—to walk in God's law, and to do all his commandments, v. 29. Thus David swore that he would keep God's righteous judgments. Ps. 119. 106. Our own covenant binds us to this, if not more strongly, yet more sensibly, than we were before bound, and therefore we must not think it needless thus to bind ourselves. Observe, When we bind ourselves to do the commandments of God, we bind ourselves to do all his commandments, and therein to have an eye to him as the Lord, and our Lord.
IV. Some of the particular articles of this covenant; such as were adapted to their present temptations.

1. That they would not intermarry with the heathen, v. 30. Many of them had been guilty of this, Ezra 9. 1. In our covenant with God, we should engage particularly against those sins that we have been most frequently overtaken in, and damaged by. They that resolve to keep the commandments of God, must say to evi-doers, Depart, Ps. 119. 115.

2. That they would keep no market on the sabbath-day, or any other day of which the law had said, Ye shall do no work therein. They would not only not sell goods themselves for gain on that day, but they would not encourage the heathen to sell on that day, by buying of them, no not victuals, under pretence of necessity; but would buy in their provisions for their families the day before, v. 31. Note, Those that covenant to keep all God’s commandments, must particularly covenant to keep sabbaths well; for the profanation of them is an inlet to other instances of profaneness. The sabbath is a market day for our souls, but not for our bodies.

3. That they would not be severe in exacting their debts, but would observe the 7th year as a year of release, according to the law, v. 31. In this matter they had been faulty, (ch. 5.) and here therefore they promise to reform. This was the acceptable fast, to undo the heavy burden, and to let the oppressed go free, Isa. 58. 5. It was in the close of the day of expiration, that the jubilee trumpet sounded. It was for the neglect of observing the 7th year as a year of rest for the land, that God had made it enjoy its sabbaths 70 years; (Lev. 26. 35.) and therefore they covenanted to observe that law. Those are stubborn children indeed, that will not amend the fault which they have been particularly corrected for.

32. Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel, for the service of the house of our God; 33. For the show-bread, and for the continual meat-offering, and for the continual burnt-offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin-offering, to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God. 34. And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood-offerings, to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed, year by year, to burn upon the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the law; 35. And to bring the first-fruits of our ground, and the first-fruits of all fruit of all trees; year by year, unto the house of the Lord: 36. Also the first-born of our sons, and of our cattle, (as it is written in the law,) and the firstlings of our herds, and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God: 37. And that we should bring the first-fruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine, and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. 38. And the priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure-house. 39. For the children of Israel and the children of Levi, shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.

Having covenanted against the sins they had been guilty of, they proceed in obliging themselves to revive and observe the duties they had neglected. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well.

I. It was resolved in general, that the temple-service should be carefully kept up, that the work of the house of their God should be done in its season, according to the law, v. 33. Let not any people expect the blessing of God, unless they make conscience of observing his ordinances, and keeping up public worship. Then it is likely to go well with our houses, when care is taken that the work of God’s house go on well. It was likewise resolved, that they would never forsake the house of their God, (v. 39.) as they and their fathers had done; nor forsake it for the house of any other god, or for the high places, as idolaters did; nor forsake it for their farms and merchandises, as these did, that were atheistical, and profane. They that forsake the worship of God, forsake God.

II. It was resolved in pursuance of this, that they would liberally maintain the temple-service, and not starve it. The priests were ready to do their part in all the work of God’s house, if the people would do theirs, which was, to find them with materials to work upon. Now here it was agreed and concluded,

1. That a stock should be raised for the furnishing of God’s table and altar plentifully. Formerly, they were treasures in the house of the Lord for this purpose, but those were gone, and there was no settled fund to supply the want of them. It was a constant charge to provide show-bread for the table, two lambs for the daily offerings, four for the sabbaths, and more, and more costly, sacrifices for other festivals, occasional sin-offerings, and meat-offerings, and drink-offerings for them all. They had no rich king to provide these, as Hezakiah had; the priests could not afford it, their maintenance was so small; the people therefore agreed to contribute yearly, each of them, the third part of a shekel, about ten pence a piece for the bearing of this expense. When every one will act, and every one will give, though but little, toward a good work, the whole amount will be considerable. II. The Shaphata did not impose this, as Hezakiah had; because it made it an ordinance for themselves, and charged themselves with it, v. 32, 33.

2. That particular care should be taken to provide wood for the altar, to keep the fire always burning upon it, and wherewith to boil the peace-offerings. Each of them, priests and Levites as well as people, agreed to bring in his quota, and cast lots in what order he should bring it in, which family first, and which next, that there might be a constant supply, and not a scarcity at one time, and
an overplus at another, v. 34. Thus, they provided the fire and the wood, as well as the lamps for the burnt-offerings.

3. That all those things which the divine law had appointed for the maintenance of the priests and Levites should be duly paid in, for their encouragement to mind their business, and that they might not be under any temptation to neglect it for the making of necessary provision for their families.

Then the work of the house of God is likely to go on, when those that serve at the altar, live, and live comfortably, upon the altar. First-fruits and tenths were then the principal branches of the minister's revenues, and they were resolved, (1.) To bring in their first-fruits justly, of their ground and trees, Exod. 23. 19. Lev. 19. 24. The first-born of their children, even the money wherewith they were to be redeemed; and of their cattle, Exod. 13. 2, 11, 12. This was given to the priests, Num. 18. 15, 16. Also the first-fruits of their dough, (Num. 15. 21.) concerning which, there is a particular order given in the prophecy concerning the second temple, Ezek. 44. 30. (2.) To bring in their tenths likewise, which were due to the Levites, (v. 37.) and a tenth out of those tenths to the priests, v. 38. This was the law; (Num. 18. 21-28.) but these dues had been withheld; for which God, by the prophet, charges them with robbing him, (Mal. 3. 8, 9.) at the same time encouraging them to be more just to him and his receivers, with a promise that if they brought the tithes into the store-house, he would pour out blessings upon them, v. 10. This therefore they resolve to do, that there might be meat in God's house, and plenty in the store-chambers of the temple, where the vessels of the sanctuary were, v. 39. We will do it (say they) in all the cities of our village, v. 37. In all the cities of our servitude, so the LXX. for they were servants in their own land, ch. 9. 36. But (as Mr. Poole well observes) though they paid great taxes to the kings of Persia, and had much hardship put upon them, they would not make that an excuse for not paying tithes, but would render to God the things that were his, as well as to Caesar the things that were his. We must do what we can in works of piety and charity, notwithstanding the taxes we pay to the government; and chearfully perform our duty to God in our servitude, which will be the surest way to ease and liberty in God's due time.

CHAP. XI.

Jerusalem was walled round, but it was not as yet fully inhabited, and therefore was weak and despicable. Nehemiah's next care is to bring people into it; of this he have here an account. 1. The method taken to replenish it, v. 1. 2. II. The principal persons that resided there, of Judah and Benjamin, v. 3. . 9. Of the priests and Levites' revenue, v. 10. 12. The several cities and villages of Judah and Benjamin, that were peopled by the rest of their families, v. 20. 36.

1. AND the rulers of the people dwell at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities. 2. And the people blessed all the men that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem. 3. Now these are the chief of the province that dwell in Jerusalem, (but in the cities of Judah dwell every one in his possession in their cities,) to wit, Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants. 4. And at Jer-

usalem dwelt certain of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin. Of the children of Judah; Athiaiah the son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahanaleel, of the children of Perez; 5. And Maaseiah the son of Barnab, the son of Col-hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of Shilohi. 6. All the sons of Perez that dwelt at Jerusalem were four hundred threescore and eight valiant men. 7. And these are the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joel the son of Pedahzur, the son of Koliah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ibniel, the son of Jesiah. 8. And after him Gabbai, Sallai, nine hundred twenty and eight. 9. And Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer: and Judah the son of Senuah was second over the city. 10. Of the priests: Jedediah the son of Joiarib, Jachin. 11. Seraiah the son of Hilkiash, the son of Meschullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, was the ruler of the house of God. 12. And their brethren, that did the work of the house, were eight hundred twenty and two: and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchiah, 13. And his brethren, chief of the fathers, two hundred forty and two: and Amashai the son of Azareel, the son of Ahasai, the son of Meschillemoth, the son of Immer, 14. And their brethren, mighty men of valour, a hundred twenty and eight: and their overseer was Zabdiel, the son of one of the great men. 15. Also of the Levites: Shemariah the son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni: 16. And Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chief of the Levites, had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God. 17. And Mattaniah the son of Micha, the son of Zabdi, the son of * Asaph, was the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer; and Bakkukiah, the second among his brethren, and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. 18. All the Levites in the holy city were two hundred fourscore and four. 19. Moreover, the porters, Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren that kept the gates, were a hundred seventy and two.

Jerusalem is called here the holy city, (v. 1.) because there the temple was, and that was the place God had chosen to put his name there; upon this account, one would think, the holy seed should have all chosen to dwell there, and have striven for a habitation there; but on the contrary, it seems, they declined dwelling there; either, 1. Because a greater strct-
ness of conversation was expected from the inhabitants of Jerusalem than from others, which they were not willing to come up to: those who care not for being holy themselves, are shy of dwelling in a holy city, they would not dwell in the New Jerusalem itself for that reason, but would wish to have a continuing city here upon earth. Or. 2. Because Jerusalem, of all places, was most hated by the heathen their neighbours, and against it their malignant designs were levelled, which made that the post of danger, (as the post of honour usually is,) and therefore they were not willing to expose themselves there. Fear of persecution and reproach, and running themselves into trouble, keeps many out of the holy city, and makes them backward to appear for God and religion, not considering that as Jerusalem is with a special malice threatened and insulted by its enemies, so it is with a special care protected by its God, and made a quiet haven. Ps. 46. 4, 5. Or. 3. Because it was more for their worldly advantage to dwell in this country. Jerusalem was no trading city, and therefore there was no money to be got there by merchandises, as there was in the country by corn and cattle. Note, All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's, Phil. 2. 21. It is a general and just complaint, that most people prefer their own wealth, credit, pleasure, ease and safety, before the glory of God and the peace of their souls.

People being thus backward to dwell at Jerusalem, now that it was poor, we are here told, 1. By what means it was replenished. 1. The rulers dwelt there, v. 1. That was the proper place for them to reside in, because there were set the thrones of judgment, (Ps. 122, 5.) and thither, in all difficult matters, the people resorted with their last appeals. And if it were an instance of eminently religious and religious states, it was to the public good, and of faith, and holy courage, and self denial to dwell there at this time, the rulers would be examples of these to their inferiors. Their dwelling there would invite and encourage others to dwell there too; Magnates, Magnates—The mighty are magnetic. When great men choose the holy city for their habitation, it brings holiness into reputation, and their zeal will provoke very much others to follow their example, and to make themselves to dwell at Jerusalem, bravely postponing their own secular interest to the public welfare, v. 2. It is upon record, to their honour, that when others were shy of venturing upon difficulty, loss, and danger, they sought the good of Jerusalem, because of the house of the Lord their God. They should prosper, that thus love Zion, Ps. 122, 6. 9. It is said, The people blessed them. They praised them, they prayed for them, they praised God for them. Many that do not appear forward themselves for the public good, will yet give a good word to those that do, God and man will bless those that are public blessings, which should encourage us to be zealous in doing good. 3. They, finding that yet there was room, concluded upon a review of their whole body, to bring one in ten to dwell in Jerusalem; who they should be, was determined by lot, the disposal whereof, all knew, of the Lord. This lot was a cut to the strife, and would be a great satisfaction to those on whom the lot fell to dwell at Jerusalem, that they plainly saw God appointing the bounds of their habitation. They observed the proportion of one in ten, as we may suppose, to bring the balance between the city and country to a just and equal poise; so it seems to refer to the ancient rule of giving the tenth to God; and what is given to the holy city, he reckons given to himself.

II. By what persons it was replenished. A general account is here given of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, because the governors of Judah looked upon them as their strength in the Lord of hosts their God, and valued them accordingly, Zech. 12. 5.

1. Many of the children of Judah and Benjamin dwelt there; for, originally, part of the city lay in the lot of one of those tribes, and part in that of the other; but the greater part was in the lot of Benjamin, and therefore here we find the children of Judah only 466 families in Jerusalem, (v. 6.) but of Benjamin far more. This was before the plagues of Egypt began, but, afterward, before our Saviour's time, it grew much more populous. Those of Judah all descended from Perez, or, Pharez, that son of Judah, of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. And though the Benjamites were more in number, yet of the men of Judah it is said, (v. 6.) that they were valiant men, fit for service, and able to defend the city in case of an attack. Judah has not lost its ancient character, of a lion's whelp, bold and daring. Of the Benjamites that dwelt in Jerusalem, we are here told who was overseer, and who was second, v. 9. For it is as necessary for a people to have good order kept up among themselves, as to be fortified against the attacks of their enemies from abroad; to have good magistrates, as to have good soldiers.

2. The priests and Levites did many of them set up their habitation in Jerusalem; where else should men that were holy to God, dwell, but in the holy city? (1.) Most of the priests, we may suppose, dwelt there, for their business lay where the temple was. Of them that did the work of the house in their courses, here were 822 of one family, 242 of another, and 128 of another, v. 12. 14. It was well that those labourers were not few. It is said of some of them, that they were mighty men of valour; (v. 14.) it was necessary that they should be, for the temple was only a very small concern in the mighty, but of warfare, which required valour, especially now. Of one of these priests it is said, that he was the son of one of the great men. It was no disparagement to the greatest man they had, to have his son in the priesthood; he might magnify his office, for his office did not in the least diminish him.

(2.) Some of the Levites also came and dwelt at Jerusalem, yet but few in comparison, 284 in all, (v. 18.) with 172 porters, v. 19. For, much of their work was to teach the great knowledge of God up and down the country, for which purpose they were to be scattered in Israel: as many as there was occasion for, attended at Jerusalem, the rest were doing good elsewhere. [1.] It is said of one of the Levites, that he had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God, v. 16. The priests were chief managers of the business within the temple-gates; but this Levite was intrusted with the secular concerns of God's house, that were in ordine ad spiritualia—subservient to its spiritual concerns, the collecting of the contributions, the providing of materials for the temple-service, and the like, which it was necessary to oversee, else the business would have been starved, and have stood still. Those who take care of the μία εἴσοδον—the outward concerns of the church, the serving of its table, are as necessary in their place, as those who take care of its οἴσοδον—its inward concerns, who give themselves to the word and prayer. (2.) It is said of another, that he was the principal to begin the thanking-giving in prayer. Probably, he had a good ear and a good voice, and was a scientific singer, and therefore was chosen to lead the psalm. He was preceptor in the temple. Observe, Thanksgiving may be necessary in prayer; they should go together; giving thanks for former mercies is a becoming way of begging further mercies. And care should be taken in public service, that every thing be done in the best
manner, decently and in good order; in prayer, that one speak, and the rest join; in singing, that one begin and the rest follow.

20. And the residue of Israel, of the priests and the Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance. 21. But the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel: and Ziza and Gispa were over the Nethinims. 22. The overseer also of the Levites at Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micha. Of the sons of Asaph, the singers were over the business of the house of God. 23. For it was the king's commandment concerning them, that a certain portion should be for the singers, due for every day. 24. And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel, of the children of Zerub, the son of Judah, was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people. 25. And for the villages, with their fields, some of the children of Judah dwelt at Kirjath-arba, and in the villages thereof, and at Dibon, and in the villages thereof, and at Jekabzeel, and in the villages thereof, 26. And at Jeshua, and at Moladah, and at Bethphoelet, 27. And at Hazar-salim, and at Beer-sheba, and in the villages thereof, 28. And at Ziklag, and at Mekonah, and in the villages thereof, 29. And at En-rimon, and at Zareah, and at Jarmuth, 30. Zanoah, Adullam, and in their villages, at Lachish, and the fields thereof, at Azekah, and in the villages thereof. And they dwelt from Beer-sheba unto the valley of Hinom. 31. The children also of Benjamin from Geba dwelt at Michmas, and at Aija, and Beth-EL, and in their villages, 32. And at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, 33. Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, 34. Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, 35. Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen. 36. And of the Levites were divisions in Judah, and in Benjamin.

Having given an account of the principal persons that dwell in Jerusalem, (a larger account of whom we had before, 1 Chron. 9. 2, &c., Nehemiah, in these verses, gives us some account of the other cities, in which dwelt the residue of Israel, v. 20. It was requisite that Jerusalem should be replenished, yet not so as to drain the country; the king himself is served of the field, which will do little service, if there be not hands to manage it; let there therefore be no strife, no envy, no contempt, no ill will between the inhabitants of the cities and those of the villages; both are needful, both useful, and neither can be spared. 1. The Nethinims, the porters of the Gibeonites dwelt in Ophel, which was upon the wall of Jerusalem, (ch. 3. 26.) because they were to do the servile work of the temple, which therefore they must be posted near to, that they might be ready to attend, v. 21. 2. Though the Levites were dispersed through the cities of Judah, yet they had an overseer who

resided in Jerusalem, superior of their order, and their provincial, to whom they applied themselves for direction, who took care of their affairs, and took care of the cities of their conduct, whether they did their duty, v. 22. 3. Some of the singers were appointed to look after the necessary repairs of the temple, being ingenious men, and having leisure betwixt their hours of service; they were over the business of the house of God, v. 22. And it seems the king of Persia had such a kindness for their office, that he allotted a particular maintenance for them, besides what belonged to them as Levites, v. 23. 4. Here is one that was the king's commissioner at Jerusalem; he was of the posterity of Zerub, v. 24. For of that family of Judah, there were some now settled in Jerusalem, and not all of Pharez, as appears by that other catalogue, 1 Chron. 9. 6. He is said to be at the king's hand, or, on the king's part, in all matters concerning the people, to determine controversies that arose between the king's officers and his subjects; to see that what was due by the king from the people, was duly paid in, and that what was allowed by the king for the temple-service, was duly paid out; it was happy for the Jews, that one of themselves was in this post.

5. Here is an account of the villages, or country towns, which were inhabited by the residue of Israel. The towns in which the children of Judah dwelt, v. 25. - 36. Those that were inhabited by the children of Benjamin, v. 31. - 35. And divisions for the Levites among both, v. 36. We will now suppose them safe and easy, though few and poor. Indeed, by the blessing of God, they were likely to increase in wealth and power; and they would have been more likely, if there had not been that general profaneness among them, and lukewarmness in religion, which the prophet Malachi charges them with, (in God's name,) who was supposed, prophesied about this time, and in whom prophecy ceased for some ages, till it revived in the Great Prophet and his forerunner.

CHAP. XII.

In this chapter, are preserved upon record, 1. The names of the chief priests and the Levites that came up with Zerubbabel, v. 1. - 9. II. The succession of the chief priests. III. The names of the next generation of the other chief-priests, v. 10. - 12. IV. The eminent Levites that were in Nehemiah's time, v. 22. - 26. V. The solemnity of dedicating the wall of Jerusalem, v. 27. - 49. VI. The settling of the offices of the priests and Levites in the temple, v. 44. - 47.

1. NOW these are the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, 2. Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, 3. Shechaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, 4. Iddo, Gunneboth, Abijah, 5. Miamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, 6. Shebnaiah, and Joarib, Jedediah, 7. Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jediaiah. These were the chief of the priests, and of their brethren, in the days of Jeshua. 8. Moreover, the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, which was over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren. 9. Also Bakbakiah and Unni, their brethren, were over against them in the watches. 10. And Jeshua begat Joiaim, Jojakim also begat Eliashib, and Eliashib begat Joiada, 11. And Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan

23. The sons of Levi, the chief of the fathers, were written in the book of the Chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib. 24. And the chief of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward over against ward. 25. Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, were porters, keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates. 26. These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe.

We have here the names, and little more than the names, of a great many priests and Levites, that were eminent in their day, among the returned Jews. Why this register should be here inserted by Nehemiah, does not appear; perhaps he kept, in remembrance those good men, that posterity might know to whom they were beholden, under God, for the happy revival and re-establishment of their religion among them. Thus must we contribute toward the performance of that promise, (Ps. 112. 6,) that the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. Let the memory of the just be blessed, be perpetuated. It is a debt we still owe to faithful ministers, to remember our guides, who have spoken to us the word of God. Heb. 13. 7. Perhaps it is intended to stir up their posterity, who succeeded them in the priest’s office, and inherited their dignities and preferments, to imitate their courage and fidelity. It is good to know what our godly ancestors and predecessors were, that we may learn thereby what we should be.

