

DISCOURAGEMENT'S RECOVERY.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.—Ps. XLIII. 5.

THIS psalm was penned by David, which shews the passions of his soul; for God's children know the estate of their own souls for the strengthening of their trust and bettering their obedience. Now this is the difference between psalms and other places of Scripture. Other scriptures speak mostly from God to us; but in the Psalms, this holy man doth speak mostly to God and his own soul; so that this psalm is an *expostulation of David with his own soul in a troubled estate*, when being banished from the house of God, he expostulates the matter with his soul: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?' The words contain,

1, David's perplexed estate; and, 2, His recovery out of it.

His perplexity is laid down in these words: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' &c. His recovery out of it is first by questioning with himself: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' and then by a charge laid upon his soul: 'Trust in God;' and this trust is amplified from the matter, for what his soul should trust in God: 'I shall yet praise him, and give him thanks;' that is, I shall be delivered, for which delivery my heart will be enlarged to give him thanks. Because this is my God, my salvation, and my help, there is the ground of my faith and trust.

1. For the first, which is his perplexity, *consider the way, how he comes to be thus perplexed.*

(1.) *He was in great troubles and afflictions.* So that it is seen, God suffers his children to fall into extremities, many and long and great afflictions and troubles, ere deliverance come. They are most sensible of spiritual crosses by reason of the life of grace that is in them; and therefore it is that these do cast them down more than all other things. The want of spiritual means makes them thirst more than any want else; yea, than the hart which brayeth after rivers of water, Ps. xlii. 1. Spiritual wants grieve much, spiritual thirst is strong, and the life of grace must be kept. Now to want the means which must do it, this toucheth him more than all the rest.

A soul that is lively in grace cannot endure to live under small means of

salvation, much less to endure blasphemous reproaches. Therefore such persons who can content themselves with small or any means, with small comforts, without labouring and striving after more sweet and near communion with God, they have cause to fear their own estates. A child, so soon as it is born, if it be not still-born, cries and seeks for the breast, which puts it out of all question there is life in it, though never so weak. So the life of grace begun in us is known by our spiritual appetites and desire after the means of grace.

(2.) The second thing that troubled this holy man, was *the blasphemous words of wicked men*. Therefore if we would try our state to be good, see how we take to heart everything that is done against religion. Can a child be patient when he sees his father abused? When a man sees the gospel of God trodden down, for a man now to be quiet, that shews his heart is dead. It is better to rage than to be quiet in such a case; for that shews life, though with much distemper. God will set light by his salvation that sets light by his honour. The enemy said, 'Where is now thy God?' Ps. xlii. 10. This went to David's heart. What doth the enemy say now at this day? Where is now your God? your reformed religion? your Christ? where is your God? Well, they that are not affected with this are in an evil and in a dangerous state, let them judge of themselves what they will. God's children are sensible of such things; they are men, and not stones, flesh, and not iron. Therefore it is no wonder that they are so sensible of our times, and take them to heart as they do; forget their wounds, and mingle their passion with their afflictions, that so perplexeth their minds. Thus David was troubled, and over-troubled and grieved, and that too much, for he checks himself: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' Indeed, by nature we have no bounds in our affections; if we joy, we joy too much; if we sorrow, we sorrow too much. Grace only doth qualify all our actions and affections, and where there is no grace there is either all joy or all sorrow. Nabal, when he did begin to joy, he joys over much, and when he did begin to sorrow, he exceeded in that, 1 Sam. xxv. 36, 37. A wicked man hath nothing to uphold him, and therefore he is over head and ears in all that he doth. The child of God is kept upright by that which is wrought in his heart, whereby his sorrow and joy is mixed together.

'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' The point is this,

Obs. 1. That it is a sin for a child of God to be too much discouraged and cast down in afflictions, nay, I add more, though the cause be good, as it was here, to be banished and want means of comfort; in this case, to be too much cast down and disquieted, it argues a distempered heart.

Quest. But how shall we know when a man is cast down too much? for it is a sinful thing in a man not to be sensible of that which lies upon him.

Ans. The soul is cast down too much, to name this one for many, when our mourning and sorrow brings us not to God, but drives us from God. Grief, sorrow, and humility are good; but discouragement is evil. That which brings a man from delighting, from trusting in God, which hinders a man in his calling, either as he is a Christian, or in his particular calling, by this he may know he is in excess. As the children of Israel were in great trouble under Pharaoh, and heeded not therefore unto that which Moses spake unto them for anguish of spirit, Exod. vi. 9. The husband and wife must not live at odds, lest their prayers be interrupted, 1 Pet. iii. 7. No; though the cause be never so good, they must not be over much

troubled; therefore, when Christians exceed in anything, they do it not as Christians, but as they are men overcome of their passions.

Quest. What is the ground why casting down and disquieting is a sin?

