

necessary to salvation is to know Christ, who is that body of divinity which the Spirit of God teaches his scholars, "for God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face Jesus Christ." Amen.



November 10, 1706.

BELIEVERS HAVING TRIBULATION IN THE WORLD.

SERMON XXXII.

JOHN xvi. 33,

*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*

THIS is a dark and gloomy day, in which there seems to be a black cloud of wrath hanging over our heads; which if mercy prevent not, is like to fall heavy upon us; yet the storm never blows so hard, but the children of God may have peace; being, though upon a sea, yet in a ship that cannot sink. Our text is the conclusion of our Lord's farewell sermon to his disciples, in which we have the use and end of the whole, namely, that they might have peace. While he discoursed to them, he had in view their peace; that is inward peace and prosperity, contentment and quietness of mind in the midst of trouble. All this they might have in him; being united to him by faith, they might have peace in him, as Noah had in the ark, while the deluge was on the earth. His own word was the mean by which they were thus to obtain peace in him. This word leads the soul to Christ, where it may get peace, and teaches how to employ Christ for peace. "Unless thy law," says David, "had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction."

We have next the necessity of his speaking these things to them for that end. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." In this world they must lay their account to meet with tribulation. In heaven there is no trouble, in earth no rest. They shall have trouble in and from the world, as they have peace in and from Christ. Observe the certainty of all this; it is not, you may have,

but, "you shall have tribulation." They have no reason to be surprised with trouble. He warns them of it. There is no eviting of it. It is the common way to heaven, no going there otherwise.

We have also the duty of the Lord's people in tribulation, or under the fears of it, "Be of good cheer." (Greek), Be confident, over the belly of all you may meet with in the world. Keep up your hearts, faint not. The comfort is, Christ has overcome the world, and therefore though it may wound you, it shall not destroy you; and as surely as Christ himself has overcome, so surely shall ye overcome.

DOCTRINE 1. Jesus Christ freely forewarns his people of the trouble with which they are to meet in his way.

Here we shall shew *First*, how; and *Secondly*, why he forewarns them.

I. We are to shew how the Lord forewarns his people.

1. He forewarns them by his word. So he does here in the text. Now Christ speaks to us by his written word, and by his ministers, whom he has set as watchmen, to blow the trumpet and give warning. In the glass of the word they may discern troubles coming on. The Scriptures are like a weather-glass, in which the people of God may discern by parallel cases, what may be expected in such and such circumstances.

2. By the dispensations of providence. There are signs of the times, Matth. xvi. 3. These are, 1. Ordinary; when a people is brought to such circumstances as naturally tend to some heavy judgment. Thus our Lord said, "every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." This seems to be our case at present. The divisions among our rulers in the important matter now in hand, and divisions among others on the same point, say that if God do not interpose by a miracle of providence for our help, we may be in a sad case ere long, 2 Kings vi. 27. Surely there is a sad infatuation on some side; while some look upon it as the way to make us happy, and others as the way to make us and our posterity miserable. 2. Extraordinary. Extraordinary operations in natural things, Luke xxi. 25. By such means the Lord has warned us, and these extraordinary rains may possibly have a voice to stir us up. Sometimes the Lord writes the fate of a nation upon the walls of the great house of the world, as he did Belshazzar's on the walls of his palace.

II. We are to shew why Christ forewarns his people.

1. To take away the scandal of the cross. Often did our Lord tell his disciples what he was, and what they were to suffer, that

when these things came to pass they might not be offended. These that give up their names to Christ, and do not lay their accounts with trouble, they will prove like those, "who when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended." It is hard not to stumble when people meet with an unexpected block in their way.

2. That his people may be forewarned. "Therefore, thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." God's people are not always meet for a storm. Lot may linger in Sodom; Baruch seek great things for himself; the wise virgins slumber while the bridegroom is on the way. It is hard to stand in an evil day, but most hard when we are surprised with it. Job had an advantage; "I was not," says he, "in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came."

3. Because he would have his people choose his way resolutely; so as when they engage with him, they may be resolute to cleave to him, come what will. He would have men either not to build, or else to count the cost; either never to venture the sea, or else to be resolute to ride out the storm. The devil flatters men into his way, lets them see the bait, but not the hook. Christ holds the crown in the one hand, and the cross in the other, and the cross nearest the sinner, Luke xiv. 26.

4. To stir up his people to come to him, renew their acceptance, and get matters of controversy removed. Christ loves to have his people about his hand, but in a time of peace, they are ready to wander, then he will make fears to bring them back again. When the weather is clear, they go abroad; but when the clouds grow black, they return to their chambers, Isa. xxvi. 20.

