

DIRECTION THIRD.

A Second Exhortation to Arm, and an Argument urging the Exhortation.

‘Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand’ — Eph. 6:13

The Apostle in these words reassumes his former exhortation mentioned, ver. 11, and presses it with a new force, from that more particular discovery which he gives of the enemy, ver. 12, where, like a faithful scout, he makes a full report of Satan’s great power and malice; and also discloseth what a dangerous design he hath upon the saints—no less than to despoil them of all that is heavenly—from all which he gives them a second alarm, and bids them ‘Arm! arm!’ ‘Wherefore take un to you,’ &c. In the words consider—FIRST. The exhortation with the inference, ‘wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God.’ SECOND. The argument with which he urgeth the exhortation, and that is double—FIRST. ‘That you may be able to withstand in the evil day.’ SECOND. ‘Having done all, to stand.’ That is, both able to fight and able to conquer.

DIRECTION III.—FIRST GENERAL PART.

[THE EXHORTATION WITH THE INFERENCE.]

‘Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God,’ — Eph. 6:13

As for the first general, ‘the exhortation,’ we shall waive it as to the substance of it—it being the same with what we have handled, ver. 11; only there are two observables which we shall lightly touch—the one, from the repetition of the very same exhortation so soon, one verse only [being] interposed; the other from the verb the apostle useth here, which being not the same with ver. 11, affords a different note. There it is ‘put on;’¹ here it is, ‘take unto you.’²

FIRST OBSERVABLE.

[Why the apostle renews so soon the same exhortation; also, what truths ministers ought to preach.]

Here observe the repetition of the same exhorta-

tion and that in so short a space. Sure it was not for want of matter, but rather out of abundance of zeal, that he harps the second time on the same string. Indeed he is a better workman, who drives one nail home with reiterated blows, than he which covets to enter many, but fastens none. Such preachers are not likely to reach the conscience, who hop from one

1. ενδυσασθε.

2. αναλαμβάνετε.

truth to another, but dwell on none. Every hearer is not so quick as the preacher, to take a notion as it is first darted forth; neither can many carry away so much of that sermon which is made up all of varieties—where a point is no sooner named, but presently it pulls back its hand, and another makes a breach and comes forth; before the first hath been opened and hammered upon the conscience by a powerful application—as where the discourse is homogeneal, and some one necessary truth is cleared, insisted on, and urged home with blow upon blow. Here the whole matter of the discourse is akin, and one part remembered, brings the memory acquainted with the other; whereas in the former, one puts the other in a weak memory. Short hints and away may please a scholar, but [are] not so profitable for others. The one [way is] more fit for the schools, the other for the pulpit. Were I to buy a garment in a shop, I should like him better that lays one good piece or two before me that are for my turn, which I may fully peruse, than him who takes down all his shop, and heaps piece upon piece, merely to show his store, till at last for variety I can look wishly³ on none, they lie so one upon another. Again, as it is profitable thus to insist on truths, so it is not unbecoming a minister to preach the same truths again and again. Paul here goes over and over the same exhortation, ver. 11, 13, and elsewhere tells us this is ‘not grievous’ to him, but to them ‘it is safe,’ to hear the same things over and over, *Php. 3:1*. There are three sorts of truths must in our ministry be preached oft.

First Sort. Fundamental truths; or, as we call them, catechise-points, that contain truths necessary to be known and believed. The weight of the whole building lies on these ground-cells, more than on superstrucory truths. In a kingdom there are some staple commodities and trades, without which the common weal could not subsist, as wool, corn, &c., in our country, and these ought to be encouraged above others, which though they be an ornament to the nation, yea, add to the riches of it, yet are not so necessary to the subsistence of it. Thus here. There is an excellent use of our other ministerial labours, as they

3. Wishly, an adverb of local usage, meaning with longing, wishfully.

tend to beautify and adorn, yea, enrich the Christian with the knowledge of spiritual mysteries, but that which is chiefly to be regarded is the constant faithful opening of those main truths of the gospel. These are the landmarks, and show us the bounds of truth; and as it is in towns that butt one upon another, if the inhabitants do not sometimes perambulate, and walk the bounds, to show the youth what they are, when the old studs are gone, the next generation may lose all their privileges by their encroaching neighbours, because not able to tell what is their own. There is no fundamental truth, but hath some evil neighbour, heresy I mean, butting on it; and the very reason why a spirit of error hath so encroached of late years upon truth is, because we have not walked the bounds with our people in acquainting them with, and establishing their judgments on, these fundamental points, so frequently and carefully as is requisite. And people are much in the fault, because they cast so much contempt upon this work, that they count a sermon on such points next to lost, and only child’s meat.

Second Sort. Those truths are oft to be preached, which ministers observe to be most undermined by Satan, or his instruments, in the judgments and lives of their people. The preacher must read and study his people as diligently as any book in his study, and, as he finds them, dispense like a faithful steward unto them. Paul takes notice that the Galatians had been in ill handling by false apostles, who had even bewitched them back to the law in that great point of justification, and see how he beats upon that one point. Our people complain, we are so much, so oft reproving the same error or sin, and the fault is their own, because they will not leave it. Who will blame the dog for continuing to bark, when the thief is all the while in the yard? Alas! alas! it is not once or twice rousing against sin will do it. When the people think the minister shows his laziness, because he preacheth the same things, he may then be exercising his patience in continuing to exhort and reprove those who oppose, waiting, if at last, God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. We are bid to lift up our voice like a trumpet, and would you have us cease while the battle lasts, or sound a retreat when it should be a battle?

Third Sort. Truths of daily use and practice. These are like bread and salt; whatever else is on,

these must be on the board at every meal. Saint Peter was of this mind: 'I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them,' II Peter 1:12. He had, you may see, been speaking of such graces and duties, that they could not pass a day without the exercise of them, and therefore will be ever their monitor, to stir up their pure minds about them. All is not well, when a man is weary of his ordinary food, and nothing will go down but rarities. The stomach is sickly, when a man delights rather to pick some sallet, than eat of solid meat; and how far this dainty age is gone in this spiritual disease, I think few are so far come to themselves, as yet to consider and lament. O sirs, be not weary, as in doing, so not in hearing those savoury truths preached you have daily use of, because you know them and have heard them often. Faith and repentance will be good doctrine to preach and hear to the end of the world; you may as well quarrel with God, because he hath made but one heaven, and one way to it, as with the preacher, for preaching these over and over. If thy heart were humble, and thy palate spiritual, old truths would be new to thee every time thou hearest them. In heaven the saints draw all their wine of joy, as I may so say, at one tap, and shall to all eternity, and yet it never tastes flat. God is that one object their souls are filled with, and never weary of; and can anything of God and his love be wearisome to thee in the hearing here? I am not all this while an advocate for any loiterer in our Lord's vineyard, for any slothful servant in the work of the gospel, who wraps up his talent in idleness, or buries it in the earth, where, maybe, he is digging and playing the worldling all the week, and then hath nothing to set before his people on the Lord's-day, but one or two old mouldy loaves, which were kneaded many years before. This is not the good steward. Here are the old, but where are the new things which he should bring out of his treasure? If the minister labours not to increase his stock, he is the worst thief in the parish. It is wicked for a man trusted with the improving of orphans' estates, to let them lie dead by him; much more for a minister not to improve his gifts, which I may call the town-stock, given for the good of the souls of both rich and poor. If that preacher was wise, Ecc. 12:9, who 'still taught the people knowledge,' that is, was ever going on, endeav-

ouring to build them higher in knowledge, and that he might, did give 'good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs;' then surely he will be proved a foolish preacher at last, that wastes his time in sloth, or spends more of it in studying how to add to his estate out of his people's, than how to add to their gifts and graces, by a conscionable endeavour to increase his own.

SECOND OBSERVABLE.

[The best of saints subject to decline in their graces, and why we are to seek a recovery of them.]

The second observable in the exhortation is taken from the verb which the apostle useth,⁴ which signifies not only to take, but to take again, or recover a thing which we have lost, or reassume a thing which for the present we have left. Now the apostle—writing to the saints at Ephesus, who, at least many of them, were not now to put on this armour by a conversion—or the first work of faith, which no doubt had already passed upon many among them—he, in regard of them and believers to the end of the world, hath a further meaning; that is, that they would put on more close where this armour hangs loose, and [that] they would recover, where they had let fall any duty, or decayed in any grace. So that the note is,

DOCTRINE. That the Christian should have an especial care to repair his broken armour—to recover his decaying graces. This armour may be battered—I might show sad examples in the several pieces. Was not Jacob's girdle of truth and sincerity unbuckled, when he used that sinful policy to get the blessing? He was not the plain man then, but the supplanter, but he had as good have stayed God's time—he was paid home in his own kind. He puts a cheat on his father; and did not Laban put a cheat on him, giving Leah for Rachel? What say you to David's breastplate of righteousness in the matter of Uriah? was it not shot through, and that holy man fearfully wounded—who lays almost a year, for aught we read of him, before he came to himself, so far as to be thoroughly sensible of his sin, till Nathan, a faithful

4. ἀναλαμβάνετε.

chirurgian, was sent to search the wound, and clear it of the dead flesh which had grown over it? And Jonah, otherwise a holy prophet, when God would send him on an errand to Nineveh, he hath his shoes to seek, I mean that preparation and readiness with which his mind should have been shod, to have gone at the first call. Good Hezekiah, we find how near his helmet of hope was of being beaten off his head, who tells us himself what his thoughts were in the day of his distress, that he should 'not see the Lord in the land of the living,' expecting that God would never let go his hold, till like a lion he had broke his bones, and at last made an end of him. Even Abraham himself, famous for faith, had yet his fits of unbelief and distrustful qualms coming over his valiant heart. Now in this case the Christian's care should be to get his armour speedily repaired. A battered helmet is next to no helmet in point of present use. Grace in a decay is like a man pulled off his legs by sickness; if some means be not used to recover it, little service will be done by it, or comfort received from it. Therefore Christ gives this church of Ephesus, to whom Paul wrote this epistle, this counsel, 'to remember from whence she has fallen, to repent and do her first works.' How many does a declining Christian wrong at once?

First. He wrongs God, and that in a high degree, because reckons upon more honour to be paid him in, by his saints' grace, than by all other talents which his creatures have to trade with in the world. He can in some sense better bear the open sins of the world, than the decays of his saints' graces. They by abusing their talents, rob him but of his oil, flax, and wool; but the Christian, by the other, bereaves him of the glory which should be paid him from his faith, zeal, patience, self-denial, sincerity, and the rest. Suppose a master should trust one servant with his money, and another with his child to be looked to; would he not be more displeased to see his dear child hurt, or almost killed by the negligence of the one, than his money stolen by the carelessness of the other? Grace is the new creature—the birth of the Spirit; when this comes to any harm by the Christian's careless walking, it must needs go nearer the heart of God, than the wrong he hath from the world, who are trusted with nothing like this.

Second. He that declines in grace, and labours

not to repair it, wrongs his brethren, who have a share in one another's grace. He wrongs his whole body that seeks not a cure for a wound in any member. We are bid to 'love one another,' II John 5; but how shall we show our love to one another? The very next words will direct us. 'And this is love, that we walk after his commandments,' ver. 6. Indeed we show little love to our brethren by sinning, whereby we are sure either to ensnare them or grieve them; and how to let grace go down and sin not go up, is [a] riddle to any that know what they both are.

Third. The Christian wrongs himself in not endeavouring to repair his broken armour, and [to] recover his declining grace. By this he loses the evidence of his inheritance, at least so blots it that it cannot be so clearly perceived by him. A declining Christian must needs be a doubting Christian, because the common symptom of a hypocrite is to wear and waste, like a stake set in the ground, which rots, while true grace like the tree grows. Is not this the knot which the devil poseth many poor souls withal, and finds them work for many years to untie? If thou wert a Christian thou wouldst grow. Right saints go from strength to strength, and thou goest from strength to weakness. They go up the hill to Zion—every ordinance and providence is a step that bears him nearer heaven—but thou goest down the hill, and art farther from thy salvation than when thou didst first believe, as thou thoughtest. And doth it stand with thy wisdom, Christian, to put a staff into the devil's hand, an argument into his mouth, to dispute against thy salvation with? If you held an estate by the life of a child, which upon the death of it should all go away from you, that child, I warrant you, should be well looked unto; his head should not ache, but you would post to the physician for counsel. I pray what is your evidence for that glorious estate you hope for? Is it not Christ within you? Is not this new creature—which may well be called Christ for its likeness to him—the young heir of heaven's glory? and when that is sick or weak, is it not time to use all means for its recovery? Whilst thus, thou canst neither live nor die comfortably. Not live! a man in a consumption has little joy of his life; he neither finds sweetness in his meat, nor delight in his work, as a healthful man doth. O how sweet is the promise to faith, when active and vigorous! how easy the yoke of

the command to the Christian, when his conscience is not galled with guilt, nor his strength enfeebled by temptation! But the Christian in a declining condition, he tastes not the promise, every command is grievous, and every duty burdensome to him; he goes in pain like one whose foot is out of joint, though the way be never so pleasant. And he is as unfit to die as he is to live. Such a one can like no more to hear the news of death, than a tenant that wants his rent doth to hear the quarter day. This made David beg time of God. 'O spare me a little, that I may recover strength.'

Having shown you why the Christian should endeavour to recover his declining graces, it will be very requisite to give a word of counsel to the Christian.

FIRST. A word of counsel to direct him how to judge of the declining state of grace, that he may not pass a false judgment upon himself therein.

SECOND. A word of counsel to direct him, when he finds grace to be in a declination, how he may recover it.

[A word of counsel, showing from what we may not, as also from what we may, judge our graces to be declining.]

FIRST. A word of counsel to direct the Christian how to judge of the declining state of grace, that he may not pass a false judgment upon himself therein.

How may a Christian judge whether grace be declining in him or no? First. I shall resolve this negatively, and show by what he is not to judge his grace to decline. Second. I shall resolve it positively, and show by what he may certainly conclude a decay of grace.

First. I shall resolve this negatively, and show by what he is not to judge his grace to decline, and that in several particulars.

1. Christian, do not judge grace to be fallen weaker, because thy sense of corruption is grown stronger. This oft lies at the bottom of poor souls' complaints in this case. O they never felt pride, hypocrisy, and other corruptions, so haunt them as now. None knows how they are vexed with these and the like, besides themselves. Now let me ask thee who makest this sad moan, whether thou dost not think these corruptions were in thee before thou didst thus

feel them? how oft hast thou prayed as formally, and not been troubled? how oft hast thou stood chatting with the same lusts, and thy soul hath not been laid low before the Lord with such abasement of thyself as now? Deal faithfully between God and thy soul, and tell not a lie for God by bearing false witness against thyself. If it be thus, thou hast rather a comfortable sign of grace growing than decaying. Sin cannot be on the getting hand, if the sense of sin grow quick; this is the concomitant of a thriving soul. None [are] so full of complaints of their own hearts as such; the least sin goes now to their very souls, which makes them think viler of themselves than ever. But it is not the increase of sin in them, but the advance of their love to Christ, makes them judge so. When the sun shines with some power, and the year gets up, we observe, though we may have frosts and snow, yet they do not lie long, but are soon dissolved by the sun. O it is a sweet sign that the love of Christ shines with [such] a force upon thy soul, that no corruptions can lie long in thy bosom, but they melt into sorrow and bitter complaints. That is the decaying soul, where sin lies bound up and frozen, [where] little sense of or sorrow for it appears.

2. Take heed thou thinkest not grace decays, because thy comfort withdraws. The influence of the sun comes where the light of it is not to be found, yea, is mighty, as appears in those mines of gold and silver, which are concocted by the same. And so may the actings of grace be vigorous in thee, when least under the shines of his countenance. Did ever faith triumph more than in our Saviour, crying 'My God, my God?' here faith was at its meridian, when it was midnight in respect of joy. Possibly thou comest from an ordinance, and bringest not home with thee those sheaves of comfort thou usest to do, and therefore concludest grace acted not in thee as formerly. Truly if thou hast nothing else to go by, thou mayest wrong the grace of God in thee exceedingly. Because thy comfort is extrinsical to thy duty—a boon which God may give or not, yea, doth give to the weak, and deny to the strong. The traveller may go as fast, and ride as much ground when the sun doth not shine, as when it doth—though indeed he goes not so merrily on his journey—nay, sometimes he makes the more haste. The warm sun makes him sometimes to lie down and loiter, but when dark and cold, he puts on

with more speed. Some graces thrive best, like some flowers, in the shade, such as humility, dependence on God, &c.

3. Take heed thou dost not mistake, and think thy grace decays, when may be it is only thy temptations increase, and not thy grace that decreases. If you should hear a man say, because he cannot to-day run so fast, when a hundred weight is on his back, as he could yesterday without any such a burden, that therefore he was grown weaker, you would soon tell him where his mistake lies. Temptation lies not in the same heaviness alway upon the Christian's shoulder. Observe, therefore, whether Satan is not more than ordinary let loose to assault thee—whether thy temptations come not with more force and violence than ever. Possibly, though thou dost not with the same facility overcome these, as thou hast done less, yet grace may act stronger in conflicting with the greater, than in overcoming the less. The same ship, that when lightly ballasted, and favoured with the wind, goes mounting, at another time deeply laden and going against wind and tide, may move with a slow pace, and yet they in the ship take more pains to make it sail thus, than they did when it went faster.

Second. I shall resolve it positively, and show by what he may certainly conclude that grace is declining; and that in a threefold respect. 1. In reference to temptations to sin. 2. In reference to the duties of God's worship. 3. The frame of thy heart in worldly employments.

1. In reference to temptations to sin, and that is threefold.

(1.) When thou art not so wakeful to discover the encroachings of sin upon thee as formerly. At one time we find David's heart smote him when he but rent the skirt of Saul's garment; at another time, when his eye glanced on Bathsheba, he takes no such notice of the snare Satan had him in, and so is led from one sin to another, which plainly showed that grace in him was heavy-eyed, and his heart not in so holy a frame as it had been. If an enemy comes up to the gates, and the sentinel [does] not so much as give an alarm to the city of his approach, it shows he is off his guard, either fallen asleep or worse. If grace were awake, and thy conscience had not contracted some hardness, it would do its office.

(2.) When a temptation to sin is discovered, and

thou findest thy heart shut up that thou dost not pray against it, or not with that zeal and holy indignation, as formerly upon such occasions, it is a bad sign, that lust hath got an advantage of thy grace, that thou canst not readily betake thyself to thy arms. Thy affections are bribed, and this makes thee so cold a suitor at the throne of grace for help against thine enemy.

(3.) When the arguments prevailing most with thee to resist temptations to sin, or to mourn for sins committed, are more carnal and less evangelical than formerly. May be thou rememberest when thy love to Christ would have spit fire on the face of Satan tempting thee to such a sin, but now that holy fire is so abated that if there were not some other carnal motives to make the vote full, it would hazard to be carried for it, rather than against it. And so in mourning for a sin, there is possibly now some slavish arguments, like an onion in the eye, which makes thee weep, rather than pure ingenuity arising from love to God whom thou hast offended; this speaks a sad decay, and the more mixture there is of such carnal arguments, either in the resisting of, or mourning for sin, the greater the declination of grace is. David's natural heat sure was much decayed, when he needed so many clothes to be laid on him, and yet he felt so little heat; the time was he would have sweat with fewer. I am afraid, many their love to Christ will be found, in these declining times, to have lost so much of its youthful vigor, that what would formerly have put them into a holy fury and burning zeal against some sins, such as Sabbath-breaking, pride of apparel, neglect of family duties, &c., hath now much ado to keep any heat at all in them against the same.

2. In reference to the duties of God's worship.

(1.) If thy heart doth not prompt thee with that forwardness and readiness as formerly to hold communion with God in any duty. Possibly thou knowest the time when thy heart echoed back to the motions of God's spirit bidding thee seek his face: 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek;' yea, thou didst long as much till a Sabbath, or a sermon-season came, as the carnal wretch doth till it be gone; but now thy pulse doth not beat so quick a march to the ordinances public or secret. Nature cannot but decay if appetite to food go away. A craving soul is the thriving soul; such a child that will not let his mother rest, but is frequently

crying for the breast.