Ans. 1. *Because it doth turn to the reproach of religion and God himself,* as if there were not strength in the promises of God to uphold a soul in the time of trouble and disquietment.

2. *Because their so sinking under afflictions never yields any good fruit.* Yea, the devil himself, in such a case, will say, God neglecteth thee,—thus joining his temptations with thy corruptions,—then where art thou? And, therefore, I beseech you consider. What! Shall a father neglect his own children so much that they should be cast down, whenas he only* knoweth what they want, and hath in his own power to give all that is good?

3. *Because it hinders us both from and in holy duties.* For where the soul is cast down, either we do not perform holy duties at all, or otherwise they are done but weakly; for as the troubled eye cannot see well, so the troubled soul cannot do good, nor receive good. It is the quiet soul that both receiveth and doeth good as it ought to be done; for quietness is the stay of the soul, either to do or receive. Holy things are not accepted of God by the stuff of them, but by the willingness and cheerfulness in doing of them. Thus, when the soul is too much cast down, God accepts not so well of the actions, because they want life. Then it plainly appears to be a sin thus to be cast down. Therefore, holy David takes up his soul and chides himself downright: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou so unquiet within me?' If this be so, that it is a sin to be too much cast down, what shall we say of those who disquiet themselves in and for a vain shadow? Ps. xxxix. 6. They trouble themselves so much about vain things that they are discouraged from doing good. The holy man doth in this case raise up his soul; for the Spirit of God saith, 'This is the way, walk in it; and this you should have done, but herein you fail, and here is your wants,' Isa. xxx. 21. Thus I thought good to enlarge this point.

Obs. 2. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' The word in the original shews it is the nature of sorrow, to bring the soul downwards (a). Sorrow and sin agree both in this, for as they come from below, so they bring the soul downwards to the earth. The devil, ever since he was cast down himself, labours to cast all down. His voice is, Down, down to the ground. He would have no man stay in going down in afflictions or desperation. The new creature created by the Spirit of God is clean contrary; for that is all upward. Where the hope is, there the soul loves to be in thought and meditation, and all that it doth or can do is to go upwards.

'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted?' Here are two words used, 'Why art thou cast down? why art thou so disquieted?'

Quest. What is meant by casting down? and why doth he find fault with himself for it?

Ans. Because it breeds disquieting. I say casting down, when it is not with humility, but discouragement, breeds disquieting; but when it is joined with humility, that raiseth the soul to see mercy, in which sort, if God doth cast us down to humble us, it is to raise us up with so much the sweeter consolation; for so much as the soul is cast down by God, so much it is raised up by God. But the soul that is cast down by Satan rests not in God, but is troubled, as Ps. xxxvii. 1, it is said, 'Fret not thyself,' &c.

* That is, 'he alone.'—G.

So a man may know when his soul murmurs, and his fretting is against God himself, or against the instrument of the sinful discouragement of his soul, being over much cast down. Here is no true humiliation, but abundance of corruption, which brings vexation and disquietments. But I hasten to that which I have further to deliver, 'Why art thou so cast down, O my soul?' He doth check himself because he was thus cast down and disquieted. Here, then, you see,

1, David's perplexity; and, 2, the particular branches thereof, casting down, and disquieting.

Quest. What was the reason why he was thus cast down?

Ans. The reason is in the words,—a reason from the contrary. He reproves his soul for being thus cast down; he doth check and command himself to wait and trust in God; he checks his soul; which shews he had no good reason why he was thus cast down. Wherefore should he ask this reason, but that there was no just cause, but sophistical reasoning, which bred this? As Jonah iv. 9, God demands, 'Dost thou well to be angry, Jonah?' As if he had said, There is no good cause. You may see, by this manner of asking, the cause was ignorance and false reasoning, false trust and want of trusting in God. There is no discouragement in any affliction or trouble whatsoever, but it is for the want of knowing the ground wherefore God doth it. First, sometimes for the exercise of our graces, as well as for our sins. Again, forgetfulness of God's dealing, as Heb. xii. 5, 'You have forgotten the consolation which speaks unto you,' &c. And sometimes we are troubled in affliction because we do not examine the cause rightly with our own souls. Many go to the highest step of the ladder, to their election, before they come to the fruits thereof, Rom. v. 1. I beseech you, let us be more wise. There be some people who do trouble themselves by seeking their comfort only in their sanctification, when it should be looked for in their justification; and some others who trouble themselves about the issue of things for time to come, when we are commanded not to care for to-morrow, Mat. vi. 34, and in the mean time neglect their duty in using lawful means, and trusting in God. Again, want of trusting in God; for when we trust not in God, then we have false trusts in the creature, or in something else. Then this follows: vanity will bring vexation of spirit.