USE 1. Of information. 1. Christ loves not to take his people at an unawares, though he often does so with his enemies, Matth. xxiv. 50. The news of the axe being laid to the root of the tree, comes to be heard commonly, before the noise of its hewing. Sometimes he surprises his people with kindness, Song ii. 8; Psal. cxxvi. 1; but as for judgments, if people are not aware of their coming, it is not for want of warning.

2. The way of the Lord is well worth the keeping, notwithstanding the trouble we may meet with in it. If there were not enough in it to counterbalance the trouble, why would he forewarn his people. But there is that sweet in the crown, that may well make us digest the cross. Moses puts the treasures of Egypt and the reproach of Christ into a balance, and counts this reproach the greatest riches.

3. God's people cannot justly pretend that they are surprised with trouble. It becomes not a Christian to say, I had not thought of them. We may indeed be surprised with prosperity—wonder to see streams in the south—to meet with kindness, when abroad from our country; and therefore they are inexcusable, that are unprovided for an evil day. What! not to provide in summer for the winter, when we know surely it will come.

4. Let not the world say God's people serve an ill master. If he chastise, he tells his people beforehand, that they may provide for a storm. The devil leads his blindfold to the pit, but Christ warns his people of every dangerous step, he deals ingeniously with them, telling them what they may expect in his service.

DOCTRINE II. That the church and people of God must lay their accounts with trouble in the world. Here we shall shew,

I. What is imported in this, that, "in the world ye shall have tribulation."

II. What these tribulations are, with which they may lay their account.

III. To confirm the doctrine,

IV. How, and in what manner, the Lord dispenseth tribulations.

V. Give the reasons why they shall have tribulation. We are then,

I. To shew what is imported in this, that, "in the world ye shall have tribulation." It imports,

1. That this world is not the place of our rest. Heaven is our home; earth our pilgrimage. To whom earth is a rest, hell will be a place of trouble. As long as we are here, we are on the sea, where deep calleth unto deep. If there be a fair blink for a while, a storm is brewing; and so will it be till we reach the shore, where a rest remaineth for the people of God.

2. That the saints shall have trouble from the men of the world. This I take to be included in the text. There are Canaanites in the land, that will be thorns in our eyes. As the Israelites were in Egypt, so is the church of God in the world. They are two distinct kingdoms that will never unite, as belonging to two so different masters, the God of heaven, and the God of this world.

3. That the troubles of the Lord's people shall go no farther with them than this world; when they have passed the sea of death, they shall see them no more. The world is the only stage for acting this tragedy, and when that is taken down, no other shall be erected. Devils and men, can pursue the Lord's people no farther than a grave. God shall then wipe away all tears from their eyes. Heaven is the place of the crown; the world of the cross.

4. The certainty of their meeting with tribulation. It is no doubtful or uncertain thing. It is beyond all peradventure. There is no escaping of it; the world one way or another, will be about with the people of God. No corn comes to heaven's granery, but what is winnowed here below. As long as the seed of the serpent is within bowshot of the seed of the woman, they cannot be secure.

II. We are to shew what these tribulations are, which the people of God may lay their account with in the world. I shall name some, not knowing but some or all of them may be our case; but there is no hazard of laying our account with the worst.

1. We find sometimes the enemies of the Lord's people rule over them. So it was in Egypt, Babylon, and other places. It is a sad threatening, "the stranger that is within thee, shall get up above thee very high, and thou shalt come down very low." So we find it often in the book of Judges, their neighbours ruling over them. Sometimes a professing people cast off God's yoke, no wonder that he wreath the yoke of strangers about their necks. It is much the same whether it be violently put on, or they stoop tamely and receive it; but always the church of God is brought to a sad state, when the wolf gets Christ's sheep to keep, and they are subjected to professed enemies of the work of reformation. O pray that God may direct the parliament in the matter of the union. They and we have to do with potent neighbours. Our rulers are wiser than we, to know what will be best for this poor land, unless the sins of the nation provoke God to make them blind. But surely these hundred years bypast, the poverty this poor land has groaned under, and the troubles the church of Scotland has had, were much owing to the influence of our neighbours, and it will be next to a miracle, if our prosperity come from that quarter.

2. Cruel mockings, Heb. xi. 36. This was the persecution which Ishmael set on foot against Isaac. The seed of the serpent are wont to spit their venom from under their tongues. Seldom are Christians free from these, for the tongues of enemies are not always restrained, when their hands are bound. O but it is sad when the enemy have the Lord's people under their feet, then their tongues are as sharp swords, Psal. cxxxvii. 3; Lam. i. 7.

