JUN 2 4 1986
SEMINARY

SCC
#11,786

~~BX~~
~~5133~~
~~.S43~~
~~N5~~
~~1758~~

Secker, Thomas.

NINE SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE

Pariſh of St. JAMES, WESTMINSTER,

ON OCCASION OF THE

Late WAR and REBELLION.

By THOMAS, Lord Biſhop of OXFORD,

Then RECTOR of the ſaid PARISH.

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
MAR 29 1996
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

LONDON:

Printed for JOHN RIVINGTON, at the *Bible and Crown*, in St. *Paul's Church-Yard.*

MDCCLVIII.

THE

CONTENTS.

SERMON I. Page 3.

Preached at St. *James*'s Church, on the Fast-Day, *Jan.* 9, 1739-40; and at *King-ſtreet* Chapel, on the Fast-Day, *Feb.* 4, 1740-1.

2 CHRON. XV. 2.

The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him: and if ye ſeek Him, He will be found of you: but if ye forſake Him, He will forſake you.

SERMON II. Page 33.

Preached at St. *James*'s Church, on the Fast-Day, *Nov.* 10, 1742; and at *King-ſtreet* Chapel, on the Fast-Day, *Jan.* 9, 1744-5.

1 PET. v. 6.

Humble yourſelves therefore under the mighty Hand of God, that he may exalt you in due Time.

SERMON III. Page 59.

Preached at St. *James*'s Church, on the Faſt-Day, *April* 11, 1744.

Text the ſame.

SERMON IV. Page 83.

Preached at St. *James*'s Church, and the Chapels belonging to it, *Oct.* 6, 13, 1745.

2 SAM. x. 12.

Be of good Courage, and let us play the Men for our People, and for the Cities of our God: And the Lord do that which ſeemeth him good.

SERMON V. Page 115.

Preached at St. *James*'s Church, and the Chapels belonging to it, *Oct.* 20, 27. *Nov.* 24, 1745.

PHIL. iv. 6, 7.

Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thankſgiving, let your Requeſts be made known unto God.

And the Peace of God, which paſſeth all Underſtanding, ſhall keep your Hearts and Minds through Chriſt Jeſus.

SERMON VI. Page 141.

Preached at St. *James*'s Church, and at *King-ſtreet* Chapel, *May* 4, 1746.

2 COR. i. 9, 10.

But we had the Sentence of Death in ourſelves, that we ſhould not truſt in ourſelves, but in God which raiſeth the Dead:

Who delivered us from ſo great a Death, and doth deliver; in whom we truſt that he will yet deliver us.

SERMON VII. Page 167.

Preached at St. *James*'s Church, on the Thankſgiving-Day, *Oct.* 9, 1746.

JOHN

JOHN v. 14.

Afterward Jesus findeth him in the Temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

SERMON VIII. Page 195.

Preached at St. *James*'s Church, on the Fast-Day, *Jan.* 7, 1746-7; and at *King-street* Chapel, on the Fast-Day, *Feb.* 17, 1747-8.

PSAL. cxxii. 6.

O pray for the Peace of Jerusalem: They shall prosper, that love thee.

SERMON IX. Page 227.

Preached at St. *James*'s Church, on the Thanksgiving-Day, *April* 25, 1749.

PSAL. xxix. 10.

——*The Lord shall give his People the Blessing of Peace.*

The First and Fourth of these Sermons were published soon after they were preached.

A

SERMON

PREACHED at the

Pariſh-Church of St. *James*, *Weſtminſter*,

January 9, 1739-40:

And at

King-Street CHAPEL, in the ſaid Pariſh,

February 4, 1740-1.

Being Days appointed, by HIS MAJESTY's Proclamation for GENERAL FASTS on Occaſion of the War againſt SPAIN.

SERMON I.

2 CHRON. XV. 2.

The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him: and if ye ſeek Him, He will be found of you: but if ye forſake Him, He will forſake you.

THESE Words are the Beginning of a ſerious Admonition, given by the Direction of Heaven to the Nation of the *Jews*, as they returned from obtaining, under the Conduct of *Aſa* their King, one of the greateſt Victories recorded in Scripture. Their Condition, after This, might have appeared to human Policy a very ſecure one: But the Divine Wiſdom ſaw the greateſt of all Dangers impending over them, that which proceeds from forgetting God, and abandoning Virtue. *And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Azariah the Son of Oded, and he went out to meet Aſa, and ſaid unto him, Hear me, Aſa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye ſeek Him, He will be found of you;*

but if ye forſake Him, He will forſake you. Now theſe great Truths, of which Heaven thought it needful to remind them, at the Concluſion of a proſperous War, it muſt be very much more needful that we ſhould attend to, who ſeem to be only at the Beginning of a doubtful one. And accordingly we are met here, by the Command of Authority, to conſider our Ways, and humble ourſelves before God for our Sins, as the neceſſary Means for deriving a Bleſſing on our Arms, and reſtoring and perpetuating Peace and Proſperity to our Country.

It is a melancholy Conſideration, that Creatures endued with Reaſon and Humanity ſhould ever come to employ Force againſt one another, and make the dreadful Addition of the Miſeries of War to the many unavoidable Sufferings of Life. But wicked as this is, when Paſſion and Reſentment, Deſire of unjuſt Gain, or Fondneſs of infamous Glory prompts to it; yet when Injuries of pernicious Conſequence are done to a Nation, and perſiſted in, and no competent Redreſs can be obtained, it becomes then, both neceſſary for particular Societies, and beneficial to human Society in general, that invaded Rights be vigorouſly

vigorouſly aſſerted by the only Way left. When the Sword is drawn for Juſtice alone, and ever ready to be ſheathed as ſoon as that is granted, then Heaven may be appealed to, with Hopes of a favourable *Sentence coming forth from his Preſence, whoſe Eyes behold the thing that is equal* *. But if the Aſſertors of a righteous Cauſe be in other reſpects a ſinful People, it is evidently juſt for God, who hath the Cognizance of both theſe things, to regard whichſoever of them infinite Wiſdom ſhall direct; and make even the injurious Party *the rod of his anger, and the ſtaff in the day of his indignation* †, to correct, or deſtroy, if their Wickedneſs deſerve it, ſuch Nations, as though right in their Diſputes with their Enemies, are wrong at the ſame time in Matters more important. And how little Terror ſoever our Enemies might give us at firſt; yet now we muſt be ſenſible, that we know not in the leaſt, how ſoon and how formidably they may increaſe: but this we know certainly, that *there is no reſtraint to the Lord*, to puniſh, as well as *to ſave, by Many, or by Few.* ‖ Times of War therefore add a peculiar Strength to thoſe Admonitions, which Reaſon and Scrip-

* Pſal. xvii. 2. † Iſai. x. 5. ‡ 1 Sam. xiv. 6.

 ture

ture give us at all times, to consider what our State is with regard to Him, *who doth according to his Will in the Army of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth* *. Let us then all consider now, whether we have Ground of Hope or of Fear from that awful Declaration of the Prophet, which you have heard read.

The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him. To be with God, is to preserve in our Minds a reverent Sense of his Being, Presence, and Government; to keep close to his Laws, and stand on his Side against the opposite Power of Darkness and Sin. Let us then think, if there be need of Thought to answer; How is the Reverence due to the Supreme Being preserved among us? Have we not Persons who even ridicule the Notion of a wise and good Maker of all Things? Have we not those, who, if they do admit a Creator, do not admit a Moral Governor of the World; or at least represent him so very defective in his Administration of it, as finally to let bad Persons be Gainers by their Wickedness, and good Persons Losers by their Virtue: rejecting with mirthful Scorn, what hath ever been the Hope and Support of

* Dan. iv. 35.

wise

wiſe and good Men, the Belief of that future State, in which the viſible Irregularities of the preſent ſhall be rectified? Have we not alſo too many, who, profeſſing perhaps to believe in Natural Religion, yet ſpeak of Chriſtianity, the great Means by which it is both ſupported and perfected, not only as a Falſhood, but an Impoſſibility: *Blaſpheming that worthy Name, by which we are called* *, and diſdaining to receive from God himſelf any other Rules, either of Faith or Life, than ſuch as their own Reaſon, directed by their own Fancy, ſhall preſcribe to them? And let us ſuppoſe, if we can, that the Number of ſuch, as go theſe Lengths deliberately, is upon the whole but ſmall: yet what ſhall we ſay of the inconſiderately guilty? Are there not Multitudes of all Degrees, who ſeem never once to have aſked themſelves, whether they believe in God or not? or if they do, whether any Regard is due to him or none: who ſlight Religion boldly, without imagining they have ever examined it: who are perſuaded of its Truth perhaps, ſo far as they have any Perſuaſion about the Matter; but have no Notion, that they are to regulate their Conduct by it: who

* James ii. 7.

poſſibly do not quite approve of profane Perſons, but are aſtoniſhed at pious ones; and by their Indulgence to the former, and their very great Proneneſs to deſpiſe the latter, plainly ſhew, whether they perceive it themſelves or not, which Party they are on the Road to join?

We have indeed many ſtill, who frequent Divine Worſhip: but how many of all Ranks, and of that Rank particularly, which ought to be an Example, and will be one either of Good or Bad; how many that omit this Duty entirely, or near it; and though it be an evident Part of the Law of Nature, and an expreſs Precept of Chriſtianity, can yet talk, not only of their own neglecting it, with much Gaiety and Humour, but of other Perſons attending upon it as Matter of Conſcience, with much Raillery. And ſuch an Aſcendant hath this contemptuous kind of Impiety got, that there are many Perſons, who ſincerely honour their Maker in their Hearts, but dare not for fear of Deriſion ſhew it in their Behaviour. Let it be thought of a little, what the Appearance and Conſtruction of theſe Things is: and let thoſe who are qualified for it, judge; Is not this the one Nation upon Earth, in which

which Regard to God is taught in the greateſt Purity, and treated with the greateſt Contempt?

But a worſe Symptom yet is, that whilſt Irreligious Perſons are active in the Cauſe of Infidelity; ſome of them with ſo ſelf-denying a Bigotry, as to teach it their Servants, their very Wives and Children: the Generality of ſuch, as think themſelves very competently religious Perſons, ſcarce appear to have any practical Impreſſions at all made on them by thoſe Truths, which they acknowledge for the Law of their Lives. They forget, it may be feared, almoſt totally, the Exerciſe of private Piety; and behave in regard to publick Devotion with a Negligence, which they would think highly indecent towards their earthly Superiors: allow themſelves in ſuch Levity of Speech on the moſt ſerious Subjects, as would ſcarce be juſtifiable in ſome of the moſt trifling ones; form their Conduct avowedly on Principles, that have no Tincture in them of the Faith, which they profeſs; and in effect declare themſelves to think of nothing but this World, whilſt yet they are really perſuaded of another to come. To this it muſt be added, that very many, who not only believe,

lieve, but are influenced by their Belief in other Reſpects, inſtead of *confeſſing their Lord and Maſter before Men*, as he hath moſt ſolemnly commanded them *, are ſilent and indifferent, whilſt he is denied, or diſregarded ever ſo much; and ſeem aſhamed of a Cauſe they ought to glory in: by which means they give bad Perſons a Colour for pretending, that few or none are Chriſtians in earneſt; and take away from ſuch, as are well-diſpoſed, the Encouragement of ſeeing how great a Number yet remains. For, God be thanked, they are ſtill no ſmall Number, who continue after all bearing Teſtimony to the Goſpel of Chriſt. But of how many Sins againſt it, not a few even of theſe are guilty at the ſame Time, by deviating from *the Form of ſound Words* †, by unwarrantable Diviſions, and uncharitable Animoſities; it is a great deal better that they ſhould conſider, than that others ſhould ſay: only thus much cannot but be ſaid, that theſe Things add a peculiar Gloom to the View, which we are taking.

Religion, it muſt be owned, hath never been practiſed any-where, as it ought. But

* Matth. x. 32. Mark viii. 38. Luke ix. 26.
† 2 Tim. i. 13.

have

have not both the Practice and Profeſſion of it decayed moſt remarkably, in this Nation, within the Compaſs of but a few Years? Is not the Proſpect before us, that of its declineing yet much lower in the Generation that is coming on? And what do we imagine this will end in? If God is, it muſt be a Matter of ill Deſert, either wilfully or thoughtleſly to treat Him, as if He were not. If he hath given a Revelation of his Will to Mankind, it cannot be innocent to neglect it, as if he had given none. And if he is the righteous Governor of the World, He will ſupport his Government by puniſhing where Guilt appears. If the Guilt be National, it muſt be expected the Puniſhment will be ſo too. And though it were not, yet amidſt the innumerable Connexions of Things, one Part of a Society cannot ſuffer, but the Whole muſt partake.

What Judgments in particular God will execute at any time on impious Nations, we cannot ſay. All Nature is in his Power: and they, who offend, have every thing to fear. But one ſure Method of Correction, (a very merciful Method, as the lower Degrees of it give Warning of the higher, but a dreadful one in-

deed, if that Warning be not taken) is by appointing the natural Conſequences of every Sin to be Part of its Reward. The Conſequences of Irreligion then what are they, and what muſt they be, on every Community? True Piety cannot induce Men to injure their Country; and comprehends peculiar Inducements to ſerve it, of the greateſt Force. But in Times of public Danger eſpecially, Belief of Religion gives a Spirit, and Defence of Religion a Motive for exerting it, which Conſiderations of a lower Nature will never equal. For what is there, that can equal the Exhortation, *Be of good Courage, and let us behave ourſelves valiantly for our People and for the Cities of our God: and let the Lord do that which is good in his Sight* *. *Fear not, neither be diſmayed: for the Battle is not yours, but God's* †. Whereas, if ſome through Infidelity have no Hope in him, and others through Wickedneſs have only Fear of him, ſo far as theſe Ways of Thinking can influence, *all Hands will be feeble, and every Heart will melt* ‡.

* 1 Chron. xix. 13. † 2 Chron. xx. 15.
‡ Iſai. xiii. 7.

But,

But, indeed, the Belief of a juſt and good Being, who ſees and will reward, is at all times the great Support under the Sufferings of Life, the great Incitement to every thing worthy, the great Reſtraint from every thing baſe. Human Weakneſs evidently wants theſe things: and there is nothing elſe, that can always furniſh them. The virtuous Dictates of their own Minds will have little Influence comparatively on moſt Men, when they are conſidered no longer as the Voice of God ſpeaking inwardly to them. And the Penalties of human Laws, without thoſe of the divine Law ſuperadded, will often be evaded, and not ſeldom deſperately braved. For if once Men think there is nothing beyond Death, they will ſoon come to think there is nothing in it, which ought to with-hold them from preferring a ſhort Life ſpent as they like, to a long one ſpent otherwiſe. Feeling themſelves free from the Terrors of Religion, they will fly out into Profligateneſs, merely to ſhew they are free: And it will be Encouragement enough to them, to purſue every Appetite, Paſſion, and Fancy, without Reſerve; that whatever Inconveniences may happen to ariſe from

from it, one Moment can deliver them from all at once, whenever they pleaſe. How then will they act in the numberleſs Caſes, to which the Power of the Magiſtrate either cannot or is not likely to reach at all, or but imperfectly at beſt? How, for Inſtance, will the Properties and even the Lives of Men be ſecured, when Perjury is no longer dreaded? A Conſideration of peculiar Weight in this Country: where, with amazing Inconſiſtence, we are multiplying Oaths, as if we could depend upon them for every thing; and ſlighting the Care of Religion, which alone can give us Cauſe to depend on them for any thing. But in general, What or Whom can we poſſibly hope Mankind will regard to any conſtant good Purpoſe, if they will not regard God: And how can we pretend to regard him, whilſt we go on as we do? Nor let it be thought, that the Belief of a future Recompence is neceſſary to the lower Part of the World alone: though if it were, they will never preſerve it long, when they ſee their Superiors have it not. But the higher Mens Station, and the greater their Power is, the more is the Importance, both to others

and

and themſelves, that they be ſtrongly influenced to do Good and not Evil, by this only Motive that can never be outweighed.

It is very true, neither Irreligious Perſons are always ſo bad, nor Religious ones always ſo good, as their Notions lead them to be: But ſtill every Way of Thinking produces, more or leſs, its natural Effects. The deeper Root Religion takes, the more Benefit will ſpring from it: and the wider Irreligion ſpreads, the more Miſchief it will bring forth. At preſent it muſt endeavour to appear as harmleſs as it can, to recommend itſelf: and ſome degree of the good old Impreſſions will remain, and have Influence for a time, even on thoſe who have done their beſt to wear them out. But when Profaneneſs ſhall once have attained its Maturity, then it will be felt, if Men are reſolved not to ſee it before, Which were in the right: the weak and credulous Creatures, who contended for honouring God: or the Perſons of ſuperior Knowledge and Freedom of Thought, who ſcorned and forſook him.

But we muſt remember, our Maker is forſaken, when Virtue, the Law He hath given to Mankind,

Mankind, is tranſgreſſed; as well as when his Worſhip is deſerted, or his Being denied. Let it then be a Second Article of Inquiry, What our Condition is in this reſpect.