Thus, when vanity goes before, there will come vexation after. Therefore when men do set upon doing any good, or suffering for good, by their own strength, and trust not in God for a constant supply, this moves God to take away his support, and then they fall most shamefully. Nay, when a man trusts in himself, and in his present grace, more than in God, he shall be sure to fall; for we must trust in God for time to come for fresh grace, and pray that God would renew his graces, to strengthen us in every trouble and affliction. The cause why God's children do so miscarry in times of trouble is, because they trouble themselves, and do not trust in God for a new supply of grace. We cannot perform new duties, and undergo new sufferings, with old graces. So now you have some causes why men are thus cast down and disquieted; false trust, or else not trusting in God, as if the prophet had said, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' The reason is this, thou dost not trust in God as thou shouldst do; therefore it was our Saviour reproved Peter when he feared, saying, 'O thou of little faith,' Mat. xiv. 31. It was not the greatness of the waves, but the weakness of his faith, which made him faint. In truth, the cause of our trouble and disquieting is either for want of faith or want

in faith, whereby we cannot rely upon God in our troubles and afflictions; for the soul being weak of itself, it hath need of something to rely upon, as a weak plant had need of a supporter. Now that which gives answerable strength is our relying upon God. When we omit this, then comes disquieting and troubles in our souls. And so I end the point of perplexity, and come to the charge that he lays upon his own soul, saying, Trust in God. His remedy is double.

1. First, A reflecting action upon his soul, 'Why art thou disquieted, O my soul?'

2. Secondly, A command laid upon his soul, 'Trust in God.'

Before I come to particulars, observe in general this point,

Doct. 3. That God's children, in their greatest troubles, recover themselves.

For here was the trouble, and his disquietness for the trouble. He was in temptation, afflictions, and discouragements. Here was Satan tempting, and the corruptions boiling, and God withdrawing the sense of his love, leaving David for a while to himself; and yet, notwithstanding, at length he breaks through all, and expostulates the matter with himself. So God's children, when they are in troubles, though never so great, they can recover and comfort themselves. And in truth the holy Scripture shews this; for this trusting and relying on God in extremities is a difference betwixt the child of God and an hypocrite. A little cross will not try men's graces so as great ones. As in Saul, it brings him to great trouble, and then he goes to the witch, and then see what becomes of him, 1 Sam. xxviii. 7. But the child of God, in his greatest troubles, he having the Spirit of God to strengthen him, he rests upon God, as is shewed, Rom. viii. 26. In the greatest troubles, the Spirit doth help our infirmities; and in the lowest depth of trouble, there is the Spirit of comfort. Now this Spirit works faith, that enables us to send out strong prayers and cries, which cry loud in God's ear. The child of God can mourn, and cry, and chatter, striving against deadness, and against his infidelity, and strives for comfort as for life; so, when they are at the lowest, they can recover themselves. God's children, at the beginning of trouble, do labour to recover themselves presently: 'Why art thou disquieted within me?' He stops himself at the first. Jonah was to blame this way; he did feed and flatter himself, and would not stand to expostulate with his heart, Jonah iv. 9; but David doth not so here, but saith, 'Why art thou so cast down, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted?' There is a contrary spirit in them who are not God's children; for they do feed upon mischief, wickedness, and dark conceits, according to which apprehensions they make their conclusions; but God's children, knowing their own estates, they reprove themselves, and say, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou so troubled?'

Doct. 4. Again, see the excellent estate of the soul. It is an atheistical conceit that the soul doth arise out of the temper of the body; for that cannot be, because we see the soul doth cross our nature, and cross itself; much more the body. How can this be, if it rise of the body, that it should cross itself, and the very inclinations to evil? For though the soul be ready to run to excess of melancholy and excess of joy, yet there is resistance in the soul, and striving against these things in some measure; for in every Christian there are three men.

(1.) First, The natural man, the good creature of God, having understanding, will, and affection.

(2.) There is nature under the 'spirit of bondage,' which we call 'the old man.'

(3.) There is the 'new man,' framed by the 'Spirit of God,' which doth strive against the corruption of his nature; for nature cannot but be troubled in afflictions. This we see in Adam in his innocency; yea, in Christ himself. Grace doth stay us in this state, then much more doth grace stop nature. In the excellent state of the soul, having the Spirit of God in him, whereby a man is raised up above himself, and humbles himself, this is the excellency of the spiritual nature of the soul, and especially the excellency of the Spirit in the soul. The soul can check the body, and the Spirit can check both soul and body. Well, this I speak but in a word; for I will not stand upon it, but only to shew the nature of the soul.

Quest. It may be asked, How shall we know in these things, when anything comes from the Spirit, and not from the natural soul? for here is nature, flesh, and the Spirit.

Ans. I answer, when there is [the] Spirit in a man, that doth cross the natural constitution of the body, and checks the constitution of his soul being in affliction and discouraged in it, that thereby a man recovers himself again.

