

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

iv. 13. Christ raiseth the hearts of his people in trouble. He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. When he says fear not, their fears are dispelled; their spirits raised to do and to suffer great things for him without fear. And never is the believer so acquainted with Christ's comforts, as in a day when fears are on every side. He loves to make them experience that his grace is sufficient for them.

4. Confidence as to the event, in opposition to anxiety and despair. "For the which cause," says Paul, "I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Trouble stirs up the godly to wait on the Lord, and roll their concerns on him, and lay down all their cares in his bosom. This has the promise, for he hath said, "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass." There is light in Goshen, when there is darkness over all the rest of the land. When providences are a dark cloud, which they cannot see through, faith goes to the promises, and there they get a sight of a blessed outgate, and will say, he has done, and will do all things well.

5. Joy in trouble instead of sorrow. They have a sweet feast. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience. They are not stocks, to stand unmoved at the loss of goods, liberty, and the like; but their sorrow is only as it were a quashed sorrow, it is so drowned in spiritual joy. They are as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Paul and Silas sang praises at midnight in the prison, and the Hebrews took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Strengthening grace will bear them out in their singing, as long as the enemy's malice will bear them in their raging. The saints are strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience, and long suffering, with joyfulness.

6. Prosperity of soul. The suffering Christian is by Christ made like Gaius, to prosper, and be in health in his soul. This Paul felt, for says he, though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. The world is a very rugged physician to the godly; but the truth is, they never thrive better than when under its hand. We are now,

II. To speak of the enjoyment of this peace in peace. The text says, In me ye might, rather may have peace. This lets us see that something must be done, in order to get it. There is a twofold enjoyment of this peace in trouble.

1. An enjoyment of it in the root and seed of it. In this respect believers always have this peace in trouble. For the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. They are like the heir while a minor, having a right to an estate, though there be not a farthing in his pocket.

2. An enjoyment of it by actual tasting thereof, when the troubled mind is really pacified, the winds rebuked, and God creates a calm in the soul, giving them all these sure, whereby they are made happy. Here I lay down these two conclusions, imported in this phrase :

1. The believer is liable to a want of inward peace in a time of outward trouble. This is manifest in Job, Heman, and others. Sometimes the wind blows upon them from all quarters at once. And thus it is ordinarily with them in such cases as these:—1. When the disease to be cured is grown inveterate. Every puff of wind will not rend rocks, nor blow up oaks by the roots. Samson for three several times had seen Delilah's deceit, yet would not take warning. Hence often it is thus with the Lord's people when the storm rises first, where the inward trouble continues till they renew their repentance. 2. When to allay their outward trouble, they step aside out of God's way, yielding to the temptation to get the trouble lessened, it is made greater by the accession of the want of inward peace. Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him. This makes a molehill a mountain, for there is no safety but in an upright way. 3. When they grow impatient under trouble. The Lord will have them see where the sting of trouble is; and by making them feel the smart of a wounded spirit, will teach them what they would not believe, namely, that a man may bear his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear. 4. When the Lord intends to appear with a more than ordinary measure of his peace and comfort. The saddest conflicts commonly go before the greatest victory. It is God's way to kill before he cure.

2. As there is a seed of inward peace in the believer's soul amidst the greatest trouble, so it shall surely spring up at length, Mic. vii. 8, 9. There is a heaven in their hottest hell, which will break forth in due time. Their light shall rise, and their seed of joy spring. They have great security for this. I shall only point at one thing in the text, that is Christ's designing it for them. He is God, his counsel shall stand. What he designs for them they shall surely get, especially considering he has purchased peace at so dear a rate to bestow on them. What though their case be low and almost desperate, yet he can give them peace, and speak peace to them, even as he spake light into being, when darkness was

on the face of the world. Though the mouth be filled only with complaints, yet creating power can make praises come from the same lips. "I create," says the Lord, "the fruit of the lips, peace; peace to him that is afar off and to him that is near and I will heal him." Wherefore, it being God's design that they may have it, they shall have it in the worst of times.