The Conſequence appears a very plain one, that when Religion decays, Morals muſt. However let us look into Fact. In ſpeaking of Virtues and Vices relating to the Public, no Matters of Controverſy ought ſo much as to be hinted at in this Place: a Place to be kept ſacredly ſeparate from the Conteſts of Parties; and only employed, when Occaſion requires, to call on every Party alike, as in the Name of God, to conſider their Doings. Where Diviſions and mutual Accuſations run ſo dreadfully high, there muſt be great Faults on one Side or other; 'tis well, if not on all. And all ſhould conſider very ſeriouſly, what they are aiming at, and by what Means; what they are riſquing, and to what good End. But That above the reſt ſhould be conſidered, which it may be feared is often thought of leaſt, what muſt become, whilſt each Side is ſupporting itſelf by the Methods too common, what muſt become of the Virtue and Integrity of this People, the moſt important Part of

of all they have to be concerned for. Every other ſort of Loſs Nations have often recovered, and riſen again from the loweſt Ebb: but Loſs of Probity and Principle, this affects the Vitals of Society: and whatever accidental Advantages may ſeem to ariſe from it in any Caſe for a time; if the Diſtemper grows, and it is the hardeſt in the World to ſtop, its Concluſion muſt be fatal. And let it not be objected, that Countries of very little Virtue and public Spirit have flouriſhed notwithſtanding. For how have they flouriſhed? In a State of Freedom? No. Outward Proſperity hath been joined with domeſtic Oppreſſion: or if Intervals of Eaſe have been felt; they have always been precarious, and generally ſhort.

Impartial Reflexions on theſe Matters will ſhew us very clearly the Guilt and the Danger of our Sins with reſpect to the Public. But we ſhall ſee both in a yet ſtronger Light, if we reflect farther, How very little Zeal we expreſs, in the midſt of all our Vehemence about diſputed Points, for the Promotion of Things indiſputably right. Propoſals for Reformation are treated in the groſs, as mere Chimeras: mighty little Harm apprehended from the moſt flagrant Immoralities, but dreadful ill Conſe-

quences to Liberty from reſtraining them: Laws treated with Contempt by thoſe who ſhould obey them, and this connived at by thoſe who ſhould execute them; ſtill every one complaining immoderately of others, for what no one will himſelf contribute to amend.

But indeed public Virtue, though it were genuine, will never be conſiſtent and univerſal, while private Vices are indulged. And to what a deplorable Degree theſe abound amongſt us, needs not be ſaid, how much ſoever it needs to be thought of. The Intemperance, the promiſcuous Lewdneſs, the Want of Induſtry and Frugality, the Diſregard to Authoritya nd Order, the Profligateneſs of all kinds, that hath overſpread in a moſt uncommon manner the lower Part of the People, every body ſees. And would but ſome of higher Condition reflect, how much they have ſunk themſelves to a Level with their Inferiors, in ſome of the worſt of their Qualities; and indeed contributed to make many of them ſo bad as they are, and themſelves deſpiſed by them at the ſame time; it might be hoped the Conſideration would be uſeful. But not to ſay more of theſe: The Faults of too many,

who are accounted, and are in compariſon, decent and regular Perſons; their improvident Expenſiveneſs, pernicious many ways; their Living to Amuſements and Pleaſures only, and overlooking the moſt ſerious Obligations of Life; forgetting the Inſpection of their own Conduct, their Families and Affairs; neglecting their very Children, at leaſt in the important Point of their Religion and Morals: Theſe are ſad Inſtances of perſonal Guilt, and make a great Addition to the national Danger.

But when to the above-mentioned Epidemical Sins, every one hath added, after examining himſelf faithfully, the ſeparate Tranſgreſſions of his own Life, and the inward *Plague*, which he hath permitted to infect *his own heart* *; unknown perhaps to Men, but *naked and open to Him, with whom we have to do* †: then we ſhall have no Doubt left, whether the total Amount be not abundantly ſufficient to juſtify Heaven, in whatever Judgments it may inflict on Us and our Country. And if, for Inſtance, by our Contempt of true Religion, we ſhould open a Way for Popiſh

* 1 Kings viii. 38. † Heb. iv. 13.

Superſtition to overſpread us, afer a ſhort preparatory Reign of atheiſtical Diſſoluteneſs; if our Abuſes on all Hands of the Bleſſings of a Free Government ſhould introduce upon us a Slavery of our own creating; if the ſinful Exceſſes, that we have ſuffered Wealth and Plenty to lead us into, ſhould bring on us, as they naturally do, Poverty and Diſtreſs; and our domeſtic Enmities deliver us up to our common Adverſary: *who ſhall have pity upon thee, O Jeruſalem, or who ſhall bemoan thee; or who ſhall go aſide to aſk of thy Peace* *?

The common Anſwer to all Repreſentations of this Sort, is, That the World hath always been bad; and therefore we have no peculiar Reaſon to fear. But if it hath been always a Place of Wickedneſs, it hath always been a Place of Miſery too, by means of that Wickedneſs. Continual Efforts have been ever neceſſary to keep both from increaſing. And we, whom God hath treated with ſuch diſtinguiſhing Mercy, will not uſe theſe Efforts, but abandon ourſelves to Sin; as he doth think fit to make ſome Examples of his Juſtice

* Jer. xv. 5.

from

from time to time, what fitter Example he can make, is hard to ſay.

Perſons however will flatter themſelves, that theſe, at the worſt, are Dangers of very diſtant Times. And every ſingle Sinner in the World flatters himſelf in juſt the ſame Manner. Yet the Conſequences of their Sins do overtake Men, and may overtake Nations too, with ſurprizing Suddenneſs. And the Sentence, recorded in Scripture, is perfectly juſt: *They of the Houſe of Iſrael ſay, The Viſion that he ſeeth is for many Days to come; and he propheſieth of Times that are far off. Therefore ſhall none of my Words be prolonged any more: but the Word which I have ſpoken ſhall be done, ſaith the Lord God* *. *And they ſhall know, that I am the Lord; and have not ſaid in vain, that I would do this Evil unto them* †.

Other Perſons there are, who acknowledge the Proſpect to be bad, and Evil perhaps impending: But the only wiſe Part in thei Opinion is, to let Matters go as they will, and enjoy themſelves as long as they can: Why ſhould they be uneaſy before the Time comes? Now if it were certain, that nothing

* Ezek. xii. 27, 28. † Ezek. vi. 10.

could do good, this might be reaſonable in a worldly View of Things: but where every one may contribute, both by amending himſelf and awakening others, to prevent Ruin; there to be indolent, is as contrary to Humanity, as it is to Religion. And therefore the Word of God hath taken ſevere notice of it, as a great Crime. *Ye have ſeen the Breaches of the City of David, that they are many:—And in that Day did the Lord God of Hoſts call to Weeping, and to Mourning, and to girding with Sack-cloth: and behold Joy and Gladneſs, eating Fleſh and drinking Wine: Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. And it was revealed in mine Ears by the Lord of Hoſts: Surely this Iniquity ſhall not be purged from you, till ye die, ſaith the Lord God of Hoſts* *.

But even they, who are concerned for the Public, may yet expreſs that Concern in a very faulty Way. Many ſeem to think they have fully done their Duty, as ſoon as they have been angry at thoſe, whom they apprehend to have any way occaſioned what is amiſs: angry, perhaps at the wrong Perſons, perhaps in

* Iſa. xxii. 9, 12, 13, 14.

a wrong

a wrong Manner: ſuch as only tends to increaſe Guilt, and haſten Miſchief.

The firſt Complaint, generally ſpeaking, is of thoſe in Authority. And undoubtedly the People have a Right to complain, whenever the common Concern is adminiſtred ill. But then it ſhould be conſidered, that we may, through Ignorance or Prejudice, expect from Authority, either what it cannot do, or what is not fit to be done: we may expect more than is reaſonable to expect from Men like ourſelves, though it be fit: and even ſuppoſing them very much to blame, we may conduct ourſelves upon it ſo as to be equally or yet more to blame. Want of Reverence to Laws and Superiors is one of our great Evils: and all Oppoſition to whatever is thought wrong, ſhould be accompanied with the ſtricteſt Care not to augment this Evil. But our Duty requires us peculiarly to beware of raiſing Domeſtic Uneaſineſſes too high, when a foreign Enemy may take Advantage of them: and at all Times it requires us, to preſerve moſt religiouſly the Loyalty and Honour due to the ſupreme Power: eſpecially now, when our preſent Eſtabliſhment is our only human Hope of

having all that is valuable to us ſecured to ourſelves, and tranſmitted to our Poſterity.

Next to the Rulers of a Nation, its Inſtructors are uſually the great Object of Cenſure: and we acknowledge there is Cauſe. We have not been ſo ſerious and religious, ſo zealous and diligent, ſo diſintereſted and humble, ſo mild and charitable, as we ought. The Public muſt have ſuffered by this: we have ſuffered by it ourſelves: and, unleſs we repent, we have ground to expect a yet fuller Execution, than we have experienced already, of what Heaven inflicted on our Predeceſſors in the *Jewiſh* Nation: *Therefore have I alſo made you contemptible and baſe before all the People, according as ye have not kept my Ways* *. Yet we cannot but hope, that a very conſiderable Part of the Accuſations brought againſt us, would appear, upon Enquiry, to be without Foundation. But however that be, we muſt remind you, that Our Faults will be no Excuſe for Your Tranſgreſſions: and we earneſtly beg, that they who complain we do not the Good we ought, would at leaſt not hinder, but give us Opportunity, and aſſiſt us rather, to do both Others and Themſelves the Good we would.

* Mal. ii. 9.

But

But even they, who proceed from Complaints to Endeavours of amending Things, will fail unhappily of their End, if they truſt to worldly Methods alone, and leave Religion and Virtue, the great Support and Cement of human Society, out of their Schemes. This will be merely palliating for a little while: and doing what the Scripture, in perfect Conformity with plain Reaſon, hath long ago condemned, as doing nothing. *Becauſe they have ſeduced my People, ſaying, Peace, and there was no Peace; and one built up a Wall, and others daubed it with untempered morter: Therefore, thus ſaith the Lord God, I will rend it with a ſtormy Wind, and bring it down to the Ground, ſo that the Foundations thereof ſhall be diſcovered: and it ſhall fall, and ye ſhall be conſumed in the midſt thereof, and ye ſhall know that I am the Lord**. Indeed every Page of the prophetical Writings recommends itſelf greatly to thinking Perſons, by the moſt forcible and convincing Expreſſions of the utter Inefficacy of every Expedient for public Good, that is not accompanied with true Virtue and true Piety.

Theſe, therefore, it is our moſt important Intereſt to reſtore and promote: to repreſent

* Ezek. xiii. 10—14.

with

with Earneſtneſs, and yet with Mildneſs, to ſuch as are deficient in either, how wrong in itſelf, and how hurtful to the World, their Conduct is; and to be zealous in doing our own Duty, whether They will attend to theirs or not: Perſons of Rank and Influence, by ſetting an Example worthy of Imitation, and ſhewing different Regards to the Good and the Bad; Perſons intruſted with public Power, by behaving in their ſeveral Stations uprightly; Parents and Maſters, by the prudent Exerciſe of their private Authority; and every one, at leaſt, by reforming himſelf. This, if it do nothing farther, will be ſecuring his own Happineſs: and the more ſingle Reformations there are, the nearer will be our Approach to an Univerſal one. We are called indeed perpetually to Repentance: but the preſent National Call, if it be not hearkened to, will much aggravate the Guilt, not only of the profane Deſpiſers of it, but thoſe alſo, whoſe Compliance with it is merely external; who dare to approach the Searcher of Hearts, and mock him by ſaying to him, without Sincerity, ſuch Things as we have joined in ſaying this Day.

On the Times appointed for Confeſſion of Sins, it hath always been a Rule, as the Word of God

God plainly ſhews, for Perſons to abſtain in a conſiderable Degree from their uſual Food: not as thinking it a Duty of any Value in itſelf, for that were a ſuperſtitious Imagination; and nothing can be more expreſs againſt every Superſtition, than Scripture is: but partly to make an Acknowledgment of more than ordinary Solemnity, by their Actions as well as Words, of their Unworthineſs to partake of the common Bleſſings of Heaven; and chiefly to ſpend thoſe Hours in Humility of Spirit, and cool Reflexion for their future Good, which they have ſpent too frequently in dangerous Levities, or ſinful Indulgences. It is not then the Abſtinence, it is not the outward Humiliation, nor even the real Seriouſneſs of a Day, which God requires of us; but that theſe Things be made ſubſervient to our laſting Benefit: that preſerving on our Minds the Impreſſion of what we have ſaid and heard here, we go home and retire into ourſelves; think over our ſeveral Duties, public and private, with reſpect to our Maker, our Fellow-creatures, and the Regulation of our own Hearts; and after renewing our Applications for Pardon and Grace, ſet right, without Delay, whatever hath been wrong: that we form Reſolutions

to

to think often of our own Conduct, to follow ſteadily the moſt effectual Methods for preſerving it ſuch as we ought, and not to ſuffer the Opinions and Cuſtoms of an inconſiderate World, to wear out of our Minds the Regard we owe to the Author and End of our Beings.

But beſides theſe Obligations, there is yet another, which particularly deſerves our Attention at this Time; that when we aſk Mercy of God, we ſhew it to Man. And accordingly the Scripture joins cloſely together Faſting and giving Alms; which therefore we ſhould join too, each according to his Ability: but always remembering, that no one Part of our Duty whatever will be accepted as an Equivalent for tranſgreſſing any other; but we muſt *break off our Sins by Righteouſneſs*, as well as *our Iniquities by ſhewing Mercy to the Poor* *, if ever we expect that our Charity ſhould avail towards procuring our Pardon.

And now would we but employ the preſent Solemnity, in determining conſcientiouſly to practiſe theſe Things: beſides the good Fruits, it could not fail to produce in each of us ſingly; we might hope, on very juſt Grounds, to expe-

* Dan. iv. 27.

rience

rience nationally the same happy Effects of it, which we read the *Jews* did, from making the same Determination, upon hearing the Admonition of the Text. *They gathered themselves together, and they entered into a Covenant to seek the Lord God of their Fathers. And they sware unto him with a loud Voice: And all Judah rejoiced at the Oath. For they had sworn with all their Heart, and sought him with their whole Desire, and he was found of them: And the Lord gave them Rest round about* *.

* 2 Chron. xv. 10. 12, 14, 15.

A

SERMON

PREACHED at the

Pariſh-Church of St. *James*, *Weſtminſter*,

November 10, 1742:

And at

King-Street CHAPEL, in the ſaid Pariſh,

January 9, 1744-5.

Being Days appointed, by HIS MAJESTY's Proclamation, for GENERAL FASTS, on Occaſion of the War.

SERMON II.

1 PET. v. 6.

Humble yourſelves therefore under the mighty Hand of God, that he may exalt you in due Time.

HUMILITY of Heart and Behaviour is a Duty, ſo deeply founded in the Nature of Man, that though we knew of no Power above us, we ought yet to think modeſtly of ourſelves, from a Conſciouſneſs of our Infirmities; and pay a mutual Deference one to another, in proportion to the different Pre-eminences, be they ever ſo ſmall, by which we are ſeverally diſtinguiſhed. But the leaſt Apprehenſion of a perfect Being ſuperintending us, muſt ſurely magnify beyond Expreſſion the Senſe, how very imperfect we are: and convince us, that the utmoſt Reverence, of which we are capable, towards ſuch a one, if ſuch a one there be, will fall vaſtly ſhort of what we owe. Now the Exiſtence of a

powerful and wiſe, a juſt and good, Ruler of all, is at firſt Sight a poſſible Thing. And were we ſure of no more, the Notion is ſo reſpectable in itſelf, ſo beneficial to human Society, and ſo peculiarly comfortable to every honeſt Mind, that paſſing it over with a ſcornful Neglect, inſtead of attending to it ſeriouſly, would be a Haughtineſs of Spirit, blameworthy and ſhocking to a great Degree. But the Reality of this Notion is undeniably proved, by the plaineſt Obſervations on every Part of the Univerſe, and the ſtricteſt Inquiries into its general Conſtitution: by the natural Preposſeſſions of common Men, the acuteſt Reaſonings of ſpeculative Men, and the moſt univerſal Conſent, that ever any inviſible Truth obtained, of all Men. Yet farther, to leave no Plea for Ignorance of it, or of its Conſequences, the Creator hath made himſelf known to his Creatures by expreſs Revelation: and declared, what he is, what he expects from them, what he hath decreed concerning them. How monſtrous a Diſpoſition of Soul muſt it be then, that can pride itſelf in ſtanding out againſt ſuch Evidence of ſuch a Doctrine: can take upon it to cenſure the Works of the Almighty, without underſtanding a ſingle Part of them thoroughly;

roughly; can triumph in the Thought of an ungoverned and fatherleſs World, of Wickedneſs unpuniſhed, and Virtue unrewarded; and hold thoſe in utter Contempt, who entertain better Hopes!

Our Nation affords, I fear, more than a few Perſons, guilty even of ſuch Pride againſt God, as this. But it affords Multitudes of a Sort, if poſſible, yet more unaccountable; who believe in him, and ſlight him. Acknowledging a Sovereign Lord of the World, without ſtanding in Awe of him, is doubtleſs a moſt aſtoniſhing Inconſiſtency: and yet I conceive it will appear, on Inquiry, the main Source of thoſe great and many Sins, for which we are met here to expreſs our Concern. Now if this be our Caſe, a little Reflexion will ſhew it to be a very dangerous one: and the Apoſtle hath pointed out the only Cure, that ſince, as the preceding Verſe teaches, *God reſiſteth the Proud, and giveth Grace to the Humble*, we ſhould *humble ourſelves* unfeignedly *under his mighty Hand*, which hath been, and is, in ſeveral reſpects, heavy on us; that ſo, inſtead of depreſſing us lower ſtill, *he may exalt us* again *in due Time*.