Afflictions of the soul are the greatest and worst of all, yet in this estate his soul doth carry him upward; and therefore there must be something in him that is better and above nature, which enables him to check and reprove himself. Now, this must needs be an excellent thing. Why? Because this is the Spirit of God, which enables us to strive, as Job did: 'Though thou kill me, yet will I trust in thee,' Job xiii. 15. And our blessed Saviour in his depths of afflictions cries, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Mat. xxvii. 46. The sense of his present state caused him to cry out as if God had forsaken him; yet herein the blessed Spirit doth raise him up, for he cries, 'My God.' Thus we see when there is a crossing of ourselves in that state which we are in, this is a sign that it comes from the Spirit of God, and not from nature: 'Why art thou so cast down, why art thou so disquieted within me, O my soul?'

Another thing that I observe is this,

Doct. 5. That the prerogative of a Christian in these disquietings, and in all estates, is, he hath God and himself to speak unto, whereby he can remove solitariness. Put him into a dungeon, yet he may speak unto God there, and speak unto himself.

This is an excellent state. He who hath laid up store of grace beforehand, he can reprove and cross himself, and in his depths cry out unto God. Therefore take a Christian in the worst estate of all others, yet he can improve his estate to the best before God, whereby, even then, he hath an happy communion with God. This is a comfort to a Christian, when he hath nothing to comfort himself withal; as David here had neither goods, nor comforts, nor prophets, nor the tabernacle with him, yet he had his good God to go unto, who was the only thing he had; and when he speaks comfortably unto him, then David speaks as comfortably unto his soul: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?'

Let all the tyrants in the world do their worst to a Christian, if God be with him, he is cheerful still. This is plentifully seen in David. He was vexed outwardly, punished, persecuted, and banished from God's house, yet he goes unto God; and though he were vexed in his soul in particular, yet he cries out, 'Why art thou so vexed within me, why art thou so unquiet?'

The point from hence is this,

Doct. 6. The best way to establish the soul is to deal with our own souls, and to begin with them first, and proceed in a judicial manner, as this holy prophet of the Lord did. When we are in any troubles and afflictions, do not go to the trouble, but go to the soul; for if the soul be not set in right frame, and quieted, we cannot endure anything. But if we can set and frame ourselves to God, all the tyrants in the world, and all the devils in hell, cannot hurt us. The devil comes to our Saviour, but he could do him no harm, because there was nothing within him for him to fasten upon, John xiv. 30. Therefore this is the way, if we be in trouble, let all other things go, and lay the foundation of our quiet in God, and deal with our own souls. And the way to do this is to cite our souls before ourselves, hereby to make ourselves offenders and judges, teachers and scholars, as the prophet doth here: 'Why art thou so unquiet, O my soul?' God hath erected a court in a man, that he may cite and condemn himself. God hath set up this court, and given us this liberty, to prevent another examination, and condemnation for ever in the world to come. Therefore, 1 Cor. xi. 31, it is said, 'If we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged of the Lord.' The way to do this is to call our own souls to a reckoning. This is to be strongly endeavoured for many reasons, that I will not stand upon, but only name some one of them.

As, namely, *because it is an hard thing.* For there is an affection of nature, and an affection of rebellion, and strong motions, that keep the soul in such a thralldom that it cannot fully know itself; and for a man to know all things, and not to know himself, what a miserable thing is it! What! to look altogether abroad, and never to look at home, that is a misery of all miseries. Well, if ever we would be saved, we must do this. If we would begin with ourselves, we might put the devil and our tormenting conscience out of office; for the time will come when it will be objected, This and that have been our sins, and this is the state of your souls, will Satan say. Well, says the soul thus prepared, 'I know all this, I have accused myself before God for this, and I have made my peace with God.' But when we go on in sin, and leave all to God, then comes the devil and accuseth us, and our consciences take God's part; thus we go down to hell for ever. Therefore take warning of this betimes, and call thy soul to a reckoning. But I will not spend too much time to enforce this holy action. The way to bring our souls to this is, to furnish them with holy thoughts, to sanctify and season our judgments with holy touches, to know what is good, and to bring our souls to love and delight in it. But if we have not a judicature in us, we can never do this, for we must not go blindly about this work, but know what evil we have committed, and which is done against this law, and which against that commandment. Thus a Christian must and will examine himself. But an ignorant person goes and never lays up anything in his soul; and therefore though he hath power in his soul to do this, yet he doth it not, because he is an ignorant and blind man.

Use. Well, let this serve to stir us up to be careful in this holy duty.