We have here,

1. The names of the priests and Levites that came up with the first out of Babylon, when Josua was High Priest. Jeremiah and Ezra, though both of them were priests, are mentioned with the first, (v. 1.) but, it is supposed, not Jeremiah the prophet, or Ezra the scribe; the name of the one was diffused long before, and the other some time after. Of one of the Levites it is said, (v. 8.) that he was over the thanksgiving, that he was intrusted to see that the psalms, the thanksgiving psalms, were constantly sung in the temple in due time and manner. The Levites kept their turns in their watches, relieving one another as becomes brethren, fellow-labourers, and fellow-soldiers.

2. The succession of High Priests during the Persian monarchy, from Josua (or Jesus) who was High Priest at the time of the restoration, to Jaddua (or Jaddus) who was High Priest when Alexander the Great, after the conquest of Tyre, came to Jerusalem, and paid great respect to this Jaddus, who met him in his pontifical habit, and showed him the prophecy of Daniel, which foretold his conquests.

3. The next generation of priests, who were chief men, and active in the days of Joiakim, sons of the first set. Note, We have reason to acknowledge God’s favour to his church, and care of it, in that, as one generation of ministers passes away, another comes. All these who are mentioned, (v. 1, &c.) as eminent in their generation, are again mentioned, though with some variation in several of the names, (v. 12, &c.) except two, as having sons that were likewise eminent in their generation; a rare instance that 20 good fathers should leave behind them 20 good sons, (for too many here are,) that filled up their places.

4. The next generation of Levites, or rather, a later generation; for those priests mentioned flourished in the days of Joiakim the High Priest, these Levites in the days of Eliasib, v. 22. Perhaps then the forementioned families of the priests began to degenerate, and the third generation of them were in a short time, as the sons of the chief priests, and we shall never fail for want of instruments. Then a generation of Levites was raised up, that were recorded chief of the fathers, (v. 22.) and were eminently serviceable to the interests of the church, and their service not the less acceptable either to God or his people, for their being Levites only of the lower rank of ministers. Eliasib the High Priest being allied to Tobiah, (ch. 13. 4,) that chief priests grew remiss; but then the Levites appeared the more zealous, as appears by this, that those who were now employed in expounding, (ch. 8. 7,) and in praying, (ch. 9. 4, 5,) were all Levites, not priests, regard being had to their personal qualifications more than to their order. These Levites were some of them singers, (v. 24,) to praise and give thanks, others of them porters, (v. 25,) keeping the wards at the thresholds of the gate; and both according to the command of David.

27. And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. 28. And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi; 29. Also from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth: for the singers had built them villages round about Jerusalem. 30. And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall. 31. Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies of them that gave thanks, whereof one went on the right hand upon the wall, toward
the dung-gate: 32. And after them went Hoshia\nne, and half of the princes of Judah, 33. And Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam, 34. Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah; 35. And certain of the priests’ sons with trumpets; namely, Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of SHE\nmaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of MIC\niah, the son of Zaccur, the son of A\n6. And his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azara\ael, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Neth\naneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them. 37. And at the fountain-gate, which was over against them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water-gate eastward. 38. And the other company of them that gave thanks went over against them, and I after them, and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces even unto the broad wall; 39. And from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old gate, and above the fish-gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep-gate: and they stood still in the prison-gate. 40. So stood the two companies of them that gave thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me: 41. And the priests; Elakim, MA\nseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; 42. And Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang loud, with Je\n\nraiah their overseer. 43. Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced; for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced; so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.

We have read of the building of the wall of Jeru\n\nalem with a great deal of fear and trembling; we have here an account of the dedicating of it with a great deal of joy and triumph. They that s\n\n in tears shall thus rea\n\n1. We must inquire what was the meaning of this dedication of the wall; we will suppose it to include the dedication of the city too, (continens pro con\nten\nto—the thing containing for the thing contained,) and therefore it was not done till the city was pretty well replenished, ch. 11. 1. It was a solemn thanksgiving to God for his great mercy to them, in the perfecting of this undertaking, which they were the more sensible of, because of the difficulty and opposition they had met with in it. 2. They hereby devoted the city in a peculiar manner to God and to his honour, and took possession of it for him, and in his name. All our cities, all our houses, must have holiness to the Lord written upon them, but this city was (so as never any other was) a holy city, the city of the great King; (Ps. 48. 2. and Matth. 5. 55.) it had been so ever since God chose it to put his name there, and, as such, it being now refitted, it was fresh dedicated to God by the builders and inhabitants, in token of their acknowledge\n\ndment that they were his tenants, and their desire that it might still be his, and that the property of it might never be alevites. Whatever is done for their safety, ease, and comfort, must be designed for God’s honour and glory. 3. They hereby put the city and its walls under the divine protection, owning that unless the Lord kept the city, the walls were built in vain. When this city was in possession of the Jebusites, they committed the guardianship of it to their gods, though they were blind and lame ones, 2 Sam. 5. 6. With much more reason do the people commit it to his keeping, who is All-wise and Almighty. The superstitious founders of cities had an eye to the lucky position of the heavens; (see Mr. Grego\ny’s works, p. 29, &c.) but these pious founders had an eye to God only, to his providence, and not to fortune.

II. We must observe with what solemnity it was performed, under the direction of Nehemiah.

1. The Levites from all parts of the country were summoned to attend; it must be dedicated to God, and therefore his ministers must be employed in the doing of it, and the surrender must pass through their hands. When those solemn feasts were over, (ch. 8. and 9.) they were gone home to their respective posts, to mind their cures in the country, but now their presence and assistance were again called for.

2. Pursuant to this summons, there was a general rendezvous of all the Levites, v. 28. 29. Observe in what method they proceeded.

(1.) They purified themselves, v. 30. We are concerned to cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts, when any work of God is to pass through them. They purified themselves, and then the people: they that would be instrumental to sanctify others, must sanctify themselves, and set themselves apart for God, with purity of mind and sincerity of intention. Then they purified the gates and the wall. Then may we expect comfort, when we are prepared to receive it. To the pure all things are pure; (Tit. 1. 15.) and to them who are s\n\nified, houses and tables, and all their creature-comforts and enjoyments, are sanctified, 1 Tim. 4. 4, 5. This purification was performed, it is proba\n\ble, by sprinkling the water of purification, or of separation, (as it is called, Num. 19. 9.) on themselves and the people, the walls and the gates; the type of the blood of Christ, with which our consciences being purged from dead works, we became fit to serve the living God, (Heb. 9. 14.) and to be his care.

(2.) The princes, priests, and Levites, walked round upon the wall in two companies, with musical instruments, to signify the dedication of it all to God, the whole circuit of it, v. 36. So that, it is likely, the young psalms as they went along, to the praise and glory of God. This procession is here largely described. They had a rendezvous at one certain place, where they divided themselves into two companies. Half of the princes, with several priests and Levites, went on the right hand, Ezra leading their van, v. 36. The other half of the princes and priests, who gave thanks likewise, went to the left hand, Nehemiah bringing up the rear; v. 37. These companies met in the temple, where they joined their thanksgivings, v. 40. The crowd of the people, it is likely, walked on the ground, some within the wall, and others without; one end of this ceremony being to affect them with the mercy they were giving thanks for, and to perpetuate the remembrance of it among
things they made matter of their joy, rejoiced for the priests, and for the Levites that waited, v. 44. They had a great deal of comfort in their ministers, and were glad of them; when they observed how diligently they waited, and what pains they took in their work, one of the need in Levites. Note, The surest way for ministers to recommend themselves to their people, and gain an interest in their affections, is, to wait on their ministry, (Rom. 12. 7.) to be humble and industrious, and to mind their business; when these did so, the people thought nothing too much to do for them, to encourage them. The law had provided them their portions; (v. 44.) but what the better were they for that provision, if what the law appointed them, either was not duly collected, or not justly paid them?

Now, (1.) Care is here taken for the collecting of their dues; they were modest, and would rather lose their right than call for it themselves; the people were many of them careless, and would not bring it unless they were called upon; and therefore some were appointed, whose office it should be to gather into the treasuries out of the fields of the cities, the portions of the law for the priests and Levites, (v. 44.) that their portion might not be lost for want of being demanded. This is a piece of good service, both to ministers and people, that the one may not come short of their maintenance, nor the other of their duty.

(2.) Care is taken, that, being gathered in, it might be duly paid out, v. 45. They gave the singers and porters their daily portion, and above what was due to them as Levites; for we may suppose that when David and Solomon appointed them their work, (v. 45, 46.) above what was required from them as Levites, they settled a fund for their further encouragement. Let those that labour more abundantly in the word and doctrine, be counted worthy of this double honour. As for the other Levites, the priests, he called the holy things they were duly set apart for them, out of which they paid the priests their tithes according to the law. Both are said to be sanctified; when what is contributed, either voluntarily or by law, for the support of religion and the maintenance of the ministry, is given with an eye to God and his honour, it is sanctified, and shall be accepted of him accordingly, and it will cause the blessing to rest on the house, and all that is in it, Ezek. 44. 30.

CHAP. XIII.

Nehemiah, having finished what he undertook for the fencing and filling of the holy city, returned to the king his master, who could not long be without him, as appears, v. 6. But, after some time, he obtained leave to come back again to Jerusalem, to redress grievances, and purge out some corruptions which had crept in in his absence; and very active he was in reforming several abuses, which here we have an account of. 1. He turned out from Israel the Ammonite and Moabite, v. 1-3. With a particular indignation, he expelled Tobiah out of the lodgings he had got in the courts of the temple, v. 4-9. II. He secured the maintenance of the priests and Levites more firmly than it had been, v. 10. 14. III. He restrained the profanation of the sabbath-day, and provided for the due sanctification of it, v. 15. 22. IV. He checked the growing mischief of marrying strange wives, v. 23...31.

1. On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; 2. Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse...
I. Howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing. 3. Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude. 4. And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah: 5. And he had prepared for him a great chamber, whereof at a certain time they had laid the meat-offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, (which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters,) and the offerings of the priests. 6. But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king. 7. And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. 8. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household-stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. 9. Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers; and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat-offering and the frankincense.

It was the honour of Israel, and the greatest preservation of their holiness, that they were a peculiar people, and were so to keep themselves, and not to mingle with the nations, nor suffer any of them to incorporate with them.

Now here we have,
1. The law to this purport, which happened to be read on that day, in the audience of the people, (v. 1.) on the day of the dedication of the wall, as it should seem, for with their prayers and praises they joined the reading of the word; and though it was long after, that the other grievances, here mentioned, were redressed by Nehemiah's power, yet this of the mixed multitude, might be redressed then by the people's own act, for so it seems to be, v. 3. Or, perhaps, it was on the anniversary commemoration of that day, some years after, and therefore said to be on that day. They found a law, that the Ammonites and Moabites should not be naturalized, should not settle among them, nor mixe with them, v. 1. The reason given is, because they had been injurious and ill-natured to the Israel of God, (v. 2.) had not showed them common civility, but sought their ruin, though they not only did them no harm, but were expressly forbidden to do them any. This law we have, with this reason. Deut. 23. 3-5.

II. The people's ready compliance with this law, v. 5. Such is the benefit of the public reading of the word of God: when it is duly attended to, it discovers to us sin and duty, good and evil, and shows us wherein we have erred. Then we profit by the discovery, when by it we are wrought upon to separate ourselves from all that evil to which we had addicted ourselves. They separated from Israel all the mixed multitude, which had of old been a snare to them, for the mixed multitude fell a lusting, Numb. 11. 4. These inmates they expelled, as usurpers and dangerous.

III. The particular case of Tobiah, who was an Ammonite, and to whom, it is likely, the historian had an eye in the recital of that law, (v. 1.) and the reason of it, v. 2. For he had the same enmity to Israel, that his ancestors had, the spirit of an Ammonite, witness his indignation at Nehemiah, (ch. 2. 10.) and his propositions had given to his undertakings, ch. 4. 7. Observe,
1. How basely Eliashib the chief priest took this Tobiah in, to be a lodger even in the courts of the temple. (1.) He was allied to Tobiah, (v. 4.) by marriage first, and then by friendship: his grandson had married Simballat's daughter, v. 28. Probably, some other of his family had married Tobiah's, and (would you think it?) the High Priest thought the alliance a honour to Tobiah, and reckoned of it, though really it was his greatest disgrace, and what he had reason to be ashamed of. It was expressly by the power of the law, that the High Priest should marry one of his own people, else he profanes his seed among his people, Lev. 21. 14. And for Eliashib to contract an alliance with an Ammonite, a servant, (for so he is called,) and to value himself upon it, probably, because he was a wise, and a beautiful man, for a friend, ch. 4. 7. was such a contempt of the crown of his consecration, as one would not wish should be told in Gath, or published in the streets of Askelon. (2.) Being allied to him, he must be acquainted with him. Tobiah, being a man of business, has often occasion to be at Jerusalem, I doubt, upon no good design. Eliashib is fond of his new kinsman, pleased with his company, and not have him admitted as he can; he has his own room for himself stately besides in his own apartment, in the courts of the temple; therefore out of several little chambers which had been used for store-chambers, by taking down the partitions, he contrived to make one great chamber, a state-room for Tobiah, v. 5. A wretched thing it was, [1.] That Tobiah the Ammonite should be entertained with respect in Israel, and have a magnificent reception. [2.] That the High Priest, who should have taught the people the law, and set them a good example, should, contrary to the law, give him entertainment, and make use of the power he had, as overseer of the chambers of the temple for that purpose. [3.] That he should lodge him in the courts of God's house, as if to confron God himself, and this was next to setting up an idol there, as the wicked kings of old had done. [4.] That the Ammonite should lodge in and near his family, and shall one of the worst and vilest of the Ammonites be courted into the temple itself and cared for there. [4.] That he should throw out the store of the temple, to make room for him, and so expose them to be lost, wasted, and embezzled, though they were the portions of the priests, merely to gratify Tobiah. Thus did he corrupt the estate of Levi, as Malachi complained at this time, ch. 2. 8. We are taught by Nehemiah, (v. 3.) But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem. If he had been there, the High Priest durst not have done such a thing. The envious one, who sows tares in God's field, knows how to take an opportunity to do it when the servants sleep, or are absent, Matt. 13. 25. The golden calf was made when Moses was in the mount.

2. Hither came Nehemiah, the chief governor, threw him out, and all that belonged to him, and restored the chambers to their proper use. When he came to Jerusalem, and was informed by the good people, who were troubled at it, what an intimacy was grown between their chief priest, and their chief enemy, it grieved him sore, (v. 7, 8.) that God's house should be so profaned, his enemies so cared for and trusted, and his cause betrayed by him that should be its protector and patron. No-
thing grieves a good man, a good magistrate, more than to see the ministers of God's house do any wicked thing. Nehemiah has power, and he will use it for God. (1.) Tobias shall be expelled; he fears not disabusing him, fears not his resentments, or Eliahshib's, nor excuses himself from interposing in an affair that lay within the jurisdiction of the High Priest, but, like one zealously affected in a good thing, expelled the intruder, by casting forth all his household-stuff: he did not seize it for his own use, but cast it out, that Tobias, who, it is probable, was now absent, when he came again, might have no conveniences for his reception there. Our Saviour thus cleansed the temple, that the house of prayer might not be defiled of them. And thus they that would expel sin out of their hearts, those living temples, must throw out its household stuff, and all the provision made for it, strip it, starve it, and take away all those things that are the food and fuel of lust; this is, in effect, to mortify it. (2.) The temple-stores shall be brought in again, and the vessels of the house of God put in their places; but the chambers must first be sprinkled with the water of baptism, and so cleansed, because they had been profaned. Thus when sin is cast out of the heart by repentance, let the blood of Christ be applied to it by faith, and then let it be furnished with the graces of God's Spirit for every good work.

10. And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers that did the work were fled every one to his field. 11. Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. 12. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn, and the new wine, and the oil, unto the treasuries. 13. And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shele-miah the priest, and Zadok the scribe and of the Levites, Pedaijah; and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful; and their office was to distribute unto their brethren. 14. Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.

Here is another grievance redressed by Nehemiah.

1. The Levites had been wronged: that was the grievance, their portions had not been given them, v. 10. Perhaps Tobiah, when he took possession of the store-chambers, seized the stores too, and, by the connivance of Eliahshib, converted them to his own use. The complaint is not that they were not collected from the people, but that they were not given to the Levites, and the Levites were so modest as not to sue for them; for the Levites and singers were fled every one to his field. This comes in as a reason, either, (1.) Why their payments were withheld; the Levites were non-residents: when they should have been doing their work about the temple, they were at their farms in the country, and therefore the people were little inclined to give them their maintenance. If ministers have not the encouragement they should have, let them consider, whether they themselves be not accessory to the contempt they are under, by the neglect of their business. Or rather, (2.) It is the reason why Nehemiah soon perceived that their dues had been denied them, because he missed them from their posts. Where are the singers? (said Nehemiah,) Why do they not attend according to their office, to praise God? Why, truly they were gone every one to his country-seat, to get a livelihood for themselves and their families out of their grounds, for their profession would not maintain them. A scandalous maintenance makes a scandalous ministry. The work is neglected, because the workmen are. It was not long since the payment of the salaries appointed by the singers was put into a very good method; (ch. 12. 47.) and yet how soon did it fail, for want of being looked after! 2. Nehemiah laid the fault upon the rulers, who should have taken care that the Levites minded their business, and had all due encouragement therein. This is required from christian magistrates, that they use their power to oblige ministers to do their duty, and people to do their's. Nehemiah dealt with the rulers, and called them to an account, Why is the house of God forsaken? (v. 11.) Why are the Levites starved out of it? Why did not you take notice of this, and prevent it? The people forsook the Levites, which was expressly forbidden; (Deut. 12. 19.—14. 27.) and then the Levites forsook their post in the house of God. Both ministers and people, who forsake religious offices, and the services of God, and magistrates too, who do not what they can to keep them to it, will have a great deal to answer for.

3. He delayed not to bring the dispersed Levites to their places again, and set them in their stations, as the word is, v. 11. A Levite in his field (clericus in foro—a minister in a market) is out of his station; God's house is his place, and there let him be found. Many that are careless, would do much better than they do, if they were but called upon, Say to Archiphus, Take heed to thy ministry. 4. He obliged the people to bring in their tithes, v. 12. His zeal provoked their's; and when they saw the Levites at their work, they could not, for shame, withhold their wages any longer, but honestly and cheerfully brought them in. The better church-work is done, the better will church-dues be paid.

5. He provided that just and prompt payment should be made of the Levites' stipends; commissi- sioners were appointed to see to this, (v. 13.) and they were such as were counted faithful, that is, had approved themselves so in other trusts committed to them, and so had purchased to themselves this good degree, 1 Tim. 3. 15. Let men be tried first, and then trusted; tried in the less, and then trusted with more. Their office was to receive up to God, and committed himself and his affairs to him. (1.) He here reflects with comfort and much satisfaction upon what he had done for the house of God and the offices thereof; it pleased him to think that he had been any way instrumental to revive and support religion in his country, and to reform what was amiss. What kindness any show to God will it not return to the own bosoms, in the secret joy they shall have there, not only in having done well, but in having done good, good to many, good to souls. (2.) He here
refers himself to God to consider him for it, not in pride, or as boast ing of what he had done, much less depending upon it as his righteousness, or as if he thought he had made God a debtor to him, but in a humble appeal to him concerning his integrity and hon est intention in what he had done, and a believing expectation, that he would not be unrighteous to forget his work and labour of love, Heb. 6. 10. Observe how modest he is in his requests; he only prays, Remember me, not reward me; Whye not out my good deeds, not Publish them, Record them. Yet he was rewarded, and his good deeds recorded; for God does more than we are able to ask. Note, Deeds done for the house of God and the offices of it, for the support of religion, and the encouragement of it, are good deeds; there is both righteousness and godliness in them, and God will certainly remember them, and not wipe them out; they shall in no wise lose their reward.

15. In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine-presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading ass es; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath-day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. 16. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. 17. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath-day? 18. Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath. 19. And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath-day. 20. So the merchants, and sellers of all kind of ware, lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. 21. Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath. 22. And I commanded the Levites, that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath-day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.