There are not many comparatively, but in their cooler Hours at leaſt, believe the Author of Nature to be alſo the wiſe and juſt Lawgiver and Ruler of Mankind. Nay, lamentable as the Apoſtacy of our Days hath been, the Generality ſtill entertain a Perſuaſion, grounded on the firmeſt Proofs, that he hath notified the Conditions of eternal Felicity by Jeſus Chriſt. But, having this *Knowledge of God*, do they *glorify him as God*?* Do they pay any Homage to him, do they cultivate any Regard for him? Do they conſider him as the Giver of all Good, to whom their Thanks are due for every thing they enjoy; as the Judge of the whole Earth, who ſhall reward every one according to his Works? Will they, in Obedience to that Reaſon, which he hath beſtowed on them, reſiſt their vicious Appetites and Paſſions: will they on the Authority of that Revelation, which he hath ſuperadded, receive any thing, but what they can ſee of themſelves to be true; or do any thing, but what they can ſee of themſelves to be requiſite? Is it not indeed their ſtated Practice to ſet their own Inclinations and Fancies above all his Aſſertions and Laws: diſdaining to mind what

* Rom. i. 21.

is

is right or wrong, even when it relates to this Life; and much more, to be ſwayed by the Tendencies, which Doctrines or Precepts may have, to fit them for the Happineſs of another?

Nay, ſuch as imagine themſelves perhaps very ſteady Believers, and ſufficiently good Chriſtians, do not many of them, though leſs profeſſedly, and without diſtinctly ſeeing it, yet almoſt as effectually, make their Choice juſt as they like, in what Things their Chriſtianity ſhall conſiſt; and what they will go on to think or practiſe, however plainly forbidden in any one's Judgment, but their own. Are they at all willing to ſeek, with ſerious Humility, what the Goſpel teaches? Are they withheld from any Sin which it forbids, merely by the Fear of their Lord and Maſter? do they perform any Duty, which it enjoins, merely from Love to their Redeemer? Try them but in one Point. The ſacred Writings have repeatedly directed a regular Attendance on public Worſhip and Inſtruction. Yet they neglect it perpetually, on Pretences, for which they would neglect ſcarce any one Thing beſides: when they condeſcend to come, they would uſually be underſtood to do it as Matter of Prudence, or Propriety, and Compliance with Cuſtom;

but by no means of Obedience to God. And in general, they ſubſtitute the Faſhions and Uſages of what they call the World, that is, of the Perſons with whom they are pleaſed, and whom they deſire to pleaſe, in the Place of the Divine Commands. This wretched Rule they follow againſt their Conſciences firſt: to this by degrees they bend their Conſciences afterwards: and when once they have accompliſhed that, they will not reflect, they will not hearken, they will not bear the Mention of an Argument or a Hint to the contrary; but exclaim againſt it as abſurd, before it can well be brought out; let Reaſon or Scripture ſay what they will: till at laſt, not even yet renouncing their Faith, they have hardly a ſingle good Impreſſion from it left: no Gratitude to God, no Hope in him, no Dread of him; no Thought of themſelves in earneſt, as his Creatures; nor any Recollection, how profligate a Treatment this is of our Maker, of our Saviour, of the holy Spirit of Grace. We do not know, I believe, nor ſuſpect very often, how inconſiderable God is become in our Eyes, and how near Advances we have made to what is in Effect mere Atheiſm. But we have cheated ourſelves with Diſguiſes,

Diſguiſes, and ſhifted between Religion and Irreligion, till we have no Perception whereabout we are. And it is high Time for us to fix once for all, which we will ſtand to. For if the Almighty deſerves any Regard, he deſerves a moſt dutiful and univerſal one. Will we therefore pay him that, or will we avow paying him none?

But were many of us, whoſe Appearance is more decent, to be examined, what there is in in us beyond Appearance; were many, who have ſome inward Reſtraints and pious Feelings, queſtioned how far they extend; and if there be not mixed with them, a much leſs indeed, but ſtill a very criminal Neglect and Contempt of the ſupreme Being; what do we think the Reſult would be? Were ſuch to be aſked, how often they pray to him in private, or whether they remember perhaps, when they did ſo laſt; with what Attention they pray at ſuch Times, or whether hurrying over a Set of unmeaning Words contents them; what Care they take in his Houſe, that their Hearts join in the Things they ſay, or improve by thoſe they hear; how often they meditate, as in the Preſence of God, on their Duty, and their Condition with regard to

another Life; whether in Truth they almoſt ever think of a future State, as their principal Concern, or have not inwardly choſen their Portion here; whether they indulge no ſecret Immorality, are chargeable with no Injuſtice or Unmercifulneſs; what Expreſſion, or what Tincture, there is in their common Converſation and Behaviour of a Chriſtian Spirit; what Zeal they have, what Expences they are at, what Methods they encourage, what Pains they take, for promoting the preſent and eternal Welfare of their Fellow Creatures: how muſt they anſwer? Nobody hath a Right, it may be, to put ſuch Queſtions to you: but ſurely they are very important ones for you to put to yourſelves. And for God's ſake do it: and preſs your Souls home to make an honeſt Reply. For if Religion be any thing, theſe are moſt material Things. Do you then find, that you have hitherto been, in relation to them, ſuch Perſons as you ought? And if not, do you experience a proportionable Concern for your Failures? Are you even now reſolved to become ſuch? And will you remember and keep to what you reſolve: or run away from your Convictions to the firſt Employment or Amuſement you can hope to loſe them in, or however

however ſuffer them to wear out for want of being renewed; ſo, after a while, neglect your Maker and his Laws as much as ever; and poſſibly deſpiſe yourſelves for having once, in a ſort of a Fright, thought to do otherwiſe? If you relapſe ſo far, your Caſe will be a very dangerous, God grant it be not a deſperate one.

Yet amongſt all theſe blameable Sorts of Perſons, there are many perhaps not ill-diſpoſed, were they left to follow their own Judgments quietly, towards becoming ſincerely and throughout religious. But the World would wonder at them, their Acquaintance would ridicule them: and that they cannot bear. But which is your God then? The World, or the Maker of it? And which is it fitter you ſhould humble yourſelves under? The rightful Authority of the greateſt and beſt of Beings; or the uſurped Tyranny of a few vain Mortals, whoſe Friendſhip means you no Good, and whoſe Enmity can do you no Harm? But ſo it is: we are cowardly one to another, and brave only againſt *Him, who hath Power to caſt into Hell**.

* Luke xii. 5.

Even

Even the loweſt Part of Mankind, they alſo now have learnt from their Superiors to lift themſelves up in Defiance of the Moſt High: to plead openly and boldly for Gratifications, expreſly prohibited by his Commandments; to prefer their Diverſions or their Idleneſs before his Worſhip; ſome of them to *ſit in*, and others to ſurround *the Seat of the Scorner* *. For poor Wretches, that know nothing elſe, imagine they know enough however to be above Inſtruction in their Duty, to contemn God's Word, and ſcoff at his Miniſters.

Such is the Condition, and I appeal to the Obſervation of you all, alas! to the Conſciences of too many of you, if it be not daily more and more, if it be not, I had almoſt ſaid, univerſally, the Condition of the People of this Land, eſpecially this City. *Help, Lord: for the godly Man ceaſeth, for the faithful fail from among the Children of Men* †.

But how great and general ſoever our Tranſgreſſions have been; it will be alleged, that they cannot have ariſen from a Principle ſo very ſhocking as Pride, directed againſt the Au-

* Pſal. i. 1. † Pſal. xii. 1.

thor

thor of our Beings, but from inconſiderate Indulgence of leſs heinous, though ſtill blameworthy Diſpoſitions. But were there, and O that there were, much more room for this Plea than there is, yet bare Inconſiderateneſs and Forgètfulneſs of God is, in no ſmall Degree, Contempt of him. However, ſome Offenders have not adventured on ſo direct Impiety as others. And we ought to judge with all poſſible Tenderneſs of every one's Caſe, beſides our own: but it concerns us beyond Expreſſion not to flatter ourſelves in that. And we may diſcern with Certainty the true State of it by this one Mark. If Want of Thought hath occaſioned our ill Behaviour, we ſhall be thankful for Admonition, and readily change our Courſe: if Pride, we ſhall be diſpleaſed with it, and tempted to go on. But whether we have diſobeyed God wilfully or inadvertently, we have great Cauſe to humble ourſelves before him with deep Contrition: and bewail our own perſonal Guilt in the firſt Place; then the Sins of thoſe, who make up the ſame Community with us: for he cannot correct Them, but we muſt ſuffer at the ſame time.

Now

Now ſuppoſing we did not at all feel ourſelves particularly under his mighty Hand at preſent, yet ſurely we ought to recollect with great Awe, that in reality we are under it always. His Government of the World is without ceaſing carried on, however ſilently, yet ſteadily and powerfully, to that one End, which a Being of perfect Holineſs muſt propoſe to himſelf ultimately, the Manifeſtation of his Glory, in the Puniſhment of the Wicked, and Reward of the Good. Were both to be entirely deferred till after Death, as the chief Part of both will, yet how near is that to us all; and how very near to many of us, who perhaps are the fartheſt of any from ſuſpecting it! Though were it as diſtant as it can, yet the Connexion of it with eternal Enjoyments or Sufferings being as certain as that God is holy and true, the practical Inference would be juſt the ſame, as if it were overtaking us this very Moment. But indeed, unleſs we will abſolutely ſhut our Eyes, we muſt ſee Judgments from above, both naturally flowing from our Sins, aud additionally inflicted on them, in the mean while.

All Wickedneſs, by the righteous and wiſe Appointment of Providence, in the ordinary

Courſe of Things produces Miſery: and the great Reſtraint from all Wickedneſs is the Fear of God. While Men continue to reverence Him, there will always be ſome Hold upon them, to keep them back from committing Evil, or bring them back to repent of it. But when once that Band is broken, which it is of late in this Nation, beyond any other in the Chriſtian, or perhaps the Heathen World, ſlighter and weaker Ties will ſoon give way one after another, till by Degrees every thing is ſet looſe. And how very faſt accordingly our Morals and our Prudence have been forſaking us, ever ſince we have begun to forſake Religion, and to find out that our Maker is unworthy of our Notice, a little Reflexion will ſhew us too plainly, if indeed any be needful. Do we not ſee Probity and Integrity, Friendlineſs and natural Affection, viſibly decayed? Perſons of all Ranks living above their Ranks; and firſt diſtreſſing themſelves and their Families by vain and vicious Expences, then deſcending to every Baſeneſs, that will enable them to proceed in this wrong Way, and every Folly, that will drive away Remorſe for an Hour, though by furniſhing Cauſe for its Return with more Bitterneſs than

than ever: crowding their whole Time with abſurd and dangerous Diverſions, and infected with a Rage for Pleaſure and Shew, be the Conſequences what they will, that hath taken Poſſeſſion of High and Low, Young and Old, to a Degree unknown before; and in many fears not, in ſome affects, to diſplay itſelf, on the Days ſet apart for the Worſhip of God, nay for ſolemn Penitence and Humiliation? Do we not ſee almoſt every body treating the groſſeſt and moſt pernicious Immoralities, of what they gently ſtile the gay kind, as no Faults at all in one Sex, and daily approaching nearer towards affording them open Countenance in the other: making, on any Occaſion indeed, very little Diſtinction, though it be of unſpeakable Importance to make a great one, between good People and bad; or, to ſay the Truth, rather inverting than laying Claim to the Pſalmiſt's Character: *In whoſe Eyes a vile Perſon is contemned; but he honoureth them, that fear the Lord**. Do we not ſee them, educating their Children, and managing their Servants, as if it were on purpoſe to have them wicked: plainly perceiving them to be miſerable in

* Pſal. xv. 4.

conſequence

conſequence of it; perpetually involved themſelves in grievous Uneaſineſſes and Difficulties from it, and making frequently heavy Complaints of it; yet never once reflecting to purpoſe, whence it comes, or what would mend it: but ſtupidly acquieſcing in what they have the neareſt Concern to prevent; and taking it for granted, that ſuch of neceſſity is to be the Condition of their Families, from one Generation to another?

And if theſe Fruits have ſprung in private Life from our Diſdain of Piety, what muſt it have produced in public? Juſt what we were to expect from a Number of ſuch Creatures put together; and from the fixed Decree of Providence, that *they, who plough Iniquity, and ſow Wickedneſs, ſhall reap the ſame* *. Rulers and Magiſtrates, having permitted the Authority that ordained them, to ſink, have, by a Conſequence, which they might eaſily have foreſeen, loſt their own: Reſpect to every kind of Superiors is worn out; and next to the Laws of Heaven, thoſe of our Country are regarded leaſt. The Nature of Things, and the Word of God, have made Uprightneſs and Induſtry the Supports of Society, and Religion the Support of Them. But we have imagined we could

* Job iv. 8.

do

do better than this: we have been laying other Foundations, and bringing these into utter Diseesteem, as it were by Consent on all Sides; till they, who desire most to act upon Principle, find, it may be feared, scarce any Remainder of Principle among us, left to act upon. We have *trusted in the Staff of a broken Reed, whereon if a Man lean, it will go into his Hand, and pierce it* †. *We have forsaken God, the Fountain of living Waters, and hewed us out broken Cisterns, that can hold no Water* ‡. We have indeed been worse than negligent, we have been jealous of Religion; fearful, that Bigotry, Enthusiasm, Superstition, and all manner of Evils would flow from it: and so, without taking the least Care to guard against them, or prevent the Increase of that Communion, in which they are most intimately mixed with it, Piety in general hath been made the Subject of Invective and Derision, till we are at present immersed in Profaneness and Profligateness: and, as Extremes beget one another, directly in the Road to be overrun after a while by Popery, the Schools of which are multiplying continually in our Streets. We have thought the Morals of our

† Is. xxxvi. 6. ‡ Jer. ii. 13.

People

People totally undeſerving of Regard, unleſs it were to corrupt them, that we might enjoy *the public Benefits of private Vices:* and the Conſequence hath been, to ſay of others no more than hath been ſaid, that our Poor, the Strength and Riches of a Nation when regulated well, are every-where deſtroying themſelves and their Poſterity by their Intemperance and promiſcuous Lewdneſs; and becoming, in the mean time, an inſupportable Burthen by their Idleneſs and Extravagance. We have thought that neither God nor Man were to reſtrain whatever we pleaſe to call Liberty; and thus we have plunged into a Licentiouſneſs, that hath brought upon us many of the Inconveniencies, and almoſt all the Diſcontent, of Slavery.

Nor hath the Almighty omitted to ſuperadd, though with a gentle Hand, Corrections intirely his own, to the Sufferings, which we have choſen to inflict on ourſelves by means of the ſtated Connexions, which he hath wiſely and juſtly eſtabliſhed. We had long been poſſeſſed of the Bleſſing of Peace, without making any one good Uſe of it: and he hath permitted a War to come upon us, of which we foreſee neither the Duration nor the Event. We had

long enjoyed healthy and plentiful Seaſons, without acknowledging Him for the Giver of them: and we have ſince been viſited with Sickneſs in all our Borders; and ſuch Dearth, as few, if any of us, ever knew before. *Our Heavens have been made as Braſs, and our Earth as Iron* *; and we would not underſtand it to be a Chaſtiſement: *the former and the latter Rain* † have been reſtored to us, and we have not owned it to be a Mercy. Now, if lighter and ſhorter Judgments will not awaken us, heavier and longer muſt. For ſo the Prophet foretells: *Lord, when thy Hand is lifted up, they will not ſee: but they ſhall ſee* ‡. And how much greater Evils God may yet cauſe us to ſee, lies hid in the Treaſures of his own Foreknowledge. We are at preſent in a Condition, that may, in various reſpects, very naturally and very ſoon become extremely dreadful. And what elſe we can do to better our Proſpect, is neither eaſy for any Perſon to diſcover, nor indeed the Concern of every Perſon to inquire but there is one Thing, which alone of itſelf will do incredible Good; and every thing beſides, very little without it; which we all have

* Deut. xxviii. 23. † Deut. xi. 14. Jer. v. 24.
‡ Iſ. xxvi. 11.

in

in our Power, and all feel to be our Duty. *Come, and let us return unto the Lord our God: for He hath torn, and He will heal us: He hath smitten, and He will bind us up* *.