(2.) When thou declinest in thy care to perform duties in spiritual sort, and to preserve the sense of those more inward failings, which in duty none but thyself can check thee of. It is not frequency of duty, but spirituality in duty, [that] causeth thriving, and therefore neglect in this point soon brings grace into a consumptive posture. Possibly, soul, the time was thou wert not satisfied with praying, but thou didst watch thy heart strictly; as a man would every piece in a sum of money he pays, lest he should wrong his friend with any brass or uncurrent coin—thou wouldst have God not only have duty, but duty stamped with that faith which makes it current, have that zeal and sincerity which makes it gospel-weight; but now thou art more careless and formal. O look to it, poor soul, thou wilt, if thou continue thus careless, melt in thy spiritual state apace. Such dealings will spoil thy trade with heaven. God will not take off these slightly duties at thy hands.

(3.) When a Christian gets little spiritual nourishment from communion with God, to what it hath done. The time had been, may be, thou couldst show what came of thy praying, hearing, and fasting, but now the case is altered. There is a double strength [which] communion with God imparts to a soul in a healthful disposition—strength to faith, and strength for our obedient walking. Dost thou hear and pray, and get no more strength to hold by a promise, no more power over, or brokenness of heart under, thy usual corruptions? What! come down the mount, and break the tables of God's law, as soon as thou art off the place! as deep in thy passion, as uneven in thy course as before! There is a sure decay of that inward heat, which should and would, if in its right temper, suck some nourishment from these.

3. The frame of thy heart in worldly employments.

(1.) When thy worldly occasions do not leave thee in so free and spiritual a disposition, to return to the presence of God as formerly. May be thou couldst have come from thy shop and family employments to thy closet, and find they have kept thee in frame, yea, may be delivered thee up in a better frame for those duties; but now it is otherwise, thou canst not so shake them off but they cleave to thy spirit, and give an earthly savour to thy praying and

hearing. Thou hast reason to bewail it; when nature decays, men go more stooping; and it is a sign some such decay is in thee, that thou canst not, as thou usest, lift up thy heart from earthly to spiritual duties. They were intended as helps against temptation, and therefore when they prove snares to us there is a distemper on us. If we wax worse after sleep, the body is not right, because the nature of sleep is to refresh; if exercise indisposeth for work, the reason is our bodies. So here.

(2.) When thy diligence in thy particular calling is more selfish. Possibly thou hast wrought in thy shop, and set close at thy study, in obedience to the command chiefly. Thy carnal interests have swayed but little with thee, but now thou tradest more for thyself, and less for God. O have a care of this.

(3.) When thou canst not bear the disappointment of thy carnal ends in thy particular calling, as thou hast done. Thou workest and gettest little of the world, thou preachest and art not much esteemed, and thou knowest not well how to brook these. The time was thou couldst retire thyself into God, and make up all thou didst want elsewhere in him; but now thou art not so well satisfied with thy estate, rank, and condition. Thy heart is fingering for more of these than God allows thee, this shows declining. Children are harder to be pleased, and old men—whose decay of nature makes them more froward, and in a manner children a second time—than others. Labour therefore to recover thy decaying grace, and as this lock grows, so thy strength with it will, to acquiesce in the dispose of God's providence.

[Directions for the recovery of declining grace.]

SECOND. We come now to give a few directions to the Christian, to show him, when he finds grace to be in a declining state, he may recover it.

Inquire faithfully into the cause of thy declining. The Christian's armour decays two ways, either by violent battery, when the Christian is overcome by temptations to sin, or else by neglecting to furbish and scour it with the use of those means which are as oil, to keep it clean and bright. Now inquire, which of these have been the cause of thy decay. It is like, both concur.

Direction First. If thy grace be weakened by any blow given it by any sin committed by thee, there then lies a threefold duty upon thee towards the recovery of it.

1. Duty. Thou art to renew thy repentance. It is Christ's counsel, Rev. 2:5, to Ephesus, 'Repent and do the first works,' where it is not only commanded as a duty, but prescribed as a means for her recovery; as if he had said, 'Repent, that thou mayest do thy first works.' So, Hosea 14:2, the Lord sets backsliding Israel about this work, bidding her 'take with you words and turn to the Lord;' and ver. 4, he then tells her he will take her in hand to recover her of her sins, 'I will heal their backslidings.' A repenting soul is under the promise of healing and therefore, Christian, go and search thy heart, as thou wouldst thy house, if some thief or murderer lay hid in it to cut thy throat in the night, and when thou hast found the sin that has done thee the mischief, then labour to fill thy heart with shame for it, and indignation against it, and so go big with sorrow, and cast it forth before the Lord in a heart-breaking confession. Better thou do this, than Satan do thy errand to God for thee.

2. Duty. When thou hast renewed thy repentance, forget not, delay not then, to renew thy faith on the promise for pardon. Repentance, that is like purging physic to evacuate the peccant humour, but if faith come not presently with its restorative, the poor creature will never get heart, or recover his strength. A soul may die of a flux of sorrow as well as of sin. Faith hath an incarnating virtue, as they say of some strengthening meat; it feeds upon the promise, and that 'is perfect, converting'—or rather restoring—the soul,' Ps. 19:7. Though thou wert pined to skin and bones, all thy strength wasted, yet faith would soon recruit thee, and enable every grace to perform its office cheerfully. Faith sucks peace from the promise, called 'peace in believing.' From peace flows joy, 'being justified by faith we have peace with God,' Rom. 5:1; and, 'We rejoice in the hope of glory,' ver. 2; and joy affords strength, 'The joy of the Lord is our strength.'

3. Duty. Back both these with a daily endeavour to mortify those lusts which most prevail over thy grace. Weeds cannot thrive and the flowers also. When grace doth not act vigorously and freely, conclude [that] it is oppressed with some contrary lust,

which weighs down its spirits, and makes them lumpish, even as superfluous humours do load the natural spirits in our bodies, [so] that we have little joy to stir or go about any business till they be evacuated. And therefore ply this work close; it is not a day's work or two in the year, like physic in the spring and fall; nothing more vain, than to make a bustle, as the Papists do at their Lent, or as some unsound professors among ourselves, who seem to bestir themselves before a sacrament or day of fasting, with a great noise of zeal, and then let those very lusts live peaceably in them all the year after. No, this is child-play to do and undo; thou must mortify daily thy lusts by the Spirit, Rom. 8:13. Follow but this work conscionably, in thy Christian course, making it thy endeavour, as constantly as the labouring man goes out every day to work in the field where his calling lies, to watch thy heart, and use all means for the discovery of sin, and as it breaks forth to be humbled for it, and be chopping at the root of it with this axe of mortification, and thou shalt see by the blessing of God what a change for the better there will be in the constitution of thy grace. Thou who art now so poor, so pale, that thou art afraid to see thy own face long in the glass of thy own conscience, shalt then reflect with joy upon thy own conscience, and dare to converse with thyself without those surprisals of horror and fear which before did appall thee. Thy grace, though it shall not be thy rejoicing, yet it will be thy evidence for Christ, in whom it is, and lead thee in with boldness to lay claim to him; while the loose Christian, whose grace is overgrown with lusts, for want of his weeding-hook, shall stand trembling at the door, questioning whether his grace be true or no, and from that doubt of his welcome.

Direction Second. If, upon enquiry, thou findest that thy armour decays, rather for want of scouring, than by any blow from sin presumptuously committed, as that is most common and ordinary—for rust will soon spoil the best armour, and negligence give grace its bane, as well as gross sins—then apply thyself to the use of those means which God hath appointed for the strengthening [of] grace. If the fire goes out by taking off the wood, what way [is there] to preserve it, but by laying it on again?

1. I shall sent thee to the Word of God; be more frequently conversant with it. David tells us where he

renewed his spiritual life, and got his soul so oft into a heavenly heat, when grace in him began to chill. The Word, he tells us, quickened him. This was the sunny bank he sat under. The Word draws forth the Christian's grace, by presenting every one with an object suitable to act upon. This is of great power to rouse them up; as the coming in of a friend makes us, though sleepy before, shake off all drowsiness to enjoy his company. Affections are actuated when their object is before them. If we love a person, love is excited by sight of him, or anything that minds us of him; if we hate one, our blood riseth much more against him when before us. Now the Word brings the Christian graces and their object together. Here love may delight herself with the beholding Christ, who is set out to life there in all his love and loveliness. Here the Christian may see his sins in a glass that will not flatter him; and can there any godly sorrow be in the heart, any hatred of sin, and not come forth, whole the man is reading what they cost Christ for him?

2. From the word go to meditation. This is as bellows to the fires. That grace which lies choked and eaten up for want of exercise, will by this be cleared and break forth. While thou art musing this fire will burn, and thy heart grow hot within thee, according to the nature of the subject thy thoughts dwell upon. Resolve, therefore, Christian, to inclose time from all worldly suitors, wherein thou mayest every day, if possible, at least take a view of the most remarkable occurrences that have passed between God and thee.

(1.) Ask thy soul what takings it hath had that day, what mercies heaven hath sent into thee? and do not, when thou hast asked the question, like Pilate, go out, but stay till thy soul has made report of God's gracious dealings with thee. And, if thou beest wise to observe, and faithful to relate them, thy conscience must tell thee, that the cock was never turned, the breast of mercy never put up all the day, yea, while thou art viewing these fresh mercies, telling over this new coin, hot out of the mint of God's bounty, ancient mercies will come crowding in upon thee, and call for a place in thy thoughts, and tell thee what God hath done for thee months and years ago. And indeed old debts should not be paid last; give them, Christian, all a hearing one time or another, and thou shalt see how they will work upon thy ingenuous

spirit. It is with the Christian in this case, as with some merchant's servant that keeps his master's cash; he tells his master he hath a great sum of his by him, and desires he would discharge him of it, and see how his accounts stand, but he can never find him at leisure. There is a great treasure of mercy always in the Christian's hands, and conscience is oft calling the Christian to take the account, and see what God has done for him; but seldom it is he can find time to tell his mercies over. And is it any wonder that such should go behind-hand in their spiritual estate, who take no more notice of what the gracious dealings of God are with them? How can he be thankful that seldom thinks what he receives? or patient when God afflicts, that wants one of the most powerful arguments to pacify a mutinous spirit in trouble, and that is taken from the abundant good we receive at the hands of the Lord as well as a little evil? how can such a soul's love flame to God, that is kept at such a distance from the mercies of God, which are fuel to it? And the like might be said of all the other graces.

(2.) Reflect upon thyself, and bestow a few serious thoughts upon thy own behaviour—what it hath been towards God and man all along the day. Ask thy soul, as Elisha his servant, 'Whence comest thou, O my soul? where hast thou been? what hast thou done for God this day? and how?' And when thou goest about this, look that thou neither beest taken off from a thorough search, as Jacob was by Rachel's specious excuse, nor be found to cocker thyself, as Eli his sons, when thou shalt upon inquiry take thy heart tardy in any part of thy duty. Take heed what thou doest, for thou judgest for God, who receives the wrong by thy sin, and therefore will do himself justice if thou wilt not.

3. From meditation go to prayer. Indeed, a soul in meditation is on his way to prayer; that duty leads the Christian to this, and this brings help to that. When the Christian has done his utmost by meditation to excite his graces, and chase his spirit into some divine heat, he knows all this is but to lay the wood in order. The fire must come from above to kindle, and this must be fetched by prayer. They say stars have greatest influences when they are in conjunction with the sun; then sure the graces of a saint should never work more powerfully than in prayer, for then he is in the nearest conjunction and com-

munion with God. That ordinance that hath such power with God, must needs have a mighty influence on ourselves. It will not let God rest, but raiseth him up to his people's succour, and is it any wonder if it be a means to rouse up and excite the Christian's grace? How oft do we see a dark cloud upon David's spirit at the beginning of his prayer, which by that time he is a little warm in his work, begins to clear up, and before his ends breaks forth into high actings of faith and acclamations of praise? Only here, Christian, take heed of formal praying, this is as baneful to grace as not praying. A plaster, though proper and of sovereign virtue, yet if it be laid on cold, may do more hurt than good.

4. To all the former, join fellowship and communion with the saints thou livest amongst. No wonder to hear a house is robbed that stands far from neighbours. He that walks in communion of saints travels in company, he dwells in a city where one house keeps up another, to which Jerusalem is compared. It is observable concerning the house in whose ruins Job's children were entombed, that a wind came

from the wilderness and smote the four corners of it. It seems it stood alone. The devil knows what he does in hindering this great ordinance of communion of saints—in doing this he hinders the progress of grace, yea, brings that which Christians have into a declining, wasting state. The apostle couples those two duties close together, to 'hold fast' our 'profession,' and to 'consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works,' Heb. 10:23,24. Indeed it is a dangerous step to apostasy, to forsake the communion of saints; hence it is said of Demas, he 'hath left us, and embraced the present world.' O what mischief has Satan done us in these few late years, in this one particular! what is become of this communion of saints? where are there two or three to be found that can agree to walk together? Those that could formerly suffer together, cannot sit together at their Father's table, can hardly pray one with or one for another. The breath of one Christian is strange to another that once lay in his bosom. 'This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.'

DIRECTION III—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[THE ARGUMENT WITH WHICH HE URGETH THE EXHORTATION.]

‘That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand,’ Eph. 6:13.

We come to the argument with which the apostle urgeth the exhortation, and that is double. **FIRST.** The first hath respect to the hour of battle—‘that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.’ **SECOND.** The second to the happy issue of the war, which will crown the Christian thus armed, and that is certain victory—‘and having done all, to stand.’

FIRST ARGUMENT—THIS HATH RESPECT TO THE HOUR OF BATTLE.

‘That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.’

But what is this evil day? Some take this evil day to comprehend the whole life of a Christian here below in this vale of tears, and then the argument runs thus:—Take to yourselves the whole armour of God, that you may be able to persevere to the end of your life, which you will find, as it were, one continued day of trouble and trial. Thus Jacob draws a black line over his whole life—‘few and evil have the days of the years of my life been,’ Gen. 47:9. What day shines so fair that overcasts not before night, yea, in which the Christian meets not with some shower or other, enough to deserve the name of an evil day? Every day hath its portion, yea, proportion. Sufficient is the evil of the day; we need not borrow and take up sorrows upon use of the morrow, to make up our present load. As we read of ‘daily bread,’ so [also] of a ‘daily’ cross, Luke 9:23, which we are bid to take, not to make. We need not make crosses for ourselves, as we are prone to do; God in his providence will provide one for us, and we are bid to take it up, but we hear nothing of laying it down, till cross and we lie down together. Our troubles and our lives are coetaneous; [they] live and die together here. When joy comes, sorrow is at its heel—staff and rod go together. Job himself, that good man, whose prosperity the devil so grudged, and set forth in all his bravery and pomp, Job 1:10, as if his sun had no shadow, hear what account he gives of this his most flourishing time, ‘I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet;’ Job 3:26. There were some

troubles that broke his rest; when his bed was, to thinking, as soft as heart could wish, even then this good man tosses and tumbles from one side to the other, and is not quiet. If one should have come to Job and blessed him with his happy condition, and said, ‘Surely, Job, thou couldst be content with what thou hast for thy portion, if thou mightest have all this settled on thee and thy heirs after thee;’ he would have said, as once Luther, ‘that God should not put him off with these.’ Such is the saints’ state in this bottom, that their very life here, and all the pompous entertainments of it, are their cross, because they detain them from their crown. We need nothing to make our life an evil day, more than our absence from our chief good, which cannot be recompensed by the world, nor enjoyed with it. Only this goodness there is in this evil, that it is short. Our life is but an ‘evil day,’ it will not last long. And sure it was mercy that God hath abridged so much of the term of man’s life in these last days—days wherein so much of Christ and heaven are discovered, that it would have put the saints’ patience hard to it, to have known so much of the upper world’s glory, and then be kept so long from it, as the fathers in the first age were. O comfort one another, Christians, with this: Though your life be evil with troubles, yet it is short—a few steps, and we are out of the rain. There is a great difference between a saint in regard of the evils he meets with, and the wicked, just as between two travellers riding contrary ways—both taken in the rain

and wet—but of whom one rides from the rain, and so is soon out of the shower, but the other rides into the rainy corner—the farther he goes, the worse he is. The saint meets with troubles as well as the wicked, but he is soon out of the shower—when death comes he has fair weather; but the wicked, the farther he goes the worse—what he meets with here is but a few drops, the great storm is the last. The pouring out of God's wrath shall be in hell, where all the deeps of horror are opened, both from above of God's righteous fury, and from beneath of their own accusing and tormenting consciences.

Others take the phrase in a more restricted sense, to denote those particular seasons of our life wherein more especially we meet with afflictions and sufferings. Beza reads it *tempore adverso*—in the time of our adversity. Though our whole life be evil, if compared with heaven's blissful state; our clearest day, night, to that glorious morning; yet one part of our life, compared with another, may be called good, and the other evil. We have our vicissitudes here. The providences of God to his saints here, while on this low bottom of earth, are mixed and parti-coloured, as was signified by the 'speckled' horses, Zech. 1:8, in Zechariah's vision—red and white, peace and war, joy and sorrow, checker our days. Earth is a middle place betwixt heaven and hell, and so is our state here; it partakes of both. We go up hill and down, till we get to our journey's end, yea, we find the deepest slough nearest our Father's house—death, I mean—into which all the other troubles of our life fall, as streams into some great river, and with which they all end, and are swallowed up. This being the comprehensive evil, I conceive it is meant here, being made remarkable by a double article, that day, that evil day;⁵ not excluding those other days of tribulation which intervene. These are but so many petty deaths, every one snatching away a piece of our lives with them, or like pages sent before to usher in this king of terrors that comes behind.

The phrase being opened, let us consider the strength of this first argument, with which the apostle reinforceth his exhortation of taking to ourselves the whole armour of God, and that consists in three

weighty circumstances.

First. The nature and quality of this day of affliction, it is an evil day. Second. The unavoidable-ness of this evil day of affliction implied in the form of speech, 'that you may withstand in the evil day.' He shuts out all hope of escaping; as if he had said, You have no way to withstand, please not yourselves with thoughts of shunning battle, the evil day must come, be you armed or not armed. Third. The necessity of this armour, to withstand. As we cannot run from it, so [we cannot] bear up before it, and oppose the force which will be made against us, except clad with armour. These would afford several points, but for brevity we shall lay them together in one conclusion.

[The day of affliction and death is evil,
and in what respects.]

DOCTRINE. It behoves every one to arm and prepare himself for the evil day of affliction and death, which unavoidably he must conflict with. The point hath three branches. First. The day of affliction and death is an evil day. Second. This evil day is unavoidable. Third. It behoves every one to provide for this evil day.

First Branch. The day of affliction, especially death, is an evil day. Here we must show how affliction is evil, and how not.

1. It is not morally or intrinsically evil; for, if it were evil in this sense, God could not be the author of it. His nature is so pure, that no such evil can come from him, any more than the sun's light can make night. But this evil of affliction he voucheth for his own act. 'Against this family do I devise an evil,' Micah 2:3, yea more, he so appropriates it to himself, that he will not have us think any can do us evil beside himself. It is the prerogative he glories in, that there is no evil in the city, but it is of his doing, Amos 3:6. And well it is for the saints that their crosses are all made in heaven; they would not else be so fitted to their backs as they are. But for the evil of sin, he disowns it, with a strict charge that we lay not this brat, which is begotten by Satan upon our impure hearts, at his door. 'Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man,' James 1:13.

5. ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ.

2. If affliction were thus intrinsically evil, it could in no respect be the object of our desire, which sometimes it is, and may be. We are to choose affliction rather than sin, yea, the greatest affliction before the least sin. Moses chose affliction with the people of God, rather than the pleasures of sin for a season. We are bid rejoice when we fall into divers temptations, that is, afflictions. But in what respects then may the day of affliction be called evil?

