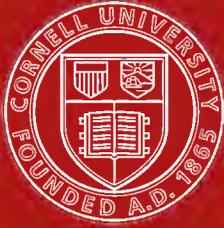


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A
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the Right Honourable the

Lord-Mayor,

Aldermen and Citizens of LONDON,

AT THE

CATHEDRAL-CHURCH of St. PAUL,

JANUARY the 19th. 170³/₄.

BEING THE

F A S T - D A Y,

Appointed by HER MAJESTY's Proclamation,

Upon Occasion of the

Late Dreadful STORM and TEMPEST;

And to Implore the Blessing of GOD, upon

HER MAJESTY, and Her Allies, in the Present W A R.

By OFSPRING BLACKALL, D. D.

Chaplain in Ordinary to HER MAJESTY.

LONDON, Printed by *J. Leake*, for *Walter Kettilby*, at
the *Bishop's Head* in *St. Paul's Church-yard*. M DCC IV.

PARSONS MAYOR.

Jovis 3^o Die Februarij, 1703. Annoq;
RR^{nt} ANNÆ, Angliæ, &c. Secundo.

T HIS Court doth Desire the Reverend
Dr. Blackall, to Print his Sermon
Preach'd at the Cathedral-Church of St. Paul,
London, before the Lord-Mayor, Aldermen,
and Citizens of this City, on Wednesday
the Nineteenth of January last; being the
General FAST-DAY Appointed by Her
Most GRACIOUS MAJESTY.

St. L U K E xiii. 4, 5.

Or those eighteen, upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell; and slew them, think ye that they were Sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

TH E Occasion of these Words you may see at the first Verse of this Chapter: *There were present at that season, some that told Our Saviour of the Galileans, whose Blood Pilate had mingled with their Sacrifices;* that is, (as this Story is made up by the probable Conjecture of learned Men) who coming to Jerusalem at the Passover, and being known or suspected by Pilate to have been some of the Followers of that Judas, spoken of by Gamaliel, who had maintain'd, Act. v. 37. that it was not lawful for the Jews, being Abraham's Seed, to whom God had given the Land of Canaan, to pay Tribute to the Roman Emperon, and thereby acknowledge Subjection to a Foreign Power; were set upon by Pilate in the very Temple, and slain by him while they were offering their Sacrifice; by which means their own Blood became mingled with the Blood of their Sacrifices.

Now with what Design this Story was told to Our Saviour, is uncertain; whether only as a Piece of News; or to shew the bloody Temper of Pilate; or to engage him to declare his Opinion concerning the Cause for which the Galileans suffer'd; or whether perhaps for some other Reason, which we now can't so much as guess at; But he

from thence takes Occasion to Reprove and Condemn (what was 'tis likely, then a common Practice among them; what is, I'm sure, too common a Practice among us, *viz.*) the Censuring and Judging as Reprobates and vile Sinners all such as fall under any remarkable Calamity, or are taken off by a violent or untimely Death.

— Ver. 2. *And Jesus answering, said unto them; Suppose ye that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay.*

And then, that this Saying of his might not be understood as meant to be restrain'd only to that one Case; he himself mentions another of like nature, which, it seems, had then lately happen'd in *Jerusalem*; of *Eighteen* that had been kill'd by the Fall of a Tower upon their Heads; and who, as it also seems, had upon this Account undergone the like uncharitable Censure; *Think ye (says Our Saviour, in the Text) that they were Sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

For the better understanding of which Words, and of the Doctrine which we are therein taught, we may observe;

1. That *Our Saviour* here does not in the least discommend, much less does he forbid the attributing particular Events to *GOD's* Disposition and Providence; whether they are effected and brought about by the Malice and Wickedness of Men, (as was the Slaughter of the *Galileans* by *Pilate*;) or by the Efficacy of Natural Causes, (as was the Death of those *Eighteen* upon whom the Tower in *Siloam* fell;) or by any other Means, or immediate Cause whatsoever. He does not in the least intimate that it was besides, or without the Knowledge and Disposition of *GOD*, that the *Galileans* were so slaughter'd by *Pilate*; or that the Fall of the Tower upon those *Eighteen* here spoken

spoken of, was nothing else but Chance, or evil-Accident. Nay, the contrary to this he has in other Places of his Holy Gospel plainly taught; viz. That no Evil does ever befall us, but either by the special Order, Direction and Working of Providence; or by a limited Power granted by GOD to other Causes upon some special Occasion; such as in the Case of *Job* he gave to *Satan*, first over his *Estate*, with *Job* i. 12. an Exception of his *Person*; and afterwards over his *Body*, *Job* ii. 6. to *afflict*, but not to *destroy* it. For Our Lord has told us, That *even the Hairs of our Head are all numbred*; That *Mat. x. 30.* the Care of GOD's Providence extends even to the *Grass* *Mat. vi.* *of the Field*, and to the *Fowls of the Air*; That *not so* *26, 28.* much as a *Sparrow falls to the Ground, without GOD*, and *Mat. x. 29.* therefore much less a *Man*, who is *of more Value than* *Mat. x. 31.* *many Sparrows*.

We may therefore, nay, we ought, in all particular Events that befall Our Selves, or other Men, to see and acknowledge the Hand and Providence of GOD; we may say, That *it is his Work, and that his Hand has done it*. Only what we ought to forbear, is, The pretending to give an Account of the Reasons of the Divine Administrations, to say why GOD has done this, or why GOD has done that; why he gave the *Galileans* into the Power of *Pilate*, or why he was pleased to destroy these Eighteen by the Fall of a Tower upon their Heads: For these things we can't certainly know without special Revelation, because the Ways and Counsels of GOD are unsearchable; we ought not therefore to pretend to know them; we do foolishly and rashly, when we offer to give our Judgment concerning them.