3. Loss of their goods, Heb. x. 34. If God let loose the sword upon the nation, or if persecution arise, losses cannot be prevented. When there are loaves to be had by following Christ, he will have a large retinue; but when Christ and the world parts, then must we either part with Christ or with the world. O! for the spirit of Moses, to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. To have

the world's goods about us like Joseph's mantle, that stript off easily in a time of temptation. Let their money perish with themselves, who esteem all the gold in the world worth a day's society with Jesus Christ, said the Marquis of Vicy.

4. Loss of liberty. Often those that now follow the Lamb, have been in bonds and prisons, banished from their native country, deprived of the society of their relations, hunted as partridges on the mountains, and what has been, may be.

5. Want of pure ordinances. Often the gates of Zion have mourned, because none were allowed to enter them. The people of God have sought the food of their souls with the peril of their lives; their teachers being removed into corners, and dumb dogs set up in their stead, who have hardened the hearts of the wicked, and discouraged the godly. Alas! our contempt of the gospel, may bring a famine of it. The word of the Lord is more precious, when there is no open vision.

*Lastly*, Bodily torments even to death, Luke xiv. 26. All God's people must be martyrs in action or affection. Those that love not Christ better than their own lives, love him not all sincerely. Sometimes Christ calls his people to resist even unto blood. Such days have been, and Cain's club is still carried up and down the world, stained with the blood of Abel. A generation of blood-suckers yet exists to make the scaffolds smoke with the blood of the saints. In a word, whatever the wit of devils can invent, and men practise, and God will permit, the people of God may lay their account with. Yet we must remark it is tribulation, not destruction, the church of God is to expect. She may be in tribulation, and yet come out of many tribulations; and therefore for the comfort of the Lord's people, I will say five things:

1. Enemies may be a wind to toss this ark up and down the waters of affliction, yet not a rock to split her. "We are troubled," says Paul, "on every side; yet not dismayed! we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed." Nay, the church shall be a rock, on which her enemies shall split, Zech. xii. 2, 3, 4. Men will be meddling with her to hurt her, if they can better their estate by it; but if they prosper it will be a wonder, for never did any meddle with the church but to their cost. The same power still exists that drowned Pharaoh, and brought Haman to the gallows which he had set up for Mordecai.

2. The bush may be set on fire, but it shall not be consumed, Exod. iii. 2. The church shall lose nothing by it but her dross, Zech. xiii. 9; but that shall at length burst out on the enemies, like the fiery furnace into which the three children were cast.

3. They may drive here into the wilderness, but she shall be fed there, Rev. xii. 6; as it was in the days of Elijah. What will we do, you may say, if ordinances be taken away; why, if there be nothing in the wilderness, God will open the windows of heaven. The doors of heaven are not always closed, when the doors of the church are closed. God is in heaven, yea Christ is there, and he shall be for a sanctuary.

4. They may hew down her branches, but the root shall remain fast in the earth, and shall bud again. It is a sad sight to see men go to with axes and hammers, and cut down the carved work of Zion. But let it be never so low, it will rise like a terrible ghost to enemies.

*Lastly*, Enemies may carry the church of God to the brow of the hill, and leave her on the very brink of ruin, and yet she shall escape singing, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped." How did Pharaoh think he had them all in his net, but the children of Israel went out with an high hand. We now proceed,

III. To confirm this, that in the world the saints shall have tribulation.

1. God has expressly told us of it. What can be more peremptory than the text, "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom;" and all who live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. It is one of the articles of the Christian's indenture, to take up the cross and follow Christ. The way to the crown is by the cross, by virtue of God's appointment. It is true, the Lord does not call every one to be a martyr, but every one that honestly engageth with Christ, engageth in these terms, that if they should die for him, they shall not leave him.

2. This has been the lot of the church in all ages. There was a Cain in Adam's family, an Ishmael in Abraham's, and an Esau in Isaac's. Christ's flock has always had their noon, as well as their morning. Silence in heaven, is but for half an hour.

3. This was the lot of our Lord and Captain. He endured the cross, despising the shame; and they that will reign with him, must resolve to suffer with him also. It is vain to expect other treatment in the world than he got. The servant is not greater than the Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

4. There is so much corruption in the best, that they cannot long carry a full cup even, but when they stand they gather mud. They have need of affliction to keep them from, or awaken them out of security.