Obj. But the hypocrite will say, Tush, this is hid, and the world sees it not; for me to take pains to work upon my soul, the world cannot see it; what profit comes by this course? But the child of God is most busy and carefully employed about that which carries with itself least applause with the world. This is always a sure sign of a good heart; for the best work of the new creature is within us, that the world cannot see. And therefore if ye will have sound assurance of salvation, then call often in question the

state of your own souls, and labour to get this disposition, and inquire of your souls what is the reason. Do you well to be angry? What! thus angry? At this time, and upon this occasion? And, what! do you well to be merry thus now? If we could do this, what an excellent state of soul should we live in! It would clear religion of many scandals. For from whence comes all these scandalous actions we fall into, but because we do not check ourselves in evil things before they break out into our lives? The soul many times doth rise in rebellious motions, and troubles the Spirit of God in us; but what an honour is it to a Christian to be free from scandal in this life, and to suppress evil in the beginning! There is nothing that is evil but it is first in thought, then in affection, and then in action; therefore if we could think when we are tempted to any evil, this thing will be a scandal, it will be open in the mouths of wicked men, it will grieve the true-hearted servants of God, oh how glorious might the servants of God shine in these woeful, dark, and sinful days! Well, I beseech you, do but consider, and bring the practice and carriage of most men and women to this rule that I have laid down, and what a pitiful estate shall we find the most to be in, who would seem to be religious, whose lives declare this before men.

Do but ask a covetous man why he is so extremely carried away with the things of this world; he answers by and by, Oh, he hath a great charge, and the times are hard; and in the mean time he neglects wholly the making sure of his own salvation. Nay, come to God's children themselves, who do too much hunt after the things of this world, I say to them, and sometimes ye shall hear the same answer, But what, have not ye a Father to provide for you? and this your Father, hath he not all things at his own disposing—having promised, you shall want nothing that is good—even he who is an infinite, loving, and merciful Father? I beseech you, consider what can we want, if we have faith to rely upon God? And then consider how vile a thing covetousness is; what for an old man now to be worldly, when one foot is in the grave! So for a blasphemer to provoke the majesty of God, there is no reason to be given for it. For sin is an unreasonable thing, and it cannot endure this question, What reason is there for this and that? Therefore the Scripture calls all wicked and ungodly men unreasonable men and fools, because they cannot give a good reason for anything they do. And therefore when they are in hell they may well say, We fools thought this and said thus. I beseech you, consider what reason is there that a man should sell God's favour, and the assurance of his salvation, for a wicked action, and for his lust, and for a little honour; I say, consider what you shall get, and what you shall lose, even the hope of heaven, for the attaining at the best but of perishing things, and many times miss of them also.

These things considered, the Spirit of God doth well to call us to question with ourselves, to give a reason for that we do, and then to censure ourselves, as David in another place did: 'How foolish was I, like a beast,' Ps. lxxiii. 22.* And so, I beseech you, when you are tempted to any sin, then say, What a base thought is this! what base thing is this! is this according to my profession and religion? If we would but thus examine and question ourselves, accuse and condemn ourselves, oh how happy and blessed creatures might we be! And thus much for the first remedy.

* It is Asaph, not David, who says so.—G. See, however, the first sentence of the next sermon.—Ed.

Now come we to the second: 'Trust in God, wait on God.' Here is,
1, An action; 2, a fit object.

The action, trust; the object, God: 'wait on God,' for God is the only prop and rock whereon we may rest safe in time of danger. Waiting on God implies his meeting our souls, before we can have any comfort from him. Therefore all our care should be to bring God and our souls together. This trusting in God, and waiting for God, is an especial means to uphold us in our greatest troubles. This is the state of the new covenant; for we have fallen in Adam by our infidelity, and must now have faith to recover ourselves, which is the applying grace that doth help us up, and enable us to wait on God and his truth, for they are all one. As a man of credit and his word are all one, so is our trusting in God and his trust* and promises. But because I have spoken of this trusting in God out of another place of Scripture,† I will be brief in it; only I will now add something to help us on in this point, wherein our souls shall find so much comfort.

Doct. 7. 'Trust in God.' *This trusting in God is the way to quiet our souls, and to stay the same in every estate.* The reason is, because God hath sanctified this holy grace to this end. This is the grace of the new covenant, the grace of all graces, which stays the soul in all disquietings whatsoever.

The first thing that disquiets the soul is sin. Now God by his Spirit and word doth give us the pardon thereof. Therefore trust in God for this, and for life everlasting, and then trust in God in this life for whatsoever thou dost want. Know that the same love of God that brings thee to everlasting life will give thee daily bread. Therefore trust in God for provision, for protection, and for whatsoever thou dost want. For the first thing that a troubled soul doth look unto is for mercy, salvation, and comfort; and therefore in every troubled estate we have one thing or other still from God to comfort us. I say, if we be in trouble, there is answerable comfort given us of God. Are we sick? He is our health. Are we weak? He is our strength. Are we dead? He is our life. So that it is not possible that we should be in any state, though never so miserable, but there is something in God to comfort us. Therefore is God called in Scripture a rock, a castle, a shield. A rock to build upon, a castle wherein we may be safe, a shield to defend us in all times of danger, shewing that if such helps sometimes succour us, how much more can God. I beseech you, consider God is our 'exceeding great reward,' Gen. xv. 1. God is bread to strengthen us, and a Spirit of all comfort; and indeed there is but a beam in the creature, the strength is in God. And if all these were taken away, yet God is able to do much more, and to raise up the soul. What! can a castle or a shield keep a man safe in the time of danger? how much more can God! I beseech you, consider how safe was Noah when the ark was afloat, Gen. vii. 16. And why? Because God shut the door upon him and kept him there. Thus you see there is something in God for every malady, and something in the world for every trouble; then 'trust in God.' This is the way to quiet our souls. For as heavy bodies do rest when they come to the centre of the earth, so the soul, for joy, and for care, for trust, doth find rest in God when it comes to him and makes him her stay. The needle rests when it comes to the North Pole, and the ark rested when it came to the mount Ararat, Gen. viii. 4, so the soul rests safe when it comes to God, and till that time, it moves as the ark upon