(1.) As it is grievous to sense in Scripture, evil is oft put as contradistinguished to joy and comfort. 'We looked for peace, and behold not good.' A merry heart is called a good heart, a sad spirit an evil spirit, because nature hath an abhorrency to all that opposeth its joy, and this every affliction doth, more or less, Heb. 12:11. No affliction, while present, is joyous, but grievous; it hath, like physic, an unpleasing farewell to the sense. Therefore Solomon, speaking of the evil days of sickness, expresseth them to be so distasteful to nature, that we shall say, 'We have no pleasure in them.' They take away the joy of our life. Natural joy is a true flower of the sun of prosperity, it opens and shuts with it. It is true indeed, the saints never have more joy than in their affliction, but this comes in on another score; they have a good God that sends it in, or else they would be as sadly on it as others. It is no more natural for comfort to spring from afflictions, than for grapes to grow on thorns, or manna in the wilderness. The Israelites might have looked long enough for such bread, if heaven had not miraculously rained it down. God chooseth this season to make the omnipotency of his love the more conspicuous. As Elijah, to add to the miracle, first causeth water in abundance to be poured upon the wood and sacrifice, so much as to fill the trench, and then brings fire from heaven by his prayer, to lick it up; thus God pours out the flood of affliction upon his children, and then kindles that inward joy in their bosoms which licks up all their sorrow; yea, he makes the very waters of affliction they float on, add a further sweetness to the music of their spiritual joy, but still it is God that is good, and affliction that is evil.

(2.) The day of affliction is an evil day, as it is an unwelcome remembrancer of what sinful evils have passed in our lives. It revives the memory of old sins, which, it may be, were buried many years ago in the grave of forgetfulness. The night of affliction is the

time when such ghosts use to walk in men's conscience's; and as the darkness of the night adds to the horror of any fearful object, so doth the state of affliction, which is itself uncomfortable, add to the terror of our sins, then remembered. Never did the patriarchs' sin look so ghastly on them, as when it recoiled upon them in their distress, Gen 42:21. The sinner then hath more real apprehensions of wrath than at another time; affliction approximates judgment, yea, it is interpreted by him as a pursuivant sent to call him presently before God, and therefore needs beget a woeful confusion and consternation in his spirit. O that men would think of this, how they could bear the sight of their sins, and a rehearsal sermon of all their ways, in that day! That is the blessed man indeed, who can with the prophet then look on them, and triumph over them. This indeed is a dark parable, as he calls it, as 'I will open my dark saying upon the harp; wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?' Ps. 49:4,5.

(3.) The day of affliction makes the discovery of much evil to be in the heart, which was not seen before. Affliction shakes and roils the creature; if any sediment be at the bottom, it will appear then. Sometimes it discovers the heart to be quite naught that before had been seeming good. These suds wash off the hypocrite's paint; *natura vexata prodit seipsam*—when corrupt nature is vexed it shows itself. And some afflictions do that to purpose. We read of such as are offended when persecution comes, they fall quite out with their profession, because it puts them to such cost and trouble; others in their distress, 'that curse their God,' Isa. 8:21. It is impossible for a naughty heart to think well of an afflicting God. The hireling, if his master takes up a staff to beat him, throws down his work and runs away, and so doth a false heart serve God. Yea, even where the person is gracious, corruption is oft found to be stronger, and grace weaker, than they were thought to be. [In the case of] Peter, who set out so valiantly at first to walk on the sea, the wind doth but rise and he begins to sink; now he sees there was more unbelief in his heart than he before suspected. Sharp afflictions are to the soul as a driving rain to the house; we know not that there were such crannies and holes in the house, till we see it drop down here and there. Thus we per-

ceive not how unmortified this corruption, nor how weak that grace is, till we are thus searched, and made more fully to know what is in our hearts by such trials. This is the reason why none have such humble thoughts of themselves, and such pitiful and forbearing thoughts towards others in their infirmities, as those who are most acquainted with afflictions. They meet with so many foils in their conflicts, as make them carry a low sail in respect of their own grace, and a tender respect to their brethren—more ready to pity than censure them in their weaknesses.

(4.) This is the season when the evil one, Satan, comes to tempt. What we find called the time of 'tribulation,' Matt. 13:21, we find in the same parable, Luke 8:13, called the time of 'temptation.' Indeed they both meet; seldom doth God afflict us, but Satan addeth temptation to our wilderness. 'But this is your hour,' saith Christ, 'and the power of darkness,' Luke 22:53. Christ's sufferings from man, and temptation from the devil, came together. Esau, who hated his brother for the blessing, said in his heart, 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob,' Gen. 27:41. Times of affliction are the days of mourning; those Satan waits for to do us a mischief in.

(5.) The day of affliction oft hath an evil event and issue; and in this respect proves an evil day indeed. All is well, we say, that ends well; the product of afflictions on the Christian is good; the rod with which they are corrected yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and therefore they can call their afflictions good. That is a good instrument that lets out only the bad blood. 'It was good for me that I was afflicted,' saith David. I have read of a holy woman who used to compare her afflictions to her children. They both put her to great pain in the bearing; but as she knew not which of her children to have been without—for all the trouble in bringing forth—so neither which of her afflictions she could have missed, notwithstanding the sorrow they put her to in the enduring. But to the wicked the issue is sad, (a.) In regard of sin; they leave them worse, more impenitent, hardened in sin, and outrageous in their wicked practices. Every plague on Egypt added to the plague of hardness on Pharaoh's heart. He that for some while could beg prayers of Moses for himself, at last comes to that pass that he threatens to kill him if he

come at him any more. O what a prodigious height do we see many come to in sin, after some great sickness or other judgment! Children do not more shoot up in their bodily stature after an ague, than they in their lusts after afflictions. O how greedy and ravenous are they after their prey, when once they get off their clog and chain from their heels! When physic works not kindly, it doth not only leave the disease uncured, but the poison of the physic stays in the body also. Many appear thus poisoned by their afflictions, by the breaking out of their lusts afterward. (b.) In regard of sorrow; every affliction on a wicked person produceth another, and that a greater than itself, the greatest comes the last, which shall rive him fit for the fire. The sinner is whipped from affliction to affliction, as the vagrant from constable to constable, till at last he comes to hell, his proper place and settled abode, where all sorrows will meet in one that is endless.

Second Branch. This evil day is unavoidable. We may as well stop the chariot of the sun, when posting to night, and chase away the shades of the evening, as escape this hour of darkness, that is coming upon us all. 'There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war,' Ecc. 8:8. Among men it is possible to get off when pressed for the wars, by pleading privilege of years, estate, weakness of body, protection from the prince, and the like; or if all these fail, possibly the sending another in our room, or a bribe given in the hand, may serve the turn. But in this war the press is so strict, that there is no dispensation. David could willingly have gone for his son—we hear him crying, 'Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son;' but he will not be taken, that young gallant must go himself. We must in our own person come into the field, and look death in the face. Some indeed we find so fond as to promise themselves immunity from this day, as if they had an insuring office in their breast. They say they have made a covenant with death, and with hell they are at an agreement. When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto them. And now, like debtors that have fee'd the serjeant, they walk abroad boldly, and fear no arrest. But God tells them as fast as they bind he will loose: 'Your covenant with death shall be

disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand.' And how should it, if God will not set his seal to it? There is a divine law for this evil day, which came in force upon Adam's first sin, that laid the fatal knife to the throat of mankind, which hath opened a sluice to let out his heart-blood ever since. God, to prevent all escape, hath sown the seeds of death in our very constitution and nature, so that we can as soon run from ourselves, as run from death. We need no feller to come with a hand of violence, and hew us down. There is in the tree a worm which grows out of its own substance that will destroy it; so in us, those infirmities of nature that will bring us down to the dust. Our death was bred when our life was first conceived. And as a woman cannot hinder the hour of her travail—that follows in nature upon the other—so neither can man hinder the bringing forth of death with which his life is big. All the pains and aches man feels in his life are but so many singultus morientis naturæ—groans of a dying nature; they tell him his dissolution is at hand. Beest thou a prince sitting in all thy state and pomp, death dare enter thy palace, and come through all thy guards, to deliver the fatal message it hath from God to thee, yea, runs its dagger to thy heart. Wert thou compassed with a college of doctors consulting thy health, art and nature both must deliver thee up when that comes. Even when thy strength is firmest, and thou eatest thy bread with a merry heart, that very food which nourisheth thy life gives thee withal an earnest of death, as it leaves those dregs in thee which will in time procure the same. O how unavoidable this day of death be, when that very staff knocks us down to the grave at last, which our life leans on and is preserved by! God owes a debt to the first Adam and to the second. To the first he owes the wages of sin, to the second the reward of his sufferings. The place for full payment of both is the other world, so that except death come to convey the man thither, the wicked, who are the posterity of the first Adam, will miss of that full pay for their sins, which the threatening makes due debt, and engageth God to perform. The godly also, who are the seed of Christ, these should not receive the whole purchase of his blood, which he would never have shed but upon the credit of that promise of eternal life which God gave him for them before the world began. This is the reason why

God hath made this day so sure. In it he dischargeth both bonds.

Third Branch. It behoves every one to prepare, and effectually to provide for this evil day, which so unavoidably impends us: and this upon a twofold account. 1. In point of duty. 2. In point of wisdom.

1. In point of duty.

(1.) It is upon our allegiance to the great God, that we provide and arm ourselves against this day. Suppose a subject were trusted with one of his prince's castles, and that he should hear that a puissant enemy was coming to lay siege to this castle, and yet he takes no care to lay in arms and provision for his defence, and so it is lost. How could such a one be cleared of treason? doth he not basely betray the place, and with it his prince's honour into the enemy's hand? Our souls are this castle, which we are every one to keep for God. We have certain intelligence that Satan hath a design upon them, and the time when he intends to come with all his powers of darkness, to be that evil day. Now as we would be found true to our trust, we are obliged to stand upon our defence, and store ourselves with what may enable us to make a vigorous resistance.

(2.) We are obliged to provide for that day, as a suitable return for, and improvement of, the opportunities and means which God affords us for this very end. We cannot without shameful ingratitude to God, make waste of those helps God gives us in order to this great work. Every one would cry out upon him that should basely spend that money upon riot in prison, which was sent him to procure his deliverance out of prison. And do we not blush to bestow those talents upon our lusts and Satan, which God graciously indulgeth to deliver us from them, and his [Satan's] rage in a dying hour? What have we Bibles for, ministers and preaching for, if we mean not to furnish ourselves by them with armour for the evil day? In a word, what is the intent of God in lengthening out our days, and continuing us some while here in the land of the living? Was it that we might have time to revel, or rather ravel out upon the pleasure of this vain world? Doth he give us our precious time to be employed in catching such butterflies as these earthly honours and riches are? It cannot be. Masters, if wise, do not use to set their servants about such work as will not pay for the candle they burn in

doing it. And truly nothing less than the glorifying of God, and saving our souls at last, can be worth the precious time we spend here. The great God hath a greater end than most think in this dispensation. If we would judge aright, we should take his own interpretation of his actions; and the apostle Peter bids us 'account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation,' II Peter 3:15, which place he quotes out of Paul, Rom. 2:4, as to the sense, though not in the same form of words—'Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?' From both places we are taught what is the mind of God, and the language he speaks to us in, by every moment's patience and inch of time that is granted to us. It is a space given for repentance. God sees [that] as we are, death and judgment could bring no good news to us. We are in no case to welcome the evil day, and therefore mercy stands up to plead for the poor creature in God's bosom, and begs a little time more may be added to its life, that by this indulgence it may be provoked to repent before he be called to the bar. Thus we come by every day, that is continually superadded to our time on earth. And doth not this lay a strong obligation on us to lay out every point of this time, unto the same end it is begged for?

Second. In point of wisdom. The wisdom of a man appears most eminently in two things. 1. In the matter of his choice and chief care. 2. In a due timing of this his choice and chief care.

1. A wise man makes choice of that for the subject of his chief care and endeavour, which is of greatest importance and consequence to him. Fools and children only are intent about toys and trifles. They are as busy and earnest in making of a house of dirt or cards, as Solomon was in making of his temple. Those poor baubles are as adequate to their foolish apprehensions, as great enterprises are to wise men. Now such is the importance of the evil day, especially that of death, that it proves a man a fool, or wise, as he comports himself to it. The end specifies every action, and gives it the name of good or evil, of wise or foolish. The evil day of death is, as the end of our days, so to be the end of all the actions of our life. Such will our life be found at last, as it hath been in order to this one day. If the several items of our

life—counsels and projects that we have pursued—when they shall be then cast up, will amount to a blessed death, then we shall appear to be wise men indeed; but, if after all our goodly plots and policies for other things we be unprovided for that hour, we must be content to die fools at last, and [there is] no such fool as a dying fool. The Christian goes for the fool, in the world's account, while he lives; but when death comes, the wise world will then confess they miscalled him, and shall take it to themselves: 'We fools counted his life to be madness, and his end to be without honour. But how is he now numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints?' therefore, we have erred from the way of truth,' Wis. 5:4,5. The place is apocryphal, but sinners will find the matter of it canonical. It is true, indeed, saints are outwitted by the world in the things of the world, and no marvel; neither doth it impeach their wisdom, any more than it doth a scholar's to be excelled by the cobbler in his mean trade. Nature, when it intends higher excellences, is more careless in those things that are inferior, as we see in man, who, being made to excel the beasts in a rational soul, is himself excelled by some beast or other in all his senses. Thus the Christian may well be surpassed in matters of worldly commerce, because he hath a nobler object in his eye, that makes him converse with the things of the world in a kind of non-attendance. He is not much careful in these matters; if he can die well at last, and be justified for a wise man at the day of resurrection, all is well, Jude 15. He thinks it is not manners to be unwilling to stay so long for the clearing of his wisdom, as God can wait for the vindicating of his own glorious nature, which will not appear in its glory till that day, when he will convince the ungodly of their hard thoughts and speeches of him. Then they shall, till then they will not, be convinced.

2. A wise man labours duly to time and his care and endeavour, for the attaining of what he proposeth. It is the fool that comes when the market is done. As the evil day is of great concernment in respect of its event, so the placing of our care for it in the right season is of chief importance, and that sure must be before it comes. There are more doors than one at which the messenger may enter that brings evil tidings to us, and at which he will knock we know not. We know not where we shall be arrested, whether at

bed, or board, whether at home or in the field, whether among our friends that will counsel and comfort us, or among our enemies that will add weight to our sorrow by their cruelty. We know not when, whether by day or night, many of us [know] not whether in the morning, noon, or evening of our age. As he calls to work at all times of the day, so he doth to bed, may be while thou art praying or preaching, and it would be sad to go away profaning them, and the name of God in them; possibly when thou art about worse work. Death may strike thy quaffing-cup out of thy hand, while thou art sitting in the ale-house with thy jovial mates, or meet thee as thou art reeling home, and make some ditch thy grave, that as thou livedst like a beast, so thou shouldst die like a beast. In a word, we know not the kind of evil God will use as the instrument to stab us; whether some bloody hand of violence shall do it, or a disease out of our bowels and bodies; whether some acute disease, or some lingering sickness; whether such a sickness as shall slay the man while the body is alive—I mean, take the head and deprive us of our reason—or not; whether such noisome troubles as shall make our friends afraid to let us breathe on them, or themselves look on us; whether they shall be afflictions aggravated with Satan's temptations, and the terrors of our own affrighted consciences, or not. Who knows where, when, or what the evil day shall be? Therefore doth God conceal these, that we should provide for all. Cæsar would never let his soldiers know when or whither he meant to march. The knowing of these would torment us with distracting fear, the not knowing them should awaken us to a providing care. It is an ill time to caulk the ship when at sea, tumbling up and down in a storm; this should have been looked to when on her seat in the harbour. And as bad as it is, to begin to trim a soul for heaven when tossing upon a sick bed. Things that are done in a hurry are seldom done well. A man called out of his bed at midnight with a dismal fire on his house-top, cannot stand to dress himself in order, as at another time, but runs down with one stocking half on, may be, and the other not on at all. Those poor creatures, I am afraid, go in as ill a dress into another world, who begin to provide for it when, on a dying bed, conscience calls them up with a cry of hell-fire in their bosoms. But alas! they must go, though they

have no time to put their armour on. And so they are put to repent at leisure in hell, of their shuffling up a repentance in haste here. We come to the application of the point.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. It reproveth those that are so far from providing for the evil day, that they will not suffer any thoughts of that day to stay with them. They are as unwilling to be led into a discourse of this subject, as a child to be carried into the dark, and there left. It is a death to them to think of death, or that which leads to it. As some foolishly think [that] they must needs die presently when they have made their will, so these think they hasten that sorrowful day by musing on it. The meditation of it is no more welcome to them, than the company of Moses was to Pharaoh. Therefore they say to it as he to Moses, 'Get thee from me, and let me see thy face no more.' The fear of it makes them to butcher and make away all those thoughts which conscience stirs up concerning it. And at last they get such a mastery of their consciences, that they arrive at a kind of atheism. It is as rare to have them think or speak of such matters, as to see a fly busy in winter. Nothing now but what is frolic and jocund is entertained by them. If any such thoughts come as prophesy mirth and carnal content, these, as right with their hearts, are taken up into the chariot to sit with them, but all other are commanded to go behind. Alas, poor-spirited wretches! something might be said for you, if this evil day of death and judgment were such entia rationis—fictions of the imagination, as had no foundation or being but what our fancies give them. Such troubles there are in the world, which have all their evil from our thoughts. When we are disquieted with the scorns and reproaches of men, did we but not think of them, they were nothing. But thy banishing the thoughts of this evil day from thy mind, will be a poor short relief. Thou canst neither hinder its coming, nor take away its sting when it comes, by thy slighting it. Thou art like a passenger in a ship, asleep or awake thou art going thy voyage. Thou dost but like that silly bird, that puts her head into a reed, and then thinks see is safe from the fowler, because she sees him not. Thou art a fair mark for God's vengeance; he sees thee, and is taking his aim at thee, when thou seest not him.

Yea, thou putteth thyself under an inevitable necessity of perishing, by not thinking of this day. The first step to our safety, is consideration of our danger.

Use Second. It reproves those who, if they think of the evil day, yet [do] so [only as so] far off, that it is to little purpose. They will be sure to set it at such a distance from them, as shall take away the force of the meditation, that it shall not strike them down in the deep sense and fear of it. That cannon which, if we stood at the mouth of it, would shatter limb from limb, will not so much as scare them that get out of its reach. The further we put the evil day, the weaker impression it makes on us. It is true, say sinners, it cannot be helped. We owe a debt to nature; it must be paid. Sickness will come, and death follow on that, and judgment brings up the rear of both. But, alas! they look not for these guests yet, they prophesy of these things a great while hence to come. Many a fair day they hope will intervene. Thus men are very kind to themselves. First, they wish it may be long before it comes, and then, because they would have it so, they are bold to promise themselves it shall be so; and when once they have made this promise, no wonder if they then live after the rate of their vain hopes, putting off the stating of their accounts, till the winter evening of old age, when they shall not have such allurements to gad abroad from the pleasures of this life. O then they will do great matters to fit them for the evil day. Bold man! who gave thee leave to cut out such large thongs of that time which is not thine but God's? Who makes the lease, the tenant or the landlord? or dost thou forget thou farmest thy life, and art not an owner? This is the device of Satan, to make you delay; whereas a present expectation of the evil day would not let you sit still unprepared. O why do you let your souls from their work, make them idle and rest from their burdens, by telling them of long life, while death chops in upon you unawares? O what shame will your whorish hearts be put to—that now say, your husband is gone afar off, you may fill yourselves with loves—if he should come before he is looked for, and find you in bed with lusts? And let me tell you, sudden destruction is threatened, especially to secure ones. Read that scripture where it is denounced against that sort of sinners, who please themselves with their Lord's delaying his coming, [declaring] that 'the lord of that servant shall come in

a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour he is not aware of,' Matt. 24:48,50,51. Indeed God must go out of his ordinary road of dealing with sinners, if such escape a sudden ruin. One is bold to challenge any to show a precedent in Scripture of any that are branded for security, that some remarkable, yea, sudden judgment did not surprise. [In the case of those in] Sodom, how soon after a sunshine morning the heavens thicken, and bury them in a few hours, by a storm of fire, in their own ashes? Careless Laish is cut off before they almost think of it. Agag, when he saw the clouds of his fears break, and fair weather was in his countenance, they return immediately upon him, and shut him up in death, he is presently hewn in pieces. Amalek [is] slaughtered by David, before the triumph of their late victory was cold. Nebuchadnezzar is strutting himself in his palace with this bravado in his mouth, 'Is not this great Babylon that I have built?' Dan. 4:30; and before he can get the words out of his throat, there is another voice falling from heaven, saying, 'O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee.' And, 'the same hour was the thing fulfilled,' ver. 32,33, and he sent to graze with the beasts. Dives blesses himself for many years, and within a few hours the pillow is plucked from under his head, and you hear no more of him till out of hell he roar; yea, a whole world, few persons excepted, [is] drowned, and they 'knew not till the day the flood came and swept them all away,' Matt. 24:39. And who art thou, O man, that promisest thyself an exemption, when kings, cities, a whole world, have been ruined after this sort?