2. It may be further observ'd, That *Our Saviour* does not here deny but that the Eighteen spoken of in the Text, and likewise the *Galileans* that had been before spoken of, were Sinners, and consequently well deserved the

the Calamities that had befallen them; He only denies that they were greater Sinners than many others were whom the like Evil Accidents had not befallen; *Suppose ye that they were Sinners above all the Galileans? or think ye that these were Sinners above all that dwell in Jerusalem, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay.*

Altho' therefore, we may say in general, that all temporal Judgments are the Expressions of G O D's Displeasure against Sin, we can't take upon us to say with Certainty, What Sins, or, Whose Sins in particular they were that drew down the Judgment. And if one Man be stricken and another Man escapes, we can't say that he that was stricken was a worse Man than he that escap'd: We can't say that his being so stricken is an Argument that G O D was more highly displeas'd with him than he is with others who live to a good old Age, and at last die peaceably in their Beds; We ought not to conclude, that he is now in a bad Condition in the other World, because he is now so ill in this; We should not deem our selves the Favourites of Heaven, or imagine our selves more Righteous than our Neighbours, because we escaped better than they. But rather the Examples of G O D's seeming Severity on others should put us upon examining and reforming our Lives; otherwise our own present Escape will be only a temporary Reprieve, and what we flatter our selves is an Impunity will be only a Reservation of us for a greater Vengeance, *Behold, says the Apostle, the Goodness and Severity of God: on them which fell, Severity; but towards thee, Goodness, if thou continue in his Goodness; Otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.* And, *suppose ye, says our Saviour, that these were sinners above others, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish; Ye shall likewise perish; that is, either by that or some other, perhaps by a much worse*

worse Calamity; Or if ye are not thus corrected and punished in this World, ye will, for that Reason, be more surely condemn'd in the next.

In Discourfing on these Words I fhall therefore do hese Two Things.

I. I fhall fhew that it is a very unwarrantable and uncertain Judgment which we make of any Man from the Evils that befall him in this Life, or from the Manner of his Death. *Suppose ye that they were Sinners above others? I tell you, Nay.* And

II. That the right Use that we ought to make of any Evil or Calamity befalling another Man, either in his Life or in his Death, is, by the Consideration thereof to be incited to reform and amend whatever is amifs in our own Lives, lest the same Evil that has befallen him, or a worse, should befall us. *Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.*

I. I fhall fhew that it is a very unwarrantable and uncertain Judgment which we make of any Man from the Evils that befall him in his Life, or from the Manner of his Death. *Think ye that those eighteen upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell and slew them, were Sinners above all Men that dwell in Jerusalem. I tell you, Nay.*

And in Discourfing on this Point I fhall fhew,

1. That there is no Warrant from Scripture for passing such a Judgment.
2. That there is no good Ground from Reason for passing such a Judgment.
3. That such Judgment is liable to great Mistakes and Uncertainties.
4. That in some Instances, we are assured it would have been false.

1. That there is no Warrant from Scripture for passing such a Judgment. For it is no where in Scripture plainly said

said that every Good Man shall certainly be prosperous in this World, and that every Wicked Man shall certainly suffer some sad Calamity or be taken off by a Violent and Untimely Death. It is no where said in Scripture that a Good Man shall never die by a sad Accident, and that a Wicked Man shall never pass a long Life in Health and Prosperity, and at last descend to his Grave in Peace.

Nay so far is the Holy Scripture from giving us any Encouragement to pass our Judgment upon Men from the Good or Evil things that befall them in this Life, that on the contrary it expressly declares that a certain Judgment can't be pass'd concerning any Man this Way. *There is a Vanity that is done upon Earth (says Solomon) that there be just Men unto whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Wicked; again, there be Wicked Men to whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Righteous, Eccles. viii. 14. And I consider'd in my Heart even to declare all this (says the same Wise Observer, Eccles. ix. 1, 2.) That the Righteous, and the Wise, and their Works are in the Hand of God; No Man knoweth either Love or Hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all; there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked; to the Good and to the Clean and to the Unclean; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not; As is the Good so is the Sinner, and he that sweareth as he that feareth an Oath.*

Thus you see plainly there is no Warrant from Scripture for passing such a Judgment upon Men from what befalls them here; and therefore such Judgment, being not so warranted, must needs be Rash, Uncharitable and Uncertain. Especially, considering, as I propounded to shew in the Second Place.

2. That there is as little Ground from Reason for passing such a Judgment, as from Scripture.

For if there be any Reasonable Ground for such Judgment, it must, I think, be drawn from the Nature of GOD consider'd as a Being of infinite Purity and Justice, and the Wise Governour of the World; But all that can with Certainty be argu'd from hence touching this Matter is only this;

First; GOD being of infinite Purity and Holiness we may be sure that he hates Sin, and that he has a Love for all Good Men, but nevertheless from what befalls a Man in this World we can't judge certainly whether he be a Good Man or no; because the very same Affliction or Mishap, which by the Dispensation of Providence is sent upon one Man in Vengeance may be sent upon another Man in Mercy; what is design'd for Punishment to one Man may be design'd for a fatherly Correction only to another.

Again; GOD being Perfect in Justice, we may be sure that he never punishes or afflicts any Man undeservedly; but it does not therefore follow that he that is now punish'd is a greater Sinner than he that is now spar'd; for he that is now judg'd may be only *chastned of the Lord, that he should not be condemned with the World*; he may receive all his Evil things here, and have all his Good things reserv'd for another State; And he that is now spared may be kept only to be made a severer Example of GOD'S Vengeance another Time, either in this World or the next. According to what is said concerning *Pharaoh*, *Exod. ix. 16. In very deed, for this Cause have I raised thee up,* or, as it is in the *Hebrew, made thee stand*; (that is, for this Cause have I hitherto preserved thee in Life, and made thee to survive the Plagues that have taken away many of thy more innocent Subjects;) *for to shew in thee my Power, and that my Name may be declared throughout all the Earth.* Thus,

2 Pet. ii. 9. as St. Peter says, *The Lord knoweth how to reserve the Unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished.*

And *Lastly*; GOD being the Wise Governour of the World, and also perfect in Holiness and Justice, we may be sure that *he will judge the World in Righteousness, and Minister Judgment to the People in Uprightness,* as the *Psalmist* says; We may be sure that *he will render to every Man according to his Works*; We may consequently be sure that he will make a wide Difference between the Good and the Bad; and may argue as *Abraham* did, *Gen. xviii. 25. That the Righteous should be as the Wicked that be far from thee; shall not the Judge of all the Earth do Right?* But it does not therefore follow that this great Difference that will certainly be made between the Righteous and the Wicked must needs be made in this World; 'tis enough that it will certainly be made some time or other: Now, or at another Time. Nay this Life being properly only a State of Trial, and the next of Retribution, it is most congruous that this Difference should not be constantly made in this World.