III. We are to consider the way of conveyance of this peace. It is in Christ. This imports,

1. That we must be in him before we can have this true peace. All out of this ark are out of the true peace. Men may have the devil's peace, while they sleep in his chains. But God's peace is only to them that lay hold on God's peace-maker. Let him, says God, take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me. What hast thou to do with peace, O sinner, so long as thou art out of Christ? For God is their enemy who are not in Christ, for by him only are we reconciled to God. Who can have true peace while God is their enemy, whose attributes do speak terror to them. He is just, holy, every where present, and almighty. He is merciful indeed, but only in Christ. Conscience also is their enemy. It is God's deputy, who faileth not sometimes to say to the wicked, that it shall be ill with him. And though it may be laid asleep a while, yet that will only make its awakening more terrible, and it is only Christ's blood that sprinkles from an evil conscience. All the creatures are likewise their enemies. Christ is the bond of the creatures, who were set one against another by Adam's sin; and therefore it is a benefit of the new covenant, peace with the creatures. Men out of Christ have no more security in the use of the creatures, than an usurper in his throne, against whom the subjects will arm themselves, as soon as they can dispatch him and shake off his yoke.

2. It is by him, and from him, they have this peace; therefore he is called our peace, Eph. ii. 14, and the peace, Mic. v. 5. Christ is the procurer and purchaser of his people's peace. Their peace was bought not stolen nor usurped, bought by his own blood. No peace could have been to men, had he not stooped and received the blow of the sword of justice. He denied himself to peace, that we might enjoy it. He is the maker of the peace, being the great peace-maker, and the Mediator of the covenant betwixt God and man, which is a covenant of peace. Peace on earth was sung at his birth; and when he is formed in a soul, peace is made betwixt God and that soul; and by his Spirit, peace is created in the soul.

He is the maintainer of the peace. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in

thee." So much guilt is found in the best, that they could not keep their peace a moment, were there not a continuance of it by the prince of peace. But by the continuance of his intercession, and efficacy of his Spirit, he maintains it.

He is the restorer of their peace. "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. Sometimes this peace is beat down very low by the corruption of the hearts of his people, and the malice of the devil. But he brings it up again, and the howling wilderness is as the fruitful field. Thus it comes to pass that at evening time it shall be light.

He is the perfecter of their peace. Their peace is but a twilight peace, while here, Zech. xiv. 6, 7; but he that hath begun it, will not leave it off, till he have perfected it. The Lord will perfect that which concerneth them, and God himself will wipe away all tears from their eyes. As he left not his people till he had seated them in the earthly Jerusalem, the city of peace, so he will bring his people to the city of peace above.

Finally, He is the storehouse of their peace, from which they may bring their peace in the worst of times; for which reason he seems to be called our peace. As every drop of water in a cup, is refreshing to a thirsty man; so every thing in Christ, is peace to the believer. Some seek for peace by their friends, beg it or buy it from their enemies, but the believer fetched all from Christ.

IV. We are to shew what sort of peace it is, which we may have in Christ.

1. A solid peace. The peace of the wicked is not solid peace. It is rather the name than the thing. It will not abide a trial, and, like a thief, it runs away before the searchers. But the godly man's peace in Christ will abide the trial, and the more it be examined the surer it proves.

2. It is a tender peace. It is easily marred by sin. Consciousness of guilt interrupts this peace. David's heart smote him for his sin in numbering the people. It is a tender bud of heaven, that cannot endure with sin, especially sin against light. Yet,

3. It is a strong peace in respect of troubles. This peace made a holy man say, I fear nothing but sin. Many assaults are made against the soul, to take away its peace; but it will stand against tribulation, scourging, a prison and stocks, spoiling of goods, yea, death itself cannot take it away.

4. It is a governing peace. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts," says the apostle, "to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." The passions and affections of the

soul, when they would mutiny, this peace of God stills them, and guards the heart of the believer, which is sadly exposed to danger, when without this peace. But the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ.