* Qu. 'truth?'—Ed.

† See General Index under 'Trust,' and 'Soul's Conflict.'—G.

the waters. Therefore our blessed Saviour saith in Matthew, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and you shall find rest in your souls,' Mat. xi. 28. This holy man would have rest, therefore he saith, 'O my soul, wait upon God.'

Quest. Well, in a word, how shall we know if we have this rest and trust in God or no?

Ans. By this which I have said; for if we trust in God, then we will be quiet, for faith hath a quieting power. Therefore, if thou canst stay thyself, and rest upon God for provision, for protection, for all that helps thee from grace to glory, thou art safe. Again, faith hath a comforting power. There is a distinction between alchymy gold and true gold; for that which is true will comfort the heart, but counterfeit faith, like alchymy gold, will not strengthen the heart. Therefore, if thou dost find thy faith strengthen thee, to cast thyself upon God and his mercy in Jesus Christ, then there is true faith. The garment of Christ, when it was but touched, there was virtue went out of it, so that the woman found strength therein to quench her bloody issue, Mat. ix. 21, xiv. 36; and dost not thou find strength from God to quench the bloody issue of sin in thy soul? Then hast thou cause to doubt of the truth of thy faith; for precious faith brings virtue from the root. As the tree doth draw strength from the earth to feed the body and the boughs, whereby it is fruitful, so faith brings virtue from Christ and his promises, which strengthens the soul.

I beseech you consider, if you have your soul strengthened by the promises of God, and the nature of God, it is a sign you have true faith. What a shame is it for Christians, when they have an infinite God for their God, who hath made abundant promises, and have a rich Saviour, and yet they live so unquiet and discontented, and sometimes for earthly trash, as if there were no Father for them in heaven, nor providence upon earth! Now, at this time, which are times of trouble abroad, wherein our faith should be exercised, how are the hearts of many cast down, as though God had cast away his care over his church! Consider, I pray you, doth an husband cast away his care over his wife in time of danger when she is wronged? No; but is the more inflamed to be revenged: much more will God arise to maintain his own cause, but we must wait the time, knowing 'they that believe make not haste,' as it is Isa. xxviii. 16.

Quest. But what is the matter for which we are to trust God? 'I shall yet praise him.'

Ans. His meaning is, though he be for the present in great afflictions, yet he shall be delivered. See the language of Canaan. The holy people of God, if they receive any deliverance, they give God the praise and glory, for this is all that God looks for; if thou art in any affliction, and God doth deliver thee, then to give him all the glory and the praise. So this holy man saith to his soul, 'God will deliver thee;' then saith the soul, 'I will praise him;' so he gives the delivered soul both matter and affection to praise his name. I beseech you, consider here when the soul hath nothing in itself to trust in, how it doth sustain itself by looking towards God. Christ himself, when he was in his extremities, looks upward to his Father in heaven, Mat. xxvi. 39, so this holy man comforts himself he shall be delivered. Thus he lays sound grounds in God, for there is no loose sands there. Therefore the ship of his soul rides safe. He trusts God for the present and for the time to come; as though he should say, Though I am now in great affliction, yet it shall be better with me, howsoever it be now.

Use. Let us raise this comfort to ourselves, *trust in God.* What if we should live here all the days of our life in this troubled estate that we are now in! 'Yet wait upon God, O my soul, for I shall yet praise him.' We live here in many troubles and afflictions, and we sit down by the rivers of Babel. Well! what if we die in this affliction? Yet I shall have glory with Christ. Thus, I beseech you, extend this comfort to the whole church of God; put the case the church be in trouble, what hath the church to do? 'To wait on God;' because it shall have delivery, and all the true church shall praise God upon their delivery. God will deliver his church, and in the mean time preserve and provide for it. It is as dear unto him as the apple of his eye, it is his jewel, his vine which himself hath planted; and therefore let us comfort ourselves with this. What though we are now cast down and in heaviness for the church of God abroad; yet God will redeem Israel from all his iniquities, much more out of all his troubles and afflictions, Ps. cxxx. 8. The church must be delivered, and Babel must fall. Nay, the Holy Ghost saith it is fallen, Rev. xviii. 2, to shew the certainty of it, for God will do it. The Red Sea and Jordan must return, and the church must sing praises for her delivery; and thus we do daily and continually wait upon God for the performance hereof.