5. They live among ill neighbours, even the wicked of the world, who have influence on their calamities several ways. They are ever ready to do them a mischief when they have an opportunity. We have had long peace, but not because enemies were idle, not because they had no plots and contrivances to injure the work of God, but because providence defeated, and may even defeat them yet. Besides their wickedness provokes God against the nation, to bring on national judgments, in which the Lord's people must needs share, especially considering, that the godly themselves are, some one way or another, often involved in their guilt; as by growing lukewarm when iniquity abounds, not mourning over the sins of others. No wonder God send an earthquake into Scotland, for the profane principles and practices of some, and the deadness of others.

*Lastly*, The devil is a restless enemy. He goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; and he is not to blame, if the church of God has a moment's rest. He wants neither will, power, nor instruments, to vex the church, if he could but get permission.

IV. We are to shew how, and in what manner the Lord dispenseth tribulation to his church and people. I will say these four things respecting it:

1. The church and people of God frequently meet with tribulations in the world. It is seldom that this ark meets not with tossing, till it come to rest on the mount of God.

2. Sometimes the church of God has tribulation, while enemies have no such thing, Zech. i. 11, 12. Often it is so, as that when the one goes up, the other goes down; yet sometimes both are in the furnace of common calamity. Thus, both Jacob's family, and his neighbours the Canaanites, were visited with famine at the same time. When it is thus, the good metal is to be refined, and the dross consumed. The Lord can punish his people for their sins, and yet enemies have no cause to triumph over them, 2 Chron. xv. 3—5.

3. Sometimes the tribulation of the Lord's people is greater, sometimes less; it is not always alike hot, nor the clouds alike full. They may suffer much, and not be brought to resist unto blood. The Lord can bind up man's wrath, and say to it as to the sea, hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther. Devils and men are bound with the chain of providence. The tribulation ordinarily is hottest, when it is to last but a short time. When the devil's time is short, his wrath is great, Exod. v. 10, 11. Again, it is hottest when the Lord has a mind to do great things for his people and cause, but there is a generation whom he will have out of the way



beforehand. This was the case with the Israelites in the wilderness, because they had tempted the Lord ten times, and had not hearkened to his voice: they were not permitted to see the land which he swore unto their fathers, but were all taken away before he accomplished the promise, Num. xiv. 22; for this cause, sore shaking commonly goes before God's great appearances for his people, Hag. ii. 7. O! that this may not be the generation which God intends to shovel out of the way, before he revive his work. Once more, tribulation is hottest when people through long ease have settled in security, and defection has come to a great height. When a people thus leave their first love, unless they repent, God threatens to come quickly and to remove their candlestick out of his place. It is a dreadful case to provoke God to unchurch a people. The longer the disease has grown, the more difficult is the cure. A stubborn heart requires a violent wound. It is hard to say, if ever there was so much profanity in principle and practice under such light, as at this day. And it is too like the Lord is about to work that work, that may, by the hearing of it, make the securest and profanest heart to tremble.

4. Ordinarily, all goes not together with the people of God; if they be under heavy troubles, yet they may get the gospel preserved. "Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers." Though there may be darkness through most of the land, yet there may be a Goshen where light is. Though they seek it with the peril of their lives, yet they may obtain it. God's chamber doors of protection are not commonly all shut together. When you are persecuted in one city, flee to another. We have often seen it thus in Europe, when persecution was hot in one country, Christians have found an asylum in another. But, if all should fail together, God himself remains, and the saints may encourage themselves in him. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and his children shall have a place of refuge." "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." We proceed,

V. To give reason why the saints shall have tribulations. The church and people of God meet with tribulations in the world for good reasons. They may say to those who are their scourges, as Joseph did to his brethren, "But, as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good." God in such dispensations, has an eye,

I. To his own glory.

II. His people's good.

VOL. IV.

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III. To hypocrites.

IV. To open enemies.

I. To his own glory. This is the end of all providences, and of this in a special manner, which should make the yoke light to those to whom his honour is dear. What if God should demolish the whole fabric of the creation for his own glory, who could quarrel him in point of justice. Surely we ought in that case, in our last prayers, say, "Hallowed be thy name." Now there is a large revenue of glory to God, rising from the tribulations of his people, though they were watered with their blood.