5. A lasting peace. "Peace," said Jesus, "I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid." How soon is the candle of the wicked put out, and their peace gone; but this peace is everlasting. Though it may run under ground a while, yet it breaks up again, and never sees an end, as streaming from the eternal fountain of peace. It now remains,

V. To confirm the point. Well may we have peace in Christ, though the world should be turned upside down, and all should go unto confusion; for,

1. If we look to him, we may see God reconciled to us in him, Ephes. ii. 15, 16, God testified of him, that in him he was well pleased, namely, with all that were in him. The believer beholding his wounds may say, these have procured my peace, his blood has pacified God's anger against me. What then though the world rage, God is well pleased; though the earth be covered with blackness, heaven is no more lowering. Is not this enough. Paul triumphed here, Rom. viii. 31—39. Though the world proclaim war against me, Christ proclaims God is at peace with me. Two things here, may give a man peace in the midst of trouble. 1. The preciousness, and excellency of this peace with God. What angel or man can tell the worth of it. When it was bought, it cost an infinite price. Souls under apprehensions of wrath know something of its value that it is better than ten thousand worlds. Then no thanks to the Christian, though he digest some petty losses in the world peaceably, while this jewel is in his possession. 2. The durableness of this peace. It is everlasting. Let men rage and devils too, they may take away outward peace, but this they cannot carry away. If an army were coming to burn and slay all in their way, and you were persuaded that they should destroy nothing of yours but that which is very little worth, might not you have peace; so may the Christian.

2. In Christ we see God upon our side. He is not only reconciled in him, but he is entered into covenant with us. His friends, are our friends, and our enemies are his. This made David fearless in the midst of troubles, Psal. xxiii. and cxxviii. 6. Hence the apostle bids defiance to all who could attack him, Rom. viii. 31. May we not say then, greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world. Here all the attributes of God stream

forth peace to the believer, so that he may sing that song, "Spring up O well, sing ye unto it." Euemies shall not prevail nor escape, for he is just, wise, powerful, and true. Two things here, should be observed. 1. He is a present help, Psalm xlii. 1. Many a one perishes because help is far off. But be the believer where he will, his help is at hand. He is ever within a cry of him. Yea, he is in him, dwelling in him by his Spirit. 2. He is a powerful help. Men may be near at hand to their friends, and not be able to help them in an evil day; but nothing is too hard for him. He is also a skilful helper. Men may be both near and able, yet for want of skill may spoil the work; but he is wise in heart. The believer may peaceably leave the time, way, and manner of deliverance on him.

3. In Christ we see God in our nature; God made man; Immanuel, God with us. This is a noble subject of meditation, the wonder of angels and saints in glory; an employment which might give us peace in the midst of trouble, if it were no other way, but by driving our thoughts, and powerfully fixing our affections on this admirable object. This gave Stephen peace. But besides, when men as incarnate devils, are terrible to us, we may look on Christ, and there with comfort see God incarnate; see him through the vail of the flesh of Christ. When a wicked man is in tribulation, he is a most miserable creature. Man is terrible to him, and God is terrible to him, because he cannot behold him in a mediator. But it is not so with a believer. May he not then have peace in trouble. Again, as Christ is a man, he has a sympathy with his people, and as God he is able to help them. Yea, in all their afflictions he is afflicted well then may the believer roll all upon him.

4. Christ suffered from the world and overcame it. "I," said he, "have overcome the world." While he was in it, he had no easy life. His life was a life of tribulation, and at length they nailed him to the cross. Here the believer may find peace. May it not create peace, amidst tribulation in the world, to think that the way of tribulation in the world, was the way by which Christ went through it to his glory. Shall we not follow him courageously and contentedly. Did they treat the master so, and will not the servant be content with his master's entertainmet. Will we follow him grudgingly, who went through so cheerfully. Again, may it not give peace, to think that he suffered to redeem us from the wrath of God. Truly, this will make the gracious soul joyful, to have but an occasion of bearing the wrath of the world for his sake and cause. It must be comfortable, also, to think that the bitter dregs are taken out of the cup. Afflictions and death are unstinged. There is no poison in the cup, this may well make you quietly drink

it. Your Master bids you ride no ford, but what he went through before you. If the world mock and reproach you, so did it do to him; if it put you to death itself, as traitors and rebels, so did it do to him.