3. As the Judgment that we pass upon Men from what befalls them in this World is altogether ungrounded and unwarranted, so it is likewise liable to great Mistakes and Uncertainties; because we may be mistaken in the Nature of those things which we account Good or Evil; or, if we are not mistaken in that, if they are indeed as Good or as Evil as we think them, we may yet be mistaken when we judge them Arguments of GOD's Love or Hatred, of his Favour or Displeasure.

And here opens a large Field of Discourse, not to be bounded by the utmost Limits that your Patience would allow to a Sermon; And therefore that I may not trespass upon it too much, I will have Respect, in what I shall say upon this Head, chiefly to the Case of
such

such as those spoken of in the Text and in the foregoing Words.

(1.) Then, I say, We may be mistaken in the Nature of those things which we account Good or Evil.

Particularly; We usually account it a great Blessing for a Man to live to the full Term of Humane Life, which, as the *Psalmist* says, is *threescore and ten or Four-score Years*; and then to die peaceably in his Bed; and a great Misfortune for a Man to be cut off in the Midst of his Days, to be taken away in the Flower of his Age; especially if it be by a Violent Death. But I say that if we consider the thing well we shall perceive that the Difference between that which we account a Blessedness, and this which we account a Misfortune, is rather Imaginary than Real; that it is not in the things but in the Persons; because that to a Good Man any Death, at any Time, is a Happiness; *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord*; And to a Wicked Man who lives and dies in his Wickedness, the longest Life is no Blessing, and the easiest Death no Comfort. Psa. xc. 19. Rev. xiv. 13.

To a Good Man, I say, an Early or a Late Death are either of them in some Respects, an Advantage; for if he dies Young he is the sooner free'd from the Miseries of this evil World, and translated to a secure and everlasting Happiness, where he is plac'd out of the Reach of Sin and Temptation, and out of Danger of falling away from GOD; And is not this an Advantage? To be taken from his Work at Noon, and then to receive his Wages, when others are forc'd to endure the Burden, and Heat, and Toil of the whole Day; nay perhaps to continue till late Night, *working out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling*? But then on the other side, If it pleases GOD to grant him a long Life, this also will turn to his Advantage; For tho' he be not so Happy now at present as his

Coæval is who died younger, yet he has this to comfort him and bear him up under the Toil and Labour which he is still to undergo, That the longer he continues in this State of Warfare, and the more Enemies he encounters and overcomes, his Victory will be so much the greater, and his Crown more glorious; That tho' he stays longer for his Pay he shall receive it at last with large Interest: That his patient Continuance in well-
 2 Cor. iv. doing so long will be recompenc'd with a more ample
 17. Reward; And that his *Light Afflictions which are but for a Moment, will work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.* So that upon the whole Matter, every Good Man may say with St. Paul; *Phil. i. 21. To me to live is Christ, and to die is Gain.*

But now, on the other side, To a Wicked Man to die soon is a Curse, and yet to live long is no Blessing. For if he be cut off Young he dies like a Fool, and is hurried away into endless Misery, without having enjoy'd so much as his Portion of good things in this Life. And if his Days be prolong'd, still he's an unhappy Man; For the longer he lives the more time he has to account for; and every Day's Misbehaviour will add to his Punishment; and the longest Life is but as a Moment in Comparison with that Eternity which he will then be condemn'd to spend in fruitless Repentance and unprofitable Sorrow.

Well but, However you'll say, It is better to die in an House than in the Street or Fields; to be carried to the Grave by one's Friends than to be eaten up by Fishes or wild Beasts. 'Tis a sad thing, you'll say, to be burn'd in one's Bed, or to be crush'd to pieces by the Fall of an House; To be cast away at Sea in a Storm, or to be dri'd up and wither'd in an Instant by a Flame of Lightning; And the like.

I answer;

Answer; If Death it self be terrible, (as it certainly is to the Man that lives in Sin) it is and must be terrible, whatever Shape it comes in: But if it be not terrible in it self, (as to a good Man, who is at Peace with GOD, and in his own Mind, it is not;) I do not see why the Garb and Dress of it should so much fright us; Or why we should judge any one sort of Death much better or much worse than another.

There are, I think, but Two things that can reasonably be thought to make very considerable Difference between one sort of Death and another; *viz.* Either because One is more *Painful*, or else because it is more *Sudden* than another. We will therefore consider these Two things distinctly.

I. Whether a Violent Death be more *Painful* than what we call a Natural Death: For if it be so, I grant it is in that respect Worse.

But of this, I think, we can be no Competent Judges, because it is a Matter of only Inward Sense; for we never try'd either of them our selves, neither have we spoken with any that have try'd either of them, and much less both of them. The only Way therefore that is left for us to judge by, is the Observation that we make concerning Others; And if Groans, and Sighs, and Complaints, frequent Swoonings, Convulsive Motions, and Fits of Madness, be any Indications of Extreme Pain, (and I think they are the best we know of) there will be Nothing then wanting to persuade us, that they who before they die, lie burning many Days in a High Fever, or are tormented with a long Fit of the Gout, or Stone, or Cholick, in Extremity, do endure as much, if not greater Torture, than they that are Broken upon the Wheel, or Burnt in the Fire, or suffer any other sort of Violent Death.