Here is another instance of that blessed reformation in which Nehemiah was so active; he revived sabbath-sanctification, and maintained the authority of the fourth commandment; a very good deed this was for the house of God and the offices thereof; for where holy time is overlooked and made nothing of, it is not strange if all holy duties be neglected. Here is,

1. A remonstrance of the abuse. The law of the sabbath was very strict, and much insisted on; and with good reason, for religion is never in the throne, while sabbaths are trodden under foot. But Nehemiah discovered even in Judah, among those to whom sabbaths were given for a sign, this law wretchedly violated. His own eyes were his in formers; magistrates, who are in charge to discharge their duty aright, will, as much as may be, see with their own eyes, and accomplish a diligent search to find out that which is evil. To his great grief, he perceived there was a universal disregard of the sabbath, that holy day, even in Jerusalem, that holy city, which was so lately dedicated to God. 1. The husbandmen trod their wine-presses, and brought home their corn, on that day, (v. 15.) though there was an express command, that in earning-time, and in harvest-time, they should rest on the sabbaths, (Exod. 34. 21.) because then they might be tempted to take a greater liberty, and to fancy that God would indulge them in it. 2. The carriers loaded their asses with all manner of burdens, and made no scruple of it, though there was a particular proviso in the law for the cattle resting, (Deut. 5. 14.) and that they should bear no burden on the sabbath day, Jer. 17. 21. 3. The hawkers, and peddlars, and petty chapmen, that were men of Tyre, that famous trading city, sold all manner of ware on the sabbath-day; (v. 16.) and the children of Judah and Jerusalem, and of the Gentiles, took of them, and so encourage them making our Father’s day a day of merchandise, contrary to the law of the fourth commandment, which forbids the doing any manner of work. No wonder there was a general decay of religion, and corruption of manners among this people, when they forsook the sanctuary, and profaned the sabbath.

II. The reformation of it. They that are jealous for the honours of God, cannot bear to see his sabbath profaned. Observe in what method this good man proceeded in his zeal for the sabbath.

1. He testified against them who profaned it, (v. 15.) and again, v. 21. He not only expressed his own dislike of it, but endeavoured to convince them that it was a great sin, and showed them the testimony of the word of God against it. He would not punish it, till he had laid open the evil of it. 2. He laid hands on them, and, with the power of his office, took the nobles of Judah to task, and contended with them, v. 17. The greatest of men are not too high to be told of their faults by those whose proper office it is; nay, great men should be, as here, contended with in the first place because of the influence they have upon others. (1.) He charged them with it, Ye do it. They did not carry corn nor sell fish, but, [2.] They contended at them that did, and did not use their power to restrain them, and so made themselves guilty, as those magistrates do, who bear the sword in vain. (2.) They set a bad example in other things; if the nobles allowed themselves in sports and recreations, in idle visits, and idle talk, on the sabbath-day, the men of business, both in city and country, would profane it by their worldly employments, as more justifiable. They must not only maintain the authority of the sabbath, but the necessity of it, and be prepared to show it, and to answer for it. (3.) He reasons the case with them, (v. 18.) and shows them that sabbath-breaking was one of the sins for which God had brought judgments upon them, and that if they did not take warning, but return to the same sins again, they had reason to expect further judgments; Ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath. This Ezra
concluded, If we again break thy commandments, will not thou be angry with us till thou hast con-

3. He took care to prevent the profanation of the sabbath, as one that aimed only at reformation; if he could reform them, he would not punish them, and if he should punish them, it was but that he might reform them. This is an example to magis-
trates to be heirs of restraint, and prudently to use the bit and bridle, that there may be no occasion for the lash.

1. He ordered the gates of Jerusalem to be kept shut from the evening before the sabbath to the morning after, and set his own servants (whose care and interest, he could confide in) to watch them, that no burglars should be brought in on the sabbath-day, nor late the night before, nor early in the morning after, lest sabbath-time should be trespassed upon, v. 19. Those that came in to worship in the courts of the temple, were, no doubt, admitted to pass and repass, but none that came to sell goods, they were forced to lodge without the city, (v. 20.) where, no doubt, they wished the sabbath were gone, that they might sell corn.

2. He threatened those who came with goods to the gates, who pressed hard for entrance, telling them that if they came again, he would cer-
tainly lay hands on them, v. 21. This deterred them from coming any more. Note, If reformers will but put on resolution, more may be done toward the breaking of bad customs than they can imagine. Vice was never in its place, and so good a thing, and will bid defiance to counsel and reproof; but it may be made cowardly, and will be so, when magistrates make themselves a terror to it. The king that sits on the throne of judgment, scatters away all evil with his eyes.

3. He charged the Levites to take care about the due sanctifying of the sabbath, that they should cleanse themselves in the first place, and so give a good example to the people, and that they should some of them come and keep the gates, v. 22. Be-
cause he and his servants must shortly return to court, he would leave this charge with some that might abide by it, that not only when he was present, but in his absence, the sabbath might be sanctified. Then there is likely to be a reformation in this and other instances, when magistrates and ministers refer to them for their example of prudence, of Nehemiah in this matter, are here re-
corded for our imitation; and we have reason to think that the cure he wrought, was lasting; for, in our Saviour's time, we find the Jews in the other extreme, over-scrupulous in the ceremonial part of sabbath-sanctification.

4. He concludes this passage with a prayer, v. 22. In which, observe, (1.) The petitions; Re-
member me, Lord; remember me, that is enough; God's thoughts to us are very precious, Ps. 40. 5. He adds, Spare me; so far is he from thinking that what he had done, did properly merit a reward in strict justice, that he cries earnestly to God to spare him, as Jeremiah, (ch. 15. 15.) Take me not away in thy long-suffering, (ch. 10. 24.) Correct me not in anger. Note, The best saints, even when they do the best actions, stand in need of sparing mercy, for there is not a just man that doth good, and sinneth not. (2.) The plea; According to the greatness (or mul-
titude of thy mercies). Note, God's mercy is what we must depend upon, and not any merit of our own, when we appear before God.

23. In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: 24. And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. 25. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. 26. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did out-
landish women cause to sin. 27. Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marry-
ing strange wives? 28. And one of the sons of Joaia, the son of Eliasib the high priest, was son-in-law to Sanballat the Ho-
rone: therefore I chased him from me.

29. Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Le-
vites. 30. Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business; 31. And for the wood-offering at times appointed, and for the first-fruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

We have here one instance more of Nehemiah's spious zeal for the purifying of his countrymen, a pe-
culiar people to God; that was the thing he aimed at in the use of his power, not the enriching of him self.

I. See here how they have corrupted themselves by marrying strange wives. This was complained of in Ezra's time, and much done towards a refor-
mation, Ezra 9. and 10. But when the unclean spir-
it is cast out, if a watchful eye be not kept upon him, he will re-enter, so he did here; though, in Ezra's time, they that had married strange wives, were forced to put them away, which could not but occasion trouble and confusion in families, yet others would not take warning; Nittimur in vetitum—We still lean toward what is forbidden. Nehemiah, like a good governor, inquired into the state of the families of those that were under his charge, that he might reform what was amiss in them, and so heal the streams, by healing the springs.

1. He inquired whence they had their wives, and found that many of the Jews had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab; (v. 23.) either because they were fond of what was forbidden, or because they hoped by these alliances to strengthen and enrich themselves. See how God by the pro-
phet reproves this, (Mal. 2. 11.) Judah has deals treacherously, and broken covenant with God, the covenant made in Ezra's time, with reference to this very thing; he has profaned the holiness of the Lord, by marrying the daughter, that is, the wor-
shipper, of a strange god.

2. He talked with children, and found they were children of strangers, for their speech betrayed them. The children were bred up with their mo-
ters, and learned of them and their nurses and
servants to speak, so that they could not speak the Jews' language, either not at all, or not readily, or at all, but half in the speech of Ashdod, or Ashdod, or Ashdod, or Ashdod, according as the country was, which the mother was a native of Observed, (1.) Children, in their childhood, learn much of their mothers, Parvis sequitur ventrem—They are prone to imitate their mothers. (2.) If either side be bad, the corrupt nature will incline the children to take after that, which is a good reason why christians should not be unequally yoked. (3.) In the education of children, great care should be taken about the government of their tongues, that they learn not the language of Ashdod, any impious or impure talk, any corrupt communication.

II. See what course Nehemiah took to purge out this corruption, when he discovered how much it had prevailed.

1. He showed them the evil of it, and the obligation he lay under to witness against it. He did not seek an occasion against them, but this was an iniquity to be punished by the judge, and which he must by no means connive at; (v. 27.) "Shall we hearken to you, who endeavour to palliate and excuse it? No, it is an evil, a great evil; it is a transgression against our God, to marry strange wives, and we must do our utmost to put a stop to it; you beg that they may not be divorced from you, but we cannot hearken to you, for there is no other remedy to clear us from the guilt, and prevent the infection." (1.) He quotes a precept, to prove that it was in itself a great sin; and makes them swear to that precept, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, &c. which is taken from Deut. 7. 3. When we would reclaim people from sin, we must show them the sinfulness of it in the glass of the commandment. (2.) He quotes a precedent, to show the pernicious consequences of it, which made it necessary to be animadverted upon by the government; (v. 26.) Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? The falls of great and good men are therefore recorded, that we may take warning by them, to shun the temptations which they were overcome by. Solomon was famous for wisdom, there was no king like him for it; yet, when he married strange wives, his wisdom could not secure him from the snares, nay it departed from him. He did very foolishly. He was loved of God, but that threw him out of God's favour, and went near utterly to extinguish the holy fire of grace in his soul: he was king over all Israel, but that lost him ten of his twelve tribes. You plead that you can marry strange wives, and yet retain the purity of Israelites; but Solomon himself could not; even him did outlandish women cause to sin. Therefore let him that thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall, when he runs upon such a precipice.

2. He showed himself highly displeased at it, that he might awaken them to a due sense of the evil of it. He contended with them; (v. 25.) they offered to justify themselves in what they did, but he showed them how frivolous their excues were, and argued it warmly with them. When he had silenced them, he cursed them, that is, he denounced the judgments of God against them, and showed them what their sins deserved. He then picked out some of them that were more obstinate than the rest, and fit to be made examples, and amute them, that is, ordered them to be beaten by the proper officers according to the law, Deut. 25. 2, 3. To which he added this further mark of in-

famy, he plucked off their hair, or cut or shaved it off; for it may be so understood. Perhaps they had prided themselves in their hair, and therefore he cut it off, to deform and humble them, and put them to shame; it was, in effect, to stigmatise them, at least, for a time. Ezra, in this case, had plucked off his own hair, in holy sorrow for the sin; Nehemiah plucked off their hair, in a holy indignation at the sinners. See the different temperaments of wise, and good, and useful, men, and the divers graces, as well as divers gifts, of the same Spirit.

3. He obliged them not to take any more such wives, and separated those whom they had taken. He cleansed them from all strangers, both men and women, (v. 30.) and made them promise with an oath that they would never do so again, v. 25. Thus did he try all ways and means to put a stop to this mischief, and to prevent another relapse into this disease.

4. He took particular care of the priests' families, that they might not lice under this stain, this guilt. He found, upon inquiry, that a branch of the High Priest's own family, one of his grandsons, had married a daughter of Sanballat, that notorious enemy of the Jews, (ch. 2. 10.—4. 1.) and so had, in effect, twisted interests with the Samaritans, v. 28. How little love had that man either to God or his country, who could make himself, in duty and interest, a friend to him that was a sworn enemy to both. It seems, this young priest would not put away his wife, and therefore Nehemiah chused him from him, deprived him, degraded him, and made him for ever incapable of the priesthood. Josephus says that this expelled priest was Manasses, and that when Nehemiah drove him away, he went to his father-in-law Sanballat, who built him a temple upon mount Gerizzim, like that of Jerusalem, and promised him he should be High Priest in it, and that then was laid the foundation of the Samaritans' pretensions, which continued warm to our Saviour's time; (John 4. 20.) Our fathers worshipped in this mountain. When Nehemiah had thus expelled one that had forfeited the honour of the priesthood, he again posted the priests and Levites, every one in his business, v. 30. It was no loss to them to part with one that was the scandal of their coat; the work would be done better without him. When Judas was gone out, Christ said, Now is theSon of Man glorified, John 13. 30, 31.

Lastly, Here are Nehemiah's prayers on this occasion.

(1.) He prays, Remember them, O my God, v. 29. "Lord, convince and convert them, put them in mind of what they should be and do, that they may come to themselves." Or, "Remember them, to reckon with them for it; remember it against them." If we take it so, this prayer is a prophecy, that God would remember them, and bring them into that defile the priesthood, despise God, and shall be lightly esteemed. Perhaps they were too many and too great for him to deal with, "Lord" (says he) "deal thou with them, take the work into thine own hands."

(2.) He prays, Remember me, O my God, v. 31. The best services done to the public have some day been forgot by those for whom they were done; (Eccl. 9. 15.) therefore Nehemiah refers himself to God, to recompense him, takes him for his Pay-Master, and then doubts not but he shall be well paid. This may well be the summary of our petitions, we need no more to make us happy than this; Remember me, O my God, for good.
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE BOOK OF

ESTHER.

How the providence of God watched over the Jews that were returned out of captivity to their own land, and what great and kind things were done for them, we read in the two foregoing books; but there were many who stayed behind, having not zeal enough for God's house, and the holy land and city, to carry them through the difficulties of a removal thither; these, one would think, should have been excluded the special protection of Providence, as unworthy the name of Israelites; but our God deals not with us according to our folly and weakness. We find in this book, that even those Jews who were scattered in the provinces of the heathen, were taken care of, as well as those who were gathered in the land of Judea, and were wonderfully preserved, when doomed to destruction, and appointed as sheep for the slaughter. Who drew up this story, is uncertain; Mordecai was as able as any man to relate, on his own knowledge, the several passages of it, 

quorum pars magna futuram habeat—is he not a conspicuous part in it; and that he wrote such an account of them as was necessary to inform his people of the grounds of their observing the feast of Purim, we are told, ch. 9. 20, Mordecai wrote these things, and sent them enclosed in letters to all the Jews; and therefore we have reason to think he was the penman of the whole book. It is the narrative of a plot laid against the Jews to cut them all off, and wonderfully disappointed by a concurrence of providences. The most compendious exposition of it will be to read it deliberately all together at one time, for the latter events expound the former, and show what Providence intended in them. The name of God is not found in this book; but the apocryphal addition to it (which is not in the Hebrew, nor was ever received by the Jews into the canon, containing six chapters) begins thus, Then Mordecai said, God has done these things. But though the name of God be not in it, the finger of God is, directing many minute events for the bringing about of his people's deliverance. The particulars are not only surprising and very entertaining, but edifying and very encouraging to the faith and hope of God's people, in the most difficult and dangerous times; we cannot now expect such miracles to be wrought for us, as were for Israel when they were brought out of Egypt, but we may expect that in such ways as God here took to defeat Haman's plot, he will still protect his people. We are told,

I. How Esther came to be queen, and Mordecai to be great at court, who were to be the instruments of the intended deliverance, ch. 1, 2.

II. Upon what provocation, and by what arts, Haman the Amalekite obtained an order for the destruction of all the Jews, ch. 3.

III. The great distress the Jews, and their patriots especially, were in, thereupon, ch. 4.

IV. The defeating of Haman's particular plot against Mordecai's life, ch. 5, 6, 7.

V. The defeating of his general plot against the Jews, ch. 8.

VI. The care that was taken to perpetuate the remembrance of this, ch. 9, 10. The whole story confirms the Psalmist's observation, Ps. 37. 12, 13, The wicked ploteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him, he sees that his day is coming.
I. NOW it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this is Ahasuerus which reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces),

2. That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, 3. In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him; 4. When he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty, many days, even a hundred and fourscore days. 5. And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace; 6. Where were white, green, and blue hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marble. 7. And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king. 8. And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure. 9. Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus.

Which of the kings of Persia this Ahasuerus was, the learned are not agreed. Mordecai is said to have been one of those that were carried captive from Jerusalem, (ch. 2. 6.) whence it should seem, it was one of the first kings of that empire. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it was that Artaxerxes who hindered the building of the temple, who also called Ahasuerus, (Ezra 4. 6, 7.) after his great-grandfather of the Medes, Dan. 9. 1. We have here an account of the vast extent of his dominion. In the time of Darius and Cyrus, there were but 120 provinces, Dan. 6. 1. Now, there were 127, from India to Ethiopia, v. 1. An overgrown kingdom, which, in time, would sink with its own weight, and, as usual, would lose its provinces as fast as it got them. If such vast power be put into a bad hand, it is able to do so much the more mischief; but if it into a good hand, it is not able to do so much the more good; Christ's kingdom is, or shall be, far larger than this, when the kingdoms of the world shall all become his; and it shall be everlasting.

II. Of the great pomp and magnificence of his court. When he found himself fixed in his throne, the pride of his heart rising with the grandeur of his kingdom, he made a most extravagant feast, wherein he put himself out expense and trouble, only to gain the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty, v. 4. This was vain glory, an affectation of pomp to no purpose at all; for none questioned the riches of his kingdom, nor offered to vie with him for honour. If he had showed the riches of his kingdom, and the honour of his majesty, as some of his successors did, in contributing largely toward the building of the temple, and the maintaining of the temple-service, (Ezra 8. 9–7. 22.) it would have turned to a much better account. Two feasts Ahasuerus made: 1. One for his nobles and princes, which lasted 180 days, v. 3, 4. Not that he feasted the same persons, every day, for all that time, but perhaps the nobles and princes of one province one day, of another province another day, while thus he and his feast kept attendants fumed sumptuously every day. The Chaldean paraphrase (one of the additions to the story of this book) says, that there had been a rebellion among his subjects, and that this feast was kept for joy of the quashing of it. 2. Another was made for all the people, both great and small, which lasted seven days; some one day, and some another; and because no house would hold them, they were entertained in the court of the garden, v. 5. The hangings with which the several apartments were divided, and the couches on which they were there pitched for the company, were very fine and rich; so were the beds or benches on which they sat, and the pavement under their feet, v. 6. Better is a dinner of herbs with quietness, and the enjoyment of one's self and a friend, than this banquet of wine, with all the noise and tumult that must needs attend it.

III. Of the good order which, in some respects, was kept by this king, notwithstanding. We do not find this like Belshazzar's feast, in which dunghill-gods were praised, and the vessels of the sanctuary profaned, Dan. 5, 3, 4. Yet the Chaldean paraphrase says, that the vessels of the sanctuary were used in this feast, to the great grief of the pious Jews. It was not like Herod's feast, which reserved a prophet's head for the last dish.

Two or three things may gather from the account here given of this feast, which are laudable.

1. That there was no forcing of healths, nor urging of them. The drinking was according to the law, probably, some law lately made; none did compel, nor by a continual proposing of it; (as Josephus explains it;) they did not send the glass about, but every man drank as he pleased, (v. 8.) so that if there were any that thought it was their own fault, a fault which few would commit, when the king's order put an honour upon sobriety. This caution of a heathen prince, even then when he would show his generosity, may shame many who are called Christians, who think they do not sufficiently show their good housekeeping, nor bid their friends welcome, unless they make them drink, and, under pretence of spending the health round, send the sin round, and death with it. There is a woe to them that do so; let them read it and tremble, Hab. 2. 15, 16. It is robbing men of their reason, their richest jewel, and making them fools, the greatest wrong that can be.
10. On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, 11. To bring Vashti the queen before the king, with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on. 12. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him. 13. Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment:) And the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the kingdom;) 15. What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains? 16. And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. 17. For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath. 19. If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, that Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she. 20. And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small. 21. And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan: 22. For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house; and that it should be published according to the language of every people.

We have here a dapp to all the mirth of Ahasuerus's feast; it ended in heaviness, not, as Job's children's feast, by a wind from the wilderness, not, as Beelshazzar's, by a hand-writing on the wall, but by his own folly. An unhappy falling-out there was, at the end of the feast, between the king and queen, which broke off the feast abruptly, and sent the guests away silent and ashamed.