Use Third. This reproves those who—much against their will, and by reason of an awakened conscience, that is ever pinching of them, and preaching on Paul's text before Felix to them, till it makes them tremble as he did—think indeed often of this evil day; yet such is the power of lust in their hearts, that it makes them spur on, notwithstanding all the rebukes conscience gives them, and affrighting thoughts they have of the evil day, yet they continue in their old trade of sin desperately. These wretches are the objects of our saddest pity. The secure sinner, that has broke prison from his conscience, is like a strong-brained drunkard, he swallows down his sin, as the other doth his drink, with pleasure, and is not stirred at all. But here is a man that is stomach-sick,

as I may say, his conscience is oft disgorging his sweet draughts, and yet he will sin, though with pain and anguish. O consider, poor wretches, what you do! Instead of arming yourselves against the evil day, you arm the evil day against yourselves; you are sticking the bed with pins and needles, on which you must ere long be laid; you are throwing billets into that fiery furnace, wherein at last you shall be cast; and all this in spite of your consciences, which yet God mercifully sets in your way, that the prickings of them may be a hedge of thorns, to keep thee from the pursuit of thy lusts. Know therefore, if thou wilt go on, that as thy conscience takes from the pleasure of thy sin at present, so it will add to the horror of thy torment hereafter.

Use Fourth. It reproves those who, though they are not so violent and outrageous in sin, [as] to make them stink above ground in the nostrils above others, yet rest in an unarmed condition. They do not fly to Christ for covering and shelter against the day of storm and tempest, and the reason is, they have a lie in their right hand, they feed on ashes, and a deceived heart carries them aside from seeking after Christ. It would make one tremble to see how confident many are with their false hopes and self-confidences. Daring to come up—as Korah with his censer, as undauntedly as Moses himself—even to the mouth of the grave, till on a sudden they are swallowed up with destruction, and sent to be undeceived in hell, who would not be beaten from their refuges of lies here. Whoever thou art, O man, and whatever thou hast to glory in, were it the most saint-like conversation that ever any lived on earth, yet if this be thy shelter against the evil day, thou will perish. No salvation when the flood comes, but Christ; yea, being in Christ, hanging on the outside of the ark by a specious profession, will not save. Methinks I see how those of the old world ran for their lives, some to this hill, and others to that high tree, and how the waves pursued them, till at last they were swept into the devouring flood. Such will your end be, that turn any other way for help than to Christ; yet the ark waits on you, yea, comes up close to your gate to take you in. Noah did not put forth his hand more willingly to take in the dove, than Christ doth to receive those who fly to him for refuge. O reject not your own mercies for lying vanity.

Use Fifth. Let it put thee upon the inquiry, whoever thou art, whether thou beest in a posture of defence for this evil day. Ask thy soul soberly and solemnly, ‘Art thou provided for this day, this evil day?’ how couldst thou part with what that will take away, and welcome what it will certainly bring? Death comes with a voider to carry away all thy carnal enjoyments, and to bring thee up a reckoning for them. O canst thou take thy leave of the one, and with peace and confidence read the other? Will it not affright thee to have thy health and strength turned into faintness and feebleness, thy sweet nights of rest into waking eyes and restless tossings up and down, thy voice that has so often chanted to the viol, to be now acquainted with no other tune but sighs and groans? O how canst thou look upon thy sweet and dear relations with thoughts of removing from them? yea, behold the instrument, as it were, whetting, that shall give the fatal stroke to sever soul and body? Think that thou wert now half dead in thy members that are most remote from the fountain of life, and death to have but a few moments’ journey before it arrive to thy heart, and so beat thy last breath out of thy body. Possibly the inevitable necessity of these do make thee to harden thyself against them. This might indeed, in some heathen, that is not resolved whether there be another world or no, help a little to blunt the edge of that terror, which otherwise would cut deeper in his amazed heart; but if thou believest another world, and that judgment which stands at death’s back, ready to allot thee thy unchangeable state in bliss or misery, surely thou canst not relieve thy awakened conscience with such a poor cordial. O therefore think what answer thou meanest to give unto the great God at thy appearing before him, when he shall ask thee, ‘What thou canst say, why the sentence of eternal damnation should not then be pronounced against thee?’ Truly we deal unfaithfully with our own souls, if we bring not our thoughts to this issue. If now you should ask how you should provide against the evil day, so that you may stand before that dreadful bar, and live so in the meantime that you might not be under a slavish bondage through the fearful expectation of it, take it in a few directions.

1. If ever you would have a blessed issue of this evil day, so as to stand in judgement before the great God, rest not till thou hast got into a covenant-

relation with Christ. Dying David's living comfort was drawn from the covenant God had made with him—this was all his desire, and all his salvation. How canst thou put thy head into the other world without horror, if thou hast not solid ground that Christ will own thee for his? Heaven hath its heirs, and so hath hell. The heirs of heaven are such as are in covenant with God. The foundation of it was laid in a covenant, and all the mansions there are prepared for a people in covenant with him: 'Gather my saints together that have made a covenant with me.' But how mayest thou get into this covenant-relation? First break thy covenant with sin. Thou art by nature a covenant-servant to sin and Satan. May be thou hast not expressly in words, and formally, as witches, sealed this covenant, yet virtually, as thou hast done the work of Satan, and been at the command of thy lusts, accepting the reward of unrighteousness—the pleasure and carnal advantages they have paid thee in for the same—therein thou hast declared thyself to be so. Now if ever thou wilt be taken into covenant with God, break this. A covenant with hell and heaven cannot stand together.

2. Betroth thyself to Christ. The covenant of grace is the jointure which God settles only upon Christ's spouse. Rebekah had not the jewels and costly raiment till she was promised to become Isaac's wife, Gen 24:53. 'All the promises of God are yea' and 'amen' in Christ. If once thou receivest Christ, with him thou receivest them. He that owns the tree hath right to all the fruit that is on it. Now, that thou mayest not huddle up a marriage between Christ and thee, so as to be disowned of Christ, and it prove a nullity at last, it behoves thee to look to it, that there be found in thee what Christ expects in every soul that he espouseth. First, therefore, consider whether thou canst heartily love the person of Christ. Look wishly on him again and again, as he is set forth in all his spiritual excellences. Are they such as thy heart can close with? Doth his holy nature, and all those heavenly graces with which he is beautified, render him desirable to thee? or couldst thou like him better if he were not so precise and exactly holy? Yea, is thy heart so inflamed with a desire of him, that thou canst love him with a conjugal love? A woman may love one as a friend, whom she cannot love so as to make him her husband. A friendly love may stand

with a love of some other equal to it, yea, superior, but a conjugal love is such as will bear neither. Canst thou find in thy heart to forsake all other, and cleave to Christ? Does thy heart speak thee ready, and present thee willing, to go with thy sweet Jesus, though he carry thee from father, and father's house? Is thy confidence such, of his power to protect thee from all thy enemies—sin, wrath, and hell—that thou canst resolvedly put the life of thy soul into his hands, to be saved by the sole virtue of his blood, and [by the] strength of his omnipotent arm; and of his care to provide for thee for this life and the other, that thou canst acquiesce in what he promiseth to do for thee? In a word, if thou hast Christ, thou must not only love him, but for his sake all thy new kindred, which by thy marriage to him thou shalt be allied unto. How canst thou fadge⁶ to call the saints thy brethren? canst thou love them heartily, and forget all the old grudges thou hast had against them? Some of them thou wilt find poor and persecuted, yet Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren, neither must thou. If thou findest thy heart now in such a disposition as suits these interrogatories, I dare not but pronounce Christ and thee husband and wife. Go, poor soul—if I may call so glorious a bride poor—go and comfort thyself with the expectation of the Bridegroom's coming for thee; and when the evil day approaches, and death itself draws nigh, look not now with terror upon it, but rather revive, with old Jacob, to see the chariot which shall carry thee over unto the embraces of thy Husband, whom thou hearest to be in so great honour and majesty in heaven, as may assure thee he is able to make thee welcome when thou comest there. Amongst the 'all things' which are ours by being Christ's, the apostle forgets not to name this to be one, 'Death is ours.' And well he did so, or else we should never have looked upon it as a gift, but rather as a judgment. Now soul, thou art out of any danger of hurt that the evil day can do thee. Yet there remains something for thee to do, that thou mayest walk in the comfortable expectation of the evil day. We see that gracious persons may for want of a holy care, fall into such distempers as may put a sting into their thoughts of the evil day. David, that at one time

6. Fadge, an obsolete word, to agree; also, suit, fit.

would not fear to ‘walk in the valley of the shadow of death,’ is so affrighted at another time when he is led towards it, that he cries, ‘Spare me,’ O Lord, ‘that I may recover my strength, before I go hence,’ Ps. 39:13. The child, though he loves his father, may do that which may make him afraid to go home. Now, Christian, if thou wouldst live in a comfortable expectation of the evil day,

(1.) Labour to die to this life, and the enjoyments of it, every day more and more. Death is not so strong to him whose natural strength has been wasted by long pining sickness, as it is to him that lies but a few days, and has strength of nature to make great resistance. Truly thus it is here. That Christian whose love to this life and the contents of it, hath been for many years consuming and dying, will with more facility part with them than he whose love is stronger to them. All Christians are not mortified in the same degree to the world. Paul tells us he died daily. He was ever sending more and more of his heart out of the world, so that by that time he came to die, all his affections were packed up and gone, which made him the more ready to follow:⁷ ‘I am ready to be offered up,’ II Tim. 4:6. If it be but a tooth to pull out, the faster it stands the more pain we have to draw it. O loosen the roots of thy affections from the world, and the tree will fall more easily.

(2.) Be careful to approve thyself with diligence and faithfulness to God in thy place and calling. The clearer thou standest in thy own thoughts concerning the uprightness of thy heart in the tenure of thy Christian course, the more composure thou wilt have when the evil day comes. ‘I beseech thee, O Lord,’ saith good Hezekiah, at the point of death as he thought, ‘remember now, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight,’ II Kings 20:3. This cannot be our confidence, but it will be a better companion than a scolding conscience. If the blood be bad, the spirits will be tainted also. The more our life has

been corrupted with hypocrisy and unfaithfulness, the weaker our faith will be in a dying hour. There is a great difference between two children that come home at night, one from the field, where he hath been diligent and faithful about his father’s work, and another that hath played the truant a great part of the day; the former comes in confidently to stand before his father, the other sneaks to bed and is afraid his father should see him, or ask him where he hath been. O sirs, look to your walking. These have been as trying times as ever came to England. It has required more care and courage to keep sincerity than formerly. And that is the reason why it is so rare to find Christians—especially those whose place and calling have been more in the wind of temptation—go off the stage with a plaudite—praise ye—of inward peace in their bosoms.

(3.) Familiarize the thoughts of the evil day to thy soul. Handle this serpent often. Walk daily in the serious meditations of it. Do not run from them because they are displeasing to the flesh; that is the way to increase the terror of it. Do with your souls, when shy of and scared with the thoughts of affliction or death, as you used to do with your beast, that is given to bogle⁸ and start as you ride on him. When he flies back and starts at a thing, you do not yield to his fear and go back, that will make him worse another time, but you ride him up close to that which he is afraid of, and in time you break him off that quality. The evil day is not such a scareful thing to thee that art a Christian, as that thou shouldst start for it. Bring up thy heart close to it. Show thy soul what Christ hath done to take the sting out of it, what the sweet promises are that are given on purpose to overcome the fear of it, and what thy hopes are thou shalt get by it. These will satisfy and compose thy spirit; whereas the shunning the thoughts of it will but increase thy fear, and bring thee more into bondage to it.

7. σπένδομαι.

8. Bogle, To start with fright or amazement. — SDB.

SECOND ARGUMENT.—THIS HATH RESPECT TO THE HAPPY ISSUE OF THE WAR.

‘And having done all, to stand,’ Eph. 6:13

We come now to the second argument the apostle useth further to press the exhortation; and that is taken from the glorious victory which hovers over the heads of believers while in the fight, and shall surely crown them in the end. This is held forth in these words, and having done all, to stand. The phrase is short but full.

FIRST. Observe, that heaven is not won with good words and a fair profession; having done all. The doing Christian is the man that shall stand, when the empty boaster of his faith shall fall. The great talkers of religion are oft the least doers. His religion is in vain whose profession brings not letter testimonial of a holy life. Sacrifice without obedience is sacrilege. Such rob God of that which he makes most account of. A great captain once smote one of his soldiers for railing at his enemy, saying, that he called him not to rail on him, but to fight against him and kill him. It is not crying out upon the devil, and declaiming against sin in prayer or discourse, but fighting and mortifying it, that God looks chiefly upon. Such a one else doth but beat the air. There are no marks to be seen on his flesh and unmortified lusts that he hath fought. Paul was in earnest. He left a witness upon his body, made black and blue with strokes of mortification. It was not a little vapouring in sight of the Philistines that got David his wife, but shedding their blood; and is it so small a matter to be son of the King of heaven, that thou thinkest to obtain it without giving a real proof of thy zeal for God and hatred to sin? ‘Not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work; this man,’ saith the apostle, ‘shall be blessed in his deed,’ James 1:25. Mark! not by his deed, but in his deed. He shall meet blessedness in that way of obedience he walks in. The empty professor disappoints others, who seeing his leaves expect fruit, but find none, and at last he disappoints himself. He thinks to reach heaven, but shall miss of it. Tertullian speaks of some that think *satis Deum habere si corde et animo suspiciatur, licet actu minus fiat*—‘God hath enough,’ they think, ‘if he be feared and revered in their hearts, though in their actions they show it not so much;’ and therefore they can sin,

and believe in God, and fear him never the worse. This, saith he, is to play the adulteress, and yet be chaste; to prepare poison for one’s father, and yet be dutiful. But let such know, saith the same father, that if they sin and believe, God will pardon them with a contradiction also; he will forgive them, but they shall be turned into hell for all that. As ever you would stand at last, look you be found doing the work your Lord hath left you to make up, and trust not to lying words, as the prophet speaks, Jer. 7.

SECOND. Observe, that such is the mercy of God in Christ to his children, that he accepts their weak endeavours, joined with sincerity and perseverance in his service, as if they were full obedience; and therefore they are here said to have done all. O who would not serve such a Lord! You hear servants sometimes complain of their masters as being so rigid and strict that they can never please them, no, not when they do their utmost; but this cannot be charged upon God. Be but so faithful as to do thy best, and God is so gracious that he will pardon thy worst. David knew this gospel-indulgence when he said, ‘Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments,’ Ps. 119:6—when my eye is to all thy commandments. The traveller hath his eye on or towards the place he is going. Though he be yet short of it, there he would be, and is putting on all he can to reach it. So stands the saint’s heart to all the commands of God; he presseth on to come nearer and nearer to full obedience. Such a soul shall never be put to shame. But woe to those that cover their sloth with the name of infirmity, yea, that spend their zeal and strength in the pursuit of the world or their lusts, and then think to make all up when charged therewith, that it is in their infirmity, and they can serve God no better. These do by God as those two did by their prince, Francis I. of France, who cut off their right hand one for another, and then made it an excuse they were lame, and so could not serve in his galleys, for which they were sent to the gallows. Thus many will be found at last to have disabled themselves, by refusing that help the Spirit hath offered to them, yea, wasted what they had given them, and so

shall be rewarded for hypocrites as they are. God knows how to distinguish between the sincerity of a saint in the midst of his infirmities, and the shifts of a false heart. But we will waive these, and briefly speak to FOUR POINTS which lie clear in the words.

FIRST. Here is the necessity of perseverance—having done all.

SECOND. Here is the necessity of divine armour, to persevere till we have done all. Wherefore, else, bids he them take this armour for this end, if they could do it without?

THIRD. Here is the certainty of persevering and overcoming at last, if clad with this armour: else it were small encouragement to bid them take that armour which would not surely defend them.

FOURTH. Here is the blessed result of the saints' perseverance, propounded as that which will abundantly recompense all their pain and patience in the war—'having done all, to stand.'

From these we have four distinct doctrines.

FIRST. He that will be Christ's soldier, must persevere. SECOND. There can be no perseverance without true grace in the heart. THIRD. Where true grace is, that soul shall persevere. FOURTH. To stand at the end of this war, will abundantly recompense all our hazard and hardship endured in the war.

FIRST POINT OF DOCTRINE.

[The necessity of perseverance.]

In the words we have necessity of perseverance—having done all. DOCTRINE. He that will Christ's soldier, must persevere to the end of his life in this war against Satan. This, having done all, comes in after our conflict with death. That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day; then follows, having done all. We have not done all till that pitched battle be fought. 'The last enemy is death.' The word⁹ imports as much as to finish a business, and bring a matter to a full issue, so Php. 2:12, where we translate it well, 'work out your salvation,' that is, perfect it. Be not Christians by halves, but go through with it; the

thorough Christian is the true Christian. Not he that takes the field, but he that keeps the field; not he that sets out, but he that holds out in this holy war, deserves the name of a saint. There is not such a thing in this sense belonging to Christianity as an honourable retreat; not such a word of command in all Christ's military discipline, as fall back and lay down your arms; no, you must fall on, and stand to your arms till called off by death.

First. The necessity of perseverance, because we are all under a covenant and oath to do this. Formerly soldiers used to take an oath not to flinch from their colours, but faithful to cleave up to their leaders; this they called sacramentum militare—a military oath. Such an oath lies upon every Christian. It is so essential to the being of a saint, that they are described by this: 'Gather my saints together, those that have made a covenant with me,' Ps. 50:5. We are not Christians till we have subscribed this covenant, and that without any reservation. When we take upon us the profession of Christ's name, we list ourselves in his muster-roll, and by it do promise that we will live and die with him in opposition to all his enemies. 'Every nation will walk in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of our God;' and what is it to walk in the name of our God, but to fight under the banner of his gospel, wherein his name is displayed, by giving an eternal defiance to sin and Satan? If a captain had not such a tie on his shoulders, he might have them to seek when the day of battle comes. Therefore Christ tells us upon what terms he will enrol us among his disciples. 'If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' He will not entertain us, till we resign up ourselves freely to his disposal, that there may be no disputing with his commands afterwards, but as one under his authority, go and come at his word.

Second. Perseverance is necessary, because our enemy perseveres to oppose us. There is no truce in the devil's heart, no cessation of arms in our enemy's camp. If an enemy continue to assault a city, and they within cease to resist, it is easy to tell what will follow. The prophet that was sent to Bethel did his errand well, withstood Jeroboam's temptation, but in his way home was drawn aside by the old prophet, and at last slain by a lion. Thus many fly from one temptation, but not persevering, are vanquished by

9. κατεργαζεσθαι.

another; those that at one time escape his sword, at another time are slain by it. Joash was hopeful, when young, but it lasted not long. Yea, many precious servants of God, not making such vigorous resistance in their last days as in their first, have fallen foully, as we see in Solomon, Asa, and others. Indeed, it is hard when a line is drawn to a great length, to keep it so straight that it slacken not, and to hold a thing long in our hand, and not to have a numbness grow in our fingers so as to remit of our strength; therefore we are bid so often to hold fast the profession of our faith. But when we see an enemy gaping to catch us when we fall, methinks this should quicken us the more to it.