5. The believer may have peace in Christ, in the midst of outward trouble, because he guides all himself, Is. lii. 7. The Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad. Christ has fought through his enemies, and has reached the throne. He sways the mediatory sceptre for the good of the church. Many things here, speak peace to those that are in him, in the worst of times; for Christ as a king is engaged to protect his church and people, Ephes. i. 22. His subjects are the Father's gift to him, of which he is to make account, John xvii. 12. He is their shepherd, Psalm xxiii. 1. Enemies can never be able to make him a king without subjects, a head without a body. The bush burning not consumed, why? God is in the midst of it. He wants neither wisdom, will, nor power to help his people.

Whatsoever they meet with, comes from him. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son. The most bitter cross comes through his hands to them. God sent Joseph to Egypt. Assyria is but God's rod and axe. Why should believers fear, when Christ lets blood of them. Though he borrow the lance from the enemy, yet it is in a friend's hand. It shall not go one hair-breadth deeper than he sees necessary.

He overrules enemies. He has a bridle on their jaws, and the remainder of their wrath he will restrain. He has a negative vote on them. "Who is he that saith and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" The devil cannot enter swine, without his permission. They cannot put one drop more into his people's cup than he allows, Rev. ii. 10. Hence, when enemies are consulting the ruin of his church, God is said to laugh, Psal. ii. He makes the devil's servants run his errands. The Philistines' kine bring home the ark. Joseph must be exalted. His envious brethren must post him on to it. The gospel must go through the world, and therefore persecutors must scatter the preachers. Many a time the church rises, just when enemies are laying on the gravestone, as it was when the service dook was pressed upon us. Jesus must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. Behold the assurance of it, Psalm cx. 1. Never weapon prospered against his people. The day will come, they shall all stand on the field as conquerors, and share of his throne.

In him they have divine promises suited to any case in which they can be. These are the silken cords let down from heaven, by which the believer may well venture to be drawn through a sea of blood, 2

Peter i. 4, Psalm cxix. 49. The word of a general will animate soldiers, and Christ's promise may well animate his people. What are you afraid of? Is it of your own weakness, which may make you sin and yield to the temptation, that may make you shrink, and leap back from the cross. Mind his promise, Isaiah xl. 30, 31; 2 Cor. xii. 9. Are you afraid of the apostacy? Truly they who are built on the sand shall fall, but not those who are built on a rock, Matth. xxi. 18; 2 Tim. ii. 18, 19. Will a man who can prevent it, suffer a limb to be drawn from him, though it be very weak? No, surely; John x. 27—29. Are you afraid of his forsaking you? Fear it not; Heb. xiii. 5; Isaiah xliii. 2. Is he with you, then he shall be with you. Mark David's reasoning, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and staff they comfort me. Why did he take thee by the hand, if he thought ever to forsake thee on any emergency. He knew all your faults from eternity. Do you fear that he intends evil to you. Perhaps you think that it is your untenderness, barrenness, or the like, that is like to raise the storm. God will have your sin to find you out. Be it so; yet consider that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. In the evening it shall be light. Let the web of Providence be once woven out, and though there be many black threads in it, it shall appear a goodly mixture.

In him we may have whatever is necessary for throughbearing in an evil day. He is able and willing to bear our expences, why then should we be disturbed at the sight of the journey. There is light to be had in him. He is the light of the world. No case so perplexed, but he can resolve it, Micah vii. 7—9. He is the counsellor, one whose advice is ready in time of need. There is strength in him. He is the storehouse of the Christian's strength, open at all times, but especially in time of trouble, 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17. He is the friend best known in adversity.

Lastly, Consider the Scriptures hold out Christ as one in whom peace is to be enjoyed, and that is confirmed by the experience of the saints. He is the Saviour both for temporal and eternal salvation. The ark was a type of Christ, the sanctuary, the cities of refuge, Isa. viii. 14; Heb. vi. 18; Isa. xxxii. 2. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous flee unto it and are safe. He is the peace; they that are in him dwell in peace, Mic. v. 5; Psal. vi. 2—4. He has chambers of protection for his own, into which he invites them to enter, Isa. xxvi. 20; Psal. xxvii. 5.