I. It was certainly the king's weakness, to send for Vashti into his presence, when he was drunk, and in company with abundance of gentlemen, many of whom, it is likely, were in the same condition. When his heart was merry with wine, nothing would serve him, but Vashti must come, well-dressed as she was in her crown on her head, that the princes and people might see what a handsome woman she was. (v. 10, 11.) Hereby, 1. He dishonoured himself as a husband, who ought to protect, but by no means to expose, the modesty of his wife, who ought to be to her a covering of the eyes, (Gen. 20. 16.) not to uncover them. 2. He diminished himself as a king, in commanding that from his wife, which she might refuse, much to the honour of her virtues. It was against the custom of the Persians for the women to appear in public, and he put a great hardship upon her, when he did not court, but command, her to do so uncouth a thing, and make her a show. If he had not been put out of the possession of himself by drinking to excess, he would not have done such a thing, but have been angry at any one that should have mentioned it. When the wine is in, the wit is out, and men's reason departs from them. II. However, perhaps it was not her wisdom to deny him: (v. 12.) she refused to come; though he sent his command by seven honourable messengers, and publicly, and Josephus says, sent again and again, yet she persisted in her denial. Had she come, while it was evident that she did it in pure obedience, it would have been no reflection upon her modesty, nor a bad example. The thing was not in itself sinful, and therefore to obey had been more her honour than to be so precise. Perhaps she refused in a haughty manner, and then it was certainly evil; she scorned to come at the king's commandment. What a mortification was this to him! While he was showing the glory of his kingdom, he showed the reproach of his family, that he had a wife that would not do as he desired. So was the passion between yoke-fellows bad enough at any time, but before company they are very scandalous, and occasion blushing and unceasing. III. The king, thereupon, grew outrageous. He that had rule over 127 provinces, had no rule over his own spirit, but his anger burned in him, v. 12. He had consulted his own comfort and credit more, if he had stilled her resentment and carried on the affair his wife gave him, and turned it off with a jest. IV. Though he was very angry, he would not do any thing in this matter, till he advised with his privy-counsellors; as he had seven chamberlains to
execute his orders, who are named, (v. 10.) so he had seven counsellors to direct his orders. The greater power a man has, the greater need he has of advice, that he may not abuse his power. Of these counsellors it is said, that they were learned men, and had been appointed for this service; that they were wise men, for they knew the times; and that the king put great confidence in them, and honour upon them, for they saw the king’s face and sat first in the kingdom, v. 13, 14. In the multitude of such counsellors, there is safety. Now here is, 1. The question proposed to this cabinet-council; (v. 15.) What shall we do to the queen Vashti, according to law? Observe, (1.) Though it was the question of the king, we see its counsellors gave the advice. (2.) Though the king was very angry, yet he would do nothing but what he was advised was according to law.

2. The proposal which Memucan made, that Vashti should be divorced for her disobedience. Some suggest that he gave this severe advice, and the rest agreed to it, because they knew it would please the king, would gratify both his passion now, and his appetite afterward. But Josephus says that, on the contrary, he had a strong affection for Vashti, and would not have put her away for this offence, if he could legally have passed it by. And then we must suppose Memucan, in his advice, to have had a sincere regard to justice and the public good.

(1.) He shows what would be the bad consequences of the queen’s disobedience to her husband, if he were passed by and not avenged upon; that it would imbolden other wives both to disobey their husbands, and to domineer over them. Had this unhappy falling out between the king and his wife, wherein she was conqueror, been private, the error had remained with themselves, and the quarrel might have been composed privately between themselves; but it happening to be public, and perhaps the ladies that were now feasting with the queen, having showed themselves pleased with her refusal, her bad example would be likely to have had a bad influence upon all the families of the kingdom; if the queen must have her humour, and the king must submit to it, (since the houses of private persons commonly take their measures from the courts of princes, the wives would be haughty and imperious, and would scorn to obey their husbands, and the poor despised husbands might fret at it, but could not help themselves, for the contention of a wife are a continual drudging; Prov. 19. 13.—27. 15. and see Prov. 21. 9.—25. 24. When wives despise their husbands, whom they ought to reverence, (Eph. 5. 33.) and contend for dominion over those to whom they ought to be in subjection, (1 Pet. 3. 1.) there cannot but be continual guilt and grief, confusion and every evil work. And great ones must take heed of setting copies of this kind, v. 16—18.

(2.) He shows what would be the good consequence of a decree against Vashti, that she should be divorced. We may suppose, before they proceeded to this extremity, they sent to Vashti to know if she would yet submit, cry Peccavi—I have done wrong, and ask the king’s pardon, which if she had done, the mischief of her example would have been effectually prevented; but she would not have been staid; but, it is likely, she continued obstinate, and insisted upon it as her prerogative to do as she pleased, whether it pleased the king or no; and therefore they gave this judgment against her, that she come no more before the king, and this judgment so ratified, as never to be reversed, v. 19. The consequence of this, it was hoped, would be, that the wives would give to their husbands honour, even the wives of the great, notwithstanding their own greatness, and the wives of the small, notwithstanding the standing of the husband’s meanness, v. 20. And thus every man would bear rule in his own house, as he ought to do, and, the wives being subject, the children and servants would be so too. It is the interest of states and kingdoms, to provide that good order be kept in private families.

3. The edict that passed, according to this proposal, signifying that the queen was divorced for contempt, according to the law, and that if other wives were, in like manner, unurtful to their husbands, they must expect to be in like manner disgraced; (v. 21, 22.) were they better than the queen? Whether it was the passion, or the policy, of the king, that was served by this edict, God’s providence served its own purpose by it, which was, to make way for Esther to the crown.

CHAP. II.

Two things are here recorded in this chapter, which were working toward the deliverance of the Jews from Haman’s conspiracy. 1. The advance of Esther to be queen instead of Vashti. Many others were candidates for the honour, (v. 1—4.) but Esther, an orphan, a captive Jew, (v. 5—7.) recommended herself to the king’s chamberlain first, (v. 8—11.) and then to the king, (v. 12—14.) who made her queen; (v. 16, 17.) "The good service that Mordecai did to the king, in discovering a plot against his life, v. 21—23.

1. After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her. Then said the king’s servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king: 3. And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hegai the king’s chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them: 4. And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king, and he did so. 5. Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. 6. Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. 7. And he brought up Hadassah (that is Esther) his uncle’s daughter; for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead took for his own daughter. 8. So it came to pass, when the king’s commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king’s house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. 9. And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and
he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidsens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women. 10. Esther had not showed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not show it. 11. And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her. 12. Now, when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women,) 13. Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her, to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house. 14. In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she was called by name. 15. Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed: and Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her. 16. So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. 17. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. 18. Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts according to the state of the king. 19. And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate. 20. Esther had not yet showed her kindred nor her people, as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

How God put down one that was high and mighty, from her seat, we read in the chapter before, and are now to be told how he exalted one of low degree, as the virgin Mary observes in her song, (Luke 1. 52.) and Hannah before her, 1 Sam. 2. 4. 8. Vashti being humbled for her height, Esther is advanced for her humility. Observe, 1. The extravagant course that was taken to please the king with another wife instead of Vashti. Josephus says, that when his anger was over, he was exceedingly grieved that the matter was carried so far, and he had never heard of Vashti, but that, by the constitution of the government, the judgment was irrevocable; that, therefore, to make him forget her, they contrived how to entertain him first with a great variety of concubines, and then to fix him to the most agreeable of them all for a wife, instead of Vashti. The marriages of princes are commonly made by policy and intrigue, for the elevation or preservation of the strengthening of their alliances; but this must be made partly by the agreeableness of the person to the king's fancy, whether she were rich or poor, noble or ignoble. What pains were taken to humour the king! As if his power and wealth were given him for no other end, than that he might have all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurableness and voluptuousness! though, at the best, they are but dress and dregs in comparison with divine and spiritual pleasures. 1. All the provinces of his kingdom must be searched, for fair young virgins, and officers appointed to choose them, v. 3. 2. A house (a seraglio) was prepared on purpose for them, and a person appointed to have the charge of them, to see that they were well provided for. 3. No less than twelve months were allowed them for their purification, and one of them, at least, who were brought out of the country, that they might be very clean, and perfumed, v. 12. Even those who were the master-pieces of nature, must yet have all this help from art, to recommend them to a vain and carnal mind. 4. After the king had once taken them to his bed, they were made recusals ever after, except the king pleased at any time to send for them; (v. 14.) they were looked upon as secondary wives, were maintained by the king accordingly, and might not marry. We may see, by this instance, to what absurd practices those came, who were destitute of divine revelation, and who, as a punishment for their idolatry, were given up to vile affections; having broken through that law of creation, which requires from God his own image, they brake through another law, which was founded upon his image, one man and one woman. See what need there was of the gospel of Christ to purify men from the lusts of the flesh, and to reduce them to the original institution. Those that have learned Christ, will think it a shame even to speak of such things as these which were done of them, not only in secret, but avowedly.

II. The overruling providence of God, thus bringing Esther to be queen. Had she been first recommended to Ahasuerus for a wife, he would have rejected the motion with disdain. But when she comes in her turn, after several others, and it was found that though many of them were ingenious and discreet, graceful and agreeable, yet Esther excelled them all, way was made for her, even her rivals were checked by her; she was recommended to honours consequent thereupon. It is certain, as Bishop Patrick says, that those who suggest that she committed a great sin, to come at this dignity, do not consider the custom of those times and countries. Every one that the king took to his bed, was married to him, and was his wife of a lower rank, as Hagar was Abraham's; so that if Esther had not been made queen, the sons of Jacob need not say that he dealt with their sister as with a harlot. Concerning Esther, we must observe,
1. Her original and character, (1.) She was one of the children of the captivity; a Jewess, and a sharer with her people in their bondage. Daniel and his fellows were advanced in the land where they were captives; for they were of those whom God sent thither for their good, Jer. 24. 5. (2.) She was an orphan, her father and mother were both dead; (v. 7.) but when they had forsaken her, then the Lord took her up, Ps. 27. 10. When those whose unhappiness it is to be thus deprived of their parents, in their childhood, yet afterwards come to be eminently pious and prosperous, we ought to take notice of it to the glory of that God, and his grace and providence, who has taken it amply to her honour, to show he is a Father of the fatherless. (3.) She was a beauty, fair of form, good of countenance, so it is in the margin, v. 7. Her wisdom and virtue were her greatest beauty, but it is an advantage to a diamond to be well set. (4.) Mordecai, her cousin-german, was her guardian, brought her up, and took her for his own daughter. The LXX say, that he designed to make her his wife; if that were so, he was to be praised that he would have taken her for himself in his honour, to show he was a Father of the fatherless. Let God be acknowledged in raising up friends for the fatherless and motherless; let it be an encouragement to that pious instance of charity, that many who have taken care of the education of orphans, have lived to see the good fruit of their care and pains, abundantly to their comfort. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that this Mordecai is the same with that mentioned, Ezra 2. 2. who went up to Jerusalem with the first fruits of the people, until the building of the temple was stopped, and then went back to the Persian court, to see what service he could do them there. Mordecai being Esther's guardian or pre-parent, we are told, [1.] How tender he was of her, as if she had been his own child; (v. 11.) he walked before her door every day, to know how she did, and wait the interest of her. Let those whose relations are thus cast upon them by Divine Providence, be thus kindly affectioned to them, and solicitous for them. [2.] How respectful she was to him, though in relation she was his equal, yet in age and dependence being his inferior, she honoured him as her father, did his commandments, v. 20. This is an example to orphans; if they fall into the hands of those who love them and take care of them, let them make such use of them, and with the less obligation of them, their guardians were, in duty, to provide for them, the more obliged they are, in gratitude, to honour and obey their guardians. Here is an instance of Esther's obsequiousness to Mordecai that she did not show her people or her kindred, because Mordecai had charged her that she should not, v. 10. He did not bid her deny her country, nor tell a lie to conceal her parentage; if he had, she must not have been an orphan, but a child of her Guardian. Yet so prudently, Providence sometimes raiseth up the posterity of the disobedient and set them among princes, 1 Sam. 2. 8. (1.) The king's chamberlain honoured her, (v. 9.) and was ready to serve her; wisdom and virtue will gain respect. They that make sure God's favour, shall find favour with man too, as far as it is good for them. All that looked upon Esther, admired her, (v. 13.) and concluded that she was the lady that would win the prize; and she did win it. (2.) The king himself fell in love with her. She was not so-

licentious, as the rest of the maidens were, to set her self off with artificial beauty; she required nothing but just what was appointed her; (v. 15.) and yet she was most acceptable. The more natural beauty is, the more agreeable. The king loved Esther above all the women, v. 17. Now he needed not to make any further trials, or take time to deliberate; he is soon determined to set the royal crown upon her head, and make her queen, v. 17. This was done in his seventh year; (v. 16.) Vashti was divorced in his third year, (ch. 1. 3.) so that he was four years without a queen.

Notice is taken, [1.] Of the honours the king put upon Esther. He graced the solemnity of her coronation with a royal feast, (v. 18.) at which perhaps Esther and compliance with the king, made a public appearance, which Vashti refused to do; that she might have the praise of obedience in the same instance in which the other incurred the blot of disobedience. He also granted a release to the provinces, either a remittance of the taxes in arrear, or an act of grace for criminals; as Pilate, at the feast, released a prisoner. This was to add to the joy. [2.] Of the deference Esther continued to pay to her former guardian; she still did the commandment of Mordecai, as when she was brought up with him, v. 20. Mordecai sat in the king's gate, that was the height of his preferment, he was one of the porters, or door-keepers, of the court; whether he had this place before, or Esther obtained it for him, we are not told; but there he sat contentedly, and aimed no higher; and yet Esther, who was advanced to the throne, was observant of due reverence to him, an evidence of an humble and grateful disposition; that she had a sense of his former kindnesses, and his continued wisdom; it is a great ornament to those that are advanced, and much to their praise, to remember their benefactors, to retain the impressions of their good education, to be diffident of themselves, willing to take advice, and thankful for it.

21. In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. 22. And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen, and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name. 23. And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the Chronicles before the king.

This good service which Mordecai did to the government, in discovering a plot against the life of the king, is here recorded, because the mention of it will again occur to his advantage. No step is yet taken toward Haman's design of the Jews' destruction, but several steps are taken toward God's design of their deliverance, and this for one. God now gives Mordecai an opportunity of doing the king a good turn, that he might have the fairer opportunity of discerning the Jews a good turn was an evidence of an humble and grateful disposition; that she had a sense of his former kindnesses, and his continued wisdom; it is a great ornament to those that are advanced, and much to their praise, to remember their benefactors, to retain the impressions of their good education, to be diffident of themselves, willing to take advice, and thankful for it.

2. Her preferment. Who would have thought that a Jew, a captive, an orphan, was born to be a queen! a Jewess, and a monarch! Yet so prudently, Providence sometimes raiseth up the posterity of the disobedient and set them among princes, 1 Sam. 2. 8. (1.) The king's chamberlain honoured her, (v. 9.) and was ready to serve her; wisdom and virtue will gain respect. They that make sure God's favour, shall find favour with man too, as far as it is good for them. All that looked upon Esther, admired her, (v. 13.) and concluded that she was the lady that would win the prize; and she did win it. (2.) The king himself fell in love with her. She was not so-
3. Mordecai got notice of their treason, and, by Esther's means discovered it to the king, hereby confirming her in, and recommending himself to, the king's favour. How he came to the knowledge of it does not appear; whether he overheard their discourse, or they offered to draw him in with them, so it was, that the thing was known to him; this ought to be a warning against all traitors and sedi-
tious practices: though they presume upon secrecy, a bird of the air shall carry the voice. Mordecai, as soon as he knew it, caused it to be made known to the king; which ought to be an instruction and example to all that would be found good subjects, not to conceal any bad design they know of against the prince or the public peace, for it is making a confederacy with public enemies.

3. The traitors were hanged, as they deserved, but not till it was, upon search, fully proved against them, (v. 23.) and the whole matter was recorded in the king's journals, with a particular remark, that Mordecai was the man who discovered the treason. He was not rewarded presently, but a book of remembrance was written. Thus with respect to these no servile, though the public compense is adjourned till the resurrection of the just, yet an account is kept of their work of faith and labour of love, which God is not unrighteous to forget, Heb. 6. 10.

CHAP. III.

A very black and mournful scene here opens, and which threatens the ruin of all the people of God. Were there not some such dark nights, the light of the morning would not be so welcome. 1. Haman is made the king's favorite, v. 1. II. Mordecai refuses to give his honour he demanded, v. 2. 4. III. Haman, for his sake, vows to be revenged upon all the Jews, v. 5, 6. IV. He, upon a malicious suggestion, obtains an order from the king to have them all massacred upon a certain day, v. 7. 13. V. This order is dispursed through the kingdom, v. 14, 15.

1. A FTER these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Ham-
medatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him. 2. And all the king's ser-
vants, that were in the king's gate, bowed and reverenced Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him: but Mor
decai bowed not, nor did him reverence. 3. Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's command-
ment? 4. Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew. 5. And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. 6. And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had showed him the people of Morde-
cai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

Here we have,
1. Haman advanced by the prince, and adored thereupon, by the people. The prince had lately laid Esther in his bosom, but she had no such inter-
rest in him, as to get her friends preferred, or to prevent the preferring of one, who, she knew, was an enemy to her people. When those that are good, become great, they still find that they cannot do good, nor prevent mischief as they would. This Haman was an Agagite, an Amalekite, says Jose-
phus, presiding over the ancient people of Agag, an an-
omous name of the princes of Amalek, that appears, Numb. 24. 7. Some think that he was, by birth, a prince, as Jehoiakim was, whose seat was set above the rest of the captive kings, (2 Kings 25. 28.) as Haman's here was, v. 1. The king took a fancy to him, (princes are not bound to give reasons for their favours,) made him his favorite, his confidant, his prime minister of state. Such a commanding influ-
ence the court then had, that (contrary to the proverb) whom it blessed, the country blessed too; for all men adored this rising sun, and the king's servants were particularly commanded to bow before him, and to do him reverence, (v. 2.) and they did so. I wonder what the king saw in Haman, that was commendable or meritorious; it is plain that he was not a man of true justice, of any true courage, or steady conduct, but greedy, passionate, and revengeful; yet was he promoted, and caressed, and there was none so great as he. Princes' darlings are not always worthies.
2. Mordecai adhering to his principles with a bold and daring resolution, and therefore refusing to reverence Haman, as the rest of the king's ser-
vants did, v. 2. He was urged to it by his friends, who reminded him of the king's commandment, and consequently of the danger he incurred, if he refused to comply with it; it was as much as his life was worth, especially considering Haman's insolu-
ence, v. 5. They shake daily to him, to persuade him to conform; but all in vain, he hearkened not to them, but told them plainly that he was a Jew, and could not in conscience do it: doubtless, his re-
fusal, when it came to be taken notice of, and made the subject of discourse, was contrived and attributed to pride and envy, that he would not pay respect to Haman, because, on the score of his alliance to Es-
ther, he was not himself as much promoted; or to a factious seditious spirit, and a disaffection to the king and his government; those that would make the best of it, looked upon it as his weakness, or his want of breeding, called it a humour, and a piece of affected singularity; it does not appear that any one scrupled it, except Mordecai: and yet his refusal was pious, conscientious, and pleasing to God, for the religion of a Jew forbade him, 1. To give such extrava-
gant honours as were required, to any morta-
man, especially so wicked a man as Haman was In the apocryphal chapters of this book, (ch. 12. 12-14.) Mordecai is brought in, thus appealing to God in this manner, 'Thou knowest, O Lord, that I was neither in contempt nor pride, nor for any a-
sire of glory, that I did not bow down to proung Ham-
man, for I could have been content with good wa-
for, for the salvation of Israel, to kiss the soles of his feet; but I did this, that I might not profane the glory of man above the glory of God, neither will I wor-
ship any but thee. 2. He especially thought that a piece of injustice to his people, gave him such honour to an Amalekite that he ought to be revenged on him, whom God had sworn that he would have perpetual war, (Exod. 17. 16.) and concerning which he had given that solemn charge, (Deut. 25. 17.) Remem-
ber what Amalek did. Though religion does by no means destroy good manners, but teaches us to render honour to whom honour is due, yet it is the character of a citizen of Zion, that not only in his
heart, but in his eyes, such a vile person as Haman was, is contemned, Ps. 15, 4. Let those who are governed by principles of conscience, be steady and resolute, however censured or threatened, as Mordecai was.

III. Haman meditating revenge. Some that hoped thereby to curry favour with Haman, took notice to him of Mordecai’s rudeness, waiting to see whether he would bend or break, v. 4. Haman then observ’d it himself, and was full of wrath, v. 5. A reck and hum bug Haman would have slighted the affront, and have said, “Let him have his humour; what am I the worse for it?” But it makes Haman’s proud spirit rage, and fret, and boil, within him, so that he becomes uneasy to himself and all about him. It is soon resolved that Mordecai must die. The head must off, that will not bow to Haman; if he cannot have his honours, he will have his blood.