Third. Perseverance is necessary, because the promise of life and glory is settled upon the persevering soul. The crown stands at the goal, he hath it that comes to the end of the race. 'To him that overcometh will I give,' not in *proelio*, but in *bello*—not in a particular skirmish, but in the whole war. 'Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise,' Heb. 10:36. There is a remarkable accent on that henceforth, which Paul mentions, II Tim. 4:7, 8 'I have fought a good fight, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.' Why, was it not laid up before? yes, but having persevered and come near the goal, being within sight of home, ready to die, he takes now surer hold of the promise. Indeed, in this sense it is, that a gracious soul is nearer its salvation after every victory than it was before, because he approacheth nearer to the end of his race, which is the time promised for the receiving of the promised salvation, Rom. 13:11. Then and not till then the garland drops upon his head.

[Use or Application.]

Here we may take up a sad lamentation, in respect of the many apostate professors of our days. Never was this spiritual falling sickness more rife. O how many are sick of it at present, and not a few fallen asleep by it? These times of war and confusion have not made so many broken merchants as broken professors. Where is the congregation that cannot show some who have out-lived their profession? [They are] not unlike the silk-worm, which, they say,

after all her spinning, works herself out of her bottom, and becomes at last a common fly. Are there not many, whose forwardness in religion we have stood gazing on with admiration, as the disciples on the temple, ready to say one to another, as they to Christ, See what manner of stones these are! what polished gifts and shining graces are here! and now not one stone left upon another. O did you ever think, that they who went in so goodly array towards heaven in communion with you, would after that, face about, and running over to the devil's side, turn blasphemers, worldlings, and atheists, as some have done? O what a sad change is here! 'It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them, II Peter 2:21. Better never to have walked a step towards heaven, than to put such a scorn and reproach upon the ways of God. Such a one who hath known both what a service Satan's is, and what God's is, then to revolt from God to the devil, seems to have compared one with the other, and as a result of his mature thoughts, to pronounce the devil's which he chooseth, better than God's which he leaveth.'¹⁰ And how is it possible that any can sin upon a higher guilt, and go to hell under a greater load of wrath? These are they which God loathes. He that hates putting away, disdains much more to be himself thus put away. 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him,' Heb. 10:38. The apostate is said to tread upon 'the Son of God,' Heb. 10:29, as if he were no better than the dirt under his feet. Well, he shall have treading for treading, God himself will set his foot upon him, 'Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes,' Ps. 119:118; and who, think you, will be weary soonest? He that is under foot bears the weight of the whole man upon him. To be under the foot of God, is to lie under the whole weight of God's wrath. O pity and pray for such forlorn souls. They are objects of the one, and subjects of the other; though they are fallen low, yet [they are] not into hell. Now and then we see a Eutychus raised, that hath fallen

10. Comparationem videtur egisse qui utrumque cognoverit, et iudicato pronunciâsse eum meliorem, cujus se rursus esse maluerit.

— Tertull. de Pœnit.

from such a height; and you that stand, take heed lest you fall.

SECOND POINT OR DOCTRINE.

[The necessity of divine armour
that we may persevere.]

Here is the necessity of divine armour to persevere till we have done all. Wherefore else bids he them to take this armour for this end, if they could do it without?

DOCTRINE. There can be no perseverance without true grace in the heart. A soul void of divine armour cannot persevere. What this divine armour is, I have shown, and the apostle here doth, in the several pieces of it. The sanctifying graces of God's Spirit are this armour. One that hath not these wrought in him, will never hold out to pass all the stages of this Christian race, to fight all the battles that are to be fought before victory is to be had. Common gifts of the Spirit, such as illumination, conviction, sudden pangs, and flushing heats of affection, may carry out the creature for a while with a goodly appearance of zeal for God and forwardness in profession, but the strength these afford is soon spent. John's hearers, mentioned in John 5:35, got some light and heat by sitting under his burning ministry, but how long did it last? 'Ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.' They were very beautiful colours that were drawn on them, but [they were] not laid in oil, and therefore [were] soon washed off again. The foolish virgins made as great a blaze with their lamps, and did expect as good a day when Christ should come, as the wise virgins; but, alas, their lamps are out before he appeared, and as good never a whit, as never the better. The stony ground [was] more forward than the best soil. The seed comes up immediately, as if a crop should soon have been reaped, but a few nipping frosts turn its hue, and the day of harvest proves a day of desperate sorrow. All these instances, and many more in Scripture, do evince, that nothing short of solid grace, and a principle of divine life in the soul, will persevere. How forward soever formalists and flighty professors are to promise themselves hopes of reaching heaven, they

will find it too long a step for their short-breathed souls to attain. The reasons are the following:

Reason First. Such want a principle of divine life to draw strength from Christ to persevere them in their course. That by which the gracious soul itself perseveres, is the continual supply it receives from Christ, as the arm and foot is kept alive in the body by those vital spirits which they receive from the heart. 'I live,' saith Paul, 'yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' that is, I live but at Christ's cost. He holds, as my soul, so [also] my grace in life. Now the carnal person wanting this union, must needs waste and consume in time. He hath no root to stand on. A carcass, when once it begins to rot, never recovers; but every day grows worse, till it runs all into putrefaction. No salve or plaster will do it good. But where there is a principle of life, there when a member is wounded, nature sends supplies of spirits, and helps to work with the salve for a cure. There is the same difference between a gracious person and an ungracious. See them opposed in this respect: the righteous man 'falleth seven times' a day, and 'riseth,' but the wicked 'falleth into mischief,' Prov. 24:16; that is, in falling, he falls farther, and hath no power to recover himself. When Cain sinned, see how he falls farther and farther like a stone down a hill, and never stays till he comes to the bottom of despair;—from envying his brother, to malice, from malice to murder, from murder to impudent lying and brazen-faced boldness to God himself, and from that to despair; so true is that, 'Evil men shall wax worse and worse,' II Tim. 3:13. But now when a saint falls, he riseth, because when he falls he hath a principle of life to cry out to Christ, and such an interest in Christ as stirs him up to help. 'Lord, save me,' said Peter, when he began to sink, and presently Christ's hand is put forth; he chides him for his unbelief, but he helps him.

Reason Second. An unregenerate soul hath no assurance for the continuance of those common gifts of the Spirit he hath at present; they come on the same terms that temporal enjoyments do to such a one. A carnal person, when he hath his table most sumptuously spread, cannot show any word of promise under God's hand that he shall be provided for the next meal. God gives these things to the wicked, as we a crust or a night's lodging to a beggar in our

barn. It is our bounty, such a one could not sue us for denying the same. So in the common gifts of the Spirit, God was not bound to give them, nor is he to continue them. Thou hast some knowledge of the things of God; thou mayest for all this die without knowledge at last. Thou art a sinner in chains—restraining grace keeps thee in, [but] this may be taken off, and thou let loose to thy lusts as freely as ever. And how can he persevere that in one day may from praying fall to cursing, from [having] a whining complaining conscience, come to have a seared conscience?

Reason Third. Every unregenerate man, when most busy with profession, hath those engagements lying upon him, that will necessarily, when put to it, take him off one time or other. One is engaged to the world, and when he can come to a good market for that, then he goes away. He cannot have both, and now he will make it appear which he loved best. Demas hath forsaken us, and embraced this present world. Another is a slave to his lust, and when this calls him he must go, in spite of profession, conscience, God and all. Herod feared John, and did many things; but love is stronger than fear, his love to Herodias overcomes his fear of John, and makes him cut off at once the head of John, and the hopeful buddings which appeared in the tenderness of his conscience, and begun reformation. One root of bitterness or other will spring up in such a one. If the complexion of the soul be profane, it will at last come to it, however for a while there may some religious colour appear in the man's face, from some other external cause.

This shows us what is the root of all final apostasy, and that is a want of a thorough change of the heart. The apostate doth not lose the grace he had, but discovers he never had any; and it is no wonder to hear that he proves bankrupt, that was worse than nought when he first set up. Many take up their saintship upon trust, and trade in the duties of religion with the credit they have gained from others' opinion of them. They believe themselves to be Christians, because others hope them to be such, and so their great business is by a zeal in those exercises of religion that lie outmost, to keep up the credit which they have abroad, but do not look to get a stock of solid grace within, which should maintain them in

their profession; and this proves their undoing at last. Let it therefore make us in the fear of God, to consider upon what score we take up our profession. Is there that within which bears proportion to our outward zeal? Have we laid a good bottom? Is not the superstructure top-heavy, jetting too far beyond the weak foundation? They say, trees shoot as much in the root underground as in the branches above, and so doth true grace. O remember what was the perishing of the seed in the stony ground. It lacked root; and why so but because it was stony? Be willing the plough should go deep enough to humble thee for sin, and rend thy heart from sin. The soul effectually brought out of the love of sin as sin, will never be thorough friends with it again. In a word, be serious to find out the great spring that sets all thy wheels on motion in thy religious trade. Do as men that would know how much they are worth, who set what they owe on one side, and what stock they have on the other, and then when they have laid out enough to discharge all debts and engagements, what remains to themselves they may call their own. Thus do they consider what thou standest engaged to, thy worldly credit, profit, slavish fear of God, and selfish desire of happiness, and when thou hast allowed for all these, see then what remains of thy fear of God, love to God, &c. If nothing, thou art nought; if any, the less there be the weaker Christian thou art; and when thou comest to be tried in God's fire, thou wilt suffer loss of all other, which, as 'hay' and 'stubble' will be burned up.

THIRD POINT OR DOCTRINE.

[The certainty of persevering if clad with this armour.]

We have here the certainty of persevering and overcoming at last, if clad with this armour. Having done all, to stand, else it were small encouragement to bid them take that armour which would not surely defend them.

DOCTRINE. There can be no perseverance without true grace in the heart. Every soul clad with this armour of God shall stand and persevere; or thus, true grace can never be vanquished. The Christian is

a born conqueror, the gates of hell shall not prevail against him. He that is 'born of God, overcometh the world,' 1 John 5:4. Mark from whence the victory is dated, even from his birth. There is victory sown in his new nature; even that seed of God, which will keep him from being swallowed up by sin or Satan. As Christ rose never to die more, so doth he raise souls from the grave of sin, never to come under the power of spiritual death more. These holy ones of God cannot 'see corruption.' Hence he that believes is said in the present tense to have eternal life. As 'the law that came four hundred years after,' could not make void the promise made to Abraham, so nothing that intervenes can hinder the accomplishing of that promise of eternal life, which was given and passed to Christ in their behalf before the foundation of the world. If a saint could in any way miscarry, and fall short of this eternal life, it must be from one of these three causes: Because God may forsake the Christian, and withdraw his grace and help from him; or because the believer may forsake God; or lastly, because Satan may pluck him out of the hands of God. Another cause I know not. Now none of these can be,

First. Because God can never forsake the Christian. Some unadvised speeches have dropped from tempted souls discovering some fears of God's casting them off, but they have been confuted, and have eaten their words with shame, as we see in Job and David. O what admirable security hath the great God given his children in this particular!

1. In promises he hath said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Heb. 13:5. [There are] five negatives in that promise, as so many seals to ratify it to our faith. He assures us there never did or can so much as arise a repenting thought in his heart concerning the purposes of his love and special grace towards his children—'The gifts and calling of God are without repentance,' Rom. 11:29. Even the believers' sins against him—their froward carriage—stirs not up thoughts of casting them off, but of reducing them—'For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal them,' Isa. 57:17,18. The water of the saints' failings cast on the fire of God's love cannot quench it. Whom he loves, he loves to

the end.

2. God, to give further weight and credit to our unbelieving and misgiving hearts, seals his promise with an oath. See Isa. 54:8-10, 'With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee.' Yea, he goes on and tells them, 'The mountains shall depart'—meaning at the end of the world, when the whole frame of the heavens and earth shall be dissolved—'but his kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed.' Now, lest any should think this was some charter belonging to the Jews alone, we find it, settled on every servant of God as his portion. 'This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord,' Isa. 54:17. And surely God that is so careful to make his children's inheritance sure to them, will con them little thanks, who busy their wits to invalid and weaken his conveyances, yea, disprove his will. If they had taken a bribe, they could not plead Satan's cause better.

3. In the actual fulfilling of these promises—which he hath made to believers—to Christ their attorney. As God, before the world began, gave a promise of eternal life to Christ for them, so now hath he given actual possession of that glorious place to Christ, as their advocate and attorney, where that eternal life shall be enjoyed by them. For as he came upon our errand from heaven, so thither he returned again, to take and hold possession of that inheritance which God had of old promised, and he in one sum at his death had paid for. And now, what ground of fear can there be in the believer's heart, concerning God's love standing firm to him, when he sees the whole covenant performed already to Christ for him, whom God hath not only called to, sanctified for, and upheld in the great work he has to finish for us; but also justified in his resurrection and jail-delivery, and received him into heaven, there to sit on the right hand of the majesty on high, by which he hath not only possession for us, but full power to give it unto all believers?

Second. Because the believer can never forsake God on account of the provision made in the covenant. An occasion of fear to the believer that he shall

not persevere, may be taken from himself. He has many sad fears and tremblings of heart, that he shall at last forsake God. The journey is long to heaven, and his grace is weak. 'O,' saith he, 'is it not possible that this little grace should fail, and I fall short at last of glory?' Now here there is such provision made in the covenant, as scatters this cloud also.

1. The Spirit of God is given on purpose to prevent this. Christ left his mother with John, but his saints with his Spirit, to tutor and keep them, that they should not lose themselves in their journey to heaven. O how sweet is that place—'I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them,' Eze. 36:27. He doth not say they shall have his Spirit if they will walk in his statutes; no, his Spirit shall cause them to do it. But may be thou art afraid thou mayest grieve him, and so he in anger leave thee, and thou perish for want of his help and counsel. Ans. The Spirit of God is indeed sensible of unkindness, and upon a saint's sin may withdraw in regard of present assistance, but never in regard of his care; as a mother may let her froward child go alone till it get a knock, that may make it cry to be taken up again into her arms, but still her eye is on it that it shall not fall into mischief. The Spirit withdrew from Samson and he fell into the Philistines' hands, and this makes him cry to God, and the Spirit puts forth his strength in him again. Thus here, indeed, the office of the Spirit is to abide for ever with the saints. 'He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever,' John 14:16.

2. It is one main business of Christ's intercession to obtain of God perseverance for our weak graces. 'I have prayed,' saith Christ to Peter, 'that thy faith fail not.' But was not that a particular privilege granted to him, which may be denied to another? Such fears and jealousies foolish children are ready to take up, and therefore Christ prevents them, by bidding Peter, in the very next words, 'When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,' Luke 22:32, that is, when thou feelest the efficacy and force of my prayer for thy faith, carry this good news to them, that their hearts may be strengthened also. And what strengthening had it been to them, if Christ prayed not for them as well as Peter? Does Christ pray for us? yea, doth he not live to pray for us? O how can children

of so many prayers, of such prayers, perish? The saints' prayers have a mighty power. Jacob wrestled and had power with God. This was his sword and bow—to allude to what he said of the parcel of ground he took from the Amorite—by which he got the victory and had power with God. This was the key with which Elijah opened and shut heaven. And if the weak prayers of saints, coming in his name, have such credit in heaven, that with them they can go in God's treasure, and carry away as much as their arms of faith can hold; O then, what prevalency has Christ's intercession, who is a Son, an obedient Son, that is come from finishing his great work on earth, and now prays his Father for nothing but what he hath bid him ask; yea, for nothing but what he is beforehand with him for, and all this to a Father that loves those he prays for as well as himself? Bid Satan avaunt! Say not thy weak faith shall perish, till thou hearest that Christ hath left praying, or meetest with a repulse.

Third. Because Satan cannot pluck the believer out of the hands of God. Let us see whether Satan be able to pluck the Christian away, and step betwixt him and home. I have had occasion to speak of this subject in another place; so the less here shall serve. Abundant provision is made against his assaults. The saint is wrapped up in the everlasting arms of almighty power, and what can a cursed devil do against God, who laid those chains on him which he cannot shake off. When is he able to pluck that dart of divine fury out of his own conscience which God hath fastened there, then let him think of such an enterprise as this. How can he overcome thee, that cannot tempt thee but in God's appointed time? And if God set Satan his time to assault the Christian whom he loves so dearly, surely it will be when he shall be repulsed with the greatest shame.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. Away then with that doctrine that saith, One may be a saint to-day and none to-morrow; now a Peter, anon a Judas. O what unsavoury stuff is this! A principle it is that at once crosseth the main design of God in the gospel-covenant, reflects sadly on the honour of Christ, and wounds the saint's comfort to the heart.

1. It is derogatory to God's design in the gospel-covenant, which we find plainly to be this, that his children might be put into a state sure and safe from miscarrying at last, which by the first covenant man was not. See Rom. 4:16, 'Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.' God on purpose, because of the weakness of the first covenant, through the mutable nature of man, makes a new covenant of a far different constitution and frame, not of works, as that was but of faith; and why? the apostle tells us that it, 'might be sure to all the seed,' that not one soul, who by faith should be adopted into Abraham's family, and so become a child of the promise, should fail of inheriting the blessing of the promise, which is eternal life; called so, Titus 1:2, and all this because the promise is founded upon grace, that is, God's immutable good pleasure in Christ, and not upon the variable and inconsistent obedience of man, as the first covenant was. But if a saint may finally fall, then is the promise no more sure in this covenant than it was in that, and so God should not have the end he propounds.

2. It reflects sadly on Christ's honour, both as he is intrusted with the saints' salvation, and also as he is interested in it. First. As he is intrusted with the saints' salvation. He tells us they are given him of his Father for this very end, that he should give them eternal life; yea, that power which he hath over all flesh, was given him to render him every way able to effect this one business, John 17:2. He accepts the charge, owns them as his sheep, knows them every one, and promiseth he 'will give them eternal life, they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand,' John 10:27,28. Now, how well do they consult with Christ's honour that say his sheep may die in a ditch of final apostasy notwithstanding all this? Secondly. As he is interested in the salvation of every saint. The life of his own glory is bound up in the eternal life of his saints. It is true, when Adam fell God did save his stake, but how can Christ, who is so nearly united to every believing soul? There was a league of friendship betwixt God and Adam; but no such union as here, where Christ and his saints make but one Christ, for which his church is called Christ. 'As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one

body: so also is Christ,' I Cor. 12:12. Christ and his members make one Christ. Now is it possible that a piece of Christ can be found at last burning in hell? can Christ be a cripple Christ? can this member drop off and that? It is as possible that all as any should. And how can Christ part with his mystical members and not with his glory? doth not every member add an ornament to the body, yea, an honour? The church is called the 'fulness of him,' Eph. 1:23. O how dishonourable is it to Christ, that we should think he shall want any of his fulness! and how can the man be full and complete that wants a member?

3. It wounds the saints' comfort to the heart, and lays their joy a bleeding. Paul saith he did not¹¹ dash the generous wine of God's word with the water of man's conceits, II Cor. 2:17. No, he gave them pure gospel. Truly, this principle of saints falling from grace gives a sad dash to the sweet wine of the promises. The soul-reviving comfort that sparkles in them, ariseth from the sure conveyance with which they are in Christ made over to believers, to have and to hold for ever. Hence [they are] called 'the sure mercies of David,' Acts 13:34—mercies that shall never fail. This, this is indeed wine that makes glad the heart of a saint. Though he may be whipped in the house when he sins, yet he shall not be turned out of doors; as God promised in the type to David's seed. 'Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail,' Ps. 89:33; and ver. 36, 'his seed shall endure for ever.' Could anything separate the believer from the love of God in Christ, this would be as a hole at the bottom of his cup to leak out all his joy; he might then fear every temptation or affliction he meets would slay him, and so the wicked's curse would be the saint's portion. His life would ever hang in doubt before him, and the fearful expectation of his final miscarriage, which he sees may befall him, would eat up the joy of his present hope. Now, how contrary such a frame of heart is to the spirit of adoption, and [to the] full assurance of hope which the grace of the new covenant gives he that runs may read in the word.