Quest. What ground hath this holy man for this waiting?

Ans. He is my present help and my God, he is my salvation and my God. The word is 'salvations:' he hath more salvations than one (*b*). Therefore though we be troubled with poverty, shame, or any other affliction, yet God is salvations and helps. Consider this, if you are in trouble of conscience for sin, or Satan condemns you, then say that 'God is salvation;' if you are in trouble, God is deliverance; if you are persecuted by any wicked malicious enemies, God is a castle: as Ps. xviii. 2, 'The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, and my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.' 'Who is a rock, save our God? I will call upon the name of the Lord, so shall I be delivered from all mine enemies.' Thus you see how David after all his victories describes God to be his God, and his salvation both for body and soul, for the present and for the time to come, with means, without means, and against all means. What a comfort is this! He can command salvation, he can command the creature to save, and the devil himself to be a means to save us; and if there be no means for thee to see, yet he can create means to do it in an instant. Thus God is our help; and what a ground of comfort is this! Therefore I beseech you be not discouraged. Mourn we may like doves, but not roar like beasts in our afflictions; when we have humbled ourselves enough, then must we raise up our souls from our grief to another object. For a Christian must look to divers objects: look to the trouble with one eye, and to God with the other, and know him to be his salvation. Then, let the trouble be what it will be, if God be thy deliverer; it is no matter what the disease be, if God be thy physician. But many times we do betray ourselves into the hands of the devil for want of thinking of these things. 'He is my God.' There is another ground of his comfort. Give me leave a little to unfold this sweet point. Consider therein with me two things.

1. God is the God of his children. 2. He is so constantly.

This is the ground of all comforts, God is my God, and God is our God. First, because he doth choose us, and call us in his due time, and then makes a covenant with us to be our God, and then he knows us, loves us, and preserves us, and so he is our God; because they whom God doth

choose, he knows them for his own, and stirs up answerable affections, that we may take God, and know God to be ours. For there must be an action on God's part in taking and choosing us, and an action of soul in us to choose God again. If God say to our souls, I will be thy God, then our souls should answer God, 'Thou art the strength of my salvation.' First, God doth love us, then know us, and then we reflect God's love upon God. Again, he knows us, and we know him again; he delights in us, and we delight in him. The Scriptures are full of speeches in this kind. There is a reciprocal natural passage between God and the soul; for in covenant there must be consent on both sides, and then we make him our God when we choose him before all creatures both in heaven and in earth. Then we have familiarity with him, love him, and trust in him in all our necessities.

Thus we see how God is said to be our God. First, God is ours by election, adoption, by sanctification and redemption. God is our God, by dwelling with us; and this propriety, '*My God*,' is the first of all; for when God saith, 'Thou art mine,' the soul saith, Thou art mine, and shalt be mine. This is an everlasting covenant of salvation: God doth endure world without end. Our salvation is according to the nature of God, from everlasting to everlasting, from election to glory. Thus God is the God of Abraham from everlasting to everlasting; he is the God of Abraham's body, now his soul is in heaven, and his body is in the dust, Mat. xxii. 32. Abraham hath a being in his love. And so we have an everlasting propriety therein, God takes us for ever, marries us for ever, Hos. ii. 19. Therefore we must trust in God, and wait upon God, for he is our God and our salvation.

Use 1. I beseech you, give me a little leave to press this; for certainly there is more comfort in this word '*My God*,' than in all the words of the world; for what is God to me if he be not my God, and so make me his? For this same propriety of comfort is more than all the comforts in the world. We account a little patch of ground, or corner of an house of our own, more than all the city and town where we live. This comforts a man, when he can say, This is mine. As a man that hath a wife, it may be, she is not of the best, or the richest, or the fairest, yet she comforts him more, and he takes more content in her, than in all the women in the world, because she is his wife; so if a man can say, '*O my God*,' he needs not say any more, for it is more than if he could say, All the world is mine. If we have God we have all, and if we had a thousand worlds, all were nothing to this, if we cannot say '*God is my God*.' Therefore, though the child of God may seem to be a poor man, yet he is the only rich man. Other men have the riches of this world, as a kind of usurpers, for they have not the highest right unto them. Worldly men are like unto bankrupts, who are taken to be rich men because they have a great deal of goods in their possession, but the true right belongs to others, and so they prove in the end to be worth nothing. I beseech you, consider what God's servants have said heretofore: '*God is my portion*,' Lam. iii. 24. If God be our God, then he will supply all our wants, as it shall make for the best unto us. This is a great comfort to all Christians in what estate soever. God in dividing things, it may be, he hath given others honours, beauty, and riches, and parts of nature. Well! God falleth to thy lot. Let the worldlings, the lascivious and ambitious persons, make themselves merry with their portions in this life, yet let the Christian, in what estate soever, glory in his portion, for God is his, and all things else. Though there be many

changes in thyself, why shouldst thou be discouraged or disquieted in any state whatsoever? God is thine to do thee good.