Both Particulars and Nations, which fall into a bad Way, are strangely unwilling, for the most part, to understand the Truth of their own Case. Such was the Disposition of God's ancient People, admirably described by the Prophet *Hosea: His Strength is devoured, and he knoweth it not: yea, grey Hairs are upon him, and he knoweth it not. And the Pride of Israel testifieth to his Face: and they do not return to the Lord, nor seek him, for all this* †. Nay, when the Disease is much too notorious to be denied, Persons will be ascribing it to other Causes, and inventing other Cures, than the right one; putting Confidence in Schemes unconnected with Reformation, and perhaps mending bad with worse. But to these the Almighty himself hath expressly denounced: *Wo to the rebellious Children, saith the Lord, that take Counsel, but not of me; that cover with a Covering, but not of my Spirit; that they may add Sin to Sin: that will not hear the Law of the Lord; which say, Cause the Holy One of Israel*

* Hos. vi. 1. † Hos. vii. 9, 10.

to ceaſe from before us. Wherefore, thus ſaith the Holy One of Iſrael: Becauſe ye deſpiſe this Word, therefore this Iniquity ſhall be to you as a Breach ready to fall, ſwelling out in a high Wall, whoſe Breaking cometh ſuddenly at an Inſtant *. Healing Sores in a palliative, unſound manner, only occaſions their burſting out again with more threatening Symptoms. If therefore we would truly mend our Caſe, we muſt go to the Bottom of it. We have been wicked, and we muſt repent. We have deſpiſed God, and we muſt *humble ourſelves under his mighty Hand.*

But then what ſhall we reckon is doing ſo? Is it merely appointing or obſerving a Form of Humiliation for Forms ſake? Inſtead of appeaſing God, we ſhall not ſo much as deceive Men by this: but only veil Irreligion with tranſparent Hypocriſy. Is it then being affected and warmed a little, at the Time, by what we ſay or hear in this Place; and becoming, almoſt immediately after, juſt the ſame Perſons that we were before? On the contrary, theſe tranſient Fits of Piety are mentioned in Scripture, as a very diſcouraging Sign: *O Ephraim, what ſhall I do unto thee? O Ju-*

* If. xxx. 1—13.

dah,

dah, what ſhall I do unto thee? For your Goodneſs is as a Morning Cloud, and as the early Dew it goeth away †. While Perſons reflect not at all, one knows not how it may operate, if ever they come to reflect. But when, through the Grace of God, they have actually been made ſenſible of their Guilt and their Danger, and yet relapſe into it; when their Convictions have been renewed, their good Purpoſes repeated, and yet all ſuffered, time after time, to fall back into nothing: what can be expected, but that Heaven will at laſt abandon thoſe, who in ſo ſhameful a manner abandon themſelves. Our preſent Buſineſs therefore is, each of us to imprint on our Minds now ſuch deep Sentiments, as may influence us ever after, that devoutly conforming our Lives and our Souls to the Will of God, is the very End of our Being: to recollect and confeſs before him, how grievouſly and how long both we in particular, and this Nation in general, have neglected the Obedience we owe him: to acknowledge, that we are altogether in his Hands, as private Perſons and as a People: to conſider whatever hath befallen us, as leſs than our Iniquities have merited; to prepare ourſelves, with

† Hoſ. vi. 4.

meek Reſignation for whatever more he may pleaſe to inflict on us: yet earneſtly petition him, that whatever becomes of our temporal Concerns, *our Spirits may be ſaved in the Day of the Lord Jeſus* *; and that if it be conſiſtent with his Holineſs and Wiſdom, he would ſpare us even in this World, *not for our Righteouſneſs, but his own great Mercies* †, in Chriſt our Redeemer, for the Honour of his Name, and the Preſervation of his true Religion eſtabliſhed amongſt us; to form ſolemn Reſolutions againſt every Sin, againſt every Occaſion of Sin, for the future: begging at the ſame time that Grace of our Sanctifier, which alone can make them effectual: and do all theſe Things not only in Profeſſion, as Matter of outward Decency, but from the Bottom of our Souls; not only with a ſudden Fervor, excited here in the Congregation, but deliberately at home, before *our Father which ſeeth in ſecret* ‡.

How eaſy, or how hard, it may be for any of us to bring our Hearts really into ſuch a Frame as this, He only knows, who knows all Things. Perhaps it is a Sort of Language, and a Way of Thinking, to which ſome of us have

* 1 Cor. v. 5. † Dan. ix. 18. ‡ Matt. vi. 6.

never

never been uſed, and which others have long diſuſed. If it be, we have ſo much the more Need to take it up without Delay. For our Maker and our Judge is intitled to the moſt lowly Submiſſions from his guilty Creatures: and there is neither any Meanneſs in making, nor any Greatneſs in refuſing, them. In all Caſes, the juſt and the right is the worthy and the honourable Behaviour. But in this, above all, it is the neceſſary one too. Obſtinacy cannot ſupport us: Diſſimulation will not conceal us: it is God we are concerned with, and our only Reſource is to throw ourſelves on his Mercy. The very beſt of us have Cauſe to lament our Failings, to reiterate our Vows, to implore his Forgiveneſs and Aſſiſtance, yet more ardently than we have done. In proportion to our Tranſgreſſions and Deficiencies; our Self-Abaſement, our Penitence, our Supplications, our Efforts of Amendment, ought to increaſe. And that our Performance of theſe Obligations will be followed, bad as our State is, with the happieſt Conſequences, Reaſon affords comfortable Hope, the whole Tenor of Scripture expreſsly declares, and the Text with peculiar Strength implies: *Humble*

yourſelves under the mighty Hand of God, that he may exalt you in due Time.

But I muſt not now enter on the Illuſtration and Proof of this important Connexion. May our preſent Humiliation give an experimental Proof of it, by effectually inclining us to *be reconciled to God* * ; and inducing Him to direct our public Counſels into the Way of national Proſperity, and our private Conduct into that of eternal Bleſſedneſs.

* 2 Cor, v. 20.

A

SERMON

PREACHED at the

Pariſh-Church of St. *James*, *Weſtminſter*,

April 11, 1744.

Being a Day appointed, by HIS MAJESTY's Proclamation,
for a GENERAL FAST on Occaſion of the War.

SERMON III.

1 Pet. v. 6.

Humble yourſelves therefore under the mighty Hand of God, that he may exalt you in due Time.

AT our laſt Meeting on the ſame moſt neceſſary Occaſion, which calls us together now, I endeavoured to lay before you, from theſe Words, both the general Duty of Man's *walking humbly with his God* *, and the particular Reaſons, which we of this Nation have, for exerciſing a very deep Humility towards him, as we have been particularly guilty, beſides various other Sins, of that unſpeakably ſhocking one, Pride againſt him. Too many amongſt us have dared to treat the Faith, if not of his Being, yet of the only Thing which makes it valuable, a juſt and good Providence, with utter Con-

* Mic. vi. 8.

tempt:

tempt: abſurd as it is, that the wiſe and powerful Maker of the World ſhould not be the Ruler of it, and that the Ruler of the World ſhould not *reward every one according to his Works* *. Much greater Numbers, if they do not deny his moral Government, yet almoſt intirely diſregard it: attend on his public Worſhip but ſeldom, and then viſibly as Matter of mere external Decency: never condeſcend to pay him any Homage in private; nor through their whole Behaviour conſider him, in the leaſt, as, what they profeſs to acknowledge He is, the Lawgiver, the Inſpector and Judge, of their Lives and Hearts: but ſecurely follow Paſſion, Appetite, Cuſtom, Fancy, as the Guide of their Conduct; and openly ridicule thoſe that do otherwiſe: call themſelves Chriſtians perhaps; but are totally void of Reverence for every Doctrine of Chriſtianity, that is above their Comprehenſion, for every Precept that contradicts their Inclination; and ſtrangely negligent even of natural Piety and ſocial Virtue. Larger Multitudes yet imagine, that they are mighty Religious Perſons, if they preſerve but a tolerable Regularity in the outward Acts of Devotion, Juſtice and Tempe-

* Matth. xvi. 27.

rance:

rence: though not proceeding from any inward Principle of Love and Duty to God, not accompanied by any Senſe of their needing his Pardon through the bleſſed Jeſus, or his Help through the Influences of the Holy Spirit; not carried on to an uniform Habit either of Obedience or Reſignation, or animated by the Hopes of a better World. Indeed they moſt commonly live, and often die, as unconcerned about his future Diſpoſal of them, as if it were not a Matter of Moment at all, inſtead of being the only real one, that belongs to our Condition.

But, if poſſible, we have ſlighted him ſtill more, conſidered as a People, than ſeparately. We have enjoyed the greateſt national Bleſſings, without the leaſt national Thankfulneſs for them. In particular he hath bleſſed us with the cleareſt Knowledge of the ſeveral Obligations incumbent on us: and we have ſhewn the moſt abſolute Scorn of all Methods for promoting or ſecuring the Practice of them, even in thoſe Points, on which our public Welfare moſt confeſſedly depends. Nor have we hitherto received the Warnings, or even the Corrections of the Almighty, which have begun to overtake us, with more Reſpect,

than

than his Mercies. You have juſt heard the Caſe of the barren Fig-tree read in the Goſpel for the Day: *Behold, theſe three Years I come, ſeeking Fruit, and find none: cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground* † ? Brethren, what is Our Caſe ? The preſent is the fifth, Year that we have profeſſed to obſerve a ſolemn Faſt, on account of our Sins and our Dangers, without making the leaſt Reformation in any ſingle Article. Nay, we have continually increaſed in Neglect of Religion, in Gaiety and Madneſs for Pleaſure: till we are come to purſue our Diverſions openly on the moſt ſacred Day of the Week; and ſome (for, in every Inſtance, while the Offence is renewed, the Complaint muſt) cannot perſuade themſelves to abſtain from them, or from inviting large Companies of others to join in them, even on theſe Anniverſaries of peculiar Humiliation.

Such Outrages on Piety and common Decency as theſe, muſt, when repeated after Notice taken of them, and Warning given againſt them, which hath been faithfully done by the Miniſters of God's Word, be deemed premeditated Inſults, not Inadvertence and Forgetfulneſs. Yet Forgetfulneſs of the Moſt High

† Luke xiii. 7.

can never be a ſlight Offence: and is greatly aggravated by the ſtrong Admonitions to remember him, which not only his holy Word and our Conſciences, would we hearken to them, give us perpetually, but his Providence alſo hath given us of late. The natural Conſequences, and ſuperadded Puniſhments of our Diſregard to him, have appeared very plainly for ſome time, and are daily becoming more viſible and ſenſible, in the Sins, and Follies, and Diſtreſſes of private Life, in the general Want of public Order and public Spirit, in Burthens and Uneaſineſſes; in Threatnings and actual Attempts from abroad to deprive us of the Liberty we have abuſed, and the Religion we have ſcorned; and ſink us down into the Slavery, and Superſtition, and Wretchedneſs, that we have deſerved to feel. Hitherto, indeed, the Storm hath not fallen upon us: but it ſtill hangs over us more heavily, than moſt of us have ever known: our Efforts to diſpel it have ſucceeded very imperfectly: The Difficulty of renewing thoſe Efforts muſt be augmenting each Year: our Enemies are multiplied in a dreadful manner: and what Aſſiſtance we may expect from our Friends, God only knows. One Thing indeed,

deed, may afford ſome Conſolation to us. We have manifeſted, on occaſion of our Danger, an univerſal Zeal for that Eſtabliſhment, which is the only human Means of preſerving us from it. Had we failed in our Loyalty, we had completed our Wickedneſs: and ſhould any Temptation hereafter intice or provoke us to fail in it, we and our Poſterity are intirely undone. But there can be no ſure Dependence on Their Dutifulneſs to their King, who are undutiful to their God: or on their Attachment to the common Intereſt of the Society, who prefer every preſent Gratification to their own everlaſting Welfare. Or if there could; a profane and wicked People will never have equal Spirit in Defence of the Community, for they have not equal Motives to it, with a pious and virtuous one. Or ſuppoſing their Courage ever ſo great: their Wealth, their Strength, their Union, their Aſſiduity, their Obſervance of Rules, their mutual Confidence, will be leſs: and thoſe Vices, which have brought us already ſo far on our Way towards Ruin, muſt at length, if we perſiſt in them, bring us to it, merely by producing their natural Effects.

But

But could we have Hopes of escaping these, the Honour of the Divine Government is concerned not to let a national Contempt of it go unpunished, even in this World: and all Reliance on human Wisdom and Power, without Regard to God, will prove in the End fatal Self-Deceit. *When the Lord shall stretch out his Hand, both he that helpeth shall stumble, and he that is holpen shall fall down: they shall all fail together* *. *The Anger of the Lord shall not return, till he have performed the Thoughts of his Heart: in the latter Days ye shall consider it perfectly* †.

But surely then we had much better consider it *in this our Day* ‡: and, as another Text awfully exhorts, *give Glory to the Lord our God, before he cause Darkness; and while we look for Light, he turn it into the Shadow of Death* §. Too many, of all Ranks, will probably slight whatever of this kind is said, even from Scripture itself. But still our Commission is: *Son of Man, I send thee to the Children of Israel; to a rebellious Nation, that hath rebelled against me, they and their Fathers, unto this very Day: and thou shalt say unto them,*

* Isa. xxxi. 3. † Jer. xxiii 20.
‡ Luke xix. 42. § Jer. xiii 6.

Thus ſaith the Lord; *and thou ſhalt ſpeak my Words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear* *. Men in Power and high Stations more eſpecially, and they who aſpire to them no leſs, have always been diſpoſed to look with great Diſdain on the artleſs and unwelcome Directions, which Religion ſuggeſts for Deliverance from Danger. They have more refined Contrivances, on which they reſt; and ſcorn the plain Methods of Reconciliation to God, and Truſt in him, through our bleſſed Redeemer, as fitted only for the Populace to hearken to. But the Scripture hath provided an alarming Denunciation againſt Them in particular. *Hear the Word of the Lord, ye ſcornful Men, that rule this People which is in Jeruſalem. Becauſe ye have ſaid, We have made a Covenant with Death, and with Hell are we at Agreement*; *when the overflowing Scourge ſhall paſs through, it ſhall not come unto us*; *for we have made Lies our Refuge, and under Falſehood have we hid ourſelves: Therefore thus ſaith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a Foundation a Stone, a tried Stone, a precious Corner Stone, a ſure Foundation: he that believeth, ſhall not*

* Ezek. ii. 3, 4, 7.

make

make haſte *. *Judgment alſo will I lay to the Line, and Righteouſneſs to the Plummet; and the Hail ſhall ſweep away the Refuge of Lies, and the Waters ſhall overflow the hiding Place. And your Covenant with Death ſhall be diſannulled, and your Agreement with Hell ſhall not ſtand. Now therefore be ye not Mockers, leſt your Bands be made ſtrong* †. Another Sort of Perſons, extremely apt to deſpiſe the Thought of Reformation, indeed all ſerious Thought whatever, are they who abandon themſelves to Indolence and Voluptuouſneſs, and the Study of luxurious Elegance and Delicacy. But for theſe likewiſe there is in the Treaſury of the Prophets a Menace in Store, which contains, alas, much too exact a Deſcription of our own Times. *Wo unto them, that are at Eaſe in Zion, that put far away the evil Day, that lie upon Beds of Ivory, and ſtretch themſelves upon their Couches, that eat the Lambs out of the Flock, and the Calves out of the midſt of the Stall*, (the Luxury of the Table had then made but a ſmall Progreſs) *that chant to the Sound of the Viol, and invent to themſelves Inſtruments of Muſick, that drink Wine in Bowls,*

* Or, be aſhamed. See Rom. ix. 33. x. 11.
† Iſa. xxviii. 14—18, 22.

and perfume themſelves with the chief Perfumes, but are not grieved for the Affliction of Joſeph. Therefore now ſhall they go captive with the firſt that go captive, and their Banquet ſhall be removed* †. Others again are by no means indifferent about the Storm, which they ſee gathering; but have no Belief, that Amendment, or any thing, can diſperſe it: and therefore will take no Pains in what they conceive will produce no Good. But at leaſt to themſelves Amendment will produce the greateſt Good: and Reſolutions not to amend will bring, both upon Them and others, more certain and ſpeedy, and total Deſtruction; which elſe, after all, may perhaps be avoided. For hear the Declaration of God in this Caſe. *Now therefore ſpeak to the Men of Judah, and to the Inhabitants of Jeruſalem, ſaying: Thus ſaith the Lord, Behold, I frame Evil againſt you; return ye now every one from his evil Way, and make your Ways and your Doings good. And they ſaid, There is no Hope: but we will walk after our own Devices, and we will every one do the Imagination of his evil Heart. There-*

* In our Tranſlation it is, anoint themſelves with the chief Ointments. But this, though literal, gives a different Idea now from what it did then.

† Amos vi. 1, 3—7.

fore

fore thus ſaith the Lord, Aſk ye now among the Heathen, who hath heard ſuch things. I will ſcatter them, as with an Eaſt Wind, before the Enemy: I will ſhew them the Back, and not the Face, in the Day of their Calamity *.

So that, whether it be Confidence, or Deſpair, that hinders Reformation, the Threatnings, you ſee, are the ſame. And the full Execution of theſe Threatnings, together with the Cauſe of it, is thus recorded in the Book of Chronicles. *The Lord God of their Fathers ſent to them by his Meſſengers, becauſe he had Compaſſion on his People, and on his Dwelling-Place. But they mocked the Meſſengers of God, and deſpiſed his Words, and miſuſed his Prophets, until the Wrath of God aroſe againſt his People, till there was no Remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the King of the Chaldees, who ſlew their young Men with the Sword in the Houſe of their Sanctuary, and had no Compaſſion upon young or old: he gave them all into his Hand* †.

How near we have approached to them in our Guilt, is too viſible: how eaſily we may come to reſemble them in our Puniſhment, is not leſs ſo. The Hand of God is plainly lifted

* Jer. xviii. 11, 12, 13, 17.
† 2 Chr. xxxvi. 15, 16, 17.

up over us: the only Queſtion is, Will we *humble ourſelves under it*, or will we not? Will we yet acknowledge, that He is the Sovereign of the World, and obeying him the only Way to proſper? Will we yet *ſeek him, while he may be found* *; confeſs our Sins, change our Conduct, and petition for his Mercy? There have been Circumſtances, in which Repentance itſelf would not ſtop the Courſe of temporal Puniſhments, though it will always prevent eternal ones: in which God hath ſaid to his Prophets, *Pray not for this People for their Good. When they faſt, I will not hear their Cry; and when they offer an Oblation, I will not accept them: but I will conſume them by the Sword, and by the Famine, and by the Peſtilence* †. Even to this Extremity we may reduce ourſelves: but that we are already in it, no way appears. The general Rule of his Providence is, *At what Inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it: if that Nation, againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them* ‡. And it

* Iſa. lv. 6. † Jer. xiv. 11, 12.
‡ Jer. xviii. 7, 8.

ought

ought to be our Perſuaſion, that we are within the Rule. Our Cauſe is unqueſtionably good: and though we have been, moſt of us, lamentably wicked, yet through his Grace many have preſerved their Integrity: and either for their ſake, or his Mercies ſake, we ſtill enjoy great Bleſſings. He hath been far from forſaking Us, to the Degree that We have forſaken Him: elſe our State were wretched indeed: and would we but now *humble ourſelves* throughly *under his mighty Hand*, there is no Room to doubt, but *he would exalt us in due time*.