1. There is a large revenue of glory arises to him from his bringing them into tribulations. Hence he has the glory of his holiness before the world. "I will," says he, "be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people, I will be glorified." The people of God by their sins, darken the glory of his holiness; but in their tribulations, they are blind that may not read that, Hab. i. 13. David made enemies to blaspheme, therefore David must smart to retrieve the glory of God, 2 Sam. xii. 14. The sins of the people of God raise such a mist, that the holy nature of God is not well perceived, but a violent stormy wind, will scatter that mist. God gets also the glory of his impartiality in his judgments, Isa. xlii. 24; Amos iii. 2. The Lord thereby shews that his own shall not get away with their sins and defections, more than others. He spared not his own Son, nor will he spare his sons. He is a Father that loves his children, and therefore spares not the rod. The heaviest weight in the ship of the church that threatens her sinking, is the sins of sons and daughters, Deut. xxxii. 18, 19. One sleeping Jonah here, will do more evil than a whole crew of pagan mariners.

2. He gets glory from his keeping them up under them. Should his people sink under them, then his glory is lost, but the everlasting arms are underneath them; hence they are kept up, and carried through, though they go through fire and water; and hence God has the glory of his all-sufficiency. The devil said, Job served not God for nought. The world says, the Lord's people speak much of Christ's fulness; but it is easy swimming while the head is borne above; they even need the world to complete their satisfaction, as well as others. Well, tribulation comes, and the world sees then, that the godly can rejoice in God when all is gone; and that they look as well as they that feed on the portion of the king's meat. O! how do they live? Why, they live by faith on an all-sufficient God. "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." "Godliness with con-

tentment is great gain." God has also the glory of his power, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. The saints living in the midst of deaths, says that Christ lives. The life of Jesus is made manifest in the mortal flesh. The three children walking in the midst of the fiery furnace, says there is a powerful one with them. The church of God, is often in the world, like a spark of fire in a sea. It is infinite power that keeps it unextinguished. Here also, he gets the glory of his unchangeable love to his people: this explains these words, "Be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Do they not fear in the valley of the shadow of death, it is because God is with them. What must spectators say, when they see them casten at all hands, and yet taken up by him, but behold how he loves them. Conscience will say it, though corruptions talk otherwise.

3. He gets glory, from his making them better by them. Tribulations rub sore upon the Lord's people, but by that means they are made clear vessels fit for the master's use, and so his house is made to shine; and thus he has the glory of his wisdom. O! what wisdom must be there, to bring life out of death, to cure by killing, and heal by wounding. This is to bring a heaven out of a hell. Here wisdom attains many precious ends, and all by one mean that the world would think destructive. He hath also the glory of his goodness he intends them good, and does them good even in the worst cases. He gets the glory of his own grace in them. The heat of the fire hardens clay, but softens wax; because of the different temper of the objects. The grace of God in a soul, never so readily appears, either to others or to the person himself, as in a time of affliction. Then they are like a sick man rising out of his bed and running for his bare life.

4. He gets glory from his bringing them out of them. This he will do. "For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity." If he bring his people into the fire, he will bring them out also; for he says, "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried." Though they be sifted among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. Though enemies may say, as to the tribulation, the Lord hath not done all this; yet as to the deliverance, when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Hence the Lord has the glory: 1. Of his wisdom, in bringing it about in such a manner as is often unexpected. What wisdom appeared in his delivering Jacob's family from the famine, by sending Joseph to

Egypt; and the Jews from Haman's conspiracy. The glory also of his power: For God's time of appearing is often when there is least hope, and the case is most desperate, Deut. xxii. 36. He raiseth Christ mystical, when the gravestone is laid on and sealed, when it comes to that, Can these dead bodies live? and none can answer the question but himself. "Thy dead men," says he "shall live; together with my dead body, shall they arise."

The glory also of his faithfulness. The Lord will bring his people to that with it, that they shall have a very strong faith, that lays not down that conclusion: "I said my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord." The providence and the promise of God seemed so to run counter to one another, that Jeremiah upon that was brought to the borders of blasphemy: "Why," said he, "is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? Wilt thou be altogether unto me as as a liar; and as waters that fail?" And enemies may be brought to say, there is no help for the afflicted saint in God. But the deliverance confounds the one, and makes the other blush; and writes his faithfulness in great characters. Thus he magnifies his word; above all his name.