USE 1. Of information.

1. Here see the superlative excellence of Jesus Christ. To recom-

mend him to your souls, may we not say, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord?" and conclude, that all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to him. Such days may come, as that we can have no peace in the world. Our means may fail us, our own wisdom can find no outgate, no comfort in friends and relations; nay, but in the worst of times, in Christ we may have peace.

2. See here Christ's all-sufficiency. If we may have peace in him when we can have it no where else, then he can be to us instead of all, better than all, and is commensurable to the desires of the soul. Nothing can be wanting in him, in whom alone the soul may rejoice when striped naked of all comforts.

3. The mystery of a Christian's life in tribulation. Many have taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods; have gone to death as to their marriage. What! were they stupied, and without natural affection? No, they had peace in him. They had meat to eat, which the world knew not of.

4. The best furniture for an evil day is faith in Christ, uniting us to him. Would you know how to be safe, prepare an ark; flee to the Lord Jesus, and then you may defy the world, devil, death and hell.

USE 2. Of exhortation.

1. To you that are out of Christ. O come to Christ, that in him you may have peace in a time of trouble. Here is a sanctuary opened to you. Consider,

1. While you are out of Christ, tribulation may turn you out of a profession too, as it did the stony ground hearers; and dreadful is the case of apostates, they pierce themselves through with many sorrows. Tribulation will discover your naughtiness, John xv. 2—6.

2. Turn you what way you will, the Lord will wind a yoke of tribulation about your neck. When national judgments come, you must lay your account with a share of them, Matth. iii. 10; Amos ix. 9, 10. Your trouble will be very heavy, because the curse of God will be in it, and because you will get it all to bear. The Lord is not with you, you are alone as Saul was. O it is sad to have darkness covering both the face of the earth and heavens. Death is coming, and then the Lord shall trouble you. Your false peace will then be at an end. No peace with God, but through Christ.

2. To the godly that are in Christ, we would say, labour ye to be in such a frame, as that you may have the actual enjoyment of that peace which you may have in Christ in tribulation. That you may attain it, take these advices,

1. Labour to get a sight of your interest in Christ. Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. This makes a man bold as a lion, 2 Tim. i. 12. This carried the martyrs through death; they knew in whom they had believed. This inflames love, which is of mighty influence to carry persons through tribulation. To a person in trouble, and under doubts, it is like the ship which carried Paul and his companions, when it stuck fast, and remained immoveable. This is a spring of joy, and will make the soul abhor sinful capitulations for deliverance.

2. Labour to get yourselves wrapt up in a promise for a time of tribulation, Gen. xxxii. 12. When the waters of trouble are coming on, he is a wise man who cleaves to a branch of the tree of life. A promise has been meet and drink, and all to a Christian; even a song to them in distress. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

3. Acquaint yourselves well with the Scriptures. "Unless," says David, "Thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction." The Scriptures are written for this end, for our learning: that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. A good Scripurist, a good Christian in an evil day: only you must study to experience the power of them on your hearts.

4. Let there be no standing controversy betwixt God and you. If you regard iniquity in your heart, the Lord will not hear you. A guilty conscience in an evil day, is a sad companion, as it was with Joseph's brethren. It puts a sting in the outward trouble. Therefore renew your repentance, and mourn over your backslidings, and apply to the blood of Jesus.

5. Study the practice of mortification. Labour to be mortified to your wordly goods, Jer. xlv. 5. The poor man must have grace to be mortified to his cottage, as well as the rich to their mansions. You must also labour to be mortified to your ease, Heb. xi. 25. It were not unreasonable for people at such a time, to ask themselves how they could take with Jacob's bed, Gen. xxviii. 11. Micaiah's food, 1 Kings xxii. 27. Peter's attendants, John xxi. 18; and the three children's lodging, Dan. iii. You must be mortified to your life, Luke xiv. 26. Die to your life now, if you would have that peace. Be familiar with Job's acquaintance, Job xvii. 14. Amen.