Whenever he calls upon us to uſe the Inſtrument, he ſurely deſigns us to attain the End, for which it was formed. Now penitent Reformation is the natural, as well as the appointed Inſtrument for exalting both particular Perſons and Communities. Religion works indeed by Terror at firſt, and lowers the high Spirits of the Guilty: but only to raiſe them again on ſolid Grounds, inſtead of the treacherous Props which kept them up before. Without it, there is no Dignity in the Condition of Man: and how ſhould there be any expected in his Deportment? If Perſons either believe not in one, who ſees and

rewards, or cannot hope that he will reward Good to Them: if all that they promiſe themſelves be here, and they apprehend, that either Annihilation or Miſery awaits them hereafter; they will of courſe be many of them dangerous and miſchievous, the Generality of them baſe and vile, attend ſolely to the Indulgence of their Fancies and their Senſes, *eat and drink, for To-morrow they die* *. Or if any Sparks of Worth do remain, unextinguiſhed by ſuch a mean Way of Thinking, they will have only an occaſional and partial Influence. Or could it, in ſome few, be a conſtant and uniform one, yet they will be very few: and the Body of a People, if they are without Conſcience towards God, will be without Honour and Probity towards Men, without Prudence and Magnanimity in the Conduct of themſelves, profligate and deſpicable in all reſpects. But on the contrary, true Religion, for I ſpeak not of ſuperſtitious Perſuaſions and Obſervances, true Religion places Men above ſordid Intereſts, low Pleaſures, and worldly Anxieties: teaches them to dread nothing, but offending their Maker; to ſet their Hearts on nothing, but pleaſing

* 1 Cor. xv. 32.

Him;

Hm; and to have no Conception of pleaſing him by any other Means, than rational Piety and genuine Virtue: it excites them by the nobleſt of Motives to whatever is uſeful and eſtimable; and reſtrains them by the ſtrongeſt Terrors from whatever is bad and hurtful: obliges them to right Behaviour in the higheſt Proſperity, and ſupports them in it under the heavieſt Adverſities: inſpires Men with the moſt earneſt Concern for doing their Duty; and frees them from all Concern about the Conſequences of it in this World, by preſenting to their View the endleſs Recompences of a better. Such, in ſome degree, is the Influence even of natural Religion: but unſpeakably more powerful will that be found, *whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promiſes, that by theſe we might be Partakers of the Divine Nature* *.

Then farther, the Sentiments, which thus dignify every one's Behaviour ſingly, muſt have the ſame Influence upon all, conſidered as forming a Community. Publick Welfare will never be conſulted as it ought, while Men act merely on ſeparate ſelfiſh Bottoms: nor ever fail to be conſulted, when a well-founded

* 2 Pet. i. 4.

Faith

Faith in God animates their Zeal for general Good. Slights and Provocations, Difficulties and Riſques, private Advantages, and party or perſonal Attachments, may very eaſily ſway and bias all, that act from temporal Motives: but are nothing to ſuch as act from This; the only one that cannot poſſibly be at any time overbalanced. So long as the State of Affairs is calm indeed, Government may go on very ſmoothly, without much Principle in thoſe who are employed by it, or live under it: perhaps the more ſmoothly for a while, in ſome Caſes, the leſs Principle there is. But when Storms riſe, as after ſuch Calms they will riſe, then is the Time to ſee, in what the real Strength of Society conſiſts: who will ſtruggle, who will hazard, who will be faithful to the laſt. They, that fear God, certainly will: and we can have no Certainty (how ſhould we?) of any other. Amongſt the truly religious, becauſe they are ſuch, there will be ſecure and mutual Truſt, faithful Oeconomy, and unwearied Application: their Counſels will be ſteady, their Undertakings juſt, their Execution bold, their Confidence in Heaven ſtrong, and their Adherence to a righteous Cauſe unmoveable! Seldom, if ever, will a State,

State, which proceeds in this manner, fail of Succeſs. And were they to fail ever ſo greatly, nay, to be overwhelmed ever ſo intirely, they would fall with more Reputation and more Happineſs, than others flouriſh. But there is always Reaſon for better Hopes. A Nation, reverencing the Sovereign of the Univerſe, will be reverenced by all around them, as *a wiſe and underſtanding People, which hath the Lord nigh unto them* *. Their Friends will know, they can depend on them: their Enemies will know, they have the utmoſt Efforts to fear from them: both will know, and they themſelves too, that even in their laſt Extremity, Providence may be expected to fight for them. *Great are the Troubles of the Righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. The Lord delivereth the Souls of his Servants: and they, that put their Truſt in him, ſhall not be deſtitute* †.

But then it muſt be obſerved, that ſuch as have long been Sinners, and are at laſt become penitent, (the former is certainly Our Caſe, would to God the latter were!) if Relief doth not appear immediately, ought to wait for it with much Patience, and be well ſatisfied if they are

* Deut. iv. 6, 7. † Pſal. xxiv. 20, 22.

exalted

exalted in due Time : in God's Time, not their own. Wickedneſs ruins Nations by degrees : Reformation may reſtore them by degrees. An imperfect Reformation will be likely to bring forth but imperfect Fruits. And the completeſt Reformation of a Few may prove inſufficient to ſave the Whole. Still theſe are Reaſons, only why All ſhould repent : not why None ſhould, unleſs All will, which it is impoſſible to foreſee. For be the Generality ever ſo incorrigible, and their Deſtruction ever ſo abſolutely decreed on that account : there is Encouragement enough, notwithſtanding, for thoſe who do humble themſelves, and return to a better Mind. *Seek ye the Lord, all ye Meek of the Earth, which have wrought his Judgment. It may be ye ſhall be hid in the Day of the Lord's Anger* *. At leaſt, whatever ſuch may ſuffer in common with others, far from being a Mark of his Anger towards Them, will contribute largely to improve their Virtues, and increaſe their future Reward. So that in every Event they may *caſt all their Care on God, for he careth for them* †. Undoubtedly they will feel the Uneaſineſs, which human Nature muſt from whatever is painful to it :

* Zeph. ii. 3. † 1 Pet. v. 7.

and

and in particular, a tender Concern for Multitudes, who have none for themſelves. But ſtill they will ſubmit with Compoſedneſs and reverent Approbation to the ſevereſt Sentences of Heaven; and reflect with Joy, that their chief Intereſt is ſafe, though inferior Comforts be loſt.

Let us therefore *acquaint ourſelves with God, and be at Peace* * : *For he will keep thoſe in perfect Peace, whoſe Mind is ſtayed on Him* †. Whoever they are, that, ſenſible of their Offences and their Weakneſs, apply for the Pardon obtained by Jeſus Chriſt, and the Grace communicated by the Holy Spirit: who, in their private Capacity, honour God, ſtudy to be harmleſs and uſeful amongſt Men, and govern themſelves by the Rules of Virtue; who alſo, in their public Capacity, earneſtly *pray for* and impartially ſeek the *Peace of Jeruſalem* ‡, the Welfare of their Country, civil and religious; not led by Intereſt, Reſentment, or Vanity, but having at Heart real common Good; and who in their whole Conduct encourage and reſtrain themſelves, as the Caſe requires, by the Faith of a future Recompence: whatever may befall the Society, of

* Job xxii. 21. † Iſ. xxvi. 3. ‡ Pſal. cxxii. 6.

which

which they are Part, it ſhall be well with Them. Whatever elſe they may undergo, others will have nothing to reproach them with, they will have nothing to reproach their own Souls with; and *in the Darkneſs Light ſhall ariſe unto them**. All ſuch Perſons therefore, after doing conſcientiouſly what is incumbent on them, not only may, but ought to be without Solicitude: and ſhould let the Foundation of their Peace be known; that all around them may perceive, how vaſtly preferable the Conſolations of Religion are to every other Method of making themſelves eaſy. The pious Man doth not labour to quiet his Thoughts by obſtinately ſhutting his Eyes, or plunging into Exceſſes, or taking off his Attention by Amuſements: but can with Tranquillity look towards the evil Day, and ſee it coming: wait for it, and bear his Share of it, leſs or greater; being aſſured, that *all Things work together for his Good* †. A very different State from theirs, who know they have deſerved the Judgments of God, who know they have contributed to bring them down on their own and others Heads; who have nothing to cheer them, when the Clouds gather on every

* Pſal. cxii. 4. † Rom. viii. 28.

Side of them; nothing to direct them, when the blackeſt Tempeſt pours upon them, but the momentary Glimmerings of human Hope, ſtruck out by their own Imaginations; and if they ſhould eſcape, if they ſhould outwardly proſper again for the preſent, will only be tempted by it to *treaſure up to themſelves* hotter *Wrath againſt the Day of Wrath* *, and final Judgment. But hear, I intreat you, how the Word of God expreſſes the Caſe of each: and may its enlivening Exhortation to the former, and its terrifying Admonition to the latter, ſink deep into your Breaſts. *Who is among you, fearing the Lord, that walketh in Darkneſs, and hath no Light? Let him truſt in the Name of the Lord, and ſtay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a Fire, and compaſs yourſelves about with Sparks; walk in the Light of your Fire, and in the Sparks, which ye have kindled: this ſhall ye have of mine Hand, ye ſhall lie down in Sorrow* †.

* Rom. ii. 5. † Iſa. l. 10, 11.

A

SERMON

Preached on Occaſion of the

REBELLION in *SCOTLAND*,

At the

Pariſh-Church of St. *James*, *Weſtminſter*,

And

The CHAPELS belonging to it,

October 6, 13, 1745.

G

SERMON IV.

2 SAM. X. 12.

Be of good Courage, and let us play the Men for our People, and for the Cities of our God: And the Lord do that which ſeemeth him good.

MANY of you, I hope, remember, that I diſcourſed to you upon theſe Words, a Year and ſeven Months ago *: when God, for our Sins, threatened us firſt, with what, for the Continuance of them, he hath at length permitted to fall on Part of this Land. The Renewal, and nearer Approach, of the ſame Danger, requires a more earneſt inculcating of the ſame Exhortations. For perhaps we may now lay to Heart the Things we did not then. It is very true, the Pulpit ought never to be prophaned, and I truſt never hath or ſhall by me, to ſerve the Purpoſes of Party-Intereſt; or intermeddle with any Points of a Political Nature, about which

* *February* 26, 1743-4.

the Friends of their Country, that think at all, can poſſibly be of different Opinions. But the preſent is a common Cauſe, affecting every one of us, without Diſtinction, in what is moſt important to us: and God forbid, that the Miniſters of the Goſpel ſhould be either unwilling or afraid to ſpeak, when his Providence calls on them ſo loudly, to lift up their Voice. Should the Storm, which is now beating on many of our Fellow-Subjects, be diſperſed by infinite Goodneſs ever ſo ſoon and ſo intirely, without reaching Us; it may yet be of unſpeakable Uſe, to have made the proper Reflexions and Reſolutions, whilſt it was approaching towards us. And ſhould the Almighty ſuffer us to feel it, as we have well deſerved; nothing, but thinking and behaving rightly under his Judgments, can give us Hope of his Mercy to moderate and ſhorten them.

Now whatever is requiſite for theſe Ends, is clearly comprehended in the Words of the Text: which bring naturally to our Thoughts the three following Particulars.

I. The Intereſts we have at ſtake. *Our People, and the Cities of our God.*

II. The

II. The Spirit, which we ought to ſhew in defending them. *Be of good Courage, and let us play the Men.*

III. The humble Dependance on Heaven, which we ought to exerciſe at the ſame time. *And the Lord do that which ſeemeth him good.*

I. The Intereſts we have at ſtake. *Our People and the Cities of our God:* in other Words, our Civil Rights and our Religion.

The Defence of their Perſons and Poſſeſſions againſt lawleſs Power, and the ſecure Enjoyment of the Means of Happineſs here and hereafter, were the great Motives, that induced Men to ſubmit originally to Government. And every particular Government is good or bad, as it anſwers or fails of anſwering theſe Purpoſes. Now in our own, as it ſtands at preſent, our Liberties are greater than thoſe of any other Nation upon Earth: we enjoy them ſo fully, that we abuſe them beyond Example: and, I believe, no one Perſon amongſt us, of Knowledge and Conſideration, doth or can ſuſpect our King of having the leaſt Deſign to infringe any Branch of them. The private Property of the very

Meaneſt is as ſafe from the Violence and Oppreſſion of the Greateſt, as good Laws and an impartial Execution of them can be hoped to make it. And for the Public Burthens we labour under, we have laid them on ourſelves, by Repreſentatives of our own Choice, for Uſes, which we and our Fathers, very juſtly in the main, thought neceſſary: In particular for the moſt important Uſe, of ſecuring the Nation, from time to time, againſt the Miſchief that now once more hangs over us: which if we at laſt get rid of, all we have ſpent is well laid out; and if we ſubmit to, all is thrown away.

Still, there may doubtleſs have been Faults committed, in relation both to theſe and other Matters. But then, Part of the Faults commonly charged may be imaginary: for we are all as fallible, as thoſe whom we blame; and few of us in ſo good a Situation for judging. Part may be of ſmall conſequence; and therefore no Ground for any great Reſentment. Part may have ariſen from our own Miſconduct, as much, if not more, than from that of our Superiors. Part again may have proceeded from excuſable Miſtakes or Infirmities of theirs; for which, as we need Allowance

in

in ourſelves, we ſhould make Allowance in others: eſpecially in Princes, for the ſame Reaſon as in Parents; and to a fit Degree, in thoſe alſo that are employed by them. But whenceſoever apprehended Grievances may have come, we have legal, conſtitutional, peaceable Means for redreſſing them; with uncontrolled Liberty to uſe thoſe Means, if we will. And ſuppoſe they have not operated ſo ſpeedily, or ſo effectually, as we may wiſh: yet, if Force may be uſed inſtead of them, upon every Failure or Delay, eſpecially when cauſed merely by Difference of Opinions amongſt ourſelves, no Society can ever ſubſiſt. And if we are too corrupt a People, to expect any Good from mutual Perſuaſion; much leſs can we expect it from mutual Violence.

Then laſtly, as for our Religion; the leaſt valued, I fear, yet infinitely the moſt valuable of all our Bleſſings; and which guards and fences the reſt, in a manner that nothing elſe can: our Religion, I ſay, is undeniably the moſt rational and worthy of God, the moſt humane and beneficial to Men, the furtheſt from being either tyrannical or burdenſome, the freeſt from Superſtition, Enthuſiaſm, and Gloomineſs, of any in the World. It is eſta-

bliſhed with ſuch Care, that the Support of it is inſeparable from that of the Civil Government: yet happily with ſuch Moderation, as to bear hard on none who diſſent from it. The Practice of it indeed, we muſt own, hath not been inforced on its Profeſſors, ſo generally or ſo carefully as it ought, either by the Authority or the Example of thoſe, whoſe Duty it is. Would to GOD it had! GOD grant it may! But ſtill, they who have not duly excited Men to Piety, have not reſtrained them from it: and every one's Diſregard to it is principally chargeable on himſelf alone.

This I apprehend to be a true and a modeſt Account of our preſent Condition: for I have put the Advantages of it at the loweſt, in order to ſay nothing that can be diſputed. And what are we to change it for, if the Attempt, now making, ſhould ſucceed? Indeed what have we to expect before it can ſucceed, (for every one muſt be convinced, that it will not be tamely ſubmitted to), but a wide and horrid View, in proportion as it makes a Progreſs, of Bloodſhed in the Field and out of it, and of Ravage at the Pleaſure of a rude and uncivilized People, to the imminent Hazard of every thing, and every Perſon, dear to us? Judg-

ments,

ments, which this Iſland hath been long without experiencing: but how long, and how heavily it may groan under them now, unleſs a ſpeedy Check be given to this Rebellion, God only knows. For a conquering Enemy, had he the Will, which is dreadful to truſt to, hath often not the Power of reſtraining the Deſolations of Fire and Sword, when once they are begun.

But ſuppoſe this Beginning of Sorrows over: what muſt follow?

With regard to our Civil Concerns: How large Numbers are there, who have no other Security for a conſiderable Part, it may be the Moſt, or the Whole of their Property, than the Continuance of the Government now in being; in whoſe Hands it actually is? And ſhould that Government fail: as it cannot be hoped, that what hath been lent for its Support, and proved one of its main Supports, will be regarded very favourably by thoſe who come to overturn it; how terrible may the Diſtreſſes of ſuch Perſons be, and how much farther than themſelves muſt they extend? To all their Domeſtics, all their Dependants, all that have Dealings or Concerns with them. What Multitudes are there again, whoſe For-

tunes

tunes are intirely, or principally, built on Royal Grants, judicial Determinations, or Acts of the Legiſlature, made within the laſt ſix-and-fifty Years? which, in caſe of a Change, will all become queſtionable, as done by incompetent Authority, and lie at the Mercy of we know not whom. The Perſon, who now threatens us, comes attended with a large and an indigent Train of Followers, collected from each of the Three Nations, who will think, and do their utmoſt to make him think, that the long Sufferings of many of them, and the preſent dangerous Services of many more, can never be rewarded with ſufficient Bounty. And when Revenge, and Poverty, and Avarice, are ſet on work together, what Forfeitures may be claimed, what Miſdemeanors and Treaſons charged, in a Nation, which will be looked on as the Whole of it involved in Treaſon, for ſo many Years paſt; or how unfairly the plaineſt Laws in our Favour may be interpreted to admit of ſuch Attempts, or even wreſted to ſerve them; which of us all can ſo much as gueſs, or who can be aſſured of his own Safety?