The

v The Truth is, Humane Nature is capable of so much Pain, and no more; And I believe there are many Diseases that cause us as much Pain as our Nature, in this State, will bear; and if any Pain exceeds these Limits, if it once grows Intolerable, Humane Nature sinks under it. Extremity of Pain will soon put an End to it self, and release the Soul from that troublesome *Vehicle* which causes it intolerable Uneasiness. So that in the State that we are now in, a Moderate Pain may be lingering and lasting; but if it be Violent, it can't long continue. But,

2. This perhaps may be accounted the great Unhappiness of a Violent Death, that it is for the most part *sudden* and unexpected; that the Soul and Body, those two Old Friends, are parted, without taking a solemn Leave of each other; and the Man is hurry'd away to Judgment, without any Warning.

And this, I confess, is a dreadful Consideration to a Wicked Man: 'Tis a sad thing for such an one, by the Fall of a Tile, or the Kick of an Horse, to be sent away into the Regions of Darkness, when perhaps he had never before once seriously thought of Death, when he had not made the least Preparation for it.

But there are Natural Ways of Dying as sudden as by any sad Accident whatsoever; and 'tis as sad a thing for such an one to go away in his Sleep, or to die of an Apoplexy, or to be seiz'd with an incurable Lunacy: Nay, indeed, it is a sad thing for such an one to die at all; because no Death, 'tis to be fear'd, can be good, after a wicked Life: For 'tis not the saying, *Lord have mercy*, that will cure our evil Habits; that will kill our vicious Affections; that will render us, all in an instant, Good, Pure, and Holy, and such as GOD would have us to be. And to keep the Commandments, (which *Our Saviour* says

says is what, if we would enter into Life, we must do,) is manifestly another thing than 'tis only to own, (tho' with the greatest and truest Professions of Sorrow) that we have not kept them. Mat. xix. 17.

But then the Suddenness of Death, is an Evil only to such as are not prepar'd for it by an Holy Life: For to a Good Man no Death is bad, no Death indeed is sudden; because a Good Man is always prepar'd to die, and is ever in Expectation of Death: And Nothing can be said to be Sudden, but what was Unexpected, and Unlook'd for. A Good Man therefore, knowing his Time to be uncertain, never puts off the doing of any necessary Work of his Salvation till to-morrow, that can be done to-day: And he that every Day does the Work of the Day, is always ready to give an Account to G O D of his Work; *And blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.* To him therefore it can be no Surprise, if as he walks about his lawful Business, he drops down in an Apoplexy; or if when he first awakens out of his Natural Sleep, he finds himself in another World: And it is all one to him, if he receives his Death by the Shot of a Bullet, by a Flash of Lightning, or by the Fall of a Tower or an House. The Manner of Dying can make no great Difference, when either Way it is over in the Twinkling of an Eye; and when as soon as ever the Man's Soul is releas'd from the Prison of the Body, this House of Clay, it finds the blessed Angels ready to receive it, and conduct it to Heaven; and the S O N its Redeemer, and all the holy Company of the *Spirits of Just Men made perfect*, ready to congratulate its safe Arrival to the Mansions of Everlasting Joy and Blessedness. Or, If this be a Surprise, it is such an one as we should rather desire and rejoice at, than be afraid of; such an one as it was to St. Peter, when having (as I may say) left

Act. xii.
6, &c.

left himself in the Prison *asleep between two Soldiers; and bound with two Chains*, he found himself, at his Awaking, under the Conduct of an Angel, walking in the Streets of *Jerusalem*. A sudden Surprise indeed it was, but it was a blessed one; It was such as might well make him at first in some Doubt, whether what had happen'd to him was true, or he had only seen a Vision; but it was also such an one, as when he came to himself, and was sure of the Truth of it, could not but yield him great Pleasure and Satisfaction.

Thus, you see, we may be mistaken in the Nature of those things which we account *Good* and *Evil*; And particularly, that a Long Life, and a Natural Death, are not so certainly Good; nor a Short Life, and a Violent Death, so certainly Evil as they are commonly suppos'd to be. The great Difference between the one and the other, depends upon the Goodness or Wickedness of the several Men to whom they befall: To a Good Man, all things are Good; and to a Wicked Man, all things are Evil: And the very same Event which to one of them would be the best, may to the other of them be the worst thing that could happen. So that we can't with Certainty pronounce any Man Bless'd, or Miserable, from the Accidents that befall him. But,

(2.) Granting the Common Opinion which we have of these things to be true, That they are indeed as Good or as Evil as we commonly think them to be; yet we may be mistaken, when we judge them Arguments of GOD's Love or Hatred, of his Favour or Displeasure.

Ecc. ix. 1.

No Man knoweth Love or Hatred, by all that is before them, says *Solomon*; that is, No Man can certainly know how GOD stands affected towards any Person, by the things, whether Good or Evil, that befall him in this World. And the Reason of this I have already intimated, *viz.*

Because

because this Life is properly a State of Trial only, not of Retribution; And while GOD is making Trial of Men it may be very consistent with his Justice, and Hatred to Sin, to spare when they deserve Punishment, and to seek by his Goodness to draw them to Repentance; and it may be likewise very consistent with his Holiness and with the Love that he bears to Good Men, to afflict them with Temporal Evils, for the Trial of their Faith, for the Exercise of their Patience, for the Correction and Cure of somewhat that is amiss, or for some other End that he designs to bring about this Way. Nay it may be very consistent with his Goodness to take them off by a Violent, as well as by what is call'd a Natural Death; because how much soever that can be supposed to be worse than this, GOD is able to make them infinite amends in another State; and he will certainly *make all things work together for good to them that love him.*

Rom. viii.
28.

I proceed now in the Fourth and Last Place.

4. To shew, That as the Judgment which we are apt to pass upon Men from what befalls them in this Life, or from the Manner of their Death is always Rash, Uncharitable and Uncertain, so in some Instances that have been, we are assur'd, such a Judgment would have been false.