II. In such dispensations God has an eye to his people's good. It is their happiness that his glory and their good are linked together. As all work for his glory, so all shall work for their good, Rom. viii. 28. I shall pitch on a few things here. It is,

1. to purge away their sin, Isa. xxvii. 9. Tribulation to the Lord's people, is as the furnace to the gold; not to consume, but refine them. It is not to purge them away meritoriously, but they are the means which the Spirit of God makes use of to weaken our corruptions. Now they contribute to this three ways: 1. As they convince of sin. They are as the fire under the pot, that brings the scum up, and so it falls off. It is difficult to convince men of prosperous wickedness, Jer. xxii. 21, 22. Solomon tells us, "that oppression makes a wise man mad;" but a greater than Solomon tells us, tribulation makes a mad man wise, Luke xv. 17; Gen. xlii. 21. Misery will open the eyes which prosperity has closed. If the gospel be taken away, it will not be so difficult to convince you of misimprovement, as it is now. Again, they make sin bitter. As Abner said to Joab of the war, so is it with sin: "It will be bitterness in the end." It is like Ezekiel's roll, sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly; thus it makes the man vomit up with loathing, what with delight he swallowed down. The wormwood and the gall being laid on the breast, weans the child at length. Once more, they do it as they lead to repentance, Hos. ii. 7. Repentance is the native product of a blessed tribulation. Let us search and try our ways,

and turn again to the Lord. Waters of affliction make the head of the gracious soul waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears for sin. Some now, they cannot get mourned for sin; but if a sword come, if the glory depart, the hard rock will stream out in the wilderness.

2. To prevent further sin, and more dreadful plagues. Tribulation is a hedge in people's way, meeting them as the angel did Balaam. Well may the children of God salute the cross, as David did Abigail: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me." By this, much mischief was prevented. It was a weary way which the Israelites had in the wilderness. But wherefore did God lead them that way? It was to keep them from drawing back, Exod. xiii. 17, 18. When a church takes a backsliding, they would go very far back ere they halted, if God did not turn them with affliction. Thus it prevents more dreadful plagues, 1 Cor. xi. 32. It was a tribulation to Lot to go out of Sodom, but had he not met with that, he had met with much worse. Many a time God drags people out of harm's way, as he did a godly man, who broke his leg going into a ship, which made him return. This saved him, for the ship was cast away. So God may cast a church or person into trouble, to prevent the casting them off.

To promote the spiritual growth of the Lord's people. The plants in God's vineyard, grow best in the winter. The church is like camomile, the pressing it down makes it thrive best; so it was with Israel in Egypt. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. The church has more professors in prosperity than in tribulation, but more true Christians probably in an evil day. In such a time the graces of the Lord's people are stronger. Sometimes they have run with the footmen, and they have wearied them; yet have they afterwards contended with horses. So Peter, who at one time by cowardice denied his Master, at another astonished his enemies with his boldness. So it was also with Nicodemus. The graces of the Lord's people are like the waters of the sun mentioned by Curtius, which are cold at noon when the air is hottest, and hot at midnight when the air is coldest.

The Lord's people have most experiences at such a time, Rom. v. 3, 4. They gain a stock of experiences in the school of tribulation, Hos. ii. 14. We have many professed Christians at this day, but few experienced Christians. Who knows but the Lord may lead them to the wilderness, and speak to their hearts there, that when they come back they may be able to say, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." Now, it is highly reasonable that these things be so, because they have more than ordinary to do in such a time, and God suits people's

strength to their burdens. They could not stand without more experience of religion; and the glory of God is at the stake, which would be wounded if they fell away. Besides, tribulation leads the soul to more than ordinary seriousness, self-denial, and going out of itself to Christ. In such a time also, they are feasted with a greater variety of providences than at other times.

4. The humiliation of his people, Deut. viii. 2. I take special notice of this, because it is the great design of the gospel, to make the sinner nothing in his own eyes, that the Lord's grace may get all the glory. This is the end of ordinances and providences, and is remarkably carried on by tribulation.

Tribulation serves this purpose, as it discovers the corruption of the heart that lurked before. Asaph's tribulation brought his heart atheism to light, Psal. lxxiii. 13. See how that humbles him, ver. 22; it will discover that particular corruption, which of all others, the man seemed to be most above. Thus, the impatience of Job, and the passion of Moses were discovered, though the one was the most patient, and the other the meekest man on earth.

It humbles the person also, as it makes him feel the need of daily supplies and support from above. When a man gets a burden to bear, for which he finds he has not strength enough, this sends him to God out of himself. The greatness of it affrights him. Hence may we see the reason why some people are helped to bear great troubles, while they sink under less ones.

*Lastly*, The weaning their hearts from the world, and making them desirous to be in heaven. If they were not so harshly entertained abroad, they might forget their home. But the more perplexities they meet with in the wilderness, the more desirable will Canaan be to them. No wonder they long to be ashore, who are tossed with the wind and wave upon the sea. But blow what storms will, against the church and people of God, the Lord does all things well; for the more the waters increase, the nearer heaven is the ark.