Use Second. This truth prepares a sovereign cordial to restore the fainting spirits of weak be-

11. καπελευειν τον λογον τωθ θεου.

lievers, who are surprised with many fears concerning their persevering and holding out to the end of their warfare. Be of good cheer, poor soul, God hath given Christ the life of every soul within the ark of his covenant. Your eternal safety is provided for. Whom he loves, he loves to the end, John 13:1. Hath he made thee 'willing in the day of his power' to march under his banner, and espouse his quarrel against sin and hell? The same power that overcame thy rebellious heart to himself, will overcome all thy enemies within and without for thee. Say not thou art a bruised reed, [for] with this [power] he will break Satan's head, and not cease till he hath brought forth judgment into complete victory in thy soul. He that can make a few wounded men rise up and take a strong city, can make a wounded spirit triumph over sin and devils, Jer. 37:10. The ark stood in the midst of Jordan, till the whole camp of Israel was safely got over into Canaan, Joshua 3:17, and so doth the covenant, which the ark did but typify. Yea, Christ, covenant and all, stand to secure the saints a safe passage to heaven. If but one believer drowns, the covenant must drown with him; Christ and the saint are put together as co-heirs of the same inheritance. 'If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,' Rom. 8:17. We cannot dispute against one, but we question the firmness of the other's title. When you hear [that] Christ is turned out of heaven, or that he is willing to sell his inheritance there; then, poor Christian, fear thy coming thither, and not till then. Co-heirs cannot sell the inheritance except both give up their right, which Christ will never do nor suffer thee.

Use Third. This truth calls for a word or two of caution. Though there is no fear of a saint's falling from grace, yet there is great danger of others falling from the top of this comfortable doctrine into a careless security and presumptuous boldness; and therefore a battlement is very necessary, that from it we may, with safety to our souls, stand and view the pleasant prospect this truth presents to our eye. That flower from which the bee sucks honey, the spider draws poison. That which is a restorative to the saint's grace, proves an incentive to the lust of a wicked man. What Paul said of the law we may truly of the gospel. Sin taking occasion from the grace of the gospel, and the sweet promises thereof, deceives the carnal heart, and works in him all manner of

wickedness. Indeed sin seldom grows so rank anywhere as in those who water its roots with the grace of the gospel. Two ways this doctrine may be abused. 1. It may be into a neglect of duty. 2. Into a liberty to sin. Take heed of both.

1. Take heed of falling into a neglect of duty upon this score—if a Christian, thou canst not fall away from grace. Take for an attitude against this, three particulars.

(1.) There are other arguments to invite, yea, that will constrain thee to a constant vigorous performing of duty, though the fear of falling away should not come in, or else thou art not a Christian. What! nothing make the child diligent about his father's business but fear of being disinherited and turned out of doors! There is sure some better motive to duty in a saint's heart, or else religion is a melancholy work. Speak for yourselves, O ye saints! Is self-preservation all you pray for, and hear for? Should a messenger come from heaven and tell you heaven were yours, would this make you give over your spiritual trade, and not care whether you had any more acquaintance with God till you came thither? O how harsh doth this sound in your ears! There are such principles engraven in the Christian's bosom, that will not suffer a strangeness long to grow betwixt God and him. He is under the law of a new life, which carries him [as] naturally to desire communion with God, as the child doth to see the face of his dear father; and every duty is a mount wherein God presents himself to be seen and enjoyed by the Christian.

(2.) To neglect duty upon such a persuasion, is contrary to Christ's practice and counsel. (a) His practice. Though Christ never doubted of his Father's love, nor questioned the happy issue of all his temptations, agonies, and sufferings, yet he prays, and prays again most earnestly, Luke 22:44. (b) His counsel and command. He told Peter, that Satan had begged leave to have them to sift them, but withal he comforts him—who was to be hardest put to it—with this, 'But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.' Sure our Saviour by this provision made for him and the rest, means to save them a labour that they need not watch or pray. No such matter. After this, as you may see, ver. 40, he calls them up to duty—'pray that ye enter not into temptation.'

Christ's praying for them was to strengthen their faith, when they should themselves pray for the same mercy; not to nourish their sloth that they needed not to pray, Christ's prayers in heaven for his saints are all heard already, but the return of them is reserved to be enclosed in the answer God sends to their own prayers. The Christian cannot in faith expect to receive the mercies Christ prays for in heaven, so long as he lives in the neglect of his duty on earth. They stand ready against he shall call for them by the prayer of faith, and if they be not worth sending this messenger to heaven, truly they are worth little.

(3.) Consider, that although the Christian may be secured from a total and final apostasy, yet he may fall sadly to the bruising of his conscience, [the] enfeebling [of] his grace, and the reproach of the gospel, which sure are enough to keep the Christian upon his watch, and the more, because, ordinarily, the saints' backslidings begin in their duties. As it is with tradesmen in the world—they first grow careless of their business, [are] often out of their shop, and then they go behind-hand in their estates—so here [Christians are] first remiss in a duty, and then fall into a decay of their graces and comforts, yea, sometimes into was that are scandalous. A stuff loseth its gloss before it wears; the Christian, the lustre of his grace in the lively exercise of duty, and then the strength of it.

2. Take heed of abusing this doctrine into a liberty to sin. Shall we sin, because grace abounds?—grow loose, because we have God fast bound in his promise?—God forbid! none but a devil would teach us this logic. It was a great height of sin those wretched Jews came to, who would quaff and carouse it while death looked in upon them at the windows: 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' They discovered their atheism therein. But what a prodigious stature in sin must that man be grown to, that can sin under the protection of the promise, and draw his encouragement to sin from the everlasting love of God? Let us eat and drink, for we are sure to live and be saved. Grace cannot dwell in that heart, which draws such a cursed conclusion from the premises of God's grace. The saints have not so learned Christ. The inference the apostle makes from the sweet privileges we enjoy in the covenant of grace, is not to wallow in sin, but having these promises, to

cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, II Cor. 7:1. It is the nature of faith—the grace that trades with promises—to purify the heart. Now the more certain report faith brings of God's love from the promise to the soul, the more it purifies the heart, because love by which faith works, is thereby more inflamed to God, and if once this affection takes fire, the room becomes too hot to stay there.

FOURTH POINT OR DOCTRINE.

[The blessed result of the saints' perseverance.]

In the words we have also the blessed result of the saints' perseverance propounded, as that which will abundantly recompense all their pain and patience in the war. Having done all, to stand.

DOCTRINE. To stand at the end of this war will abundantly recompense all our hazard and hardship endured in the war against sin and Satan. In man's wars all do not get by them that fight in them. The gains of these are commonly put into a few pockets. The common soldiers endure most of the hardship, but go away with little of the profit. They fight to make a few that are great yet greater, and are many times themselves turned off at last, with what will hardly pay for the cure of their wounds, or keep them from starving in a poor hospital. But in this war there is none loseth, but he that runs away. A glorious reward there is for every faithful soldier in Christ's camp, and that is wrapt up in this phrase, 'having done all, to stand.' Now in this place, to stand imports three things, which laid together will clear the point.

First. To stand, in this place, is to stand conquerors. An army, when conquered, is said to fall before their enemy, and the conqueror to stand. Every Christian shall at the end of the war stand a conqueror over his vanquished lusts, and Satan that headed them. Many a sweet victory the Christian hath here over Satan. But, alas! the joy of these conquests is again interrupted with fresh alarms from his rallied enemy. One day he hath the better, and may be the next he is put to the hazard of another battle. Much ado he hath to keep what he hath got, yea, his very victories are such as send him bleeding out of the

field. Though he repulses the temptation at last, yet the wounds his conscience gets in the fight do overcast the glory of the victory. It is seldom the Christian comes off without some sad complaint of the treachery of his own heart, which had like to have lost the day, and betrayed him into his enemy's hand. But for thy eternal comfort, know, poor Christian, there is a blessed day coming, which shall make a full and final decision of the quarrel betwixt thee and Satan. Thou shalt see this enemy's camp quite broken up—not a weapon left in his hand to lift up against thee. Thou shalt tread upon his high places, from which he hath made so many shots at thee. Thou shalt see them all dismantled and demolished, till there be not left standing any one corruption in thy bosom, for a devil to hide and harbour himself in. Satan, at whose approach thou hast so trembled, shall then be subdued under thy feet. He that hath so oft bid thee bow down, that he might go over thy soul and trample upon all thy glory, shall now have his neck laid to be trodden on by thee. Were there nothing else to be expected as the fruits of our watching and praying, weeping and mourning, severe duties of mortification and self-denial, with whatever else our Christian warfare puts us upon, but this, our labour sure would not be in vain in the Lord. Yea, blessed watching and praying, happy tears and wounds we meet with in this war. May they but at last end in a full and eternal victory over sin and Satan. Bondage is one of the worst of evils. The baser the enemy is, the more abhorred by noble spirits. Saul feared to fall into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines and to be abused by their scorns and reproaches, more than a bloody death. Who baser than Satan? What viler tyrant than sin? Glorious then will the day be, wherein we shall praise God for delivering us out of the hands of all our sins, and from the hand of Satan. But [it will be] dismal to you, sinner, who, at the same wherein you shall see the saints stand with crowns of victory on their heads, must like fettered captives be dragged to hell's dungeon, there to have your ear bored unto an eternal bondage under your lusts. And what more miserable sentence can God himself pass upon you? Here sin is pleasure, there it will be your torment. Here [it is] a sweet bit that goes down glib, but there it will stick in your throats. Here you have suitable provision to

entertain your lusts withal—palaces for pride to dwell and strut herself in; delicious fare for your wanton palates; houses and lands, with coffers of silver and gold, for your covetous hearts, by their self-pleasing thoughts, to sit brooding upon—but you will find none of these there. Hell is a barren place. Nothing grows in that land of darkness to solace and recreate the sinners' minds. You shall have your lusts, but want the food they long for. O what a torment that must needs be, to have a soul sharp set, even to a ravenous hunger after sin, but chained up where it can come at nothing it would have to satisfy its lust! For a proud wretch, that would wish he might dominate over all the world, yea, over God himself if he would let him, to be kept down in such a dungeon as hell is, O how it will cut! For the malicious sinner, whose heart swells with rancour against God and his saints, that he could pluck them out of God's bosom, yea, God, out of his throne if he had power, to find his hands so manacled, that he can do nothing against them he so hates, O how this will torment! Speak, O you saints, whose partial victory over sin at present is so sweet to you, that you would choose a thousand deaths, sooner than return to your old bondage under your lusts! How glorious then is that day in your eye, when this shall be completed in a full and eternal conquest, never to have anything to do more with sin or Satan!

Second. To stand, is here to stand justified and acquitted at the great day of judgment. The phrase is frequent in Scripture, which sets out the solemn discharge they shall have then by standing in judgment. 'The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,' Ps. 1:5, that is, they shall not be justified. 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' Ps. 130:3; that is, who shall be discharged? The great God, upon whose errand we come into the world, hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world by Jesus Christ. A solemn day it will be, when all that ever lived on earth, high and low, good and bad, shall meet in one assembly to make their personal appearance before Christ, and from his mouth to receive their eternal doom, who shall in his majestic robes of glory ascend the awful seat of judicature, attended with his illustrious train and guard of angels about him, as so many officers ready to execute and perform his pleasure according to the definitive sentence that

he shall pronounce—either to conduct those blessed ones whom he shall justify into his glorious kingdom, or [to] bind them hand and foot to be cast into hell's unquenchable flames, whom he shall condemn. I do not wonder that Paul's sermon on this subject did not make an earthquake in Felix's conscience; but rather that any should be so far gone in a lethargy and dedolent numbness of conscience, as the thought of this day cannot recover them to their sense and feeling. O sirs, do not you vote them happy men and women that can speed well on this day? are not your thoughts inquiring who those blessed souls are which shall be acquitted by the lively voice of Christ the judge? You need not ascend to search the rolls of election in heaven. Here you may know they are such as fight the Lord's battles on earth against Satan, in the Lord's armour, and that to the end of their lives. These having done all, shall stand in judgment. And were it but at a man's bar—some court-martial where a soldier stood upon trial for his life, either to be condemned as a traitor to his prince, or cleared as faithful in his trust—O how such a one would listen to hear how it would go with him, and be overjoyed when the judge pronounces him innocent! Well may such be bid to fall down on their knees, thank God and the judge that have saved their lives. How much more ravishing will the sweet voice of Christ be in the saints' ears, when he shall in the face of men and angels make public declaration of their righteousness? O how confounded will Satan then be, who was their accuser to God and their own consciences also, ever threatening them with the terror of that day! How blank will the wicked world be, to see the dirt that they had thrown by their calumnies and lying reports on the saints' faces, wiped off with Christ's own hand, and those justified from Christ's mouth as sincere, whom they had called hypocrites! Will not this, O ye saints, be enough for all the scorn ye were laden with from the world, and conflict you endured with the prince of the world! But this is not all. Therefore,

Third. To stand, doth here also—as the compliment of their reward—denote the saints' standing in heaven's glory. Princes, when they would reward any of their subjects that in their wars have done eminent service to the crown, as the utmost they can do for them, they prefer them to court, there to enjoy their

princely favour, and [to] stand in some place of honourable service before them continually. Solomon sets it out as the greatest reward of faithful subjects, to 'stand before kings.' Heaven is the royal city where the great God keeps his court. The happiness of glorious angels is to stand there before God—'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God,' Luke 1:19; that is, I am one of those heavenly spirits who wait on the great God, and stand before his face, as courtiers do about their prince. Now such honour shall every faithful soul have. 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge....I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by,' Zech. 3:7. He alludes to the temple, which had rooms joining to it for the priests that waited on the Lord in his holy service there; or to courtiers, that have stately galleries and lodgings becoming their place at court allowed them in the king's palace they wait upon. Thus all the saints—whose representative Joshua was—shall, after they have kept the Lord's charge in a short life's-service on earth, be called up to stand before God in heaven, where with angels they shall have their galleries and mansions of glory also. O happy they who shall stand before the Lord in glory! The greatest peers of a realm—such as earls, marquises, and dukes are—count it greater honour to stand before their king, though bareheaded and oft upon the knee, than to live in the country, where all bow and stand bare to them; yea, let but their prince forbid them coming to court, and it is not their great estates, or respect they have where they live, will content them. It is better to wait in heaven than to reign on earth. It is sweet standing before the Lord here in an ordinance. One day in the worship of God is better than many elsewhere. O, what then is it to stand before God in glory! If the saints' spikenard sendeth forth so sweet a smell, while the king sits at his table here in a sermon or sacrament; O then what joy must needs flow from their near attendance on him, as he sits at his table in heaven, which when God first made, it was intended by him to be that chamber of presence in which he would present himself to be seen of, and enjoyed by, his saints in all his glory. I know nothing would have a more powerful, yea, universal operation, upon a saint's spirit, than the frequent and spiritual consideration of that blissful state in heaven, which

shall at last crown all their sad conflicts here on earth. None like this sword, to cut the very sinews of temptation, and behead those lusts which defy and out-brave whole troops of other arguments. It is almost impossible to sin with lively thoughts and hopes of that glory. It is when the thoughts of heaven are long out of the Christian's sight, and he knows not what has become of his hopes to that glorious place, that he begins to set up some idol—as Israel the calf in the absence of Moses—which he may dance before. But heaven come in sight, and the Christian's heart will be well warmed with the thoughts of it, and you may as soon persuade a king to throw his royal diadem into a sink, and wallow with his robes in a kennel, as a saint to sin with the expectation of heaven's glory. Sin is a devil's work, not a saint's, who is a peer of heaven, and waits every hour for the writ that shall call him to stand with angels and glorified saints before the throne of God. This would cheer the Christian's heart, and confirm him when the fight is hottest, and the bullets fly thickest from men and devils, to think, it is heaven all this is for, where it is worth having a place, though we go through fire and water to it. 'It is before the Lord,' said David to scoffing Michal, 'which chose me before thy father, and all his house; . . . therefore will I play before the Lord, and I will yet be more vile than thus,' II Sam. 6:21,22.

Thus, Christian, wouldst thou throw off the vipers of reproaches, which from the fire of the wicked's malice fly upon thee. It is for God that I pray, hear, mortify my lust, deny myself of my carnal

sports, profits, and pleasures, that God who hath passed by kings and princes to chose me a poor wretch to stand before him in glory; therefore I will be yet more vile than thus. O sirs, were there not another world to enjoy God in, yet should we not, while we have our being, serve our Maker? The heavens and the earth obey his law, that are capable of no reward for doing his will. 'Quench hell, burn heaven,' said a holy man, 'yet I will love and fear my God.' How much more when everlasting arms of mercy stand ready stretched to carry you as soon as the fight is over into the blissful presence of God? You have servants of your own so ingenuous and observant, that can follow you work hard abroad in all weathers; and may they but, when they come home weary and hungry at night, obtain a kind look from you, and some tender care over them, they are very thankful. 'Yea,' saith one, to shame the sluggish Christian, 'how many hundred miles will the poor spaniel run after his master in a journey, who gets nothing but a few crumbs, or a bone from his master's trencher?' In a word, which is more the devil's slaves; what will they not do and venture at his command, who hath not so much to give them as you to your dog, not a crust, not a drop of water to cool their tongue? and shall not the joy of heaven which is set before the Christian, into which he shall assuredly enter, make him run his race, endure a short scuffle of temptation and affliction? yea sure, and make him reckon also that these 'are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in him.'

DIRECTION FOURTH.

The Position to be maintained in the Fight.

‘Stand therefore’ (Eph. 6:14).

The apostle had laid down in general, ver. 13, what armour the Christian soldier must use—armour of God. Now, lest any should stamp divinity upon what is human, and make bold to set God’s name on their counterfeit ware, calling that armour of God which comes out of their private forge, as Papists, and many carnal Protestants also, do, who invent weapons to fight the devil with that never came into God’s heart to appoint; he therefore comes more particularly to show what this whole armour of God is, describing it piece by piece, which together make up the complete suit, and every way furnish the Christian to take the field against this his enemy. We shall handle them in that order we find them here laid by the apostle. Only something would briefly be first said to the posture given us in charge, as that which we are to observe in the use of every piece, and [which is] therefore prefixed to all. The posture lies in these words—‘stand therefore;’ *στῆτε*, stand. This word is the same with the last in the precedent verse; but [is] neither in the same mood nor tense. There [it is] put for victory and triumph when the war is done; here for the Christian’s posture in the fight, and in order to it. It is a military expression, a word of command that captains use upon different occasions to their soldiers, and so imports several duties that are required at the Christian’s hands.

[The necessity of resisting Satan’s temptations, with the danger of yielding to them.]

FIRST. To stand, is opposed to a cowardly flight from, or treacherous yielding to, the enemy. When a captain sees his men beginning to shrink, and perceives some disposition in them to flee or yield, then he bids stand; that is, stand manfully to it, and make good your ground against the enemy, by a valiant receiving his charge, and repelling his force. The word taken thus, points at a suitable duty incumbent on the Christian, which take in this note—

DOCTRINE. Satan in his temptations is stoutly to be resisted, not in anywise to be yielded unto.