For thus, he that from the Afflictions (the more than common Afflictions) that befell *Job*, in which also there were several Marks and Characters of a special Hand and Providence of God, should have concluded (as *his* Friends did) that however he had been blameless in the Sight of Men he was nevertheless certainly known to GOD to be a Man of Superlative Wickedness, would have passed upon him a Judgment directly contrary to the Judgment of GOD himself, who testified of him, *Job* i. 8. *that there was not a Man like him upon the Earth, a Perfect and an Upright Man, one that feared GOD and eschewed Evil.*

And how false their Judgment was who thought the *Galileans* that were slain by *Pilate*, greater Sinners than the other *Galileans* that escap'd, and those Eighteen upon whom the Tower in *Siloam* fell and slew them, Sinners above all Men that dwelt in *Jerusalem*. Our Saviour Joh. ii. 25, himself, who perfectly knew *what was in Man*, here plainly tells us; *Think ye that they were Sinners above all others, because they suffer'd such things? I tell you, Nay.*

But these however, it may be you'll say, were Sinners, and great Sinners too, altho' not greater than some others that were not in like Manner taken off; Thus much seems to be allow'd by our Saviour himself in this Way of Expression; *Think ye that they were greater Sinners?*

And what if this be granted? Nay and what if it be further granted, that the Evil Accidents that befel them were in Judgment and Punishment upon them for their Sins; it does not therefore follow, that because they far'd worse than other Men in this World, they shall also fare worse than others in the next; Nay indeed the contrary to this may with better Reason be presumed; *viz.* that having received this Punishment of their Sin in this World, by a Temporal Judgment, the Justice of God, was in and thro' the Merits and Satisfaction of Christ, thereby so fully appeas'd, as that the same Sin shall not be imputed to them to their Eternal Condemnation, according to that of the Apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 32. *When we are judged we are chastned of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the World.* For it may be considered that the Judgment which the Apostle there speaks of, was not only of the Calamities of Life, but likewise of that Temporal Death which was inflicted upon some that had been guilty of great Irregularities in the Celebration of the Holy Communion, as may be seen *Ver. 30.* *For this Cause many are weak and sickly among you, and*
many

many sleep. Even those that *sleep*, that is, who were smitten with Death, as well as those that were smitten with Diseases were (as the *Apostle* seems plainly to intimate) chasten'd of the Lord here, that they might not be condemned with the World hereafter. Ecclef. vii. 20.

Thus tho' it be supposed that a violent Death were always sent for the Personal Transgression of the Man that suffer'd it, we could not therefore conclude, that because he was taken away in Judgment, he was so taken away in GOD'S Displeasure as to be excluded from his Mercy in the other World.

But I said before, and that I still abide by, That in Judging a Man to be a Sinner (in any other Sense, I mean, than as we are all Sinners; *there not being a Just Man upon Earth that doth Good and sinneth not;*) Or in Judging a Man to be a greater Sinner than others, only because he comes to his Death by a sad Accident, such as that spoken of in the Text, or because he is taken off by any other sort of Violent Death, we pass such a Judgment as in some Instances of these Kinds would have been plainly false. Ecclef. vii. 10.

For what shall we think of the *Prophet of Judah* who was sent by GOD to Prophesie against the Altar at *Bethel*, and in his Return Home was slain by a Lion? whose Story you have in the *xiiith Chap. of 1 Kings*. 'Tis true indeed, he had transgressed the Order that was given him by GOD, not to eat Bread or drink Water there. But then 'tis to be consider'd, that his Transgression of this Precept (which was at most but a Ceremonial Precept) was not out of any Aversion he had to it, or out of a *Rebellious Spirit*; for he shewed all the Willingness that could be to comply with it, and when the King himself had invited him to a Royal Entertainment at his Palace, he had refused to accept of his Kindness upon any Terms, even altho' the King Ver. 9.

Ver. 14. would have given him half his House only to have din'd with him; and the Reason of his Refusal, he says himself, was because he had been otherwise ordered by GOD; And in the same Obedient Mind he continu'd after that, for having delivered his Message, he immediately set forwards on his Journey and was on his Way returning Home; when he was overtaken by a Reverend Old Man, who told him that he also was a Prophet as he was, and that he had lately received a Revelation from GOD, by which that former Order given him not to eat or drink there, had been revoked, and by which he himself had been commanded to invite him to his House, and to entertain him there with Bread and Drink. His Transgression therefore of the Order that GOD had given him, tho' not to be justified, yet seems not to have proceeded from any Wickedness in his Mind; He was indeed over-credulous in believing another Man's Pretence to Revelation against a clear Revelation that had been given to himself; but it appears to have been an Error of his Judgment only, not a Fault in his Will; for it seems highly probable from the whole Story, that he would not upon any Account, by no Inducements or Persuasions whatever, have been prevail'd with to go back, had he not been really persuaded that the other Prophet had indeed received such a Revelation as he pretended, vacating and countermanding, in that particular, the Revelation which had been before made to himself.

But now the Crime of the *Old Prophet of Bethel* who lyed to this Prophet, and who knew that he lyed when he told him he had receiv'd such a Revelation, was manifestly exceeding great; For what Crime almost can be conceiv'd greater than it was to utter a known Untruth in the Name of GOD? Had therefore the Death of the *Prophet*
of

of *Judab* by the Lion been design'd chiefly as a Punishment for Sin, the Wilful Deceiver, one would think, should rather have been so punished, than he that was (I had almost said, *innocently*) deceiv'd; His Crime being of the two, evidently, much the greatest. But it happen'd quite otherwise; The true Prophet was slain by a Lion, and the Deceiver and false Prophet escap'd, and for ought appears to the contrary, died in Peace in his Bed. It is therefore highly Probable that the Death of this Prophet who was slain by the Lion, tho' it might be truly call'd a Judgment of G O D upon him for his Disobedience, yet was not design'd by G O D so much for his Punishment, as to give Confirmation to the Truth of that Prophecy which he had before uttered against the Altar in *Bethel*. And this it did, even to the full Satisfaction of that False Prophet who had deceiv'd him; who therefore order'd Ver. 31, 32. himself to be buried in the same Grave with him, that so when the time should come wherein this Prophecy was to be fulfilled, as he was then well assur'd it would be, his Bones might not be disturb'd.