It is as penal, in this court, not to worship Haman, as it was, in Nebuchadnezzar’s, not to worship the golden image which he had set up. Mordecai is a person of quality, in a post of honour, and own cousin to the queen; and yet Haman thinks his life nothing towards a satisfaction for the affront, thousands of innocent and valuable lives must be sacrificed to his indignation; and therefore he vows the destruction of all the people of Mordecai, for his sake, because his being a Jew, was the reason why he did not reverence Haman. Herein appears Haman’s intolerable pride, insatiable cruelty, and the ancient antipathy of an Amalekite to the Israel of God. Saul the son of Kish, a Benjamite, spared Agag, but Mordecai the son of Kish, a Benjamite, (ch. 2. 5.) shall find no mercy with this Agagite, whose design is, to destroy all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, (v. 6.) which, I suppose, would include those that were returned to their own land, for that was now a province of his kingdom. Come and let us cut them off from being a nation, Ps. 83. 4. Nero’s barbarous wish is, that they had all but one neck.

7. In the first month, (that is the month Nisan,) in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman, from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is the month Adar. 8. And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people, neither keep they the king’s laws, therefore it is not for the king’s profit to suffer them.

9. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed; and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king’s treasuries. 10. And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews’ enemy. 11. And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee. 12. Then were the king’s scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king’s lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province, according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king’s ring. 13. And the letters were sent by posts into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. 14. The copy of the writing, for a commandment to be given in every province, was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day. 15. The posts went out, being hastened by the king’s commandment; and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.

Haman values himself upon that bold and daring thought, which, he fancied, well became his great spirit, of destroying all the Jews; an undertaking worthy of its author, and which, he promised himself, would perpetuate his memory. He doubts not but to find desperate and bloody hands enough to cut all their throats, if the king would but give him leave; how he obtained leave, and commission to do it, we are here told. He had the king’s ear, let him alone to manage his purposes.

1. He makes a false and malicious representation of the Jews, and their character, to the king, v. 8. The enemies of God’s people could not give them such bad treatment as they do, if they did not first give them a bad name. He would have the king believe, 1. That the Jews were a despicable people, and that it was not for his credit, to harbour them. A certain people there is, without name, as if nobody knew whence they came, and why they were there: “They are not incorporated, but scattered abroad and dispersed into all the provinces as fugitives and vagabonds on the earth, and inhabit in all countries, the burthen and scandal of the places where they live.” 2. That they were a dangerous people, and that it was not safe to harbour them. “They have laws and usages of their own, and conform not to the statutes of the kingdom, and the customs of the country; and therefore may be looked upon as affected to the government, and likely to infect others with their singularities, which may end in a rebellion.” It is no new thing for the best of men to have such invidious characters as these, given of them; if it be no sin to kill them, it is no sin to believe them.

2. He bids high for leave to destroy them all, v. 9. He knew there were many that hated the Jews, and would willingly fall upon them, if they might but have a commission; “Let it be written therefore, that they may be destroyed; give but orders for a general massacre of all the Jews, and Haman will undertake it shall be easily done;” if the king will gratify him in this matter, he will make him a present of ten thousand talents, which shall be paid into the king’s treasuries. This, he thought, would be a powerful inducement to the king to consent, and would obviate the strongest objection against him, which was, that the government must needs sustain loss in its revenues, by the destruction of so many of its subjects; so great a sum, he hoped, would be equivalent for that. Proud and malicious
men will not mind the expenses of their revenge, nor spare any cost to gratify it; yet, no doubt, Haman knew how to reimburse himself out of the spoil of the Jews, which his janizaries were to seize for him, (v. 13.) and to make them bear the charges of their own ruin; while he himself hoped to be not only a savior, but a gainer by the baleful success of the evil.

III. He obtains what he desired, a full commission to do what he would, with the Jews, v. 10, 11. The king was so inattentive to business, and so bewitched with Haman, that he took no time to examine the truth of his allegations; but was as willing as Haman could wish, to believe the worst concerning the Jews, and therefore he gave them up into his hands. The cup of black wine, the more thine, do unto them as woe methat good unto thee; he does not say, "Kill them, slay them," (hoping Haman's own cooler thoughts would abate the rigour of that sentence, and induce him to sell them for slaves) but "Do what thou wilt with them." And so little did he consider how much he should lose in his tribute, and how much Haman would gain in the spoil, that he gave him withal the ten thousand talents; The silver is thine. Such an implicit confidence likewise he had in Haman, and so perfectly had he abandoned all care of his kingdom, that he gave Haman his ring, his privy-seal, or sign-manual, wherewith to confirm whatever edict he pleased to draw up to this purpose. Miserable is the kingdom that is at the disposal of such a head as this, which has one ear only, and a nose to be led by, neither eyes nor brains, nor scarcely a tongue of its own.

IV. He then consults with his soothsayers to find out a lucky day for the designed massacre, v. 7. The resolve was taken up within the first, in the twelfth year of the king, when Esther had been his wife about five years; some day or other in that year must be pitched upon; and, as if he doubted not, but that Heaven would favour his design, and further it, he refers it to the lot, that is, to the Divine Providence, to choose the day for him; but that, in the decision, proved a better friend to the Jews than to him; for the lot fell upon the twelfth month, so that Mordecai and Esther had eleven months to turn them in, for the defeating of the design; or, if they could not, space would be left for the Jews to make their escape, and shift for their safety. Haman was then in so great a hurry to have the Jews cut off, yet will submit to the laws of his superstition, and not anticipate the supposed fortunate day, no, not to gratify his impatient revenge. Probably, he was in some fear lest the Jews should prove too hard for their enemies; and therefore durst not venture on such a hazardous enterprise, but under the smiles of a good omen. This may shame us, who often acquiesce not in the directions and dispositions of Providence, when they cross our desires and intentions. He that believeth the lot, much more that believeth the promise, will not make haste. But see how God's wisdom serves its own purposes by men's folly: Haman has appealed to the lot, and to the lot he shall go, which, by adjourning the execution, gives judgment against him, and breaks the neck of the plot.

V. The bloody edict is, hereupon, drawn up, signed, and published, giving orders to the militia of every province to be ready against the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and on that day, to murder all the Jews, men, women, and children, and seize their effects, v. 12-14. Had the decree been to banish all the Jews, and expel them out of the king's dominions, it had been severe enough; but the force of so many arrests appeared as if by art of cruelty attempted to be faced as this, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all the Jews; appointing them as sheep, for the slaughter, without showing any cause. No crime is laid to their charge; it is not pretended that they were obnoxious to the public justice, nor is any condition offered, upon performance of which, they might have their lives spared, but die they must, without mercy. Thus have the church's enemies thirsted after blood, the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus, and drunk of it till they have been perfectly intoxicated, (Rev. 17. 6.) yet still, like the horse leech, they cry, Give, give. This cruel order is ratified with the king's seal, directed to the king's lieutenants, and drawn up in the king's name, and yet the king knows not what he does. Plans are sent out with all expedition, copies of the decree to the respective provinces, v. 15. See how restless the malice of the church's enemies is; it will spare no pains, it will lose no time.

VI. The different temper of the court and city, hereupon. 1. The court was very merry upon it; the king and Haman sat down to drink, perhaps to drink confusion to all the Jews. Haman was afraid, lest the king's conscience should smite him for what he had done, and he should begin to wish it undone again; to prevent which, he engaged him to himself, and kept him drinking: this cursed method many take to drown their convictions, and harden their own hearts, and the hearts of others, in sin. 2. The city was very sad upon it, (and the other cities of the kingdom, no doubt, when they had apprehended it,) Most cruel was her deliverance; not only the Jews themselves, but all their neighbours that had any principles of justice or compassion. It grieved them to see their king so abused, to see wickedness in the place of judgment, (Ecc. 3. 16.) to see men that lived peaceably, treated so barbarously; and what would be the consequences of it to themselves, they knew not. But the king and Haman cared for none of these things. Note, It is an absurd and impious thing to indulgence ourselves in mirth and pleasure, when the church is in distress, and the public perplexed.

CHAP. IV.

We left God's Isaac bound upon the altar, and ready to be sacrificed, and the enemies triumphing in the prospect of it; but things here begin to work towards a deliverance, and they begin at the right end. 1. The Jews' friends lay to heart the danger, and lay hands to it, v. 1-14. II Matters are concerted between Mordecai and Esther for the preventing of it. 1. Esther inquires into this case, and receives a particular account of it, v. 5-7. 2. Mordecai urges her to intercede with the king, v. 8. 3. Esther objecteth the danger of addressing the king uncalled, v. 10-12. IV. Mordecai pressed her to venture, v. 13, 14. V. Esther, after a religious fast of three days, promised to do so; (v. 15-17.) and we shall find that it sped well.

1. WHEN Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry; 2. And came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. 3. And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping and wailing: and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. 4. So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved, and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai,
and to take away the sackcloth from him: but he received it not.

Here we have an account of the general sorrow that was among the Jews, upon the publishing of Haman's bloody edict against them. It was a sad time with the church.

1. Mordecai cried bitterly, rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, v. 1, 2. He not only thus vented his grief, but proclaimed it, that all might take notice of it that he was not ashamed to own himself a friend to the Jews, and a fellow-sufferer with them, their brother and companion in their distress; and now declared the miserable and odious soever they were now represented by Haman's faction. It was bravely done, thus publicly to espouse what he knew to be a righteous cause, and the cause of God, even then when it seemed a desperate and sinking cause. Mordecai laid the danger to heart more than any, because he knew that Haman's spite was against him primarily, and that it was for his sake that the rest of the Jews were struck at; and therefore, though he did not repent of what some would call his obstinacy, for he persisted in it, (ch. 5. 9.) yet it troubled him greatly, that his people should suffer for his scruples, which perhaps occasioned some of them to reflect upon him as too precise. But, being able to appeal to God, that what he did, he did from a principle of conscience, he could with comfort remember what his ancient prince, this his prototype, did for him, to wear a sackcloth. God will keep those that are exposed by the tenderness of their consciences. Notice here is taken of a law, that none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth; though the arbitrary power of their kings often, as now, set many a mourning, yet none must come near the king in a mourning dress, because he was not willing to hear the complaints of such. Nothing, but what was gay and pleasant, must appear at court, and every thing that was melancholy, must be banished thence; all in king's palaces wear soft clothing. (Matt. 11. 8.) not sackcloth. But thus to keep out the badges of sorrow, unless they could withal have kept out the causes of sorrow, to forbid sackcloth to enter, unless they could have forbidden sickness and trouble, and death, to enter, was a jest. However, this obliged Mordecai to continue in his distress, only desiring before the gate, not to take his place in the gate.

2. All the Jews in every province laid it much to heart, v. 3. They denied themselves the comfort of their tables, (for they fasted and mingled tears with their meat and drink,) and the comfort of their beds at night, for they lay in sackcloth and ashes. They who, for want of confidence in God, and affection to their own land, had staid in the land of their captivity, when God gave them liberty to be gone, now, perhaps repented their folly, and wished, when it was too late, that they had complied with the call of God.

Esther the queen, upon a general intimation of the trouble Mordecai was in, was exceedinly grieved, v. 4. Mordecai's grief was her's, such a respect did she still retain for him; and the Jews' trouble was her distress; for she knew, she could not forget her relation to them. Let not the greatest think it below them to grieve for the affliction of Joseph, though they themselves be anointed with the chief ointments, Amos 6. 6. Esther sent change of raiment to Mordecai, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness; but, because he would make her sensible of the greatness of his grief, and consequently of the cause of it, he received it not, but was as one that refused to be comforted.

5 Then called Esther for Hattah, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was. 6. So Hattah went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king's gate: 7. And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them: 8. Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to show it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people. 9. And Hattah came and told Esther the words of Mordecai; 10. Again Esther spake unto Hattah, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai; 11. All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. 12. And they told to Mordecai Esther's words. 13. Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews. 14. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? 15. Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer; 16. Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish. 17. So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

So strictly did the laws of Persia confine the wives, especially the king's wives, that it was not possible for Mordecai to have a conference with Esther about this important affair, but divers messages are here carried between them, by Hattah, whom the king had appointed to attend her, and, it seems, he was one that she could confide in. 1. She sent to Mordecai to know more particularly and fully what the trouble was, which he was now lamenting, (v. 5.) and why it was that he would not put off his sackcloth. To inquire thus...
after news, that we may know the beter how to
direct our grieves and joys, our prayers and preses, 
well becomes all that love Sion. If we must weep 
with them that weep, we must know why they weep.

II. Mordecai sent her an authentic account of the 
whole matter, with a charge to her to intercede 
with the king in this matter. Mordecai told her 
all that had happened unto him, (v. 7.) what a 
pique Haman had against him for not bowing to 
him, and by what arts he had procured this edict; 
she sent her also a true copy of the edict, that she 
might see what imminent danger she and her peo 
ples were in, and either find some protector for 
herm or any kindness for the Jewish nation, that 
she should appear now on their behalf, rectify the 
mis-informations with which the king was imposed 
upon, and set the matter in a true light, not doub 
ting but that then he would vacate the decree.

III. She sent her case to Mordecai, that she could 
not, without peril of her life, address the king, and 
that therefore he must put a great hardship upon her, in 
urging her to it; gladly would she wait, gladly 
would she stoop, to do the Jews a kindness, but 
if she must run the hazard of being put to death as a 
malefactor, she might well say, I pray thee, have 
me excused, and find out some other intercessor.
1. The law was express, all knew it; that who 
soever came to the king uncalled, should be put to 
death, unless he was pleased to hold out the golden 
 sceptre, and offer himself as a candidate for 
the king's favors. This made the royal palace 
little better than a royal prison, and the kings 
themselves could not but become morose, and perhaps 
malicious, and so a terror to others, and a burthen 
to themselves. Many have their lives made miserable by their own haughti 
ness and ill-nature. (2.) It was bad for their 
subjects; for what good had of them a king that 
they might never have liberty to apply to for the redres 
s of grievances, and appeal to from the martial judges?
It was the right and interest of the Jews to have the 
king's favor, and the footstool of his throne of grace we may, at 
any time, come boldly, and may be sure of an 
answer of peace to the prayer of faith. We are welcome, 
not only into the inner court, but even into the 
holiest, through the blood of Jesus. (3.) It was 
particularly very uncomfortable for their wives, that 
there was not a proviso in the law to except them, 
who were brave of their bone, and flesh of their flesh. But 
perhaps it was wickedly intended as much 
against them as any other, that the kings might the 
freely enjoy their concubines, and Esther knew it. 
Miserable was the kingdom, when the 
princes framed their laws to serve their lusts.

2. Her case was, at present, very discouraging: 
Providence so ordered it, that, just at this juncture, 
she was under a cloud, and the king's affections 
cooled toward her, for she had been kept from his 
freira thirty days; that her faith and courage 
might be the more tried, and that God's goodness 
in the favour she now found with the king notwithstanding, might shine the brighter. It is probable 
that Haman endeavoured by women, as well as 
wine, to divert the king from thinking of what he 
had done, and then Esther was neglected, from which 
came the more reason to alienate the king, knowing her to be averse to him.

IV. Mordecai still insisted upon it, that, 
whatever hazard she must run, she must apply herself
to the king in this great affair, v. 13, 14. No ex 
cuse will serve, but she must appear an advocate if 
this cause; he suggests to her, 
1. That it was her own cause, for that the decree 
to destroy all the Jews comprehended her; "Think 
not therefore that thou shalt escape in the king's 
house, that the palace will be thy protection, and 
the crown save thy head: no, thou art a Jew, and 
if the rest be cut off, thou wilt be cut off too." It 
was certainly her wisdom rather to expose herself 
to a conditional death from her husband, than to 
certain death from her enemy.

2. That it was a cause which, one way or other, 
would certainly be carried, and which therefore 
she might safely venture in. "If thou shouldest 
decline the service, enlargement and delivery 
will arise to the Jews from another place." This 
was the language of a strong faith, which staggered 
not at the promise when the danger was most 
threatening, but against hope believed in hope. 
Instruments may fail, but God's covenant will not.

3. That if she deserted her friends now, through 
cowardice and unbelief, she would have reason to 
fear that some judgment from heaven would be 
the ruin of her and her family; "Thou and thy fa 
ther's house shall be destroyed, when the rest of 
the families of the Jews shall be preserved." He that 
by sinful shifts will save his life, and cannot find in 
his heart to trust God with it in the way of duty, 
shall lose it in the way of sin.

That Dr. Clarke had an eye to this, in 
bringing her to be queen, "Who knows whether 
thy soul be come to the kingdom for such a time as 
this?" And therefore, (1.) "Thou art bound in 
gratitude to do this service for God and his church,
else thou dost not answer the end of thine eleva 
tion." (2.) "Thou needest not fear miscarrying in 
the enterprise; if God designed thee for it, he will 
bear thee out, and give thee success." Now, [1.] 
it appeared, by the event, that she did come to the 
kidoml that she might be an instrument of the 
Jews' deliverance, so that Mordecai was right in his 
conjecture. Because the Lord loved his people, 
therefore he made Esther queen. There is a wise 
counsel and design in all the providences of God, 
which is unknown to us till it is accomplished, but it 
will prove, in the issue, that they are all intended 
for, and centre in, the good of the church. [2.] 
We are probably to consider, good reason why, she 
should now bestir herself, and do her utmost for 
herself. We should every one of us consider 
for what end God has put us in the place where 
we are, and study to answer that end: and when 
any particular opportunity of serving God and our 
generation offers itself, we must take care that we 
do not let it slip; for we are intrusted with it, that 
we might improve it.

These things Mordecai urges to Esther, and 
some of the Jewish writers, who are fruitful of inven 
tion, add another thing which had happened to him, 
(v. 7.) which he desired she might be told; "that, 
going home the night before, in great heaviness, 
upon the notice of Haman's plot, he met three 
Jewish children coming from school, of whom he 
inquired what they had learned that day; one of 
them told him his lesson. (Prov. 3. 25, 26.) Be 
not afraid of sudden fear; the second told him 
his was, (Isa. 8. 10.) Take counsel together, and it 
shall come to nought; the third told him his was, 
(1sa. 46. 4.) I have made, and I will hear, even 
I will carry, and will deliver you. "O the goodness of 
God," says Mordecai, "who out of the mouth of 
babies and sucklings ordains strength."

37. Esther, let it cost what it cost 
er, to apply herself to the king, but not till she 
and her friends had first applied themselves to God. 
Let them first by fasting and prayer obtain God's
favour, and then she should hope to find favour with the king, v. 15, 16. She speaks here,

1. With the piety and devotion that became an Israelite; she had her eye up unto God, in whose hand the hearts of kings are, and on whom she desired to incline this king’s heart toward her. She went in peril of her life, but would think herself safe, and would be easy, when she had committed the keeping of her soul to God, and had put herself under his protection. She believed that God’s favour was to be obtained by prayer, that his people are a praying-people, and he a prayer-hearing God. She knew it was the practice of good people, in extraordinary cases, to join fasting with prayer, and many of them to join together in both. She therefore,

(1.) Desired that Mordecai would direct the Jews that were in Shushan, to sanctify a fast and call a solemn assembly, to meet in the respective synagogues to which they belonged, and to pray for her, and to keep a solemn fast, abstaining from all set meals and all pleasant food, for three days, and, as much as possible, from all food, in token of their humiliation for sin, and in a sense of their unworthiness of God’s mercies. Those know not how to value the divine favours, who grudge thus much labour, and self-denial, in the pursuit of it.

(2.) She promised that she and her family would sanctify this fast in her apartment of the palace, for she might not come to their assemblies; her maids were either Jews, or so far proselytes, that they joined with her in her fasting and praying.

Here is a good example of a mistress praying with her maids; and it is worthy to be imitated. Observe also, That those who are confined to privacy, may join their prayers with those of the solemn assemblies of God’s people; they that are absent in body, may be present in spirit. Those who desire, and have, the prayers of others for them, must not think that that will excuse them from praying for themselves.