But beſides theſe Hazards to the Properties and the Lives of particular Perſons, in what

State

State will the Commerce and Poſſeſſions of the Nation be? Think, what innumerable Debts the Pretender to His Majeſty's Crown muſt needs have contracted in ſo long a Space, during which he hath had nothing of his own to ſubſiſt on: think, what immenſe Sums foreign Princes may charge on account of moſt expenſive Wars, which they may plead were begun or carried on for his Service: and how dreadfully this Nation may be exhauſted, to ſatisfy but a ſmall Part of theſe Demands: for which it will make no Amends, to annihilate the preſent Incumbrances on our public Revenues, by a ruinous Breach of the public Faith. Think alſo, once more, what fatal Conceſſions the Powers who ſupport the preſent Invaſion, and who will be wanted for a continual Support, even were it to ſucceed; what fatal Conceſſions they will aſſuredly require in return, of Places on which our Trade depends, of Indulgences in Trade to themſelves, of Reſtrictions upon Us; which will reduce us to a Condition impotent, precarious, and deſpicable.

I ſay not this, or any thing, to raiſe in you a Spirit of unchriſtian Bitterneſs, either againſt the

the ignorant Wretches that have been deluded into this Rebellion, or even againſt their Leaders. Let them be judged of with all the Charity, let them be treated with all the Mercy, which their Caſe will poſſibly allow: only let us ſee the Miſchief, that their Succeſs would bring on us, and exert ourſelves accordingly to prevent it.

But were we ever ſo ſafe in other reſpects: what Security can we have with reſpect to our happy, envied, legal Conſtitution; when that Power of ſuſpending and diſpenſing with Laws, and levying Money without Law, which lays every Proviſion, that can be made in favour of the Subject, wholly at the Sovereign's Feet; and yet was not only claimed, but exerciſed immediately before the Revolution, ſhall come of courſe to be eſtabliſhed as a juſt Prerogative, by what will be called a Reſtoration? The Rights, that we have enjoyed as indiſputably our own, from that time to this, may then be accounted ſeditious and treaſonable Pretences; and every Expreſſion of Fondneſs for any Remain of Liberty, be deemed a Step towards Rebellion: as indeed it will be thought but natural, to ſuſpect and

ſtifle the leaſt breathing of that Spirit which once delivered us, in order to prevent another Change. Efforts notwithſtanding will, in all likelihood, be made towards one: how bloody and how fatal, who can tell? The Apprehenſion of theſe Efforts will be a much ſtronger Plea, than in the late King *James*'s Time, for keeping up a chargeable and dangerous ſtanding Force, perhaps a foreign one. The Dread of that Force will intimidate ſome; and the Principle of turning to their own Advantage what they cannot help, will intice others, to go every Length of Compliance that they are required. And a Prince, coming in on the Bottom of Right Hereditary and Indefeaſible, will think he hath the cleareſt Title to Abſolute Power. His Partizans, even whilſt he is out of Poſſeſſion, have openly avowed that he hath: and what can be expected then, if he ſhould get into it? The mere Exerciſe of ſuch a Power very probably will not ſatisfy; but Declarations and Oaths be invented for the Acknowlegement and Support of it; which, it will be impoſſible for us, either to make with Innocence, or to refuſe with Safety.

Then for the State of our Religion: No one Inſtance can be given, that Popery ever

ſpared

ſpared Proteſtantiſm for any Continuance, after it was able ſafely to oppreſs it. But leaſt of all will Favour be ſhewn here, longer than Neceſſity obliges. For, to whatever Tenderneſs many of that Communion may be inclined; as, no doubt, there are Numbers amongſt them of mild and worthy Perſons: yet the uncharitable Part will aſſuredly prevail, as they always have done every-where; and falſely imputing to our Religion that pretended Diſloyalty, which proceeded only from their illegal Attempts to overturn the whole Conſtitution, will not fail to argue, that the ſame Cauſe muſt produce again the ſame Effect, and therefore muſt not be permitted to ſubſiſt. Think then, all that love the Church of *England*, all that believe the Doctrines of the Reformation to be the Truth of Chriſt, what a Condition it will be, either to profeſs and practiſe the Falſhoods and Impieties, of which you are ſo thoroughly convinced, or to be driven from this, and every other Place of God's public Worſhip into Corners: nay, in a while, to be dragged out thence alſo, and ſacrificed to that *Mother of Abominations*, which hath ſo long been *drunken with the Blood of the Saints* *.

* Rev. xvii. 5, 6.

And

And let even them who are indifferent, or Doubters, or Unbelievers in Religion, reflect on this at leaſt: that, as they are always inveighing againſt Superſtition, ſo the Church of *Rome* is over-run with it to the higheſt Degree poſſible: and, as they are always exclaiming againſt the Wealth and Power of Eccleſiaſtics; ſo the Wealth and the Power, the Pride and the Tyranny of Popery, are unſpeakably the greateſt, that ever the World knew. And if they will notwithſtanding go at preſent upon their favourite Maxim, that All Religions are the ſame, it will be a juſt Judgment of God to make them feel the Difference.

But to theſe Things it may be anſwered, that the moſt ſolemn Obligations have unqueſtionably been entered into, by him who claims the Crown, for our intire Security, both in Church and State. Nor indeed could any thing ſeem in Speculation more likely: becauſe nothing is more apparently requiſite in all common Policy. And yet, ſurpriſing as it is, no one clear and explicit Declaration of this kind was made by the Pretender at the time of the laſt Rebellion: nor can I hear of

any made by him at preſent. And I beg you to conſider, if he will not promiſe plainly now, what will he do afterwards? For as to any good Words, given by another in his Name, what can be eaſier for him, than to diſavow them, as going beyond the Commiſſion which he granted? But ſuppoſe the ſtrongeſt Aſſurances given by himſelf: were they not given by the bloody Queen *Mary* to her Proteſtant Subjects, who had fully merited them by their Zeal for raiſing her to the Throne? And did ſhe not perſecute them immediately, and burn them in little more than a Twelvemonth? Were they not given by the late King *James?* And had he not ſtrong Motives of Gratitude, as well as Conſcience, to keep them? And yet did he keep them for the ſmalleſt Part of four Years? How can we then flatter ourſelves, that any one, who claims under him, will be at all more favourable to that Religion, and thoſe Liberties, which have been all this time the capital Enemies to his Pretenſions? The moſt formal Declarations, that he can make, have been over and over, and long ſince the Revolution, declared by the Authority of the See of *Rome* "utterly

"null

" null and void from the Beginning, when-
" ever they are prejudicial, in any manner, and
" the leaſt degree" (I uſe the very Words of *Pope Clement* XI. in the very Caſe of Stipulations made in favour of Proteſtants) " to the
" Catholic Faith, the Salvation of Souls, or to
" any Rights of the Church whatſoever; even
" though ſuch Engagements have been often
" ratified, and confirmed by Oath *." Let therefore the Pretender to the Crown make Promiſes ever ſo full and expreſſive, let his natural Diſpoſitions to keep them be ever ſo favourable; yet, as he profeſſes Subjection of Conſcience to the Pope's Determinations, under whoſe Eye he hath long reſided, in whoſe Dominions his Son, who hath now invaded us, was born and educated, and by whoſe Bounty they have both been all along ſupported; he cannot refuſe to break any Ties, which ſhall be declared ſinful by his infallible Guide; who may purpoſely have connived at his engaging in them, in order to his breaking them at a proper Time. But if he were to refuſe it; can we imagine, that all his Succeſſors too will be ſo obſtinately undutiful, as

* Clem. XI. Pont. Max. Epiſt. & Brevia. fol. Romæ, 1724. tom. ii. p. 179.

to ſpare a Religion which they mortally hate, when they believe extirpating it will intitle them to Heaven, and atone for all the Sins of a wicked Life?

It muſt be acknowledged, Popery hath appeared milder of late, than in former Ages. Yet even our Days have known the Executions of *Thorn*, and the Baniſhments of *Saltzburgh*: and *France*, this very Year, hath been perſecuting and murdering our Proteſtant Brethren for the Profeſſion of their Faith. Nor hath the Church of *Rome* ever given up any one of the Claims, which it may have forborn to exerciſe: and, ſhould it once regain ſo much of its ancient Power, as would neceſſarily follow from prevailing here, it would ſoon reſume its ancient Fierceneſs in Proportion.

Shall we perſuade ourſelves then, that Fear will reſtrain a Popiſh Prince from attempting to overturn our Religion and Laws? But what if his greateſt Fear ſhould be that of Damnation for not attempting it? which was the known Caſe of King *James*, and may be that of others after him. Or what if it ſhould be held the ſafeſt Way, in a political View, to make thorough Work at once, by the Aſſiſt-

ance

ance of Foreigners, now preparing to invade us?

Still it may be ſaid, that whoever becomes our King, will at leaſt, for his own Intereſt, be careful of the Trade and Power of the Nation. But how can he, if he would; when he muſt undoubtedly have promiſed the contrary to foreign Powers already? And if he is capable of deceiving Them, how ſhall We truſt him? But ſuppoſing he hath promiſed them nothing: yet, if he prevails by their Help, what can he be elſe, than a Deputy and a Viceroy, ſubject to the Commands of our moſt formidable Adverſaries?

This Conſideration ought in Reaſon to alarm even thoſe who wiſh well to his Cauſe, even thoſe who profeſs his Religion; and make them utter Enemies to his coming in ſuch a Manner, however deſirous they may be of his coming otherwiſe. For can we, or can they, make Terms with the Power of *France*, when we have once given it Footing in the Heart of our Country; or hope, that any Terms, which are made, will ever be obſerved? Will that moſt ambitious and perfidious Crown loſe ſuch an Opportunity of weakening us by our own Strength, making

us dependent on itſelf for ever, and Tools to enſlave the reſt of *Europe?* Will it not treat both us, and the King it ſets over us, as the Tyrant of *Babylon* did the Prince, whom he gave to the *Jews? He hath made a Covenant with him, and taken an Oath of him; he hath taken alſo the Mighty of the Land; that the Kingdom might be baſe, that it might not lift up itſelf; but that by the keeping of his Covenant it might ſtand* *.

Such then being the View of our Dangers, let us proceed to conſider,

II. The Spirit, with which we ought to defend ourſelves againſt them. *Let us be of good Courage, and play the Men.* Theſe Words may ſeem to expreſs the Duty of the Soldiery alone. And, without queſtion, they expreſs that peculiarly: and, joined with the following ones, clearly ſhew, that a ſtrong Senſe of Religion, and a virtuous Concern for the common Welfare, are the true Principles, that will give military Perſons Bravery and Succeſs; as they did to thoſe, whoſe Hiſtory the Text relates. But ſtill the more Literal Tranſlation is, *Be ſtrong, and let us ſtrengthen one another* †. In

* Ezek. xvii. 13, 14.

† See Gen. xxv. 22. xli. 2. 2 Kings xiv. 8, 11.

this

this Senſe they concern us All: this therefore I ſhall follow.

And, if ever Cauſe required exerting and joining all the Strength, and all the Courage we have, This is that Cauſe. For the Attack is made by our Enemies, foreign and domeſtic at once, on every thing dear to us, Civil and Sacred: and Conſcience towards God, as well as private Intereſt and public Good, demands our utmoſt Zeal in ſuch a Conteſt.

The Plea, which ſome would uſe to check this Ardour, as if the Government we live under ought not to be ſupported, becauſe the late King *James* and his Son were ſet aſide by the People, is abſolutely groundleſs. For indeed King *James* ſet himſelf aſide; abandoned the Government wilfully, rather than adminiſter it according to Law: and by ſo doing, left the Nation at Liberty, or rather under Neceſſity to provide for itſelf in the Manner it did; eſpecially as he carried away the Perſon, whom he called his Son, along with him. And had he not been carried away; all the World knows, it was generally and ſtrongly ſuſpected, that he was not the Queen's Child: and the three Eſtates of the Kingdom, the only fit Judges of a doubtful Succeſſion, fixed

it without taking Notice of him. But had none of these Things been so; that unhappy King, seduced by *Romish* Bigots, had invaded, with a high Hand, the Religious and Civil Rights of his People: instead of giving the least Hope of Amendment, he was going on with Rapidity to the utter Destruction of both. And Subjects were not made for Princes, to be treated as their absolute Property, and descend from one to another like Cattle, let them be used as they will: But Princes were made for their Subjects; to govern them legally, and seek their Good. What is the Duty of the one, is the Right of the other: and where there is a Right, there ought to be a Remedy. Common Remedies are ever to be used in common Cases: and if they are insufficient, single Persons ought to bear every thing; and Nations, every thing that can be born without Destruction; rather than break the public Peace, and established Order of Government. But in extreme, imminent, universal Dangers, Methods of the last Resort, if necessary and likely to succeed, are fully warranted; by the Nature of the Thing, by our original Constitution, by ancient Practice upon it, and royal Recognitions of it.

The Scripture indeed commands, what Reaſon itſelf doth, Subjection to the ſupreme Powers.—But how many other Commands are there, which confeſſedly admit of proper Exceptions? And were this to admit of none, yet the Scripture doth not determine, in whoſe Hands the ſupreme Power is lodged. And where it is divided, as it is with Us, between the King and his great Council, by whoſe joint Authority every Statute is expreſſed to be made: he, who refuſes to ſtand to that Diviſion, as the late King *James* did openly, both by Word and Deed, renounces the Authority that belonged to him under it; and other Authority he hath none. Or ſuppoſe even this doubtful; the Scripture requires Subjection: But to whom? To *the Powers that be*, the actual, viſible, Governments of every Country. Theſe it declares *are ordained of God*; and that *they who reſiſt, ſhall receive Damnation* *. Not the leaſt Hint given, of enquiring into the Juſtice of an Eſtabliſhment in its firſt Riſe long ago: a Thing which few Subjects can do, and perhaps few Governments can bear. Not the ſlighteſt Intimation,

* Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

of adhering for ever to the Family of an abdicated Prince, and going on, Age after Age, to aſcribe the ſovereign Authority over a Nation, to a Perſon that hath no Means of exerciſing any one Act of Authority. The Neceſſities of Mankind render it abſurd: the Practice and the Notions of Mankind have always been contrary to it. Heathens, *Jews*, Chriſtians, Papiſts, Proteſtants, all the World have agreed in the Point with univerſal Conſent; excepting a ſmall Handful of Men in this one Age and Nation: Perſons greatly to be pitied, and highly to be eſteemed, while they ſubmit peaceably to Inconveniences for Conſcience Sake; but ſurely guilty of as indefenſible a Singularity, as ever was.

There may indeed often be a Doubt, and ſometimes it may laſt a good while, which are *the Powers that be:* whether a Government is yet to be conſidered as eſtabliſhed, or not. But in our own Caſe, if a Duration of ſo many Years, and the peaceable Succeſſion of ſo many Princes, and the repeated Acknowledgments of the whole People of theſe Kingdoms, and of all the Sovereigns and Nations of the Earth, do not make it a clear

Point,

Point, in whoſe Hands the ſupreme Authority of this Country long hath been, and actually now is: nothing of ſuch a Nature can ever be clear at all. Very few of Us have either known, or lived under any other Government: we have all of us claimed, and enjoyed the Protection of this: we have acted in Purſuance of its Authority; we have prayed continually for its Preſervation; we have many of us bound our Souls by ſolemn Oaths, and ſome of us by repeated ones, to maintain it: in ſo doing, we maintain at the ſame time, every thing that is valuable to us and our Poſterity: and there cannot be a firmer Tie upon us, than theſe Things together: nor more abandoned Wickedneſs, than to break through it.

Strengthened thus then within ourſelves, let us proceed to *ſtrengthen one another*. God knows, inſtead of this, we have taken great Pains to weaken one another, by ſeparate Intereſts and Views, Animoſities and Reſentments, unkind Suſpicions, and unjuſt Imputations. What Party or Sort of Men hath been moſt to blame in this reſpect, were it ever ſo eaſy to ſay, would be very unfit: when the plain Concern is, not to accuſe and recriminate, but all to unite

unite in what affects all so nearly. They therefore, who have hitherto thought the Danger of such an Attempt small, let them now shew they were far from wishing it greater. They, who have been dissatisfied with particular Measures of Government, let them now give Proof, that they were not disaffected to the Government itself: and if possibly in any thing they may have opposed too far, take this fittest Opportunity of making amends. This will demonstrate the Uprightness of their Intentions, give Weight to their Sentiments on other Matters, and pull down the false Hopes, that our Enemies have founded on our domestic Disputes. But then, at the same time, if the Zeal of any for the present Establishment, hath tempted them to judge too hardly concerning the Affection of others towards it, they ought now candidly to acknowledge their Error: embrace those as true Friends, who approve themselves to be such in the Day of Trial; and remember for the future, that Strength is attained, not by Division, but by Union. Indeed we should all remember, instead of aggravating what our Opposers have done amiss, to reflect seriously what we and

our

our Friends have been faulty in: and perhaps we ſhould moſt of us find, it hath been a great deal too much.

But it is not mutual good Temper alone, that our Caſe requires; but mutual Aſſiſtance and Encouragement, to be given with Spirit by each of us, according to his Ability, and the Nature of his Station, to all around him: by ranking ourſelves openly on the Side we are of; joining our Counſels, contributing our Money, hazarding our Perſons, if need require it; by inſtructing, undeceiving, exciteing, fortifying, as many others as we can. That Part would be indifferent, Part timorous, and All reſiſt weakly, was the great Thing, that the Adverſaries of the Government promiſed themſelves, and its Friends were apprehenſive of. God be thanked, both of them in ſome degree have ſeen their Miſtake. Let us go on to complete the Conviction, by a daily Increaſe of reſolute Activity. *Strengthen ye the weak Hands, and confirm the feeble Knees: ſay to them that are of a fearful Heart, Be ſtrong, fear not* *.