Another Instance of this Kind, wherein such Judgment concerning a Man from the manner of his Death would have been plainly false, we have in *Josiab*, who was slain 2 Kings xxiii. 29. by the Sword of his Enemies, and in the Vigour of his xxii. 1. Age, under Forty years Old. And now who that had read only the History of his Death, would not have concluded that he was certainly One of the worst of the *Kings* of *Judab*, at least, much worse than his Grandfather *Ma-* xxi. 1. *nasseb*, who lived Sixty Seven, and Reign'd Five and Fifty Year, and at last died in Peace. And yet if you read the whole History of both their Lives, you will find that as *Manasseb* had been the very worst, so *Josiab* was the best King that had Reign'd in *Judab*: For of him the Scripture 2 Kings xxii. 2. it self testifies, That *he did that which was right in the Sight* of

of the Lord, and walked in all the Way of David his Father, and turned not aside to the Right Hand or to the Left; And in another Place; That like unto him there was no King before him, that turned to the Lord with all his Heart, and with all his Soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, neither after him arose there any like him.

But there is no sort of Violent Death that can with better Reason be thought a Judgment of God upon the Person that suffers it, than that which is inflicted by the sentence of the Magistrate, who is GOD'S Deputy and Vicegerent upon Earth, who Acts in GOD'S Place, and of whose Judgment it is expressly said in Scripture, that it is GOD'S Judgment; *Te judge not for Man but for the Lord;* said Jehosaphat to the Judges whom he had appointed in the Cities of Judah; And He, (says the Apostle, speaking of the Civil Magistrate) *is the Minister of GOD, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil;* If therefore we might say of any Man that dies a violent Death, that he is smitten of God for his Evil Deeds, we might, I think, with the most Certainty say it of those who are formally Tried and condemn'd to Death as Malefactors by the sentence of these *Ministers of GOD, these Executioners of his Wrath;* and who are put to Death by that *Sword* which GOD himself has given into their Hands. But what shall we say then of those Ancient Worthies who by this very Judgment, *were tortured, and had Trial of cruel Mockings and Scourgings;* and not only so, but who were *stoned, and sawn asunder, and slain with the Sword;* for so the *Author* to the *Hebrews* tells us a great many were, of whom yet the *World* was not worthy. Or what then shall we say of all the Holy *Apostles* of our Lord, and of the Noble Army of Martyrs, both of the present and former Ages, who by the sentence of *GOD'S Deputy* the Civil Magistrate, have been Condemn'd to various kinds of Death,

xxii. 25.

Deut. 1.

17.

2 Chron.

xix. 6.

Rom. xiii.

4.

Heb. xi.

35, 36,

37, 38.

Death, by many Degrees more sad and painful than either the *Galileans* suffer'd who were slain by *Pilate*, or those Eighteen upon whom the Tower in *Siloam* fell?

When therefore we see any Man stricken, as it were, by the Hand of GOD, and taken away by a violent Death; either by the Judgment of the Magistrate, or by a sad Accident; tho' we may and ought to rest satisfied in it, so far as the Providence of GOD is therein concerned; firmly believing that GOD is *Righteous in all his ways and Holy in all his Works*; We ought not however to say, Nay Psal. cxlv. 17. we ought not so much as to think within our selves, Surely this Man was a great Sinner; greater than we who are left alive, greater than others that die peaceably in their Beds, and in a good old Age. For whatever another Man has suffer'd is no more than we all, even the Best of us do deserve to suffer; And it is not any Worthiness in any of us, but only the great Mercy and Long-suffering of GOD that has kept us so long in Life and Safety. And if upon this we take Occasion to Judge Uncharitably of our Brother, or to pride and please our selves in a fond Conceit that we are the special Favourites of Heaven, that GOD sees no Sin in us; and that we need no Amendment; we shall at length find to our cost that GOD's present Forbearance of us is only a Reservation of us for some greater Punishment, either in this World or in the other.

And this leads me to the Second Point that I propounded to Discourse of; *viz.*

II. To shew that the right Use which we ought to make of any Evil or Calamity befalling another Man either in his Life or in his Death, is, by the Consideration thereof to be incited to reform and amend whatever is amiss in our own Lives, lest the same Evil that has befallen him, or a worse, should befall us. *Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.*

For

For it is certain that all the Temporal Judgments of GOD are sent upon Men for the Punishment of Sin; tho' not always of *their* Sin in particular, or of *their's* more especially who are stricken by it; For the Temporal Judgments of GOD are most commonly designed for National Punishments; and when a whole Nation deserves to be rooted out for their Scandalous Wickedness, it is indeed great Mercy and Goodness in GOD that he is pleas'd to make some few of them only Examples for a Terror to the rest. Herein GOD deals with a Sinful Nation as 'tis customary for Earthly Governors or Commanders of Armies to do in the Case of Sedition or Mutiny; 'tis not fit that the Crime should be wholly unpunish'd, because then the Authority of the Governor would quickly become Vile and slighted; and yet should all that partake in the Crime be involv'd in the Punishment, the Execution would be too Bloudy and Severe. In such a Case therefore they commonly mix Mercy with Severity, and take out by Lot, as they judge needful, One out of Ten, or One out of Twenty, or One out of an Hundred; and having done Execution upon them, let the rest go free, in Hope that by the Punishment which some have suffer'd, and which they all have been in Danger of, they will be deterr'd from committing the like Crime again.

And thus, I say, GOD often deals with a sinful Nation; when it is *Time for him to Work*, because they have made void his Law; he nevertheless, even in Judgment, commonly remembers Mercy, and smites only some, and lets others escape; cuts off some, and gives others a longer time of Trial.

And not only so, but in setting some out for Execution, he seems also to take them just as if it were by Lot, by meer Chance and Accident; In these National Judgments
he

he commonly lets the Arrows of his Vengeance flie, as it were at random, just as if he were not at all concern'd who were stricken or who escaped. Such, I say, the Administration of his Providence in executing his Vengeance in this World commonly seems to us; and it must needs seem so, when, according to the best Judgment that we can make concerning Men, we see the Good and the Bad, the Righteous and the Wicked, and as many in Proportion of the one sort as of the other, afflicted by the same Judgment, destroy'd by the same Plague, or cut off by the same evil Accident.