III. The Lord has an eye to hypocrites, in bringing tribulation on the church, to try and discover them. Times of tribulation are winnowing and sifting times, Matth. iii. 10, 12; Amos ix. 9.

The summer of the church's prosperity breeds much vermin, which the winter dispatches. Many follow Christ for loaves, and are like those that go to sea for pleasure. They flame a while; but as the candle, go out with a bad smell, when the wind blows. Now they are cast out, for likely they did not count the cost before they began to build, hence they are surprized with tribulation. The cross is placed in the dark to them, therefore they fall over it, Matth.

viii. 19, 20. What is undeliberately attempted, seldom succeeds where difficulties are in the way.

Again, hypocrites want the root of grace in them, hence a storm blows them over, Matth. xiii. 21. How can a house built on sand endure a storm? Lamps without oil may do much in a fair day, but nothing in a dark night. The real spring will hold out in a time of scorching heat but the pools will be dried up.

In tribulation, people must either live on Christ alone, or not at all. Hypocrites cannot do this, more than a bird can fly without wings. The hypocrite is the man with the heart and the heart; therefore, like the hurcheon, he changes his nest, according to the blowing of the north and south wind. His lusts are his limbs, therefore he must cut his shoe answerable to his foot.

IV. The Lord has an eye to open enemies, to bring vengeance to them. The Israelites were in a great strait at the Red sea, but it was that Pharaoh and his host might be drowned, see also Dan. iii. 22. The Lord allows enemies to fill up their cup, and then he punishes them, and the punishment comes heaped and running over, Matth. xxii. 35, 36. The tribulation of the Lord's people, is a certain forerunner of the destruction of enemies, Mic. iv. 11—13; the rod having done its work, is for the fire.

USE. Prepare then for tribulation. Lay your account with it, and make ready for it. This is a day in which we should be about Noah's work, even preparing an ark. Consider these three things:

1. The Lord has a controversy with the land, and he seems to be about to plead it; and when God's anger has set the nation in a flame, it will be hard for the Lord's people to escape tribulation. There are several things, for which the Lord seems to be about to pursue Scotland this day; such as the sins of late times, and here we find covenant breaking the mother evil, Ezek. xvii. 15. This land lies under a double guilt here. The breach of the national covenant, which was first made early after our reformation from popery, and afterwards several times renewed, and much countenanced of God. The solemn league and covenant now buried in England, and now much forgotten in Scotland, in both which, prelacy was abjured. But alas! the nation soon forgot his covenant. Prelacy, like the accursed walls of Jericho, was rebuilt; the Lord's people that adhered to the oath of God and covenanted work of reformation, were persecuted for the same; fined, imprisoned, banished, carried into remote corners of the world, and many of them murdered under colour of law. The covenant itself burned. God has not forgotten these things yet. The late fire in Edinburgh, which set on flames his vast buildings that burnt the covenant, was

a visible token of the Lord's minding that quarrel: and now I think the Lord is saying, as he did to Israel, I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant.

There is also the contempt of the gospel now abounding. How little is Christ cared for in our land; his offers are slighted, his reproofs undervalued. We have begun to weary of God, and our souls loathe the manna.

There is, moreover, much profanity in principles and practices. It is with us as with the Jews, both the poor and the rich have erred, Jer. v. 4, 5. Who could have thought, that in such a day, deism and atheism could have so abounded. Many ridicule the scriptures, and the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ; and so give themselves up to work all uncleanness with greediness. Pagan countries produce not such monsters. The matter is, men are given up to their lusts, the word galls them, and therefore they endeavour to extinguish all sense of religion, that they may sin without remorse.

2. The Lord has a controversy with his own people. How little sense have we of God's mighty works? In what security have we been of a long time? Little care to walk with God. Carnality, formality, worldly mindedness, lukewarmness in the things of God, presage a storm of tribulation.

3. The present state of affairs says a cloud is gathering. They that have but half an eye may see it.

DIRECTIONS. 1. Make sure work as to your interest in Christ, Matth. vii. 24—27. The months of tribulation are trying to hypocritical professors. If you be in Christ you shall not be removed. The temptations and dangers to which people are exposed in tribulations, speak loudly to them to turn to their strong hold, Zech. ix. 12. O that they would now come that have hitherto refused him. A man out of Christ in tribulation, is a sad spectacle.

2. Keep grace in exercise. Take that advice, "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first work." See there be no standing controversy betwixt God and you. "If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us." Outward trouble, and the frowns of an angry God, are sad companions. These months are trying to them that are under a spiritual consumption; it will be difficult for them to stand.