One thing more, to be mentioned under this Head, is, that if the preſent Endeavour to ruin

* Iſaiah xxxv. 3, 4.

us ſhould increaſe, though it were conſiderably, the public Expence neceſſary to defend us, we are ſurely neither to wonder, nor to murmur at it; but bear with Chearfulneſs what may be inconvenient, in order to prevent what muſt be ruinous; and conſider well, that were this Deſign to take Place, we ſhould probably pay much more to Foreigners, as a Reward for enſlaving us, than now to our own Governors, as the Means of keeping us free.

But human Means alone, human Prudence and Strength, be it ever ſo great, is no ſufficient Ground of Confidence. For *the Moſt High ruleth in the Kingdom of Men, and giveth it to whomſoever he will* *. We muſt never forget therefore,

III. An humble Dependance on Heaven for the Event of all. *And the Lord do that which ſeemeth him good.*

What it will ſeem good to him to do with Us, when we conſider our National Wickedneſs and Ingratitude to him, it muſt be acknowledged we have great Cauſe to fear. He hath bleſſed theſe Nations beyond moſt, if not any other Part of the World: and we have

* Daniel iv. 17.

turned

turned all his Bleſſings into Occaſions of Sin. He hath given us Wealth: and we have applied it to the wicked Purpoſes of Diſſoluteneſs and Luxury. He hath given us Liberty: and we have abuſed it to the bittereſt Hatred, and the groſſeſt Licentiouſneſs. He hath given us true Religion: and we have ſlighted and ſcorned it; caſt off the Worſhip of God, received the Mercies of his Providence without Thankfulneſs, and the Threatnings of it without Humility; nay, ridiculed the Obligations even of Probity and moral Virtue, till we have ſcarce Principle enough left to be concerned for any thing, but preſent Pleaſure and preſent Intereſt. Our Abhorrence of Popery is gone: our Zeal againſt Slavery is degenerated into Faction: our Zeal for the Government, into private Selfiſhneſs. We daily accuſe one another of theſe things: we never think of reforming ourſelves. And what can be, in a rational View, the probable Conſequence, in a religious one, the juſt Puniſhment of ſuch Behaviour, but that which the Divine Wiſdom hath ſo clearly foretold? *For that they hated Knowledge, and did not chuſe the Fear of the Lord; they would none of my Counſel, and deſpiſed my Reproof: therefore ſhall they*

eat

eat of the Fruit of their own Way, and be filled with their own Devices *.

It is by slow and silent, but it is by effectual Methods, that God shews himself the Governor of the World. Princes, that neglect to support His Authority, shall find their own decay with it. Subordinate Rulers, that trust to other than virtuous Arts of Government, shall find they have leaned on a broken Reed. And Nations, that indulge Profaneness and Profligateness, shall experience them to bring on Confusion and Ruin. Escaping it in one Shape for once, is nothing: in that, or some other, it must fall upon them, if they continue such as they are. And were ever so great Ruin to fall upon Us now, what would it be more, than *Samuel*'s Prediction verified? *If ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your King* †. And what could we say, but acknowledge before God, with the penitent *Jews* in *Nehemiah*, *Thou art just in all that is brought upon us: for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: neither have our Kings, our Princes, our Priests, nor our Fathers* (would to

* Prov. i. 29, 30, 31. † 1 Sam. xii. 25.

God

God there were not the moſt Cauſe of all to add, nor we ourſelves) *kept thy Law* †.

Conſidering our Caſe in this Light then, we have ſmall Reaſon to *be of good Courage*. And yet, conſidering the divine Mercies, we are far from having any Reaſon to deſpond, if we have any Heart to repent. The Cauſe we are engaged in, is that of Right and Truth, and God's own Honour. Defending it valiantly, is performing one Part of our Duty to him: and deſerting it, would be filling up at once the Meaſure of our Iniquities to the utmoſt. Wicked as we have been, and are, yet if we will but, *at leaſt in this our Day, know the Things that belong to our Peace* *, there is ſtill abundant Room to truſt in the gracious Protection, that we have ſo often experienced: and, provided we can but now bring our Hearts in earneſt to fear God, we have no need to fear Man. What hath hitherto happened, is indeed more than enough to awaken us from that Supineneſs, which it is aſtoniſhing we ſhould have indulged ſo long; but not at all to make us doubtful concerning the Event, were there only any Proſpect, that we ſhould render ourſelves fit Objects of our Maker's

† Neh. ix. 33, 34. * Luke xix. 42.

Favour.

Favour. For the ſake of a few good, there may be Mercy in ſtore for the reſt. The more of us become ſo, the greater is the Hope. And would but this National Alarm produce, what undoubtedly Heaven hath deſigned it for, a National Reformation; we might boldly ſay to our Enemies, in the Words of holy Writ: *Aſſociate yourſelves, O ye People, and ye ſhall be broken in Pieces: take Counſel together, and it ſhall come to nought: ſpeak the Word, and it ſhall not ſtand: for God is with us. Sanctify therefore the Lord of Hoſts, and let him be your Fear, and let him be your Dread, and he ſhall be for a Sanctuary* *. *For God will ſave* Sion, *and will build the Cities of* Judah. *The Poſterity alſo of his Saints ſhall inherit it; and they that love his Name ſhall dwell therein* †. *Their Children ſhall continue, and their Seed ſhall be eſtabliſhed before him* ‡.

* Iſaiah viii. 9, 10, 13, 14. † Pſalm lxix. 35, 36.
‡ Pſalm cii. 8.

A

SERMON

PREACHED at the

Parish-Church of St. *James*, *Westminster*,

AND

The CHAPELS belonging to it,

October 20, 27. *November* 24, 1745.

SERMON V.

PHIL. iv. 6, 7.

Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thankſgiving, let your Requeſts be made known unto God.

And the Peace of God, which paſſeth all Underſtanding, ſhall keep your Hearts and Minds, through Chriſt Jeſus.

DANGERS are ſo conſtant, and Sufferings ſo frequent, in human Life, that behaving properly under the Apprehenſions and Experience of them, conſtitutes a very conſiderable Part of our Buſineſs here. But when Providence permits a peculiar Degree of either to be our Lot, it calls us peculiarly to think, what Methods will beſt preſerve us from them, or carry us through them. Now theſe are of two Sorts: Worldly Prudence, and Religious Wiſdom. The Precepts

of the former it is not the Buſineſs of this Place to deliver; but to limit and perfect them by the Dictates of the latter: that we may neither endeavour to ſecure ourſelves by acting wrong, nor doubt of Support in acting right. We are apt to look on Religion, very injuriouſly, as only preſcribing diſagreeable Duties; whereas it ſuggeſts the kindeſt Advice, and ſuperadds the moſt comfortable Promiſes: which cannot be done more completely, in the great Point of moderating Fear and Uneaſineſs, than it is in the Text: where we have

I. A friendly Caution: *Be careful for nothing.*

II. A moſt neceſſary Direction: *But in every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thankſgiving, let your Requeſts be made known unto God.*

III. An Aſſurance of the happy Effect, which this Conduct will produce: *And the Peace of God, which paſſeth all Underſtanding, ſhall keep your Hearts and Minds, through Chriſt Jeſus.*

I. A

I. A friendly Caution: *Be careful for nothing:* Words, which neither common Reason allows us to take in their utmoſt Extent, nor Scripture itſelf. For it every-where demands from us the moſt earneſt Care about the Things of another World: and enjoins, quite as often as it needed, a moderate Care about the Affairs of This. *Being careful* therefore muſt mean, in the Paſſage which I have read to you, as an Expreſſion mighty little varied from it, being full of Care, doth for the moſt part, in our daily Speech; not a diſcreet and rational, but a diſquieting and tormenting Solicitude: and that principally, not concerning our Behaviour, which is the only Thing in our Power; but the Event, which is often intirely out of it. This the Original *Greek* Phraſe elſewhere uſually ſignifies, though not always. In the Sixth of St. *Matthew* it is many times rendered, *Take no Thought.* But there alſo we muſt remember, that only what is immoderate was intended to be forbidden: which, it had been happy, if our Tranſlation had more determinately expreſſed.

Thoughtfulneſs concerning our Deportment, our Welfare, that of others, and the Public,

ſo far as it will really be of Uſe, is a Duty of indiſpenſable Obligation. And firſt acting at random, then turning our Eyes from the evil Day, when we ſee it coming, inſtead of conſidering how we may avert it, or make the beſt Proviſion againſt it, will prove the ſureſt Way to bring it on with its blackeſt Horrors. But the contrary Extreme, Anxiety, is both a miſerable Feeling in itſelf, and the Parent of many farther Miſchiefs, without any Mixture of Good. It repreſents every Object of Terror as vaſtly greater than it is in Truth: and frequently gives far more Pain beforehand, than the Preſence of all that we fear, is capable of giving. Nay, it makes us tremble at mere Spectres: and fills us with the moſt alarming Suſpicions, ſometimes of what cannot happen, often of what is highly improbable. And yet, were it ever ſo likely, exceſſive Dread will do nothing towards preſerving us from it. Calm Reflexion will inſtruct and excite us to do every thing for ourſelves, which we are able to do: and the utmoſt Agonies of Diſquiet can never carry us beyond our Abilities. Indeed very commonly vehement Emotions either hinder us from ſeeing what is fit, or diſqualify us from performing it: nay,

hurry

hurry us into what is very unfit, and prejudicial to the Point, which we have in View.

But were they to leave us otherwiſe intirely Maſters of ourſelves, that Eagerneſs of looking farther than we can ſee, which they always beget, hath a powerful Tendency to miſlead us very unhappily. Dangers, which we think we diſcern at a Diſtance, may have no Reality: or if they have, may never draw near. Dangers that are near, may never reach us: and Evils, that have reached us, may vaniſh on a ſudden. Theſe are no Reaſons againſt prudent Forecaſt: but they are ſtrong Reaſons againſt extracting Wretchedneſs out of Speculations on Futurity, inſtead of following quietly and chearfully the proper Buſineſs of the preſent Day; ſince *we know not what another may bring forth* *, and conſequently require us to contrive or execute, to grieve or rejoice at. *To-morrow*, our bleſſed Saviour hath told us, *ſhall take Thought for the Things of itſelf* †: Time, as it runs on, will direct us much better than we can gueſs now, what Precautions we are to take, and what Judgments we are to form, about remote Affairs: and ſince all,

* Prov. xxvii. 1. † Matt. vi. 34.

that appears at this Inſtant likely to fall out, or wiſe to do, may poſſibly in the next appear quite otherwiſe; we ought ſtudiouſly to moderate both our Actions and our Paſſions, by recollecting the Mutability of the World: which would ſave us a vaſt deal of fruitleſs Labour and needleſs Miſery. We every one of us think the Sorrows of Life abundantly enough: why then ſhould we multiply them by long Anticipations; and load ourſelves at once with Misfortunes preſent and to come, unmindful of our gracious Lord's important Maxim: *Sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof* *? Had our Maker framed the human Mind in ſuch manner, that we muſt have been *always forecaſting grievous Things* ‡, and ſuffering every Hour, in Thought, all that through a Courſe of Years we are to ſuffer in Reality, and much more; we ſhould certainly have looked on it as very hard Uſage. Why then will we bring ourſelves into a State, in which if God had placed us, we ſhould have complained of him, as cruel? He hath mercifully hid future Events from us, leſt the Foreſight of them ſhould make

* Matt. vi. 34. ‡ Wiſd. xvii. 11.

us

us unhappy. And we pry into them by Conjecture, and dwell upon them by Imagination, that we may be unhappy whether he will or not.

This, you see, is more than Folly: it is evidently Sin. He intended us to live here in Comfort and Peace: and we are not at Liberty to frustrate his Design, by making ourselves uneasy and wretched. Both Nature and Scripture plainly forbid it. Nor have we the least Ground to hope, that the Fault will be deemed a Punishment severe enough for itself. Many others are accompanied with grievous Misery, to which notwithstanding more hereafter is deservedly threatened. And the Guilt of inordinate Solicitude is greater, than we generally apprehend. It implies, not only Disobedience to God, but Distrust in him. It unfits us for the Offices of Piety and of common Life. By dejecting the Spirits, and souring the Temper, it renders us different, in many respects, from what we should be, to all around us. It leads Persons into strong Temptations, of raising and cheering themselves under their Troubles by false and pernicious Supports, or of seeking Deliverance

from them by dishoneſt Arts and Compliances. It infects others, who ſee it, with the ſame Apprehenſions: which may produce the ſame or worſe Effects on their Quiet, nay, their Innocence. And in proportion, as diſcouraging Alarms become epidemical, the Calamity dreaded becomes likely to happen. Still, ſo much of this wrong Turn, as is really conſtitutional and unavoidable Weakneſs, will certainly not be imputed as criminal. And therefore we ought not to double our Uneaſineſs, by adding to involuntary Anxieties a rigid Condemnation of ourſelves for them: but ſtrive againſt them to the utmoſt of our Power; and then be ſatisfied with the Conſciouſneſs, that we have done ſo: only not deceiving our Hearts with a Notion, that we have reſiſted Fears, which in truth we have indulged.

But ſome will ſay, "How can we reſiſt "them? Muſt we not of neceſſity be terri- "fied at what we perceive is terrible: be "concerned about what we are ſenſible is of "great Concern to us? Where is the Virtue "of pretending to blind ourſelves, or even of "doing it actually, if we could?" None at all certainly. But the Rule preſcribed you is,

not

not to ſhut, but open your Eyes, and contemplate the whole of your Caſe deliberately and impartially. For perhaps it is not ſo bad, perhaps not near ſo bad, as you conceive, though you were to look on it only in a worldly View. And yet were outward Appearances, and our own Strength, all that we had to look at, there would be no Wonder, if ſometimes our Hearts fainted within us at the Proſpect: for the ſtouteſt and the proudeſt Hearts have fainted, before Us, on like Occaſions. But the never-failing Foundation of Comfort is this. A Being infinitely powerful, wiſe, and benevolent, ſuperintends the Univerſe continually: theſe Attributes afford us large Ground of Hope; and, that our own Unworthineſs may raiſe no Doubt, his expreſs Declarations give us full Aſſurance, that if we fly to him with humble Faith, *he will not ſuffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will, with the Temptation, alſo make a Way to eſcape* *. The moſt uſual Anxiety of Men is about the daily Neceſſaries of Life. With reſpect to theſe therefore he condeſcends to argue with us particularly; and the Argument will hold as well concerning leſs common Exigencies; that ſince

* 1 Cor. x. 13.

he ſuſtains the Vegetable Part of the Creation, which can do nothing for itſelf, and the Animal, which cannot do near ſo much as we: certainly he will take of Us, on doing what we ought, a Care proportionable to the Superiority of our Nature. For in this lies the Force of our Saviour's Reaſoning. And when he ſaith, *Behold the Fowls of the Air; they ſow not; neither do they reap; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them: Are not ye much better than they* *? He doth not mean, that they take no Pains, and therefore we are to take none. They take a great deal, in ſeeking Food, and contriving Security againſt Dangers, for themſelves and for their Young, according to the Extent of their Faculties. And we are to take as much, in proportion to the Extent of ours. But then, as Providence furniſhes to Them, ſo far as conſiſts with its wiſe Purpoſes, whatever they need, and cannot acquire by their own Power: the ſame Providence will certainly watch over Us with more peculiar Tenderneſs, even in the preſent State; beſides that what we ſuffer now ſhall increaſe our Happineſs hereafter. And therefore, ſince They are eaſy in Their Condition, well may

* Matth. vi. 26.

We

We in Ours. For it would be ſtrange indeed, if that Order of earthly Beings, which enjoys the greateſt Favour beyond all Compariſon, ſhould be the only one diſcontented. Reflect then: where human Care ends, the Divine Care begins. The Duty of To-day is our Buſineſs; the Event of To-morrow is our heavenly Father's: and ſurely you do not wiſh to remove it out of his Hands into your own; or ſurmiſe, that you can poſſibly be unſafe, while under the Protection of Him, with whom *the very Hairs of your Head are all numbered* *. Here then we have a ſecure Refuge againſt Inquietude. But let us remember: If, having it, we uſe it not: if, profeſſing Faith in God, we allow ourſelves to be as much diſconcerted and perplexed on every Alarm, as they that *have no Hope, and are without God in the World* †; we either think unworthily of him, or behave quite unſuitably to what we think; and our Guilt is greater, as our Temptation to it is leſs. When therefore, on being troubled and caſt down, we are inclined to lay the Blame on accidental or natural Lowneſs of Spirits, or whatever Excuſe occurs, let us *take heed, leſt there be in us an evil Heart of Unbe-*

* Matth. x. 30. † Eph. ii. 12.

lief,

lief *, or Disobedience. If there be, amending That is the Way to *uphold him that was falling, and strengthen the feeble Knees* †.

But in vain shall we attempt any thing beneficial to us, if we trust to ourselves for Success. And therefore, to make his Caution effectual, the Apostle subjoins,

II. A most necessary Direction. *In every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your Requests be made known unto God.*

The usual Method is, to be *careful about many things* ‡, and pray about nothing: but the right one is, to be careful about nothing, but pray about every thing, which is of Importance enough to be laid before the Lord of All. The Movements of our Hearts indeed, though unuttered, are clearly discerned by him: and he foresaw from Eternity whatever we should wish on every Occasion. But the Scripture speaks in the Language of Men: and calls that *making known our Requests to God*, which is only expressing before him what he is perfectly acquainted with already,

* Heb. iii. 12. † Job iv. 4.
‡ Luke x. 42.

in

in order to imprint more efficaciouſly, on ourſelves and others, the Sentiments concerning him, which belong to our Condition.