And yet this Method of the Divine Providence, is in truth, the wisest that could be taken; the most suitable to the Nature and Design of *Temporal*, and especially of *National* Judgments; and wherein there is an admirable Mixture of Wisdom, of Justice, and of Goodness.

For should none but Good Men suffer in a National Calamity, this would make it look as if the World were govern'd by a wicked Spirit; and besides, would give too great Encouragement to Men to live in Wickedness, by making it appear to them the most probable Means of saving and securing themselves from Harm. It is therefore plainly necessary that in a National Judgment, some at least, should be chosen out from among the Wicked to be made Examples.

And yet, on the other side, should none but notorious wicked Men suffer in such a Calamity, this would give too much Ground to think that this Life was design'd by God for a State of Retribution as well as of Trial to Men; and consequently that there might possibly be no other Life after this. And besides, such an Execution as this would not so well answer the End of a National Judgment; For what Judgment or Punishment would it be to a Nation to have none cut off from it, but only such

as it self would wish to be cut off? Such as it would be glad to be rid of? Such as being Disturbers of the publick Peace and Welfare would have been taken away by Humane Justice, if that could have its due Course against all Crimes and upon all Offenders? But it is truly a Judgment and a Calamity to a Nation to be depriv'd of some of its best Members, to have those cut off that are the most useful to it, and do the most Good in it; So that a Nation is then most severely punish'd when the Judgment lights chiefly upon such; the Loss of a few Good Persons out of it being a much greater Loss and Damage to it than it would have been to have had ten times the same Number of other Men taken away.

When therefore the Providence of God takes this Course, and destroys both the Good and the Bad by the same common Calamity, This, both is an Argument of God's highest Displeasure, and also gives just Ground to fear that he designs not to stop at this, but to go on and punish the sinful Nation still seven times more for their Iniquity,

I say, First, It is an Argument of God's highest Displeasure at present. And in this Sense I understand those Words of the Prophet *Ezekiel, Chap. xxi. V. 3, 4, 5. Say to the Land of Israel, Thus saith the Lord; Behold I am against thee, and will draw forth my Sword out of his Sheath, and will cut off from thee the Righteous and the Wicked. Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the Righteous and the Wicked, therefore shall my Sword go forth out of his Sheath against all Flesh, from the South to the North; That all Flesh may know that I the Lord have drawn forth my Sword out of his Sheath; It shall not return any more. — It shall not return any more; that is, it shall go on Destroying till it has made a full End.*

And this was what I further said: *viz.* that when God proceeds after this manner, destroying in any Publick Calamity

lamity the Righteous with the Wicked, this affords great Cause to fear that his Justice will not be satisfied with this One Execution, but that he intends to punish the sinful Nation still seven times more for their Iniquity. For so, when he gave good King *Josiah* (the best King that ever Reign'd in *Judah*) to be slain by the Sword of his Enemies, the Reason was because he was resolv'd to destroy his Nation, *to remove Judah also out of his sight as he had remov'd Israel*; and therefore he took him first away, *that his Eyes might not see the Evil that he was bringing upon his People*. And whenever he suffers Good Men (especially if they were remarkably such) to be taken away by the Destroying Angel in a common Plague or Calamity, whoever wisely and religiously considers the Matter will always be apt to fear it is for the same Reason; according to that of the Prophet, *Isaiah lvii. 1. The Righteous perisheth, and no Man layeth it to Heart; and merciful Men are taken away, none considering, that the Righteous is taken away from the Evil to come.*

2 Kings
xxiii. 27.
---xxii. 20.

And as it is an Argument of GOD's severest Displeasure against a whole Nation, when he thus takes away (as it were without Discriminating) the Righteous and the Wicked, so this same is likewise an Instance and Expression of his wonderful Grace and Goodness to particular Men; Indeed, he shews herein as much Goodness and Tenderness to particular Persons as he could possibly do while he is executing his just Vengeance upon that whole sinful Nation which they compose. For what can be more gracious, what can be more agreeable to the infinite Goodness of that GOD, *who is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to Repentance*, than it is, to take away in a Common and National Calamity, such as will be the least Sufferers by it in their own Persons, such as are the fittest to die: and to endure with much Long-suffering

2 Pet. iii.

9.

Rom. ix.
22.

fering the Vessels of Wrath fitted to Destruction, that is; such Persons as if he should then take them away must be unavoidably miserable to all Eternity, but who may (and, 'tis to be hop'd, will) by this Goodness and Forbearance of God be led to Repentance?

But if neither by the Judgment that has befallen others, nor by the Goodness that has been shewed to themselves they be brought to Repentance, their Case then will be worse than if they had been taken off sooner; For unless they repent, the longer they continue in the World they will have only the more Sins to Answer for; and by *Despising the Riches of GOD's Goodness and Forbearance and Long-suffering, they will only treasure up unto themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of GOD, who will render to every Man according to his Deeds. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

Rom. ii.
4, 5, 6.

I crave your Patience only while I make Application of what has been said to our selves; with regard to a Case that has lately happen'd among us, and which is a principal Occasion of our present Meeting.

And I might almost say of the Words of the Text, as our *Saviour* in *Luke* iv. 21. did concerning a Text which he was then Preaching upon, out of the Prophet *Isaiab*; *This Day is this Scripture fulfilled in your Ears.* For we have had lately among our selves an Instance like to that spoken of in the Text, only much more severe and terrible. For many more we have heard of than Eighteen that have been kill'd upon the Land, much in such manner as these Men were, by the Fall of Walls and Houses upon their Heads; And I fear I might say there have been more than as many Hundred cast away and Drowned at Sea in the late dreadful Storm; none of which had more Reason to fear or expect their Death at that time than we had, who by the Goodness of God are still alive.