Reason First. The command is express for it: ‘Whom resist steadfast in the faith,’ 1 Peter 5:9. Set yourselves in battle against him, as the word imports, fight him whenever he comes. Soldiers must keep close to their commission, whatever comes on it. When Joab sent Uria to stand in the forefront of the battle, in the face of death itself, he could not but see his danger, yet he disputes not the matter with his general; obey he must, though he loses his life upon the place. Cowardice and disobedience to the leader’s command are counted among the Turks the most damning sins; and shall they be thought peccadillos,

little ones, by us that have Christ for our Captain to serve, and sin and the devil for enemies to fight? To resist some temptations may cost us dear: ‘Ye have not yet resisted unto blood,’ saith the apostle, ‘striving against sin,’ Heb. 12:4, implying that it may come to that, and if it should, [that] it alters not the case, nor gives a dispensation to shift for ourselves by choosing to sin rather than to suffer. The Roman captain said it was necessary to sail, not to live; and shall a Christian be afraid of his duty, when it is attended with outward hazard? The soldier carries his prince’s honour into the field with him, and so doth the Christian his God’s, whenever he is called to contest with any temptation. Now it will be seen at what rate he values his honour. David’s subjects valued him worth ten thousand of their lives, and therefore would die every man of them, rather than hazard him. O, how unworthy is it then, to expose the name of God to reproach, rather than ourselves to a little scorn, temporal loss, or trouble! It was Pompey’s boast, that at a word or nod of his, he could make his soldiers creep up the steepest rock on their hands and knees, though they were knocked down as fast as they went up. Truly, God is not prodigal of the blood of his servants, yet sometimes he tries their loyalty in hard services, and sharp temptations, that

he may from their faithfulness to him, and holy stoutness in their sufferings for him, triumph over Satan, who was so impudent as to tell God, that one of his choicest servants did but serve himself in serving him, ‘Doth Job fear God for nought?’—as if, when any sharp encounter came, he would turn head, and rather curse God than submit to him. And therefore, we find the Lord glorying over Satan, ‘Still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him,’ Job 2:3—as if the Lord had said, ‘What dost thou think now, Satan? hath not Job proved thee a loud liar? I have some servants, thou seest, that will serve me without a bribe, that will hold fast their integrity, when they can hold fast nothing else. Thou hast got away his estate, servants, and children, and yet he stands his ground, and thou hast not got thy will of him, nor his integrity from him.’

Reason Second. God furnisheth us with armour for this end, that we should stand it out valiantly, and not yield to Satan tempting. To deliver up a castle into an enemy’s hand, when it is well provided with ammunition to defend it, is shameful and unworthy of such a trust. This makes the Christian’s sin more dishonourable than another’s, because he is better appointed to make resistance. Take a graceless soul, when solicited, suppose, to a sin that promiseth carnal pleasure, or profit, it is no great wonder that he yields at first summons, and delivers himself up prisoner to Satan. The poor wretch, alas, hath no armour on to repel the motion. He tastes no sweetness in Christ. What marvel is it, if his hungry soul, for want of better food, falls on board upon the devil’s cheer?—that he, who hath no hope for another world, be made to shark and prole¹² to get some of this? The goat, we say, must browse where she is tied, and the sinner feed on earth and earthly things, to which he is staked down by his carnal heart; but the Christian hath a hope in his bosom of another guess-glory, than this peddling world can pretend to, yea, a faith that is able to entertain him at present with some of heaven’s joys—it being the nature of that grace to give existence to the good things of the promise. This hel-

12. Shark, to search, and prowl about; live by petty theft.

Prole, sometimes prolle, to search or prowl about for anything. — ED.

met on and shield lift up, would keep off a whole shower of such arrows from hurting the Christian. God hath reason to take it the worse at his hands to yield, that might have stood, would he but have made use of those graces which God hath given him for his defence, or called in help from heaven to his succour. ‘Hast thou eaten,’ saith God to Adam, ‘of the tree, whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldest not eat?’ Gen. 3:11. The accent lies on thou. It was not sure for hunger, thou hadst a whole paradise before thee; hast thou eaten that wert provided so well to have withstood him? Hast thou, may God say to the Christian, eaten of the devil’s dainties, who hast a key to go to my cupboard? does thy heavenly Father keep so starved a house, that the devil’s scraps will go down with thee?

Reason Third. The Christian’s safety lies in resisting. All the armour here provided is to defend the Christian fighting, none to secure him flying. Stand, and the day is ours. Fly, or yield, and all is lost. Great captains, to make their soldiers more resolute, do sometimes cut off all hope of a safe retreat to them that run away. Thus the Norman conqueror, as soon as his men were set on English shore, sent away his ships in their sight, that they might resolve to fight or die. God takes away all thought of safety to the coward; not a piece to be found for the back in all God’s armoury. Stand, and the bullets light all on your armour; flee, and they enter into your hearts. It is a terrible place, Heb. 10:38, ‘The just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.’ He that stands to it believingly comes off with his life; but he that recoils, and runs from his colours, as the Greek word¹³ imports, God will have no pleasure in him, except it be in the just execution of his wrath on him. And doth he not make a sad change, that from fighting against Satan, engageth God as an enemy against him? There is comfort in striving against sin and Satan, though to blood, but none to lie sweating under the fiery indignation of a revenging God. What Satan lays on, God can take off; but who can ease, if God lays on? What man would not rather die in the field fighting for his prince, than on a scaffold by the axe, for cowardice or

13. ὑποστείλῃται.

treachery?

Reason Fourth. The enemy we have to do withal, is such as is only to be dealt with by resisting. God is an enemy that is overcome by yielding; the devil only by force of arms.

1. He is a cowardly enemy. Though he sets a bold face on it by tempting, he carries a fearful heart in his breast. The work is naught he goes about; and, as a thief is afraid of every light he sees, or noise he hears, in the house he would rob; so Satan is discouraged where he finds the soul waking, and in any posture to oppose him. He fears thee, Christian, more than thou needest him; 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know,' Acts 19:15; that is, I know them to my shame, they have both put me to flight, and if ye were such as they, I should fear you also. Believe it, soul, he trembles at thy faith. Put it forth in prayer to call for help to heaven against him, and exert it vigorously by rejecting the motions he makes, and thou shalt see him run. Did soldiers in a castle know that their enemies besieging them were in a distracted condition, and would certainly upon their sallying out, break up, and flee away, what metal and courage would this fill them withal? The Spirit of God—who knows well enough how squares go in the devil's camp—sends this intelligence unto every soul that is beleaguered by temptations, 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you,' James 4:7. He cannot hurt us without our leave. The devil is not so good a drawer; but, when he finds it comes not—the soul yields not—his heart then fails him, at least for the present, as in Christ's combat, it is said he 'departed from him for a season.' When the devil continues long the same suit, it is to be feared [that] that person, though he hath not fully promised him, yet hath not given him a peremptory denial. He is a suitor, that listens for something to drop from the creature that may encourage him to prosecute his motion. No way to be rid of him but to shut the door upon him, and deny all discourse with him; which prompts to the second character.

2. He is an encroaching enemy, and therefore to be resisted. 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,' saith the apostle, 'neither give place to the devil,' Eph. 4:26,27. As soldiers, by cowardly leaving some outwork they are set to defend, give place to their enemy, who enters the same, and from thence

doth more easily shoot into the city than he could before. Thus [by] yielding in one temptation we let the devil into our trench, and give him a fair advantage to do us the more mischief. The angry man while he is raging and raving, thinks, may be, no more, but to ease his passion by disgorging it in some bitter keen words, but alas while his fury and wrath is sallying out at the portal of his lips, the devil finding the door open, enters and hurries him farther than he dreamt of. We have not to do with a Hannibal—who, though a great swordsman, yet wanted the art of following and improving the advantages his victories gave him—but with a cunning devil that will easily lose no ground he gets. Our best way, therefore, is to give him no hand-hold, not so much as to come near the door where sin dwells, lest we be hooked in. If we mean not to be burned, let us not walk upon the coals of temptation;—if not to be tanned, let us not stand where the sun lies. They surely forget what an insinuating wriggling nature this serpent hath, that dare yield to him in something, and make us believe they will not in another—who will sit in the company of drunkards, frequent the places where the sin is committed, and yet pretend they mean not to be such?—that will prostitute their eyes to unchaste objects, and yet be chaste?—that will lend their ears to any corrupt doctrine of the times, and yet be sound in the faith? This is a strong delusion that such are under. If a man hath not power enough to resist Satan in the less, what reason hath he to think he shall in the greater. Thou hast not grace, it seems, to keep thee from throwing thyself into the whirl of temptation, and dost thou think that, when in it, thou shalt bear up against the stream of it? One would think it is easier when in the ship, to keep from falling overboard, than when in the sea, to get safely into the ship again.

3. He is an accusing enemy. And truly folly is in that man's name, who knows what a tell-tale the devil is, and yet will, by yielding to his temptation, put an errand into his mouth, with which he may accuse him to God. Some foolishly report that witches cannot hurt till they receive an alms. But I am sure, so long as thou showest no kindness to the devil, he cannot hurt thee, because he cannot accuse thee. Take up therefore holy Job's resolution, 'My righteousness I hold fast,...my heart shall not reproach me so long as

I live,' Job 27:6. It is never sad indeed with the soul till the barking is within doors. Conscience, not the devil, is the bloodhound that pulls down the creature. O let not that reproach thee, and thou art well enough.

[The Christian's duty, to stand in his own place, and the danger of straggling.]

SECOND. To stand, amounts to as much as, to stand every one in his rank and proper station, and here is opposed to all disorder, or straggling from our place. When a captain sees his soldiers march, or fight out of their rank and order, then he bids stand. Military discipline is so strict in this case, that it allows none to stir from their place without special warrant. It hath cost some their lives for fighting out of their place, though with great success. Manlius killed his own son, for no other fault. From hence the note is—

DOCTRINE. That it should be the care of every Christian, to stand orderly in the particular place wherein God hath set him. The devil's method is first to rout, and then to ruin. Order supposeth company, one that walks alone cannot go out of his rank. This place therefore and rank wherein the Christian is to stand, relates to some society or company in which he walks. The Christian may be considered as related to a threefold society—church, commonwealth, and family. In all there are several ranks and places. In the church, officers and private members; in the commonwealth, magistrates and people; in the family, masters and servants, parents and children, husband and wife. The welfare of these societies consisteth in the order that is kept—when every wheel moves in its place without clashing, when every one contributes by performing the duty of his place to the benefit of the whole society. But more distinctly, a person then stands orderly in his place when he doth these three things—

First. When he understands the peculiar duty of his place and relation; 'The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way,' Prov. 14:8—his way, that is, the way in which he on particular is to walk. It will not profit a man to know the way to York, if going to London; yet how prone are we to study another's way and work [rather] than our own—the servant more what

his master's duty is, not what his is to his master—the people what the minister in his place should do, rather than what is incumbent on themselves to such as are over them in the Lord. It is not knowing another's duty, no nor censuring the negligence of another, but doing our own [duty, that] will bring us safely and comfortably to our journey's end. And how can we do it except we know it? Solomon in no one thing gave a greater proof of his wisdom than in asking of God wisdom, to enable him for the duty of his place.

Second. When knowing the duty of our place, we conscientiously attend to it and lay out ourselves for God therein. When Paul charged Timothy in his place, that every Christian must do in his. He must 'meditate upon these things,' and 'give himself wholly' to the discharge of his duty, as a Christian, in such a place and calling—*ἐν τούτοις ἴσθι*, be in them, let thy heart be on thy work, and thou wholly be taken up about it, 1 Tim 4:15. The very power of godliness lies in this. Religion, if not made practicable in our several places and callings, becomes ridiculous and vanisheth into an empty notion that is next to nothing. Yet many there are that have nothing to prove themselves Christians, but a naked profession, of whom we may say as they do of the cinnamon tree, that the bark is worth more than all they have besides. Such the apostle speaks of, 'They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate,' Titus 1:16. What good works the apostle means, will appear in the next words, Titus. 2, where, in opposition to these, he presseth those duties which Christians in their particular places and relations, as becometh holiness, ought to perform. A good Christian and a disobedient wife, a godly man and an unfaithful servant, or undutiful child is a contradiction that can never be reconciled. He that walks not uprightly in his house, is but a hypocrite at church. He that is not a Christian in his shop, is not in his closet a Christian, though upon his knees in prayer. Wound religion in one part, and it is felt in every part. If it declines one way, it cannot thrive in any other. All that miscarry in religion do not the same way miscarry. As it is in the regard of our natural life; some, it is observed, die upwards, some downwards. In one, the extreme parts, his feet, are

first dead, and so [the malady] creeps up to the legs, and at last takes hold on the vitals; in another his superior parts are first invaded. Thus in profession. [With] some, their declining appears first in a negligence of duties about their peculiar callings, and the duties they owe, by their place and relation, to man, though all this while they may seem very forward and zealous in the duties of worship to God, much in hearing, praying, and such like; while others falter first in these, and at the same time seem very strict in the other. Both are alike destructive to the soul; they both meet in the ruin of the power of godliness. He stands orderly that makes conscience of the whole duty that lies on him in his place to God or man.

Third. to stand orderly, it is requisite that we keep the bounds of our place and calling. The Israelites were commanded every man 'to pitch by his own standard,' Num. 2:2. The Septuagint translates it *κατα τάγμα*—according to order. God allows no stragglers from their station in his army of saints. 'As the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk,' I Cor. 7:17. Our walk must be in that path which our call beats out. We are therefore commanded every one to 'do his own business,' I Thes. 4:11. That which is the commander's business in the army, is not the private soldier's; the magistrate's [business] not the subjects'; the minister's is not the people's. That which is justice in the ruler, is murder in another. They are *ἴδια*, our own things—[things] that come within the compass of our general or particular calling. Out of these, we are out of our diocese. O what a quiet world should we have, if every thing and person knew his own place! If the sea kept its own place, we should have no inundations; if men had theirs, we should neither have seen such floods of sin, nor miseries, as this unhappy age has been almost drowned with. But it must be a strong bank indeed, that can contain our fluid spirits within our own terms. Peter himself was sharply chidden for prying, out of curiosity, into that which concerned him not—'What is that to thee?' John 21:22. As if Christ had said, 'Peter, meddle with thy own matters, this concerns not thee;' which sharp rebuke, saith one, might possibly make Peter afterwards give so strict a charge against, and set so black a brand upon, this very sin, as you may find, I Peter 4:15, where he ranks the 'busybody' among murderers and thieves. Now to fix every one in his

place, and persuade all to stand orderly there without breaking their rank, these five considerations, methinks, may carry some weight—among those especially with whom the word of God in the Scripture yet keeps its authority to conclude and determine their thoughts.

[Five Considerations to persuade all to STAND.]

1. Consideration. Consider what thou doest out of thy place is not acceptable to God, because thou canst not do it in 'faith,' without which 'it is impossible to please God;' and it cannot be in faith, because thou hast no call. God will not thank thee for doing that which he did not set thee about. Possibly thou hast good intentions. So had Uzzah in staying the ark, yet how well God liked his zeal, see II Sam. 6:7. Saul himself could make a fair story of his sacrificing, but that served not his turn. It concerns us not only to ask ourselves what the thing is we do, but also who requireth this at our hands? To be sure, God will at last put us upon that question, and it will go ill with us if we cannot show our commission. So long must we needs neglect what is our duty, as we are busy about that which is not. The spouse confesseth this, 'They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept,' Song. 1:6. She could not mind their [vineyards] and her own too—our own iron will cool while we are beating another's. And this must needs be displeasing to God—to leave the work God sets us about, to do to do what he never commanded. When a master calls a truantly scholar to account, that hath been missing some days from school, would this be a good plea for him to tell his master, that he was all the while in such a man's shop at work with his tools? No, sure his business lay at school, not in that shop.

2. Consideration. By going out of our proper place and calling, we put ourselves from under God's protection. The promise is, he will 'keep us in all our ways,' Ps. 91:11. When we go out of our way, we go from under his wing. We have an excellent place for this, 'Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God,' I Cor. 7:24. Mark that phrase, abide with God. As we love to walk in God's company, we must abide in our place and calling. Every step from that is a departure from God; and better to stay at

home, in a mean place and low calling, wherein we may enjoy God's sweet presence, than go to court and there live without him. It is likely you have heard of that holy bishop, that in a journey fell into an inn, and by some discourse with the host, finding him to be an atheist, or very atheistical, presently calls for his servant to bring him his horse, saying he would not lodge there, for God was not in that place. Truly when thou art in any place, or about any work to which thou art not called, we may safely say, 'God is not in that place or enterprise.' And what a bold adventure it is to stay there where you cannot expect his presence to assist or protect! 'As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place,' Prov. 27:8. God took special care that the bird sitting over her eggs in her nest should not be hurt; Deut. 22:6, but we find nothing to secure her if found abroad. In doing the duty of our place, we have heaven's word for our security; but upon our own peril be it if we wander. Then we are like Shimei out of his precincts, and lay ourselves open to some judgment or other. It is alike dangerous to do what we are not called to, and to neglect or leave undone the duty of our place. As the earth could not bear the usurpation by Korah and his company of what belonged not to them, but swallowed them up, so the sea could not but bear witness against Jonah the runaway prophet, disdaining to waft him that fled from the place and work that God called him to. Nay, heaven itself would not harbour the angels, when once they left their own place and office that their Maker had appointed; so these words 'left their own habitation,' Jude 6¹⁴, I find most probably interpreted. The ruin of many souls breaks in upon them at this door. First they break their ranks, and then they are led farther into temptation. Absalom first looks over the hedge in his ambitious thoughts. A king he would be, and this wandering desire beyond his place, lets in those bloody sins, rebellion, incest, and murder, and these ripened him for, and at last delivered him up into, the hands of divine vengeance. The apostle joins order and steadfastness together, 'I am with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith,' Col. 2:5. If

an army stands in close order, every one in his place attending his duty, content with his work, it is impregnable in a manner. How came many in our days to fall from their steadfastness, but by breaking their order?

3. Consideration. We shall never be charged for not doing another's work. 'Give an account of thy stewardship,' Luke 16:2, that is, what by thy place thou wert intrusted with. We may indeed be accessory to another's sin and miscarriage in his place. 'Be not partakers with them,' saith the apostle, Eph. 5:7. There is a partnership, if not very watchful, that we have with other's sins, and therefore we may all say 'Amen' to that holy man's prayer, 'Lord, forgive me my other sins.' Merchants can trade in bottoms¹⁵ that are not their own, and we may sin with other man's hands many ways; and one especially is, when we do not lend our brother that assistance in his work and duty, which our place and relation obligeth to. But it is not our sin that we do not supply another's negligence, by doing that which belongs not to our place. We are to pray for magistrates that they may rule in the fear of God, but if they do not, we may not step upon the bench and do his work for him. God requires no more than faithfulness in our place. We do not find fault with an apple-tree if it be laden with apples—which is the fruit of its own kind—though we can find no figs or grapes growing on it. We expect these only from their proper root and stock. He is a fruitful tree in God's orchard that 'bringeth forth his fruit in his season,' Ps. 1:3.

4. Consideration. There is poor comfort in suffering for doing that which was not the work of our place and calling. Before we launch out into any undertaking, it behoves us to ask ourselves, and that seriously, what our tackling is, if a storm should overtake us in our voyage. It is folly to engage in that enterprise which will not bear us out, and pay the charge of all the loss and trouble it can put us to. Now no comfort or countenance from God can be expected from any suffering, except we can entitle him to the business we suffer for. 'For thy sake are we killed all the day long,' Ps. 44:22, saith the church. But if suffering finds us out of our calling and place, we cannot

14. ἀπολίπονται το ἰδίων ὀικητήριον.

15. Bottoms, vessels of burden.

say, 'for thy sake' we are thus and thus afflicted, but 'for our own sakes;' and you know the proverb, 'self-do, self-have.' The apostle makes a vast difference between suffering 'as a busy-body,' and suffering 'as a Christian,' 1 Peter 4:15,16. It is to the latter he saith, 'Let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.' As for the busy-body, he mates him with thieves and murderers, and those, I trow, have reason both to be ashamed and afraid. The carpenter that gets a cut or wound on his leg from his axe, as he is at work in his calling, may bear it more patiently and comfortably, than one that is wantonly meddling with his tools, and hath nothing to do with such work. When affliction or persecution overtakes the Christian travelling in the way God hath set him in, he may show the Bible, as that holy man suffering for Christ, did, and say, 'This hath made me poor, this hath brought me to prison,' that is, his faith on the truths and obedience to the commands in it; and therefore may confidently expect to suffer at God's cost, as the soldier [expects] to be kept and maintained by the prince in whose service he hath lost his limbs. But the other that runs out of his place and so meets with sufferings, he hath this to embitter them, that he can look for nothing from God but to be soundly chidden for his pains—as the child is served that gets some hurt while he is gadding abroad, and when he comes home at night with his battered face, meets with a whipping from his father in the bargain for being from home. This lay heavy on the spirit of that learned German Johannis Funccius, who of a minister of the gospel in his prince's court, turned minister of state to his prince, and was at last for some evil counsel at least so judged, condemned to die. Before he suffered he much lamented the leaving of his calling, and to warn others left this distich—

Disce meo exemplo mandato munere fungi,
Et fuge ceu pestem πολυπραγμοσυνην.