2. With the courage and resolution that became a queen; “When we have sought God in this matter, I will go in unto the king to intercede for my people; I know it is not according to the king’s law, but it is according to God’s law; and therefore, whatever comes of it, I will venture, and not count my life dear to me, so that I may serve God and his church, and if I perish, I perish, I cannot lose my life in a better cause. Better do my duty, and die for my people, than shrink from my duty, and die with them;” she reasons as the lepers, (2 Kings 7. 4.) “If I sit still, I die; if I venture, I may live, and be the life of my people: if the worst come to the worst,” as we say, “I shall but die.” Nothing venture, nothing win. She said not this in despair or passion, but in a holy resolution to do her duty, and trust God with the issue: welcome his holy will. In the apocryphal part of this book, (ch. 13. and 14.) we read of the prayer of Esther upon this occasion, and both of them very particular and pertinent. In the sequel of the story, we shall find that God said not to this seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.

CHAP. V.

The last news we had of Haman, left him in his cups, ch. 3. 15. Our last days of queen Esther left her in tears, fasting and praying. Now this chapter begins in

I. Esther in her joys; smiled upon by the king, and honoured with his company at her banquet of wine, v. 1-7. II. Haman upon the fret, because he had not Mordecai’s reverent salutation, and with great indignation setting up a gallows for him, v. 9. 14. Thus they that sow in tears, shall reap in joy, but the triumphing of the wicked is short.

1. Now it came to pass on the third day that Esther put on her royal ap-

parel, and stood in the inner court of the king’s house, over against the king’s house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. 2. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre. 3. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom. 4. And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him. 5. Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared. 6. And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed. 7. Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request is; 8. If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do tomorrow as the king hath said.

Here is,

I. Esther’s bold approach to the king, v. 1. When the time appointed for their fast, was finished, she lost no time, but, on the third day, when the impressions of her devotions were fresh upon her spirit, she addressed the king. When the heart is enlarged in communion with God, it will be imbued with a boldness in doing and suffering for him. Some think that the three days’ fast was only one whole day, and two whole nights, in all which time they did not take any food at all, and that this is called three days, as Christ’s lying in the grave so long is. This exposition is favoured by the consideration, that on the third day the queen made her appearance at court. Resolutions which have difficulties and dangers to break through, should be pursued without delay, lest they cool and slacken: What thou dost, which must be done boldly, do it quickly. Now she put on her royal apparel, that she might the better recommend herself to the king, and lay aside her fast-day clothes. She put on her fine clothes, not to please herself, but her husband; in her prayer, as we find it in the Apocrypha, and in her lover, (Q. 10. 14.) she sheweth the king that she knoweth, Lord, I abhor the sign of my high estate, which is upon my head, in the days wherin I show myself, &c. Let those whose rank obliges them to wear rich clothes, learn hence to be dead to them, and not make them their adorning. She stood in the inner court over against the king, expecting her doom, between hope and fear.

II. The favourable reception which the king gave her. When he saw her, she obtained favour in his sight. The apocryphal author and Josephus
say that she took two maids with her, on one of whom she leaned, while the other bore up her train; that her countenance was cheerful and very amiable, but her heart was in anguish; that the king, lifting up his countenance that shone with majesty, at first, looked very fiercely upon her; whereupon, she grew pale, and fainted, and bowed herself before him, the head of the maid that went with her; but that then God changed the spirit of the king, and, in a fear, he leaped from his throne, took her in his arms till she came to herself, and comforted her with loving words; here we are only told, 1. That he protected her from the law, and assured her of safety, by holding out to her the golden sceptre, (v. 2.) which she thankfully touched the top of the head of the maid that went with her, 2. That he prevailed, like Jacob, she had power with men too. He that will lose his life for God, shall save it, or find it in a better life.

2. That he encouraged her address; (v. 3.) What wilt thou, queen Esther, and what is thy request? So far was he from counting her an offender, that he seemed glad to see her, and desirable to obtain her. (v. 4.) She would not know him, by nothing coming when she was sent for, would not be severe to another for coming when she was not sent for. God can turn the hearts of men, of great men, of those that act most arbitrarily, which way he pleases toward us. Esther feared that she should perish, but is promised that she shall have what she asks for, though it were the half of the kingdom. Note, God in his providence often prevents the fear of those who afraid. 3. What she asked, and what she obtained. (v. 5.) What is thy petition? It shall be granted, (v. 6.) and say, shall not God hear and answer the prayer of the upright, that is despised, and wronged? Shall not God hear and answer the prayer of the upright, that is despised, and wronged? What is your petition? Esther came to a proud imperious man, and came to the God of love and grace; she was not called, we are; the Spirit says, Come, and the bride says, Come. She had a law against her, we have a promise, many a promise, in favour of us, Ask, and it shall be given you. She had no friend to introduce her, or intercede for her, on the contrary, he that was then the king's favourite, was her enemy; the Advocate was her Friend, and the Father, in whom he is well pleased. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace. 3. That all the request she had to make to him, at this time, was, that he would please to come to a banquet which she had prepared for him, and bring Haman along with him, v. 4. 5. Hereby, (1.) She would intimate to him, how much she valued his favour and company. Whatever she had to ask, she desired she have any thing, and would purchase at any rate. (2.) She would try how he stood affected to her; for if he should refuse this, it would be to no purpose, as yet, to present her other request. (3.) She would endeavour to bring him into a pleasant humour, and soften his spirit, that he might with the more tenderness receive the impressions of the complaint she had to make to him. (4.) She would use him, as if she were courteously, to Haman his favourite, and inviting him to come, whose company she knew he loved, and whom she desired to have present when she made her complaint, for she would say nothing of him, but what she durst say to his face. (5.) She hoped, at the banquet of wine, to have a fairer and more favourable opportunity of presenting her petition. Wisdom is profitable to direct how to manage some matters that are hard to deal with.

4. That he readily came, and ordered Haman to come along with him, (v. 5.) which was an indication of the kindness he still retained for her; if he really designed the destruction of her and her people, he would not have accepted of her banquet. There he renewed his kind inquiry, (What is thy petition?) and his generous promise, that it should be granted, even to the half of the kingdom, (v. 6.) a proverbial expression, by which he assured her, that he would deny her nothing in reason. Herod used it, Mark 6. 23.

5. That then Esther thought fit to ask no more than a promise that he would please to accept of another treat, the next day, in her apartment, and Haman with him, (v. 7.) intimating to him, that then she would let him know what the business was. This adjourning of the main petition may be perhaps of a proverbial expression, by which he assured her, that he would deny her nothing in reason. Herod used it, Mark 6. 23.

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This account given of Haman, is a comment upon that of Solomon, (Prov. 21. 24.) Proud and haughty men are marked in proud wrath; never did any man more answer that name than Haman here, in whom pride and wrath have so much the ascendant. See him.

I. Puffed up with the honour of being invited to Esther's feast. He was joyful and glad at heart at it, v. 9. Observe with what a high gust he speaks of it, (v. 12.) how he values himself upon it, and how near he thinks it brings him to the perfection of his ambition, that Esther the queen did let no turn come with the king to the banquet, but his mighty self, and he thought it was because she was exceedingly charmed with his conversation, that the next day she had invited him also to come with the king; none so fit as he to bear the king company. Note, Self-admirers and self-flatterers are really self-deceivers. Haman pleased himself with the fancy that the queen, by this repeated invitation, designed to honour him, whereas really she designed to accuse him, and, in calling him to the banquet, did but call him to the bar. What magnifying glasses do proud men look at their faces in! And how does the pride of their heart deceive them! Obad. 3.

II. Vexing and fretting at the slight that Mordecai put upon him, and thereby made uneasy to himself. He determined upon him, v. 2. What he did, was from a principle of conscience, and therefore he persevered in it, and would not cringe to Haman, nor yet when he had reason to fear him, and Esther herself complimented him. He knew God could and would deliver him and his people from the rage of Haman, without any such mean and sneaking expedients to secure him. He thought, if it be necessary to walk in holy sincerity, may walk in holy security, and go on in their work, not fearing what man can do unto them. He that walks uprightly, walks surely. 2. Haman can as ill bear it as ever; nay, the higher he is lifted up, the more impatient is he of contempt, and the more enraged at it. (1.) It made his own spirit restless, and put him into a grievous agitation; he was full of indignation, (v. 9.) and yet resolved himself, v. 10. Gladly would he have drawn his sword, and run Mordecai through for affronting him thus, but he hoped shortly to see him fall with all the Jews; and therefore, with much ado, prevailed with himself to forbear stabbing him. What a struggle had he in his own bosom between his anger, which required Mordecai's death immediately, (O that I had of his flesh; I cannot be satisfied! Job. 31. 31.) and his conscience, which had determined to wait for the general massacre! Thus thorns and snares are in the way of the froward. (2.) It made all his enjoyments supless. This little affront which he received from Mordecai, was the dead fly which spoiled all his pot of precious ointment; he owned it himself in the presence of his wife and friends, to the everlasting reproach of pride and discontented mind, that and no comfort in his estate, property, and family, as long as Mordecai lived, and had a place in the king's gate, v. 10. 13. He took notice of his own riches and honours, the numerosness of his family, and the high posts to which he was advanced, that he was the darling of the prince, and the idol of the court; and yet all this avails him nothing, as long as Mordecai is unhanged. Those that are supposed to be uneasy, will never want something or other to be uneasy at. Such are proud men, that though they have much to their mind, if they have not all to their mind, it is as nothing to them. The thousandth part of what Haman had, would serve to make a humble modest man as much of a happiness as he expects from this world; and yet Haman complains as passionately as if he had been sunk into the lowest degree of poverty and distress.

III. Meditating revenge, and assisted therein by his wife and his friends, v. 14. They saw how gladly he would dispense with his own resolution, of deferring the slaughter till the time determined by the lot, and therefore advise him to take an earnest and foretaste of the satisfaction he then expected, in the speedy execution of Mordecai; let him have that to pleasur him at the moment; and, having, as he thought, made sure of the destruction of all the Jews, at the time appointed, he will not think scorn, for the present, to lay hands on Mordecai alone. 1. For the pleasing of his fancy, they advise him to get a gallows ready, and have it set up before his own door; that as soon as ever he could get the warrant signed, there might be no delay of the execution, he would not need so much as to stay the making of the gallows. This is very agreeable to Haman, who has the gallows made, and fixed, immediately; it must be fifty cubits high, or as near that as might be, for the greater disgrace of Mordecai, and to make him a spectacle to every one that passed by; and it must be before Haman's door, that all men might take notice it was to the idol of his revenge that Mordecai was sacrificed, and that he might feed his eyes with the sight. 2. For the gaining of his point, they advise him to go early in the morning to the king, and get an order from him for the hanging of Mordecai, which, they doubted not, would be readily granted to one who was so much the king's favourite, and who had so easily obtained an edict for the destruction of the whole nation of the Jews; there needed no feigned suggestion, it was enough if he let the king know that Mordecai, in contempt of the king's command, refused to reverence him. And now we leave Haman to go to bed, pleased with the thoughts of seeing Mordecai hanged the next day, and then going merrily to the banquet, and not dreaming of handselling his own gallows.

CHAP. VI.

It is a very surprising scene that opens in this chapter. Haman, when he hoped to be Mordecai's judge, was made his page, to his great confusion and mortification; and the page was made for his ruin. He is therefore made a witness against himself, and the deliverance of the Jews. 1. The providence of God recommends Mordecai in the night to the king's favour, v. 1-5. 11. Haman, who came to incense the king against him, is employed as an instrument of the king's favour to him, v. 4. 11. III. From Haman's friends read him his doom, which is executed in the next chapter, v. 12-14. And now it appears, that Esther's intercession for her people was happily adjourned, De die in diem—From day to day.

1. On that night could not the king sleep; and he commanded to bring the book of records of the Chronicles; and they were read before the king. 2. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. 3. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him.

How Satan put it into the heart of Haman to contrive Mordecai's death, we read in the fore-
had been done to Mordecai for this; suspecting that this good service had gone unrequited, and, like Pharaoh's butler, remembering it as his fault this day, Gen. 41. 9. Note, The law of gratitude is a law of nature. We ought particularly to be grateful to our iniquities, and not to think their services such debts to us, but that they make us indebted to them. Two rules of gratitude may be gathered from the king's inquiry here. 1. Better honour than nothing: if we cannot, or need not make a recompense to those who have been kind to us, yet let us do them honour, by acknowledging their kindnesses, and owning our obligations to them. 2. Better late than never. If we have long neglected to make grateful return for good offices done us, let us, at length, bethink ourselves of our debts.

V. The servants informed him, that nothing had been done to Mordecai for that eminent service; in the king's gate he sat before, and there he still sat. Note, It is common for great men to take little notice of their inferiors. The king knew not whether Mordecai was preferred or no, till his servants informed him. High spirits take a pride in being careless and unaccountable about those that are below them, and ignorant of their state. The great God takes cognizance of the meanest of his servants, knows what dignity is done them, and what disgrace.

2. Humility, modesty, and self-denial, though, in God's account, of great price, yet commonly hinder men's preferment in the world. Mordecai rises no higher than the king's gate, while God ambitious Haman gets the king's ear and heart; but though the aspiring rise fast, the humble stand fast. Honour makes proud men giddy, but upholds the humble in spirit, Prov. 29. 23. 3. Honour and dignity are rated high in the kings' books. He does not ask, What reward has been given to Mordecai? What money? What estate? But only, What honour? A poor thing, and which, if he had not where to support it, it would be but a burthen. 4. The greatest merits, and the best services, are often overlooked, and go unrewarded; among men: little honour is done to those who best deserve it, are fittest for it, and would do most good with it. See Eccl. 9. 14-16. The acquisition of wealth and honour are usually a perfect lottery, in which they that venture least, commonly carry off the best prize. Nay, 5. Good services are sometimes neglected and overlooked; and, sometimes, while they stood in God's account, it is not to be presumed, that they will not be his protection; Mordecai is, at this time, by the king's edict, doomed to destruction, with all the Jews, though it is owned that he deserved dignity. Those that faithfully serve God, need not fear being thus ill paid.

4. And the king said, Who is in the court? (Now Haman was come into the outer court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.) 5. And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. 6. So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? (Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?) 7. And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, 8. Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear.
and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown-royal which is set upon his head: 9. And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour. 10. Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken. 11. Then took Haman the apparel, and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

It is now morning, and people begin to stir. I. Haman is so impatient to get Mordecai hanged, that he comes early to court, to be ready at the king's levee, before any other business was brought before him, to get a warrant for his execution, (v. 4.) which makes sure that he shall have at the first word. The king would gratify him in a greater thing than that; and he could tell the king, that he was so confident of the justice of his request, and the king's favour to him in it, that he had got the gallows ready; one word from the king would complete his satisfaction.

II. The king is so impatient to have Mordecai honoured, that he sends to know who was in the court that was fit to be employed in it. Word is brought him, that Haman is in the court, v. 5. Let him come in, says the king; the fittest man to be made use of, both in directing and in dispensing the king's favour, and the king knew nothing of any quarrel he had with Mordecai. Haman is brought in immediately, proud of the honour done him, in being admitted into the king's bed-chamber, as it should seem, before he was up; for let the king but give orders for the dignifying of Mordecai, and he will be easy in his mind, and try to sleep. Now Haman thinks he has the fairest opportunity he could wish for, to solicit against Mordecai; but the king's heart is as full as his, and it is fit he should speak first.

III. The king asks Haman, how he should express his favour to one whom he had marked for a favourite. What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour? v. 6. Note, It is a good property in kings, and other superiors, to delight in bestowing rewards, and not to delight in punishing. Parents and masters should take a pleasure in commending and encouraging that, which is good in those under their charge.

IV. Haman concludes that he himself was the favourite intended, and therefore prescribes the highest expressions of honour that could, for once, be bestowed upon a subject. His proud heart presently suggested, To whom will the king delight to do honour more than to myself? “No one deserves it so well as I,” thinks Haman, “nor stands so fair for it.” See how men's pride deceives them. 1. Haman had a better opinion of his merits than there was cause for. He thought none so worthy of honour as himself; it is a foolish thing for us thus to think ourselves the only deserving persons, or more deserving than any other. The deceitfulness of our own hearts appears in nothing so much as in the good counsel we give ourselves of our future performances, against which we should therefore constantly watch and pray. 2. He had a better opinion of his interest than there was reason for. He thought the king loved and valued no one but himself, but he was deceived. We should suspect that the esteem which others profess for us, is not so great as it seems to be, or as we are sometimes willing to believe it; that we may not think too well of ourselves, nor place too much confidence in others.

Now Haman thinks he is carving out honour for himself, and therefore does it very literally, v. 8. 9. Nay, he does it presumptuously, prescribing honours too great to be conferred upon any subject; That he must be dressed in the royal robes, wear the royal crown, and ride the king's own horse; in short, he must appear in all the pomp and grandeur of the king himself, only he must not carry the sceptre, the emblem of power. He must be attended by one of the king's most noble princes, who must be his lacquey, and all the people must be made to take notice of him, and do him reverence; for he must ride in state through the streets, and it must be proclaimed before him, for his honour, and the encouragement of all to seek the ruler's favour, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king doth delight to honour, which had been the same intention with that which was proclaimed before Joseph, Bow the knee; for every good subject will honour those whom the king delights to honour. And shall not every good christian then honour those whom the King of kings delights to honour, and call the saints which are on the earth, the excellent ones.

V. The king confines him with a positive order, that he should immediately go himself, and put all his honours upon Mordecai. Now, the king had but said, as Haman expected, Thou art the man, what a fair opportunity would he have had to do the errand he came on, and to have desired, that to grace the solemnity of his triumphs, Mordecai, his sworn enemy, might be hanged at the same time. But how is he thunder-struck when the king bids him not order all this to be done, but do it to his own will. It is, said he, of all men he hated above all men, and whose ruin he was now designing! Now, it is to no purpose to think of moving any thing to the king against Mordecai, when he is the man whom the king delights to honour. Solomon says, The heart of the king is unsearchable, (Prov. 25. 3.) but it is not unchangeable.

VI. Haman dares not dispute, nor so much as to seem to dislike, the king's order, but with the greatest regret and relucancy imaginable, brings it to Mordecai, who, I suppose, did no more cringe to Haman now than he had done, valuing his counterfeit respect no more than he had valued his concealed malice. The apparel is brought, Mordecai is dressed up, and rides in state through the city, recognized as the king's favourite, v. 11. It is hard to say which of the two put a greater fence with himself; proud Haman, in putting this honour upon Mordecai, or humble Mordecai, in accepting it; the king would have it so, and both must submit. Upon this account, it was agreed to Mordecai, as it was an indication of the king's favour, and gave hope that Esther would prevail for the reversing of the edict against the Jews.

12. And Mordecai came again to the king's gate: but Haman hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered. 13. And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his
friends every thing that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him. 14. And while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.

We may here observe, I. How little Mordecai was puffed up with his advancement. He came again to the king's gate; (v. 12.) he returned to his place, and the duty of it immediately, and minded his business as close as he had done before. Honour is well bestowed on those that are not made proud and idle by it, and will not think themselves above their business.

II. How much Haman was cast down with his disappointment. He could not bear it; to wait upon any man, especially Mordecai, and at this time, when he hoped to have seen him hanged, was enough to break such a proud heart as he had. He hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered with sackcloth, as won himself sack, and in a manner condemned. What harm had it done him to stoop thus to Mordecai? Was he ever the worse for it? Was it not what he himself proposed to be done by one of the king's most noble princes? Why then should he grudge to do it himself? But that will break a proud man's heart, which would not break a humble man's sleep.

III. How his doom was, out of this event, read himself a friendly warning; “If Mordecai be, as they say he is, of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, though but in a point of honour, never expect to prevail against him, for thou shalt surely fall before him,” v. 13. Miserable comforters are they all; they did not advise him to repent, and ask Mordecai's pardon for his bad design against him, but foretell his destiny as fatal and unavoidable. Two things they foresee, 1. That Haman would be disappointed in his enterprise against the Jews: “Thou shalt not prevail, to root out that people; Heaven plainly fights against thee.” 2. That he himself would be destroyed: “Thou shalt surely fall before him. The contest between Michael and the dragon will not be a drawn battle, no, Haman must fall before Mordecai. Two things they ground their prognostications upon. (1.) This Mordecai is of the seed of the Jews, feeble Jews, their enemies sometimes called them, but formidable Jews, they sometimes found them. They are a holy seed, a praying seed, in covenant with God, and a seed that the Lord hath all along blessed, and therefore let not their enemies expect to triumph over them. (2.) Haman had begun to fall, and therefore he is certainly a gone man. It has been observed of great court-favours, that when once they have been frowned upon, they have fallen utterly, as fast as they rose; it is true of the church's enemies that when God begins with them, he will make an end. As for God, his work is perfect.