Now

Now why they were taken away, and why we were left, we our selves can give no Reason; Only this we may be sure of, that it was not because we were better than they, that they are dead and we alive; This we may be sure of, that there were not worse Men taken away than are still remaining among us; Nay, and it is further highly probable that there are not better Men now alive than some were who by that violent Tempest were forcibly driven into that *Haven where they would be*, into the Haven of eternal Rest and Peace. It is impossible therefore for us to give a Reason of this Dispensation of Providence as to particular Men; and of what we are not able to make a true Judgment, the Judgment that we give, if it be not uncharitable, must at least be rash and uncertain, *Let us therefore (as the Apostle exhorts, 1 Cor. iv. 5.) judge nothing before the Time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to Light the hidden things of Darknes, and will make manifest the Counsels of the Hearts: And then shall every Man have Praise of God. Think ye, says our Lord, that they were Sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay.*

But whether they were Sinners or no; or whether they were Sinners above others or no; that have been taken away in this sad Calamity, the Calamity it self was doubtless a Judgment of GOD upon us all, even upon the whole Nation for our manifold and Crying Sins: And *when the Judgments of GOD are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World should learn Righteousness.* They that have been taken away by this Judgment, seemingly in GOD's Displeasure, are Examples to us of that Vengeance which we had all of us deserv'd, and which we had also all of us felt if he had suffer'd his whole Displeasure to arise.

Let not *us* therefore who have escaped, let not even such of us as have escap'd by a Signal or even wonderful Providence of GOD, (as some have done) think ever the better of our selves for this; For we are not by this absol-

ved,

ved, our Judgment is but only delayed for a while; And
 Jude 5. it may be remembred, *how that the Lord having saved
 the People out of the Land of Egypt, (and that too by Signs
 and Wonders, by a mighty hand and a stretch'd out Arm,
 yet,) afterward destroy'd them that believed not.*

But even this cannot yet be said of us, that *we are saved*; All that can be said is, that we are not yet destroy'd, but how soon we may be God only knows; and that too by a much worse Destruction than they were who perish'd in the late dreadful Tempest. For the same Hand that then smote us is still held over us; and tho' we hope that the Winds and Storms have already fulfill'd all that was given them in Command by GOD, yet the same Word at which they arose can arm and send forth any other of his Creatures for our Destruction. The same Power that has shaken the Tops of our Houses, can shake the Foundations also, and make them become in an Instant an Heap of Rubbish to cover and bury our dead Carcasses in; and He that has given so many of late to be swallow'd up by the Sea, can, if he pleases, command the Earth also to swallow up us that remain; some Menaces of this kind, 'tis said, we have lately had in some parts of the Nation. But this we may be assur'd of, that unless we improve to good Purpose the Reprieve which God now affords us, we shall yet fall under a heavier Condemnation than if we had been call'd to Judgment sooner. *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

And that we have not yet repented to good purpose is evident, because for all the Evils that GOD has hitherto sent upon us, *his Anger is not turned away, but his Hand is stretched out still.* For there are four things which GOD

Ezek. xiv. call's his *four sore Judgments, The Sword, and the Famine,*
 21. *and the noisom Beast, and the Pestilence;* the first of which,

2 Sam. and (if *David* thought right) the forest of all GOD's Judg-
 xxiv. 14. ments, *The Sword,* has been now, almost without Inter-
 mission, for several Years past, and is still very heavy upon

us;

us; tho' (GOD be thanked) not so heavy as in other Countries where the Seat of the War has been; nor yet so heavy as it might have been, and, as we have Reason to fear, it still may be. For if in the War we are now engag'd in we should be unsuccessful, it may, and probably will be, in its Consequences; a great deal sorer Evil than any that has yet befallen us; and much better would it have been for us to have perish'd before, tho' by the worst of Accidents, than to live to see (which yet we must then expect to see) our Country devoured by Strangers, our holy Religion abolish'd, and Popery and Slavery entail'd upon us and our Posterity for ever.

Great Reason there is therefore that we should pray continually (as we do) for good Success in this War, on the Issue whereof the Fate of the whole Nation, both as to Temporals and Spiritualls, does, to all Appearance, depend. And upon whatever other special Occasion we are at any time call'd upon to Fast, and to Humble our selves before GOD, in a Sense of his heavy Displeasure, it ought to be a considerable Part of our Prayer, That GOD would *be now with us to help us and to fight our Battels*; and that, *howsoever he may think fit to correct us for our Sins, he would yet never deliver us up into the Hands of those Men whose Mercies are cruel*. This is what among other things, we have been now begging of GOD; And I hope the Consideration of his great Displeasure against us, manifestly shewed forth in the late terrible Storm, has made us do it with more than usual Seriousness and Devotion.

But Fasting and Praying alone will not obtain our Pardon; they alone will not *avert from us the Judgements of GOD, or procure the Continuance of his Mercies*. The Heathen *Ninevites* understood better than this by the Light of Nature only; And therefore when their Destruction had been threatned by *Jonah* the Prophet, they, by the same Proclamation which ordered General Fasting and Supplication,

plication, enjoin'd likewise a general Reformation of Manners; *Jonah iii. 6, 7, 8.* When the Word came to the King of Nineveh — he caused it to be proclaimed and published thro' Nineveh, (by the Decree of the King and his Nobles) saying, — Let Man and Beast be covered with Sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil Way, and from the Violence that is in their Hands: This is the Magistrates Part, to forbid; and (so far as in them lies) by wholesome Laws and a vigorous Execution of them, effectually to restrain and suppress at least the open Practice of Wickedness. And in this, there has, I think, been nothing wanting on the Part of our most Religious and Gracious QUEEN; May all her Ministers of State and Officers of Justice but do their Duties as well; May you the Magistrates of this Capital City be herein a good Pattern to the whole Kingdom; And may there be on the Peoples Part (and I pray GOD there may be in all of us as ready and full a Compliance with her Majesty's Pious Designs, as there was in the Subjects of *Nineveh*; and then we may reasonably hope that our Fasting and Prayer will be as availing as theirs was; that when GOD sees our Works, and that we turn from our evil Way, He also will repent of the Evil that he thought to do unto us. Then, and upon no other Terms, we may reasonably expect that he will bless us with Victory and good Success, and in his own due time with such a Peace as may tend to the Glory of his great Name, the Preservation of his Church and true Religion, the Honour and Safety of Her Majesty, and the Security and Prosperity of these Kingdoms.

*Jonah iii.
10.*

Which GOD of his Mercy grant, for the sake of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever. Amen.

F I N I S