To keep thy place and calling learn of me;
Flee as the plague a meddler for to be.

5. Consideration. It is an erratic spirit that usually carries men out of their place and calling. I confess there is an heroicus impetus, an impulse which some of the servants of God have had from heaven, to

do things extraordinary, as we read in Scripture of Moses, Gideon, Phinehas, and others. But it is dangerous to pretend to the like, and unlawful to expect such immediate commissions from heaven now, when he issueth them out in a more ordinary way, and gives rules for the same in his word. We may as well expect to be taught extraordinarily, without using the ordinary means, as to be called so. When I see any miraculously gifted, as the prophets and apostles, then I shall think the immediate calling they pretend to is authentic. To be sure we find in the word that extraordinary calling and extraordinary teaching go together. Well, let us see what that erratic spirit is which carries many out of their place and calling. It is not always the same.

(1.) Sometimes it is idleness. Men neglect what they should do, and then are easily persuaded to meddle with what they have nothing to do. The apostle intimates this plainly, 'They learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busy-bodies, 1 Tim. 5:13. An idle person is a gadder. He hath his foot on the threshold—easily drawn from his own place—and as soon into another's diocese. He is at leisure for to hear the devil's chat. He that will not serve God in his own place, the devil, rather than he shall stand out, will send him off his errand, and get him to put his sickle into another's corn.

(2.) It is pride and discontent that makes persons go out of their place. Some men are in this very unhappy. Their spirits are too big and haughty for the place God hath set them in. Their calling is may be mean and low, but their spirits high and towering, and whereas they should labour to bring their hearts to their condition, they project how they may bring their condition to their proud hearts. They think themselves very unhappy while they are shut up in such strait limits. Indeed the whole world is too narrow a walk for a proud heart, *œstuat infœlix angusto limite mundi*—it tosses unhappy within the narrow boundary of the world. The world was but a little ease to Alexander. Shall they be hid in a crowd, lie in an obscure corner, and die before they let the world know their worth? No, they cannot brook it, and therefore they must get on the stage, and put forth themselves one way or other. It was not the priest's work that Korah and his accomplices were so

in love with him, but the priest's honour which attended the work. This they desired to share, and liked not to see others run away with it from them. Nor was it the zeal that Absalom had to do justice which made his teeth water so after his father's crown, though this must silver over his ambition. These places of church and state are such fair flowers, that proud spirits in all ages have been ambitious to have them set in their own garden, though they never thrive so well as in their proper soil.

(3.) In a third it is unbelief. This made Uzzah stretch forth his hand unadvisedly to stay the ark that shook; which being but a Levite, he was not to touch, see Num. 4:15. Alas! good man, it was his faith shook more dangerously than the ark. By fearing the fall of this, he fell to the ground himself. God needs not our sin to shoar¹⁶ up his glory, truth, or church.

(4.) In some it is misinformed zeal. Many think they may do a thing, because they can do it. They can preach, and therefore they may. Wherefore else have they gifts? Certainly the gifts of the saints need not be lost, any of them, though be not be laid out in the minister's work. The private Christian hath a large field wherein he may be serviceable to his brethren. He need not break the hedge which God hath set, and thereby occasion such disorder as we see to be the consequences of this. We read in the Jewish law, Ex. 22, that he who set a hedge on fire, and that fire burned the corn standing in a field, was to make restitution, though he only fired the hedge—may be not intending to hurt the corn; and the reason was, because his firing the hedge was an occasion of the corn's being burned, though he meant it not. I dare not say, that every private Christian who hath in these times taken upon him the minister's work, did intend to make such a combustion in the church, as hath been, and still sadly is, among us. God forbid I should think so. But, O that I could clear them from being accessory to it. In that they have fired the hedge which God hath set between the minister's calling and people's. If we will acknowledge the ministry a particular office in the church of Christ—and this I think the word will compel us to do—then we

must also confess it is not any one's work, though never so able, except called to the office. There are many in a kingdom to be found that could do the prince's errand, it is like, as well as his ambassador, but none takes the place but he that is sent, and can show his letters credential. Those that are not sent and commissioned by God's call for ministerial work, they may speak truths as well as they that are, yet of him that acts by virtue of his calling, we may say that he preacheth with authority, and not like those that can show no commission, but what the opinion themselves have of their own abilities gives them. Dost thou like the minister's work? why shouldst thou not desire the office, that thou mayest do the work acceptably? Thou dost find thyself gifted, as thou thinkest, for the work, but were not the church more fit to judge so, than thyself? and if thou shouldst be found so by them appointed for the trial, who would not give thee the right hand of fellowship? There are not so many labourers in Christ's field, but thy help, if able, would be accepted. But as thou now actest, thou bringest thyself into suspicion in the thoughts of sober Christians; as he would justly do, who comes into the field where his prince hath an army, and gives out he comes to do his sovereign service against the common enemy, yet stands by himself at the head of a troop he hath got together, and refuseth to take any commission from his prince's officers or join himself with them. I question whether the service such a one can perform—should he mean as he say, which is to be feared—would do so much good, as the distraction which this his carriage might cause in the army would do hurt.

[The Christian must STAND AND WATCH.]

THIRD. To stand, here, is opposed to sleep and sloth. Standing is a waking, watching posture. When the captain sees his soldiers lying secure upon the ground asleep, he bids 'Stand to your arms,' that is, stand and watch. In some cases it is death for a soldier to be found asleep, as when he is appointed to stand sentinel, or the like. Now to sleep, deserves death; because he is to keep awake that the whole army may sleep; and his sleep may cost them their lives. Therefore a great captain thought he gave that soldier but his due, whom he run through with his

16. Shoar, usually spelled shore, to prop up, support.

— ED.

sword, because he found him asleep when he should have stood sentinel, excusing his severity with this, that he left him but as he found him, *mortuum imveni et mortuum reliqui*—I found him dead in sleep, and left him but asleep in death. Watchfulness is more needful for the Christian soldier than any other, because other soldiers fight with men that need sleep as well as themselves; but the Christian's grand enemy, Satan, is ever awake and walking his rounds, seeking whom he may surprise. And if Satan be always awake, it is dangerous for the Christian at any time to be spiritually asleep, that is secure and careless. The Christian is seldom worsted by this his enemy, but there is either treachery or negligence in the business. Either the unregenerate part betrays him, or grace is not wakeful to make a timely discovery of him, so as to prepare for the encounter. The enemy is upon him before he is thoroughly awake to draw his sword. The saint's sleeping time is Satan's tempting time. Every fly dares to creep on a sleeping lion. No temptation so weak, but is strong enough to foil a Christian that is napping in security. Samson asleep, and Delilah cuts his locks. Saul asleep, and his spear is taken away from his very side, and he never the wiser. Noah asleep, and his graceless son has a fit time to discover his father's nakedness. Eutychus asleep, nods, and falls from the third loft, and is taken up for dead. Thus the Christian asleep in security may soon be surprised, so as to lose much of his spiritual strength—'the joy of the Lord,' which is his 'strength;' be robbed of his spear, his armour—graces, I mean—at least in the present use of them, and his nakedness discovered by graceless men, to the shame of his profession. As, when bloody Joab could take notice of David's vainglory in numbering the people, was not David's grace asleep? Yea, the Christian may fall from a high loft of profession, so low into such scandalous practices, that others may question whether there be any life of grace indeed in him. And therefore it behoves the Christian to stand wakefully. Sleep steals as insensibly on the soul, as it doth on the body. The wise virgins fell asleep as well as the foolish, though not so soundly. Take heed thou dost not indulge thyself in thy lazy distemper, but stir up thyself to action, as we bid one that is drowsy stand up or walk. Yield to it by idleness and sloth, and it will grow upon thee. Bestir thyself in

this duty, and that, and it will over. David first awakes his tongue to sing, his hand to play on his harp, and then David's heart wakes also, Ps. 62:8. The lion, it is said, when he first wakes, lashes himself with his tail, thereby to stir and rouse up his courage, and then away he goes after his prey. We have enough to excite and provoke us to use all the care and diligence possible.

[WHY the Christian is to STAND AND WATCH.]

First. The Christian's work is too curious to be done well between sleeping and waking, and too important to be done ill and slubbered¹⁷ over no matter how. He had need be awake that walks upon the brim of a deep river, or the brow of a steep hill. The Christian's path is so narrow, and the danger is so great, that it calls for a nimble eye to discern and a steady eye to direct; but a sleepy eye can do neither. Look upon any duty or grace, and you will find it lie between Sylla and Carybdis—two extremes alike dangerous. Faith, the great work of God, cuts its way between the mountain of presumption and gulf of despair. Patience [is] a grace so necessary that we cannot be without it a day, except we would be all that while beside ourselves. This keeps us that we fall neither into the sleepy apoplexy of a blockish stupidity, which deprives the creature of its senses; nor into a raging fit of discontent, which hath sense enough, and too much, to feel the hand of God, but deprives the man of his reason, that he turns again upon God, and shoots back the Almighty's arrows on his very face in the fury of his froward spirit. The like we might say of the rest. No truth but hath some error next door to it. No duty can be performed without approaching very near the enemy's quarters, who soon takes the alarm, and comes out to oppose the Christian. And ought he not then to have always his heart on the watch?

Second. The trouble of watching is not comparable to the advantage it brings.

1. By this, thou frustratest the designs Satan hath upon thee. It is worth watching to keep the house from robbing, much more the heart from rifling

17. Slubbered, performed in a slipshod fashion.—SDB

by the devil. ‘Watch, that ye enter not into temptation,’ Matt. 26:41. He buys his sleep dear that pays his throat-cutting for it; yea, though the wound be not so deep but may be cured at last. Thy not watching one night may keep thee awake many a night upon a more uncomfortable occasion. And hadst thou not better wake with care, to keep thyself from a mischief, than afterward to have thine eyes held open, whether thou wilt or not, with pain and anguish of the wound given thee in thy sleep? You know how sadly David was bruised by a fall got in his spiritual slumber;—for what else was he when in the eventide he rose from his bed, and walked upon the roof of his house, like a man walking in his sleep? II Sam. 11:2-6. And how many restless nights this brought over this holy man’s head you may perceive by his own mournful complaints of this sin, which is the foot and sad burden of several mournful psalms.

2. By thy watchfulness thou shalt best learn the evil of a sleepy state. One asleep is not sensible of his own snoring, how uncomely and troublesome to others it is, but he that is awake is apprehensive of both. The man asleep is not sensible if laid naked by some that would abuse him, but he that is awake observes, is ashamed, and covers himself. Thus while you are in a spiritual sense awake, thou canst not but observe many uncomely passages in the lives of those professors who do not watch their hearts, which will fill thy heart with pity to them—to see how they are abused by Satan and their own passions, which like rude servants, take this their own time to play their pranks in, when they have made sure of their mistress—grace I mean now laid asleep—that should keep them in better rule. Yea, it will make the blood come into thy face for shame, to see how by their nakedness, profession itself is flouted at by those that pass by, and to see how it is with them. Well, what thou blushest to see, and pitiest to find in another, take heed it befall not thyself. If thou sufferest a spiritual slumber to grow upon thee, thou wilt be the man thyself that all this may come upon; and what not besides? Sleep levels all; the wise man is then no wiser than a fool to project for his safety; nor the strong man better than the weak to defend himself. If slumber falls once upon thine eye, it is night with thee, and thou art, though the best of saints, but as other men, so far as this sleep prevails on thee.

3. By thy watchfulness thou shalt invite such company in unto thee as will make the time short and sweet; and that is thy dear Saviour, whose sweet communication and discourse about the things of thy Father’s kingdom, will make that thou shalt not grudge the ease sleepy Christians get, with the loss of such an heavenly entertainment as thou enjoyest. Who, that loves his soul better than his body, had not rather have David’s songs, than David’s sleep in the night? And who had not rather have Christ’s comforting presence with a waking soul, than his absence with a sleepy slothful one? It is the watchful soul that Christ delights to be with, and open his heart unto. We do not choose that for the time of giving our friends a visit, when they are asleep in their beds. Nay, if we be with them and perceive they grow sleepy, we think it is time we leave them to their pillow; and verily Christ doth so too. Christ withdraws from the spouse till she be better awake, as a fitter to receive his loves. Put the sweetest wine into a sleepy man’s hand and you are like to have it all spilled; yea, put a purse of gold into his hand, and the man will hardly remember in the morning what you gave him over night. Thus in the sleepy state of a soul, both the Christian loseth the benefit, and Christ the praise of his mercy; and therefore Christ will stay to give out his choice favours when the soul is more wakeful, that he may both do the creature good, and his creature may speak good of him for it.

[HOW the Christian is to STAND AND WATCH.]

Question. But how must the Christian stand upon his watch?

Answer First. Watch constantly. ‘The lamp’ of God in the tabernacle was to ‘burn always,’ Ex. 27:20; 30:8; that is, always in the night, which sense is favoured by several other places. And I pray, what is our life in this world but a dark night of temptation? Take heed, Christian, that thy watch-candle go not out in any part of this darksome time, lest thy enemy come upon thee in that hour. He can find thee, but thou canst not resist him in the dark. If once thy eye be shut in a spiritual slumber, thou art a fair mark for his wrath; and know thou canst not be long off thy watch but the devil will hear on it. The devil knew the apostles’ sleeping time, and then he desires leave

to ‘winnow’ them, Luke 22. He saw they were in some disorder, the eye of their soul began ‘to be heavy.’ The thief riseth when honest men go to bed. The devil, I am sure, begins to tempt when saints cease to watch. When the staff is thrown away, then the wolf appears. When the soul puts her danger farthest off, and lies most secure, then it is nearest. Therefore labour to be constant in thy holy care; the want of this spoils all. Some you shall have, that after a great fall into a sin that hath bruised them sorely, will seem very careful for a time where they set their foot, how they walk, and what company they come in; but as soon as the soreness of their consciences wears off, their watch is broken up, and they are as careless as ever; like one that is very careful to shut up his shop strongly, and may be sits up late to watch it also for two or three nights after it hath been robbed, but then minds it no more. Others in an affliction, or newly come out of the furnace, O how nice and scrupulous are they while the smell of fire is about them, and memory of their distress fresh! They are as tender of sinning, as one that comes out of a hot close room is of the air. They shrink at every breath of temptation stirring. But alas, how soon are they hardened to commit those sins without remorse, the bare motion of which, but a little before, did so trouble and afflict them? Josephus, in his Antiquities, tells us that the sons of Noah, for some years after the flood, dwelt on the tops of high mountains, not daring to take up their habitation in the lower ground for fear of being drowned by another flood; yet in process of time, seeing no flood came, they ventured down into the plain of Shinar, where their former fear, we see, ended in one of the boldest, proudest attempts against God, that the sun was ever witness to—the building I mean of a tower whose top should reach heaven, Gen 11:2-4. They who at first were so maidenly and fearful, as not to venture down their hills for fear of drowning, now have a design to secure themselves against all future attempts from the God of heaven himself. Thus oft we see God’s judgements leave such an impression on men’s spirits, that for a while they stand aloof from their sins—as these on their hills—afraid to come down to them; but when they see fair weather continue, and no clouds gather towards another storm, then they can descend to their old wicked practices, and grow more bold and

heaven-daring than ever. But if thou wilt be a Christian indeed, keep on thy watch still, remit not in thy care. Thou hast well run hitherto. O lie not down, like some lazy traveller, by the wayside to sleep, but reserve thy resting time till thou gettest home out of all danger. Thy God rested not till the last day’s work in the creation was finished, neither do thou cease to wake or work till thou canst say thy salvation work is finished.

Answer Second. Watch universally.

1. Watch thy whole man. The honest watchman walks the rounds, and compasseth the whole town. He doth not limit his care to this house or that. So do thou watch over thy whole man. A pore in the body is a door wide enough to let in a disease if God command, and any one faculty of thy soul, or member of thy body to let in an enemy that may endanger thy spiritual welfare. Alas, how few set the watch round? some one faculty is not guarded, or member of the body not regarded. He that is scrupulous in one, you shall find him secure in another. May be thou settest a watch at the door of thy lips, that no impure communication offends the ears of men; but how is the Lord’s watch kept at the temple door of thy heart? II Chr. 23:6. Is not that defiled with lust? Thou, may be, keepest thy hand out of thy neighbour’s purse, and thy foot from going on a thievish errand to thy neighbour’s house; but does not thy envious heart grudge him what God allows him? When thou prayest, thou art very careful thy outward posture be reverent; but what eye hast thou on thy soul that it performs its part in the duty?

2. Watch in everything. If the apostle bids, ‘in everything give thanks,’ then it behoves us in everything to watch, that God may not lose his praise, which he doth in most for want of watching. No action so little, almost, but we may in it do God or the devil some service, and therefore none too little for our care to be bestowed on. He was a holy man indeed, of whom it was said, that ‘he ate and drank eternal life.’ The meaning is, he kept such a holy watch over himself in these things, that he was in heaven while doing them. There is no creature so little among all God’s works but his providence watcheth over it, even to a sparrow and a hair. Let there be no word or work of thine over which thou art not watchful. Thou shalt be judged by them even to

thy idle words and thoughts, and wilt thou not have care of them?

Answer Third. Watch wisely. This thou shalt do if thou knowest where thou shouldst keep strictest watch, and that must be first in the weightiest duty of the command. 'Tithing of cummin and anise' must not be neglected; but take heed thou dost not neglect the weightiest things of the law, 'judgment, mercy, and faith,' making your preciseness in the less a blind for your horrible wickedness in the greater, *Matt. 23:23*.

1. Begin at the right end of your work, Christian, by placing your chief care about these main duties to God and man, in his law and gospel, in his worship, and in thy daily course; which when thou hast done, neglect not the circumstantial. Should a master before he goes forth, charge his servant to look to his child, and trim his house up handsomely against he comes home, when he returns will he thank his servant for sweeping his house, and making it trim, if he finds his child through his negligence fallen into the fire, and by it killed or crippled? No sure, he left his child with him as his chief charge, to which the other should have yielded, if both could not be done. There hath been a great zeal of late among us about some circumstantial of worship; but who looks to the little child—the main duties of Christianity, I mean? Was there ever less love, charity, self-denial, heavenly-mindedness, or the power of holiness in any of its several walks, than in this sad age of ours? Alas, these, like the child, are in great danger of perishing in the fire of contention and division, which a perverse zeal in less things hath kindled among us.

2. Be sure thou beest watchful more than ordinary over thyself, in those things where thou findest thyself weakest, and hast been oftenest foiled. The

weakest part of the city needs the strongest guard, and in our bodies the tenderest part is most observed and kept warmest. And I should think it were strange, if thy fabric of grace stands so strong and even, that thou shouldst not soon perceive which side needs the shore most, by some inclination of it one way more than another. Thy body is not so firm, but thou findest this humour overabound, and that part craze faster than another; and so mayest thou in thy soul. Well, take counsel in the thing, and what thou findest weakest, watch more carefully. Is it thy head is weak—thy judgment I mean? watch thyself, and come not among those that drink no wine but that which thy weak parts cannot bear—seraphic notions and high-flown opinions—and do not think thyself much wronged to be forbidden their cup. Such strong wine is more heady than hearty, and they that trade most with it are not found of the healthiest tempers of their souls, no more than they that live most of strong water are for their bodies. Is thy impotency in thy passions? Indeed we are weak as they are strong and violent. Now watch over them as one that dwells in a thatched house would do of every spark that flies out of his chimney, lest it should light on it and set all on fire. O take heed what speeches come from thy mouth, or from any thou conversest with. This is the little instrument sets the whole course of nature on flame. When our neighbour's house is on fire we cast water on our roof, or cover it with a wet sheet. When the flame breaks out at another's mouth, now look thou throwest water on thy own hot spirit. Some cooling, wrath-quenching scriptures and arguments ever carry with thee for that purpose. And so in any other particular as thou findest thy weakness.