IV. How seasonably he was now sent for to the banquet that Esther had prepared, v. 14. He thought it seasonable, in hopes it would revive his drooping spirits, and save his sinking honour. But, really, it was seasonable, because his spirits being broken by this sore disappointment, he might the more easily be run down by Esther's complaints against him. The wisdom of God is seen in timing the means of his church's deliverance, so as to manifest his own glory.

CHAP. VII.

We are now to attend the second banquet to which the king and Haman were invited: and there, 1. Esther presents her petition to the king for her life, and the life of her people, v. 1-4. II. She plainly tells the king that Haman was the man who designed her ruin, and the ruin of all her friends, v. 5, 6. III. The king, thereupon, gave orders for the hanging of Haman upon the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai, which was done accordingly, v. 7-10. And thus, by the destruction of the plotter, a good step was taken toward the defeating of the plot.

1. So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen. 2. And the king said again unto Esther, on the second day, at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom. 3. Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: 4. For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish: but if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage. 5. Then the king Abasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? 6. And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

The king in humour, and Haman out of humour, meet at Esther's table. Now here:

The king urges Esther, a third time, to tell him what her request was, for he longed to know, and repeats his promise, that it should be granted, v. 2. If the king had now forgotten that Esther had an errand to him, and had not again asked what it was, she could scarce have known how to renew it herself; but he was mindful of it, and now he was bound with the threefold cord of a promise thrice made to favour her.

II. Esther, at length, surprises the king with a petition, not for wealth or honour, or the preference of some of her friends to some high post, which the king expected, but for the preservation of herself and her countrymen from death and destruction, v. 3, 4. Even a stranger, a criminal, shall be permitted to petition for his life: but that a friend, a wife, should have occasion to present such a petition, was very affecting; Let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request.

Two things bespeak lives to be very precious, and fit to be saved, if innocent, at any expense. 1. Majesty. If it be a crowned head that is struck at, it is time to stir: Esther's was such: “Let my life be given me. If thou hast any affection for the wife of thy bosom, now is the time to show it, for that is the life that lies at stake.” 2. Multitude. If they be many lives, very many, and those no way forlorn, that are aimed at, no time should be lost, nor pains spared, to prevent the mischief. “It is not a friend or two, but my people, a whole nation, and a nation dear to me, for the saving of which I now intercede.”
To move the king the more, she suggests, (1.) That she and her people were bought and sold. They had not sold themselves by any offence against the government, but were sold to gratify the pride and revenge of one man. (2.) That it was not their liberty but their lives that were in danger; they had been "sold" (says she) "into slavery, I would not have complained, for, in time, we might have recovered our liberty, though the king would have made but a bad bargain of it, and not have increased his wrath by our price. Whatever had been paid for us, the loss of so many industrious hands out of his kingdom, would have been more damage to the treasury than the price would counterbalance." To procure good people is as impolitic as it is injudicious, and a manifest wrong to the interests of princes and states; they are weakened and impoverished by it. But this was not the case. We are sold (says she) to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish; and then it is time to speak. She refers to the words of the decree, (ch. 3. 13.) which aimed at nothing short of their destruction; this would touch in a tender part, if there were any such in the king's heart, and would bring him to relent.

II. The king stands amazed at the remonstrance, and asks, (v. 5.) "Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? What contrive the murder of the queen and all her friends? Is there such a man, such a monster rather, in nature? Who is he, and where is he, whose heart has filled him to do so?" Or, Who hath filled his heart; he wonders, 1. That any one should be so bad as to think such a thing; 2. So certain a heart. 2. That any one should be so bold as to do such a thing; should have his heart so fully set in him to do wickedly; should be so very daring. Note, (1.) It is hard to imagine that there should be such horrid wickedness committed in the world as really there is. Who, where is he, that dares, presumes, to question the being of God and his providence, to bring his oracles, profane his name, persecute his people, and yet bid defiance to his wrath? Such there are, to think of whom is enough to make horror take hold of us, Ps. 119. 53. (2.) We sometimes startle at the mention of that evil, which yet we ourselves are chargeable with. Ahasuerus is amazed at that wickedness, which he himself was guilty of; for he consented to that bloody edict against the Jews. Thou art the man, might Esther say to herself, if the king would but own it.

IV. Esther plainly charges Haman with it before his face: "Here he is, let him speak for himself, for therefore he is invited. The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman, (v. 6.) it is he that has designed our murder, and, which is worse, basely drawn the king in to be his accuser, a partaker of this crime, ignorantly agreeing to it." If Haman is soon apprehensive of his danger; he was a bold person, and king, and it was time for him to fear, when he heard his master, the king, his judge, and his own conscience a witness against him; and the surprising operations of Providence against him, that same morning, could not but increase his fear. Now he has little joy of his being invited to the banquet of wine, but finds himself in straits, when he thought himself in the fullness of his sufficiency. He is cast into a net by his own feet.

7. And the king, arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath, went into the palace-garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king. 8. Then the king returned out of the palace-garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed wherein Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. 9. And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon. 10. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

Here,

1. The king retires in anger. He rose from the table in a great passion, and went into the palace-garden to cool himself, and to consider what was to be done, v. 7. He sent for his seven wise counsellors who knew the times, being ashamed to consult with them about the undoing of that which he had rashly done without their knowledge or advice; but he went to walk in the garden a while, to compare in his thoughts what Esther had now informed him of, with what had happened before to Purim and to himself and Haman. And we may suppose him, 1. Vexed at himself, that he should be such a fool, as to doom a guiltless nation to destruction, and his own queen among the rest, upon the base suggestions of a self-seeking man, without examining the truth of his allegations. They that do things with self-will, reflect upon them afterward with self-reproach. 2. Vexed at Haman whom he had laid in his designs, who should be such a villain as to abuse his interest in him, to draw him to consent to so wicked a measure. When he saw himself betrayed by one he had caressed, he was full of indignation at him; yet he would say nothing, till he had taken time for second thoughts, to see whether they would make the matter better or worse than it first appeared, that he might proceed accordingly. When we are angry, we should pause a while, before we come to any resolution, as those that have a rule over our own spirits, and are governed by reason.

II. Haman becomes a humble petitioner to the queen for his life. He might easily perceive by the king's hasty flying out of the room, that there was evil determined against him. For the wrath of a king, such a king, is as the roaring of a lion, and as messengers of death; and now see, 1. How mean Haman looks, when he stands up first, and then falls down at Esther's feet, to beg she would save his life, and take all he had. They that are most haughty, insolent, and imperious, when they are in power and prosperity, are commonly the most abject and poor spirited, when the wheel turns upon them. Cowards, they say, are most cruel, and then consciousness of their cruelty makes them the more cowardly. Hence, though Haman's pride of late had been neglected, and doomed to the slaughter, tanguum ovis—as a sheep; nor had his enemy owned that he lies at her mercy, and begs his life at her hand. Thus did God regard the estate of his handmaids, and scatter the pride in the imagination of their hearts, Luke 1. 48. 51. Compare with this that promise made to the Phila- delphian church. (Rev. 3. 8.) I will make thee an island of Satan to come and to worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved the
The day is coming when those that hate and persecute God's chosen ones, would gladly be beholden to them: Give us of your oil; Father Abraham, send Lazarus; The uprightness shall have dominion in the morning.

III. The king returns yet more exasperated against Haman. The more he thinks of him, the worse he thinks of him, and of what he had done. It was but lately, that every thing Haman said and did, even that which was most criminal, was taken well, and construed to his advantage; now, on the contrary, what Haman did, that was not only innocent, but a sign of repentance, is ill taken, and without colour of reason, construed to his disadvantage. He then turns to the queen. What! (says the king,) will he force the queen away before me in the house? Not that he thought he had any such intention, but, having been musing on Haman's design to slay the queen, and finding him in this posture, he takes occasion from it thus to vent his passion against Haman, as a man that would not scruple at the greatest and most impudent piece of wickedness. "He designed to slay the queen, and to slay her with me in the house; will he in like manner force her? What! ravish her first, and then murder her? He that had a design upon her life, may well be suspected to have a design upon her chastity.

IV. Those about him were ready to be the instruments of his wrath. The courtiers that adored Haman when he was the rising sun, set themselves as much against him as they could, and were as glad of an occasion to run him down, as little sure can proud men be of the interest they think they have. 1. As soon as the king spake an angry word, they covered Haman's face, as a condemned man, not worthy any more either to see the king, or to be seen by him; they marked him for execution. Those that are hanged, commonly have their faces covered. See how readily the servants were to take the first hint of the king's mind in this matter. 

Turbia Romæ sequitur Fortunam, ut semper et odio damnatos—The Roman populace change as the aspects of fortune do, and always oppress the fallen. If Haman be going down, they all cry, "Down with him." 2. One of them that had been lately sent to Haman's house, to fetch him to the banquet, informed the king of the gallows which Haman had prepared for Mordecai, v. 9. Now that Mordecai is the favourite, the chamberlain applauds him; he spake good for the king, and, Haman being in disgrace, every thing is taken notice of, that might make against him, incense the king against him, and fill up the measure of his iniquity.

V. The king gives orders that he should be hanged upon his own gallows, which was done accordingly. Upon which he was told, he was asked what he had to say, why this judgment should not be passed upon him, and execution awarded. The sentence is short, Hang him thereon; and the execution speedy, So they hanged Haman on the gallows, v. 10. See here, 1. Pride brought down. He that expected every one to do him reverence, is now made an ignominious spectacle to the world, and himself too. 2. Vice taken into, and the vexation he had created, v. 1. His houses and lands, goods and chattels, and all the money he had heaped up, while he was prime-minister of state, (which, we may suppose, was no little,) are given to Esther, they are all her own, added to the allowance she already had. Thus is the wealth of the sinner laid up for the just; and the innocent divides the silver, Prov. 13. 22. Job 27. 18. What Haman would have done in mischift with Esther will do good with; and estates are to be valued as they are used.

2. Mordecai advanced. His pompous procession, this morning, through the streets of the city, was but a sudden flash or blaze of honour; but here we have more durable and gainful preferences to which he was raised, which yet the other happily made way for. (1.) He is now owned as the queen's cousin, which, till now, though Esther had been 4 years queen, for aught that appears, the king did not of his own hands, Ps. 7. 15, 16. 9. 15, 16. Haman is justly hanged on the very gallows he had unjustly prepared for Mordecai. If he had not set up that gallows, perhaps the king would not have thought of ordering him to be hanged; but, if he rear a gallows for the man whom the king delights to honour, the thought is very natural, that he should be ordered to fill it up; and, see how it fits him, see how he likes it. The enemies of the church have often thus been taken in their own craftiness. In the morning Haman was designing himself for the robes, and Mordecai for the gallows; but the tables are turned; Mordecai has the crown, Haman the cross. The Lord is known by such judgments, 

1. Lastly, That execution which the king had in this execution. Then was the king's wrath pacified, and not till then. He was as well pleased in slaying Haman to be hanged, as in ordering Mordecai to be honoured. Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to take vengeance on. God saith of wicked men, (Ezek. 5. 13.) I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted.

CHAP. VIII.

We left the plotter hanging, and are now to see what becomes of his plot. 1. His plot was to raise an estate for himself; and that estate being established, then is, given to Esther and Mordecai, v. 1, 2. His plot was to ruin the Jews; and as to that, 1. Esther earnestly intercedes for the reversion of the edict against them, v. 3... 6. 2. It is, in effect, done by another edict here published, empowering the Jews to stand up in their own defence against their enemies, v. 7... 14. 3. This occasions great joy to the Jews, and all their friends, v. 15... 17. 1. On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman, the Jews' enemy, unto Esther the queen; and Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her. 2. And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

It was but lately that we had Esther and Mordecai in tears and in fears, but fasting and praying; now let us see how to them there arose light in darkness. 1. Here is Esther enriched. Haman was hanged as a traitor, therefore his estate was forfeited to the crown, and the king gave it all to Esther, in recompense for the fright that wicked man had put him into, and the vexation he had created, v. 1. His houses and lands, goods and chattels, and all the money he had heaped up, while he was prime-minister of state, (which, we may suppose, was no little,) are given to Esther, they are all her own, added to the allowance she already had. Thus is the wealth of the sinner laid up for the just; and the innocent divides the silver, Prov. 13. 22. Job 27. 18. What Haman would have done in mischief with Esther will do good with; and estates are to be valued as they are used.

2. Mordecai advanced. His pompous procession, this morning, through the streets of the city, was but a sudden flash or blaze of honour; but here we have more durable and gainful preferences to which he was raised, which yet the other happily made way for. (1.) He is now owned as the queen's cousin, which, till now, though Esther had been 4 years queen, for aught that appears, the king did not
know. So humble, so modest, a man was Mordecai, and so far from being ambitious of a place at court, that he concealed his relationship to the queen, and her obligations to him as her guardian, and never made use of her interest for any advantage of his own. Who but Mordecai would have taken so little notice of so great an honour? But now he was brought before the king, introduced, as we may say, to kiss his hand; for now, at length, Esther had told what he was to her, not only near akin to her, but the best friend she had in the world, who took care of her when she was an orphan, and one whom she still respected as a father. Now the king finds himself, for his wife's sake, more obliged than he thought he had been, to delight in doing honour to Mordecai. How great were the merits of that man, to whom both king and queen did, in effect, owe their lives! Being brought before the king, to him, no doubt, he bowed, and did reverence, though he would not to Haman an Amalekite.

(2.) The king makes him lord privy-seal in the room of Haman; all the trust he had reposed in him, and all the power he had given him, are here transferred to Mordecai; for the ring which he had taken from Haman, he gave to Mordecai, and made this trusty humble man as much his favourite, his confidant, and his agent, as ever that proud perfidious wretch was; a happy change he made of his bosom friends, and so, no doubt, he and his people soon found it.

(3.) The queen makes him her steward, for the management of Haman's estate, and for getting and keeping possession of it. She set Mordecai over the house of Haman. See the vanity of laying up treasure upon earth; he that heareth the rich knoweth not who shall gather them, (Ps. 39. 6.) not only whether he shall be a wise man or a fool, (Eccl. 2. 19.) but whether he shall be a friend or an enemy. With what little pleasure, nay, with what constant vexation, would Haman have looked upon his estate, if he could have foreseen that Mordecai, the man he hated above all men in the world, should have rule over all wherein he had laboured, and thought that he showed himself wise! It is our interest, therefore, to make sure those riches which will not be left behind, but will go with us to another world.

3. And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. 4. Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king; 5. And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces: 6. For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred? 7. Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen, and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews. 8. Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse. 9. Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the third and twentieth day thereof: and it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, a hundred and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language. 10. And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed it with the king's ring; and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries: 11. Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. 12. Upon one day, in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. 13. The copy of the writing, for a commandment to be given in every province, was published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. 14. So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace.

Haman, the chief enemy of the Jews, was hanged, Mordecai and Esther, their chief friends, were sufficiently protected, but many others there were in the king's dominions, the hate the Jews and desired their ruin, and to their rage and malice all the rest of that people lay exposed; for the edict against them was still in force, in pursuance of which, their enemies would, on the day appointed, fall upon them, and they would be deemed as rebels against the king and his government, if they should offer to resist, and take up arms in their own defence, or in the prevention of this. 1. The queen here makes intercession with much affection and importunity. She came, a second time, uncalled, into the king's presence, (v. 3.) and was, as before, encouraged to present her petition, by the king's holding out the golden sceptre to her, v. 4. Her petition is, that the king, having put away Haman, would put away the mischief of Haman, and his device against the Jews, that that might not take place now that he was taken off. Many a man's mischief survives him, and the wick-
ELIAS AND THE LEPERS

"But he was not willing that Elias should perish in the fire, for he had seen God, and had not lacked his presence; but he had only a right to act in the manner he did, as his duty bound him to do; therefore the King could not lay the blame on him, though it may be true that he had done right, yet he had done it too soon."

ESTHER, VIII.

"In the same month, when the king's order and the edict were published, came Mordecai to king Ahasuerus, and said, 'Let not my lord think that the king's edict is unto the benefit of your臣民.'"

..."And the king arose to his couch, and the queen stood by the bedpost, and said, 'What manner of man is this that cometh in hither?'"
former decree, before the notice of this arrived. It was therefore by the king's commandment, as well as Mordecai's, that the messengers were hastened and pressed on, (v. 14,) and had swift beasts provided them, v. 10. It was not a time to trifle, when so many lives were in danger.

15. And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. 16. The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour. 17. And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

It was but a few days ago, that we had Mordecai in sackcloth, and all the Jews in sorrow; but here is a blessed change, Mordecai in purple, and all the Jews in joy. See Ps. 30. 5, 11, 12.

1. Mordecai in purple, v. 15. Having obtained an order for the relief of all the Jews, he was easy, he parted with his mourning weeds, and put on the royal apparel which he had belonged to his place, or which the king appointed him as a favourite. His robes were rich, blue and white, of fine linen and purple; so was his cornet, it was of gold. These are things not worth taking notice of, but as they were marks of the king's favour, and that the fruit of God's favour to his church. It is well with a land, when the ensigns of dignity are made the ornaments of serious piety. The city of Shushan was sensible of its advantage in the preferment of Mordecai, and therefore rejoiced and was glad, not only pleased, in general, with the advancement of virtue, but promising itself, in particular, better times, now that so good a man was intrusted with so high a station. He was the hand of God, and when the wicked perish, there is shouting: (Prov. 11. 10.) Mordecai was preferred; and when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice.

16. The Jews in joy, v. 16, 17. The Jews, who, a while ago, were under a dark cloud, dejected and disgraced, now had light and gladness, joy and honour, a feast and a good day; if they had not been threatened and in distress, they had not occasion for this extraordinary joy. Therefore are God's people sometimes made to sorrow in tears, that they may reap in so much the more joy. The suddenness and strangeness of the turn of affairs in their favour, added much to their joy; they were like them that dream; then was their mouth filled with laughter, Ps. 126. 1, 2.

One good effect of this deliverance was, that many of the people of the land, that were considerable, sober, and well disposed, proselyted to the Jewish religion, renounced idolatry, and worshipped the true God only. Haman thought to extirpate the Jews, but it prove, in the issue, that their numbers are greatly increased and many added to the church. Observe, When the Jews had joy and gladness, then many of the people of the land became Jews; the holy cheerfulness of those that profess religion, is a great ornament to their profession, and will invite and encourage others to be religious. The reason here given why so many became Jews at this time is, because the fear of the Jews fell upon them. When they observed how wonderfully Divine Providence had owned them, and wrought for them in this critical juncture, (1.) They thought them great, and those happy that were among them; and therefore they came over to them, as was foretold, (Zech. 8. 23,) He will go with you, for we have heard, we have seen, that God is with you, the Shield of your help; and the Sword of your excellency, Deut. 33. 29.

When the church prospers, it is smiled upon, many will come in to it, that will be the last of whom it is in trouble. (2.) They thought them formidable, and those miserable that were against them. They plainly saw in Haman's fate, that if any offered injury to the Jews, it was at their peril; and therefore, for their own security, they joined themselves to them. It is folly to think of contending with the God of Israel, and therefore it is wisdom to think of submitting to him.

CHAP. IX.

We left two royal edicts in force, both given at the court of Shushan, one bearing date the 13th day of the 1st month, appointing, that, on the 19th day of the 12th month then next ensuing, all the Jews should be killed; another bearing date the 25th day of the 1st month, empowering the Jews, on the day appointed for their slaughter, to draw the sword in their own defence, and make their part good against their enemies as well as they could, for God had given them good success. This was, no doubt, the first notice of the day, this day, and the issue of it. The Jews' cause was to be tried by battle, and the day fixed for the combat by authority. Their enemies resolved not to lose the advantages given them by the first edict, in hopes to overpower them by numbers; the Jews relied on the goodness of their God, and justice of their cause, and resolved to make their utmost efforts against their enemies. The day comes, at length; and here we are told, 1. What a glorious day it was that year, to the Jews, and the two days following; a day of victory and triumph, both in the city of Shushan, and in all the rest of the king's provinces, v. 1. 19. 11. What a memorable day it was made to posterity, by an annual feast, in commemoration of this great deliverance, called the feast of Purim, v. 20. 32.