Use 2. Again, *Here is a ground of comfort against all losses whatsoever.* The world, and worldly men, may strip us of these earthly things, vex our bodies, and restrain our liberties, and take away outward things from us; but this is our comfort, they cannot take our God from us, for this is an everlasting portion, my God, my help, my all-sufficiency. In truth, friends, means, and life itself may be taken away, yet God will never fail nor forsake us. We are here to-day, and gone to-morrow, and life is the longest thing we have, for we may out-live our riches and honours. But what then? Ps. xc. 1, 2, it is said, 'Thou art an everlasting habitation, from everlasting to everlasting,' and we dwell in the fear of God. We had a being in thy love, O Lord, before ever we were born, and when we are dead, we are in thy love still. What a comfort is this to cause us to rest in our God, and that for ever! But as for the wicked, it is not so with them; their voice is, The 'Philistines are upon me, and God hath forsaken me,' 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. This is a fearful speech, and is, or shall be, the voice of every wicked man ere long. Now they ruffle it out,* and none so free from care and trouble as they; but where is their comfort when their consciences shall be awakened? Then their voice will be, Death and hell and all are upon me, and God hath forsaken me; what shall become of me and mine? But as for the children of God, let what will come upon them, yet God can command salvation, and he commands comfort to attend his people, for God is my God. I beseech you to enlarge these things in your own meditations, and do not disquiet yourselves, but believe in God for these things, and for your own happiness in heaven, and cast yourselves upon Christ for the pardon of sins in the first place; and then, 'trust in God,' and nothing in all the world that comes between you and heaven but God will remove it, and bring you safe thither; but, in this case, many doubts arise: 1. For perseverance.

Obj. I may fall away for time to come.

Ans. I answer, That God, that hath begun this good work in me, will finish it in his due time, Philip. i. 6.

Obj. Ay, but I am changeable.

Ans. It is true, but God is unchangeable; thou mayest be off and on, but God is not so, for the ground of his love is always alike. Therefore fear nothing for the present nor for the time to come.

Obj. Oh but I have a great charge, and these are hard and evil times.

Ans. God is thy God, and the God of thy seed, therefore labour to make this sure, that God is thy God, and in thus doing, thou providest for thyself and thy posterity; and when thou art dead and gone, then the living Father will be a God to thy posterity and children. Therefore I beseech you trust in God, wait upon him, and fear not the want of necessaries in this life. What foolish children are we, that think God will give us heaven when this life is gone, and yet we fear he will not give us such things as shall maintain this life, while we are here employed in his service! 'The heathen seek after all these things,' saith our Saviour, Mat. vi. 32; but 'it is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom,' Luke xii. 32.

Exhortation. Well, therefore, for provision and protection both in life and death, trust in God for all, and all shall be well with us; then wait upon God. I beseech you make one thing sure, that is, make God to be our God, by trusting in him, and walking worthy of him. And this one

* That is, are at 'the height of prosperity.' Cf. *Glossary, sub voce.*—G.

care will free you of all other cares. This one study is better than all other studies; for if we can make God our God, then we make all other things ours also. This requires more than ordinary of a Christian, to walk worthy of the Lord: 'Two cannot walk together if they be not agreed,' saith Solomon,* therefore this requires great mortification of soul, and much holiness, to walk with God. This world knows not what this is, to walk with God in the ways of heaven, where there is nothing but holiness. Therefore we must exercise our communion with God, by praying to him, and by hearing of him, and thinking upon his word and presence, and abstaining from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. We have an holy God, therefore we must labour for a good measure of holiness, if we will maintain communion with God. This should enforce us thus to stand for God and his truth, because he is our God. It is strange to see how men do not walk this way. They will part with anything, or do anything for their lust, but yet they will not endure to part with anything for God, and for the comfort of their souls. Well! Christ stood for us unto the death, and gained us life, when it could not be had otherwise; and are we too good to stand for a good cause; nay, to die for the maintenance of God's cause? What! shall not we stand for God? Yes; for he is an 'hiding-place' to us; and if death come to us for this cause, he is life to us, and we have a being for ever in his love.

* It is Amos (iii. 3), not Solomon, who says this.—G.

NOTES.

- (a) P. 53. 'The word in the original shews it is the nature of sorrow,' &c. More exactly the rendering is, 'Why wilt thou cast down,' &c., = dejection, self-rebuked.
 (b) P. 61. 'Salvation.' See Note j, Vol. I. p. 294. G.