3. Prudently forecast what may befall you, and lay your accounts that way. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on and are punished." A warned man is half armed. Men surprised seldom resist. A man newly awakened out of his dream, may be easily overcome.



4. Be temperate in all things, and live above the world, its frowns, and smiles. Be moderate in your affections and cares about any worldly enjoyments. Use the world as if you used it not. Let it hang loose about you, like Joseph's mantle.

5. Labour to be concerned about your relations now. Solemnly give them away to God with respect to an evil day. In a troublesome time, people use to carry their precious things to any place where they may be safe. Husbands, wives, children, cannot be so safe as in Christ. Commit them to him, and trust him with them without anxiety. Strive also to get them possessed with real love to Christ and his truths, that they may be more afraid of sinning, than of suffering, for their influence may do you good or evil, as they are disposed.

6. Labour to have a feeling of the truth and power of religion on your souls. A mere form of godliness will not help in tribulation. If religion be not in the heart, but only in the head, it will melt away like snow before the sun. He that sees Christ by an eye of faith, and sees heaven afar off, has the trial of the efficacy and power of the truth on his soul, will be able to endure a blast. Therefore closely study practical godliness.

*Lastly,* Be much in prayer. Prayer opens the windows of heaven, James v. 18. Pray for yourselves, for the nation, for posterity, for the church, and for the world. It is a sad symptom a man has no part of the ship, when he is not concerned whether she sink or swim. Prayer has opened prison doors, Acts xvi. 26; and held off wrath, Exod. xxxii. 10. And who knows what the prayers of the Lord's people may do yet. It is a mercy that we may pray, Mic. vii. 3—7.

OBJECTION 1. There will always be safety on some side, and I will fall in with them that are uppermost. ANSWER. If the Bible be the word of God, this is not the way to be safe. "Whoso walketh uprightly, shall be saved; but he that is perverse in his ways, shall fall at once." If you shift so, you will not be on God's side; and often men by seeking safety out of God's way, hasten their own destruction, as the Jews crucified Christ to please the Romans. "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake," saith Jesus, "shall find it."

OBJECTION 2. I fear I never shall be able to stand in an evil day. ANSWER. Deal thou honestly with Christ. Tell him sincerely you are content to go through fire and water with him, if he will but bear you up, that you sink not; and trust him for through bearing, and then it lies upon his honour to carry you through, and he will do it, Isa. xl. 30, 31; 2 Cor. xii. 9.

But is there no way to be sure of temporal safety when tribulation comes? ANSWER. Without more than ordinary, neither you nor I can promise that to ourselves. We may promise inward peace, but not outward. Yet some may even get much outward safety. I will tell you the way that bids fairest for it. Mourn now for the sins of the land; that has the promise, Ezek. ix. 4. Keep close to the way of duty, whatever be the hazard, Prov. xxviii. 18. To be best when others are worst bids fair for it. This was the case with Noah, who was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. But all outward things are uncertain; only in the general, if you be his, he will do what will be best.

But behold, our text opens up a magazine of comfort in the worst of times: "That in me ye might have peace." From whence observe this doctrine,

Whatever storms blow in the world, in Jesus Christ we may have peace, in the midst of outward troubles. Here I shall speak *first* of the nature of this peace. *Secondly*, of the enjoyment of it. *Thirdly*, of the way of conveyance. *Fourthly*, of its kind; and *fifthly*, confirm the point. I am then,

I. To speak of the nature of the peace to be enjoyed in Christ. It is an inward peace, being opposed to outward trouble. The trouble is bodily, and on the outward state; the peace is spiritual. It is the peace of mind. Inward trouble is the native consequence of outward trouble. But here is a sort of miracle, the godly in the fire, yet walking at ease; the ship amongst rocks and waves, yet secure. Taking this inward peace of mind in its full latitude, it comprehends,

1. A holy calm in the soul, a serenity and tranquillity of mind in the midst of trouble. Trouble naturally produces inward confusion and disturbance; but the soul has in Christ a calm instead of that, Psal. iii. 1—5. The believer is like a vessel of water tossed upon the sea, yet not jumbled. In the fiery furnace, the three children had more peace than the king in his palace, Dan. iii. 24.

2. Content of mind, in opposition to discontent and murmuring, which are the native effects of trouble in a soul out of Christ. Contentment is not only the duty but the privilege of believers, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. To be content with a full cup is nothing; but grace can make a man content with an empty house and empty coffers. And what does a man want, whose spirit is brought down to his lot? Many a man has been so well content with the cross, that he would not have exchanged with them that were at ease, for the crown.

3. Courage and holy boldness, instead of discouragement, Acts