NOW in the twelfth month, that is the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them,) 2. The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities, throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt; and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people. 3. And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. 4. For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces; for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater. 5. Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them. 6. And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men, 7. And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha, 8. And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha,
9. And Parmashar, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha, 10. The ten sons of Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand. 11. On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king. 12. And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee; or what is thy request further? and it shall be done. 13. Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to-morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows. 14. And the king commanded it so to be done; and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons. 15. For the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand. 16. But the other Jews that were in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand (but they laid not their hands on the prey) 17. On the thirteenth day of the month Adar: and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. 18. But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. 19. Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

We have here a decisive battle fought between the Jews and their enemies, in which the Jews were victorious. Neither side was surprised, for both had notice of it long enough before, so that it was a fair trial of skill between them. Nor could either side call the other rebels, for they were both supported by the royal authority.

I. The enemies of the Jews were the aggressors, (v. 1.) and made assaults upon them accordingly; they formed themselves into bodies, and joined in confederacy against them, to seek their hurt, (v. 2.) The Chaldee paraphrase says, that none appeared against the Jews but Amalekites only, who were, infatuated, and had their hearts hardened, as Pharaoh's against Israel, to take up arms to their own destruction. Some had such an inveterate implacable malice against the Jews, that Haman's fall and Mordecai's advancement, instead of convincing them, did but exasperate them, and make them more outrageous and resolute to cut all their throats. The sons of Haman, particularly, vowed to avenge their father's death, and pursue his designs, which they call noble and brave, whatever hazards they run and a strong party they had formed both in Shushan and in the provinces, in order to go off with Haman's revenge, though they plainly saw Providence fight against them; and thus they were infatuated to their own destruction. If they would have sitten still, and attempted nothing against the people of God, not a hair of their head had fallen to the ground; but they cannot persuade themselves to do that, they must be meddling, though it prove to their own ruin; and roll a barthome stone, which will return upon them.

II. But the Jews were the conquerors. That very day, when the king's decree for their destruction was to be put into execution, and which the enemies thought would have been their day, proved God's day; (Ps. 57. 13.) it was turned to the contrary of what was expected, and the Jews had ride over them that hated them, v. 1. We are here told, (v. 2.) What the Jews did that day. They first gathered themselves together in their cities, embodi'd, and stood upon their defence, offering violence to none, but bulding defiance to all. If they had not had an edict to warrant them, they durst not have done it, but, being so supported, they strove lawfully. Had they acted separately, each family apart, they had been an easy prey to their enemies, but acting in concert, and gathering together in their cities, the number was so great, and the hatred so open and strong, that their enemies durst face their enemies. Vis unita fortior—Forces act most powerfully when combined. Those that write of the state of the Jews at this day, give this as the reason why, though they are very numerous in many parts, and rich, they are yet so despicable, because they are generally so selfish, that they cannot incorporate; indeed, being under the curse of dispersion, they cannot unite nor (as here) gather together, for if they could, they might raise their numbers and wealth threaten the most potent states.

2. What the rulers of the provinces did for them, under the influence of Mordecai. All the officers of the king, who, by the bloody edict, were ordered to help forward their destruction, (ch. 3. 12, 13.) conformed themselves to the latter edict, (which, being an estoppel against an estoppel, had set the matter at large, and left them at liberty to observe which they pleased,) and helped the Jews, which turned the scale on their side, v. 3. The provinces would generally do as the rulers of the provinces inclined, and therefore their favouring of the Jews would greatly further them. But why did they help them? Not because they had any kindness for them, but because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them, he having manifestly the countenance both of God and the king. They all saw it their interest to help Mordecai's friends, because he was not only great in the king's house, and caressed by the courtiers, (as many are who have no intrinsic worth to support their reputation,) but his fame for wisdom and virtue went out from thence throughout all the provinces, in all places he was spoken of as a great man; he was looked upon also as a thriving man, and one that stood greater and greater (cf. 4.) and therefore, for fear of him, all the king's officers helped the Jews. Great men may, by their influence, do a great deal of good; many that fear not God, will stand in awe of them.

3. What God did for them; he struck all people with a fear of them, (v. 2.) as the Cannautes were.

* An act barring legal process.
made afraid of Israel, (Josh. 2. 9.—3. 1.) so that though they had so much hardness as to assault them, yet they had not courage to prosecute the assault. Their hearts failed them when they came to engage, and none of the men of might could find their hands.

4. What execution they did hereupon; no man could withstand them, (v. 2.) but they did what they would, to those that hated them, and were cruel, hardened, and animated, and their enemies weakened and dispirited, that none of those who had marked themselves for their destruction, escaped, but they smote them with the stroke of the sword. Particularly, (1.) On the 13th day of the month Adar, they slew in the city of Shushan 300 men, (v. 6.) and the ten sons of Haman, v. 10. The Jews, when, on the feast of Purim, they read this book of Esther, oblige, themselves to read the names of Haman's ten sons all in one breath, without any pause, because they say that they were all killed together, and all gave up the ghost just in the same moment.

Buxt. Synag. Jud. c. 24. The Chaldee paraphrase says, that when these ten were slain, Zeresh, with seventy more of his children, escaped, and afterward begged their bread from door to door. (2.) On the 14th day they slew in Shushan 300 more, who had escaped the sword on the former day, v. 14, except v. 15. This Esther obtained leave of the king for them to do, for the greater terror of their enemies, and the utter crushing of that malignant party of men. The king had taken account of the numbers that were put to the sword the first day, (v. 11.) and told Esther, (v. 12.) and asked her what more she desired. "Nothing," says she, "but commission to do such another day's work." Esther knew that Haman was none of the older, but all of those that delight in slaughter, but she had some very good reasons that moved her to make this request. She also desired that the dead bodies of Haman's ten sons might be hanged up on the gallows on which their father was hanged, for the greater disgrace of the family, and terror of the party; (v. 13.) and it was done accordingly; (v. 14.) it is supposed that they were hanged in chains, and left hanging some time. (3.) The Jews converted all the contrary to their orders, and put no Jewish man in any of their enemies than what were slain the 13th day, which were in all, among all the provinces, 75,000, v. 16. If all these were Amalekites, (as the Jews say,) surely now it was that the remembrance of Amalek was utterly put out, Exod. 17. 14. However, that which justifies them in the execution of so many, is, that they did it in their own just and necessary defence; they stood for their lives, authorized to do so by the law of self-preservation, as well as by the king's decree. (4.) In these several executions, it is taken notice of, that on the prey they laid not their hand, v. 10, 15, 16. The king's commission had warranted them to take the spoil of their enemies for a prey, (ch. 8. 11.) and a fair opportunity they had of enriching themselves with it; if Haman's party had prevailed, no doubt, they would have made use of it to further their business. And as for the goods and estates of the Jews, ch. 3. 13. But the Jews would not do so by them. [1.] That they might, to the honour of their religion, evidence a holy and generous contempt of worldly wealth, in imitation of their father Abraham, who scorned to enrich himself with the spoils of Sodom. [2.] That they might make it to appear that they aimed at nothing but their own preservation, and used their utmost force only for the sake of their lives, not for the raising of their estates. [3.] Their commission empowered them to destroy the families of their enemies, even the little ones, and the women, ch. 8. 11. But their humanity for-bade them to do that, though that was designed against them; they slew none but those they found in arms; and therefore they did not take the spoil, but left it to the women and little ones whom they spared, for their subsistence; otherwise as good slay them as starve them, take away their lives, as take away their livelihoods. Herein they acted with a consideration and compassion well worthy imitation.

5. What a satisfaction they had in their deliverance; the Jews in the country cleared themselves of their enemies on the 13th day of the month, and they rested on the 14th day, (v. 17.) and made that a thanksgiving-day, v. 19. The Jews in Shushan, the royal city, took two days for their military execution, so that they rested on the 15th day, and made that their thanksgiving-day, v. 18. Both of them celebrated their festival the very day after they had finished their work, and gained their point. When we have received signal mercies from God, we ought to be quick and speedy in making our thankful returns to him, while the mercy is fresh, and the impressions of it are most sensible.

20. And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far, 21. To establish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same yearly, 22. As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor. 23. And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them; 24. Because Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur (that is, the lot) to consume them, and to destroy them: 25. But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters, that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. 26. Wherefore they called these days Purim, after the name of Pur; therefore, for all the words of this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them, 27. The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time, every year; 28. And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them
perish from their seed. 29. Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim. 30. And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth, 31. To confirm these days of Purim in their times appointed, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves, and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry. 32. And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.

We may well imagine how much affected Mordecai and Esther were with the triumphs of the Jews over their enemies, and how they saw the issue of that decisive day, with a satisfaction proportional to the care and concern with which they expected it. How were their hearts enlarged with joy in God and his salvation, and with songs of praise were put into their mouths! But here we are told what course they took to spread the knowledge of it among their people, and to perpetuate the remembrance of it to posterity, for the honour of God, and the encouragement of his people to trust in him at all times.

I. The history was written, and copies of it were dispersed among all the Jews in all the provinces of the empire, both near and far, v. 20. They all knew something of the story, being nearly concerned in it—were by the first edict made sensible of their danger, and by the second of their deliverance; but how this amazing turn was given, they could not tell, Mordecai therefore wrote these things. And if this book be the same that he wrote, as many think it is, I cannot but observe what a difference there is between Mordecai's style and Nehemiah's; Nehemiah's discourse is the notice of Divine Providence and the good hand of his God upon him, which is very proper to stir up devout affections in the minds of his readers; but Mordecai never so much as mentions the name of God in the whole story. Nehemiah wrote his book at Jerusalem, where religion was in fashion, and an air of it appeared in men's common conversation; Mordecai wrote his at Shushan the palace, where policy reigned more than piety, and he wrote according to the genius of the place. Even those that have the root of the matter in them, are apt to lose the savour of religion, and let their leaf wither, when they converse wholly with those that have little religion. Commend me to Nehemiah's way of writing, that I would imitate; and yet learn from Mordecai's, that men may be truly devout, though they do not abound in the showy and expressive devotions, and therefore that we must not judge or despise our brethren. But because there is so little of the language of Canaan in this book, many think it was not written by Mordecai, but was an extract out of the journals of the kings of Persia, giving an account of the matter of fact, which the Jews themselves knew how to comment upon.

II. A festival was instituted, to be observed yearly from generation to generation by the Jews, in remembrance of this wonderful work which God wrought for them; that the children which should be born, might know it, and declare it to their children, that they might set their hope in God, Ps. 78. 6, 7 It would be for the honour of God as the Protector of his people, and the honour of Israel as the care of Heaven, as a confirmation of the fidelity of God's covenant, an invitation to strangers to come into the bonds of it, and an encouragement to God's own people cheerfully to depend upon him, his wisdom, power, and goodness, in the greatest straits. Posterity would reap the benefit of this deliverance, and therefore ought to celebrate the memorial of it.

Now concerning this festival we are here told.

1. When it was observed; every year on the 14th and 15th day of the 12th month, just a month before the passover, v. 21. Thus the first month and the last month of the year kept in remembrance the months that were past, even the days when God preserved them. They kept two days together as thanksgiving-days, and did not think that too much to spend in praising God. Let us not be niggardly in our returns of praise to him, who bestows his favours so liberally upon us. Observe, They did not keep the day when they fought, but the day when they rested; on the 14th day the country Jews rested, and on the 15th those in Shushan, and both those they kept. The sabbath was appointed not on the day that God finished his work, but on the day that he rested from it. The Jews therefore observed the 15th day, the day appointed for their destruction, as a fast day, grounding it on v. 31, the matters of the fastings and their cry. But that refers to what was in the day of their distress, (ch. 4. 3, 16.) which was not to be continued, when God had turned their fasts into joy and gladness, Zech. 8. 19.

2. How it was called; The feast of Purim, (v. 26.) from Pur, a Persian word, which signifies a lot, because Haman and by lot determined this to be the time of the Jews' destruction, while the Lord, at whose disposal the lot is, had determined it to be the time of their triumph. The name of this festival would remind them of the sovereign dominion of the God of Israel, who served his own purposes by the foolish superstitions of the heathen, and outwitted the monthly prognosticators in their own craft, (Isa. 47. 12.) frustrating the tokens of the liars, and making the wiser men fools. Is. 47. 16.

3. By whom it was instituted and enacted; it was not a divine institution, and therefore it is not called a holy day, but a human appointment, by which it was made a good day, v. 19, 22. (1.) The Jews ordained it, and took it upon themselves; (v. 27.) voluntarily undertook to do as they had begun, v. 23. They obliged themselves to it by common consent. (2.) Mordecai and Esther confirmed their resolve, that it might be the more binding to posterity, and might come well recommended by those great names. They wrote, [1.] With all authority; (v. 29.) as well they might, Esther being queen, and Mordecai prime minister of state. It is well when those who are in authority, use it to authorize that which is good. [2.] With words of peace and good-will; this is the manner of authority, they wrote with tenderness; not impen- dous, not imposing, but in such language as the council at Jerusalem use in their decree, (Acts 13. 29.) "If ye do so and so, ye shall do well, Fare ye well." Such was the style of these letters, or such the salutation or valediction of them, Peace and truth be with you.

4. By whom it was to be observed; by all the Jews and by their seed, and by all such as joined themselves to them, v. 27. The observation of this feast was to be both universal and perpetual; the proselytes must observe it, in token of their sincere affection to the Jewish nation, and their having united interests with them. A concurrence in joys and praises is one branch of the communion of saints.

5. Why it was to be observed; that the memorial
of the great things God had done for his church, might never perish from their seed, v. 28. God does not work wonders for a day, but to be had in everlasting remembrance. What he doeth, shall be for ever, and therefore shall be had in mind. In this affair, they would have remembered, (1.) Haman’s bad practices against the church, to his perpetual reproach, (v. 24.) Because he had devised against the Jews to destroy them. Let this be kept in mind, that God’s people may never be secure, while they have such malicious enemies, on whom they ought to have a jealous eye; their enemies aim at no less than their destruction, and God therefore let them depend for salvation. (2.) Esther’s good services to the church, to her immortal honour. When Esther, in peril of her life, came before the king, he repealed the edict, v. 25. This also must be remembered, that wherever this feast should be kept, and this history read in explication of it, this which she did, might be told for a memorial of her. Good deeds, done for the Israel of God, ought to be remembered, for the encouragement of others to do the like, God will not forget them, and therefore we must not. (3.) Their own prayers, and the answers given to them, (v. 31.) the matters of the fastings and their cry. The more cries we have offered up in our trouble, and the more prayers for deliverance, the more we are obliged to be thankful to God for deliverance. Call upon me in the time of trouble, and then offer to God thanksgiving.

6. How it was to be observed. And of this let us observe,

(1.) What was here enjoined, which was very good; that they should make it, [1.] A day of cheerfulness, a day of feasting and joy; (v. 22.) a feast was made for laughter, Eccl. 10. 19. When God gives us cause to rejoice, why should we not express our joy? [2.] A day of generosity; sending portions one to another in token of their pleasantness and mutual respect and their being knit by this and other public common dangers and deliveries so much the closer to each other in love. Friends have their goods in common. [3.] A day of charity; sending gifts to the poor. It is not to our kinsmen, and rich neighbours only, that we are to send tokens, but to the poor and the maimed, Luke 14. 12, 13. They that have received mercy, must, in token of their gratitude, show mercy; and there never was a greater occasion, for the poor we have always with us. Thanksgiving and almsgiving should go together, that when we are rejoicing and blessing God, the heart of the poor may rejoice with us, and their loins may bless us.

(2.) What was added to this, which was much better. They always, at the feast, read the whole story over in the synagogue, each day, and put up three prayers to God; in the first of which, they praise him for all he has done, and to attend this divine service; in the second, they praise him for the miraculous preservation of their ancestors; in the third, they praise him, that they have lived to observe another festival in memory of it. So Bishop Patrick.

(3.) What it is since degenerated to, which is much worse. Their own writers own that this feast is not only degenerated, by giving them with glut and drunkenness, and excess of riot. Their Talmud says expressly that, in the feast of Purim, a man should drink till he knows not the difference between, Cursed be Haman, and, Blessed be Mordecai. See what the corrupt and wicked nature of man often brings that to, which was at first well intended; here is a religious feast turned into a carnival, a perfect revel; as wakes among us. Nothing more purifies the heart, and adorns religion, than holy joy; nothing more pollutes the heart, and reproaches religion, than carnal mirth and sensual pleasure. Corruptionem est fessi- ma—What is best, when corrupted, becomes the worst.

CHAP. X.

This is but a part of a chapter; the rest of it, beginning at v. 4., with six chapters more, being found only in the Greek, is rejected as apocryphal. In these three verses, we have only some short hints. I. Concerning Ahasuerus in the throne, what a mighty prince he was, v. 1, 2. II. Concerning Mordecai his favourite, what a distinguished blessing he was to his people, v. 3.

1. AND the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea. 2. And all the acts of his power, and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? 3. For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

We are here told,

I. How great and powerful king Ahasuerus was. He had a vast dominion, both in the continent and among the islands, from which he raised a vast revenue. Beside the usual customs which the kings of Persia exacted, (Ezra 4. 13.) he laid an additional tribute upon his subjects, to serve for some great occasion he had for money; (v. 1.) The king laid a tribute. Happy is our island, that pays no tribute but what is laid upon it by its representatives, and that of its own choosing, and is not squeezed or oppressed by an arbitrary power, as some of the neighbouring nations are. Beside this instance of the grandeur of Ahasuerus, many more might be given, that were acts of his power and his might, but they are not thought fit to be recorded here in the sacred story, which is confined to the Jews, and relates the affairs of other nations only as they fell in with their affairs, but they are written in the Persian chronicle, (v. 2.) which still long since lost and buried in oblivion, while the sacred writings live, live in honour, and will live, till time shall be no more. When the kingdom of men, monarchs and their monarchies, are destroyed, and their memorial is perished with them, (Ps. 9. 6.) the kingdom of God among men, and the records of that kingdom, shall remain, and be as the days of heaven, Dan. 2. 44.

II. How great and good Mordecai was.

1. He was great; and it does one good to see virtue and piety thus in honour. (1.) He was great with the king; next to him, as one he most delighted and confided in. Long had Mordecai sitten contentedly in the king’s gate, and now, at length, he is advanced to the head of his council-board. Men of merit may, for a time, seem buried alive, but often, by some means or other, they are discovered and set on foot. The declaration of the greatness to which the king advanced Mordecai, was written in the chronicles of the kingdom, as very memorable, and contributing to the great achievements of the king. He never did such acts of power, as he did when Mordecai was at his right hand. (2.) He was great among the Jews; (v. 3.) not only great above them, more honorable than any of them, but great with them, familiar with them, and much respected by them. So far were they from envying his prefer-
ment, that they rejoiced in it, and added to it, by giving him a commanding interest among them, and submitting all their affairs to his direction.

2. He was good, very good, for he did good; that made him truly great, and then his greatness gave him an opportunity of doing so much the more good. When the king advanced him, (1.) He did not disown his people the Jews, nor was he ashamed of his relation to them, though they were strangers and captives, dispersed and despised. Still he wrote himself Mordecai the Jew, and therefore, no doubt, adhered to the Jews' religion, by the observances of which he distinguished himself, and yet it was no hinderance to his preferment, nor looked upon as a blemish to him. (2.) He did not seek his own wealth, and the raising of an estate for himself and his family, which is the chief thing most aim at, when they get into great places at court, but he consulted the welfare of his people, and made it his business to advance that. His power, his wealth, and all his interest in the king and queen, he improved for the public good. (3.) He not only did good, but he did it in a humble condescending way, was easy of access, courteous and affable in his behaviour, and spake peace to all that made their application to him. Doing good works is the best and chief thing expected from those that have wealth and power; but giving good words is also commendable, and makes the good deed the more acceptable. (4.) He did not side with any one party of his people against another, nor make some his favourites, while the rest were neglected and crushed; but, whatever differences there were among them, he was a common father to them all, recommended himself to the multitude of his brethren, not despising the crowd, and spake peace to all their seed, without distinction. Thus making himself acceptable by humility and beneficence, he was universally accepted, and gained the good word of all his brethren. Thanks be to God, such a government as this, we are blessed with, which seeks the welfare of our people, speaking peace to all their seed. God continue it long, very long! And grant us, under the happy protection and influence of it, to live quiet and peaceable lives in godliness, honesty, and charity.

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