Applying to the Almighty in our Difficulties immediately reminds us, on whom we and all things depend: and brings it ſtrongly to our Thoughts, that the moſt threatning Dangers cannot advance one Step farther, than infinite Wiſdom ſees it proper they ſhould, and infinite Goodneſs permits. Placing ourſelves in his Preſence awes and compoſes our worldly Fears; not by a ſervile Dread of him, forcibly overcoming them, and ſubſtituting itſelf, a ſtill worſe Terror, in their ſtead; but by a filial Reverence, mixed with humble Reliance on his Favour, which calms and revives us in ſuch manner, that we perceive our Solicitudes to vaniſh, even whilſt we are confeſſing them; and quickly ſmile at what we ſhuddered at before. Then beſides, venting our Deſires to Him, ſhews us in the fulleſt Light, which are ſinful, and to be repreſſed, if we hope for Acceptance with him: and begging his Help, muſt powerfully admoniſh us, that we are not to think of helping ourſelves by Methods diſpleaſing to him; but adhere ſtrictly to our Duty, and be aſſured it will lead us out of whatever

whatever Perplexities it leads us into. *Commit thy Way unto the Lord, and put thy Truſt in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs* *. Further yet, praying to *our* Father which is in Heaven, leads us to conſider him as our common Father: who is concerned, not only for us, but for all our Friends; and expects us to be zealous for the general Good, as well as our own; and on no account to withdraw from the Service of the Body, of which he hath made us Members. Piety therefore excites the trueſt and firmeſt public Spirit; but ſmooths and tempers, at the ſame time, that Roughneſs and Vehemence, which too frequently renders it ineffectual and hurtful, by promoting, as it doth beyond all things, an humble Opinion of ourſelves, and Meekneſs towards others.

With ſuch Diſpoſitions, we ſhall be duly qualified for the Mercy we intreat: and they who are, will never fail to receive it. For *this is the Confidence which we have in him*, ſaith the beloved Diſciple, *that if we aſk any thing according to his Will, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us, whatſoever we aſk, we know that we have the Petitions which we deſired of him* †. We are ſure of the very

* Pſalm xxxvii. 5. † 1 John v. 14, 15.

Favours

Favours we beg, if they are conducive to his Glory, and the Happineſs of his Creatures: which doubtleſs the Deliverance of this Nation from its Enemies muſt be, ſince we profeſs and ſupport his holy Truth, would we but penitently conform our Conduct to it. And his long Forbearance under our Provocations gives us Room to expect every Inſtance of Mercy, in caſe of our Amendment. What indeed the humble Applications of a few may do for others, He only knows. But for themſelves they will certainly obtain infinitely greater Benefits, than ſharing in the higheſt Degree of earthly Proſperity. Now the ſole Reaſon of our praying for any thing is, that we ſuppoſe it will be good for us. And therefore we pray for nothing of this World abſolutely, but on that Condition. So that if God, who knows beſt, withholds it becauſe it will be otherwiſe, he grants our Requeſt in the general, though he refuſes it in the particular: and if we are wiſe, far from being overwhelmed by the ſevereſt Diſpenſations, we ſhall not only be contented, but glad, in ſuch meaſure as human Infirmity and Sympathy permit, that *His Will ſhould be done, not Ours* *.

* Luke xxii. 42.

For this Cauſe the Apoſtle, when he might have ſaid, what moſt People would have thought very ſufficient, that we ſhould *make our Requeſts known unto God* with Reſignation, choſe to ſay more, that we ſhould do it *with Thankſgiving*. And indeed we ought to be heartily thankful, not only for the many and great Bleſſings, temporal and ſpiritual, national and perſonal, which God continues to us in the midſt of his Corrections, (O that we would all think ſeriouſly, how many and great they are) but even for his Corrections themſelves: and much more for the Alarms and Warnings, the Liftings up of his Rod, which are deſigned to prevent the Neceſſity of heavier Judgments. What he doth with this View, though it produce terrifying Apprehenſions, is the moſt real Kindneſs; the only Kindneſs, that we permit him at preſent to ſhew. Many, we may Hope, will be influenced by ſuch awful Notices, to amend their Ways. But at leaſt we need not fail of being influenced ourſelves to what is right. And then, whatever the Event be to thoſe around us, to Us it ſhall be happy: if in no other reſpect, yet in That, which, beyond all Com-

pariſon, is of the greateſt Conſequence: *Our light Afflictions which are but for a Moment, ſhall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory* *.

Knowing theſe Things, well might the Apoſtle add in the Text

III. An Aſſurance of the bleſſed Effect, which raiſing our Thoughts from Earth to Heaven will produce. *And the Peace of God, which paſſeth all Underſtanding, ſhall keep your Hearts and Minds, through Chriſt Jeſus.*

Bad Perſons, as they have never any well-grounded, have ſeldom any long-continued Peace of Mind, even in Proſperity: and much leſs can they hope for it in Troubles and Dangers. If they have not been juſt and merciful, they are conſcious of ill-deſerving Behaviour to their Fellow-creatures. If they have not been uniformly virtuous and religious, they know they have acted undutifully and ungratefully to their Creator. If they have not by due Application for Pardon reconciled themſelves to Him, the Guilt of their Sins remains upon them: and the whole Creation is a Weapon in

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

his Hands againſt them. They may be ſtupidly unmoved by theſe Conſiderations: they may affect to hide their Convictions, or ſtrive to run away from them into whatever preſents itſelf. But uſually the livelieſt and ſtrongeſt natural Spirits will ſink under them, in a Time of ſevere Trial. Or ſuppoſing they do not; the more obſtinately ſuch Perſons hold out, and the more gaily they go on, the heavier in all likelihood will be their preſent Ruin, but the dreadfuller certainly their final Sentence. For ſooner or later, and with full Recompence for ever ſo long Delay, the ſolemn and repeated Denunciation muſt be verified, *Whatſoever a Man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap* †.

But the obedient and devout Soul, which looks beyond worldly Appearances, and reſts itſelf on the divine Providence, is intitled, whatever outward Commotions happen, to the trueſt, the ſteadieſt, the moſt delightful inward Compoſedneſs: to that *Peace of God*, that Senſe of being in Friendſhip with Him, that Feeling of Comfort and Joy flowing from him, *which paſſeth all Underſtanding*; exceeds the Conceptions of thoſe who have not experienced it, and ſhall exceed hereafter the pre-

† Gal. vi. 7.

ſent

ſent Conceptions of thoſe who have. Yet the ſincerely Good may not conſtantly enjoy a very high Degree of This. The Imperfection of their Goodneſs, the Lowneſs of their Spirits, Errors of Judgment, ſudden Alarms, Afflictions uncommonly grievous, may leſſen, may interrupt it: or God may, for ſecret Reaſons of infinite Wiſdom, *hide his Face from them* * for a Time. But, ordinarily ſpeaking, their Tranquillity and Conſolation will be found proportionable to their Improvements in real Religion. And, though undoubtedly Seaſons of Difficulty and Hazard will give ſome Uneaſineſs to the beſt Minds; yet no more, than is moderate and very tolerable: no more, than leaves them, on the whole, in a peaceful State; and able to *caſt*, if not *all*, as they ſhould, yet the moſt of *their Care on Him, who careth for them* †.

Let us therefore try ourſelves by this Rule, whether we have indeed practical Faith and Confidence in the Almighty. And if not, let us inſtantly labour to obtain it, by a total Forſaking of *our Iniquities, which have ſeparated between Us and Him* ‡, and humble Addreſſes

* Pſal xiii. 1. † 1 Pet. v. 7.
‡ Iſa. lix. 2.

for Grace to help in Time of Need *. The common Resource is to the Help of Man alone: *there be many that say, who will shew us any Good?* but the Language of a well-instructed Heart is, *Lord, lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon us* †. *Some put their Trust in Chariots, and some in Horses: but let us remember the Name of the Lord our God* ‡: provide for our Security with the utmost Prudence, and defend our Cause with the boldest Zeal: but still rely on Him alone, *who giveth Victory unto Kings* §. Every other Aid may fail: but God cannot. *He is able to save by many or by few* (*): *to break the Arm of the Wicked* (†), *and disappoint the Devices of the Crafty* (‡). *He stilleth the Raging of the Sea, the Noise of its Waves, and the Madness of the People* (§). Under his Conduct, the *Things*, that seem the most *against us* [*], may prove the very Means of our Deliverance: and the fiercest Storms drive the Ship with more Speed into a safe Harbour. Therefore *say to them, that are of a fearful Heart, Be strong, fear not: behold your God will come with a Re-*

* Heb. iv. 16.
‡ Psal. xx. 7.
(*) 1 Sam. xiv. 6.
(‡) Job v. 12.
[*] Gen. xlii. 36.
† Psal. iv. 6, 7.
§ Psal. cxliv. 10.
(†) Psal. x. 15.
(§) Psal. lxv. 7.

compence;

compence; *he will come and save you* *. All, who are penetrated with these Truths, tho' timorous naturally, and while the Danger is distant, shall, when it draws near, *out of Weakness be made strong, and wax valiant in Fight* †: not with a tumultuous and transitory animal Courage, but a calm and stedfast Resolution, *keeping*, as the Apostle expresses it, *their Hearts and Minds*, quieting their Passions, fixing their Judgments, and by consequence determining their Behaviour. The Reasonings of such Persons will be those of the Psalmist: *God is our Hope and Strength, a very present Help in Trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the Earth be moved, and though the Hills be carried into the midst of the Sea: though the Waters rage and swell, and though the Mountains shake at the Tempest of the same. The Rivers of the Flood thereof shall make glad the City of God, the holy Place of the Tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed: God shall help her, and that right early. The Nations make much ado, and the Kingdoms are moved: but God sheweth his Voice, and the Earth shall melt away. The Lord of Hosts is with*

* Isa. xxxv. 4. † Heb. xi. 34.

us, the God of Jacob is our Refuge *. These are the Grounds, and there cannot be ſtronger, on which a good Perſon, unleſs he is wanting to himſelf, *will not be afraid of any evil Tidings: for his Heart ſtandeth faſt, and believeth in the Lord* †. Nay, were it not the Pleaſure of God to deliver his People from their Enemies, even in that Caſe, they would be enabled to *ſuffer according to his Will, and commit the keeping of their Souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator* ‡.

But then we muſt ever obſerve, by whoſe Means alone this unconquerable Firmneſs, this inconceiveable Serenity, is to be acquired. *The Peace of God ſhall keep your Hearts and Minds, through Chriſt Jeſus.* For as, without Faith in Religion, Perſons very often have no Refuge at all in the Storms and Troubles that overtake them; ſo, without Faith in the Chriſtian Religion, they are liable ſtill to moſt uneaſy and diſheartening Fluctuations; from Doubts, how far Providence extends; Doubts of their own Title to Forgiveneſs and Favour, Doubts of the Exiſtence and Duration of a future Reward: to all which the Goſpel

* Pſal. xlvi. 1—7. † Pſal. cxii. 7.
‡ 1 Pet. iv. 19.

hath

hath put the happieſt End; informing Mankind with Certainty of every thing that could induce them to act right with chearful Perſeverance; and confirming the higheſt Expectations, which they can poſſibly entertain, by that equally convincing and affecting Argument: *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all Things**?* Thus then *we have Hope, as an Anchor of the Soul, ſure and ſtedfaſt, and which entereth into that within the Veil*; lays hold on the promiſed State of inviſible Glory, *whither the Forerunner is entered for us*, to take Poſſeſſion already in our Name, *even Jeſus* †: whoſe gracious Words to his Diſciples we ought to have conſtantly preſent to our Thoughts, when Clouds ariſe and darken our Proſpect, hang over our Heads, and ſeem ready to burſt upon us. *Theſe Things have I 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* §. *Peace I leave with you: my Peace I give unto you: let not your Heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid* ‡.

* Rom. viii. 32.
§ John xvi. 33.
† Heb. vi. 19, 20.
‡ John xiv. 27.

A

SERMON

PREACHED at the

Pariſh-Church of St. *James*, *Weſtminſter*,

And at

King-Street CHAPEL, in the ſaid Pariſh,

May 4, 1746.

On Occaſion of the

VICTORY at *CULLODEN*.

SERMON VI.

2 Cor. i. 9, 10.

But we had the Sentence of Death in ourſelves, that we ſhould not truſt in ourſelves, but in God which raiſeth the Dead:

Who delivered us from ſo great a Death, and doth deliver; in whom we truſt, that he will yet deliver us.

OUR gracious Sovereign having appointed, of his own mere Motion and Perſonal Piety, a ſolemn Acknowledgment to Heaven, for our late Victory over the Rebels, to be inſerted in the Prayers of this Day, permit me, as far as I am able, to be *a Helper of your Joy* * on that happy Occaſion. And may God effectually diſpoſe us all to *rejoice before Him* † in ſo wiſe and religious a Manner, as may lay a ſure Foundation for his *rejoicing over Us to*

* Verſe 24. † Deut. xii. 12.

do

do us Good *; for his going on to *comfort us again, after the Time that he hath afflicted Us, the Years wherein we have suffered Adversity* †.

I hope it may promote this Blessed End, if we consider our Condition in the same Views in which the Text places before us that of the Apostle St. *Paul*, comprehending an Account,

I. Of his Danger: *A great Death, of which he had the Sentence within himself.*

II. Of his Defender from it: *God, who had delivered, and did still deliver him.*

III. Of the Reasons, for which he was first permitted to fall into this Danger, then brought out of it: *that he might not trust in Himself, but might trust in God, which raiseth the Dead:* as accordingly he declares he doth, for Deliverances yet future.

I. His Danger: *A great Death, of which he had the Sentence within himself.* Death, being the Extremity of temporal Sufferings, in the *Hebrew* Idiom, which expresses every thing strongly, signifies any very dreadful Evil or Hazard. Thus *Pharaoh*, on the Plague of Locusts, begs of *Moses: Entreat the Lord your*

* Jer. xxxii. 41. † Psalm xc. 15.

God,

God, that he may take away from me this Death only *. But more especially Hazard of Life goes under that Name. Whence *David* speaks of himself, as *counted with them that go down into the Pit*; *free among the Dead, like the Slain that lie in the Grave* †. Now St. *Paul*, to use his own Phrase towards the latter End of this Epistle, had been *in Deaths often* ‡. And therefore the Term, *so great a Death*, must denote, that on the Occasion, to which he refers, his Peril was imminent, peculiarly terrible, and, humanly speaking, unavoidable. His own Words are, *we were pressed out of measure, above Strength, insomuch that we despaired even of Life* §. Farther Particulars cannot now be discovered, excepting one, which he adds, of small Consequence to Us, that this Trouble came to him in *Asia*. But by his Manner of notifying it, and the Warmth of his Description, it must have been recent, since he wrote the former Epistle.

How lately we have been in like Distress, you all know. How *great a Death* we must have suffered, had our Enemies prevailed; how total a Destruction of every thing valu-

* Exodus x. 17.
† Psalm lxxxviii. 4, 5.
‡ Cap. xi. ver. 23.
§ Ver. 8.

able

able to us on Earth, that can be deſtroyed by Man; I endeavoured to ſhew you at the very Beginning of their Attempt: and the whole Body of the Nation, God be thanked, have expreſſed the ſtrongeſt Deteſtation of it. May neither the Horror of the impending Ruin, nor the frightful Probability there was of its overwhelming us, ever be forgot. Recollect, I entreat you, what your ſucceſſive Apprehenſions have been for many Months paſt: on the early and intire, and eaſy Defeat of our Forces by the Rebels; on the defenceleſs Condition in which the Iſland then was; on their paſſing afterwards, unhurt, by two Armies poſted to intercept them, and approaching towards this Capital; on the Proſpect of powerful Aſſiſtance to them from abroad; on the credible, though happily falſe, Intelligence of our being actually invaded; on the ſafe Retreat of our domeſtic Enemies into the North, to join, as it was affirmed and believed, with foreign Succours there; on our ſecond Diſappointment in Battle, a fatal one it might have proved; on the continual Dangers, to which that heroic Prince was expoſed, whoſe Preſence and Conduct, and Courage and Activity, were ſo eſſentially neceſſary for animating our diſpirited

Troops; on the reaſſembling and Succeſſes of our Foes, after a ſeeming Deſpondency and Diſperſion; on the Largeneſs of their Numbers, the Advantages of their Situation; and laſtly, on the ſtrong Report of what was but too poſſible, a complete Victory obtained by them, when indeed one had been obtained over them, of which we were ignorant. Had we not often, during this Period, *the Sentence of Death within ourſelves?* Were we not *troubled on every Side; without were Fightings, within were Fears* *; *Mens Hearts failing them for Fear, and for looking after thoſe Things which were coming on the Earth* †? And had we been aſked, at ſome Junctures eſpecially, as the Prophet was, in Language akin to that of the Text, *Can theſe dry Bones live?* Can this exhauſted Nation riſe up again, and ſhake off the Preſſures, from every Quarter, under which it labours? What other Reply, at beſt, could we have made, than this? *O Lord God, thou knoweſt* ‡. For ſurely the wiſeſt of Men did not know: nor could the braveſt anſwer for the Event, after it had been ſo frequently

* 2 Cor. vii. 5. † Luke xxi. 26.
‡ Ezek. xxxvii. 3.

contrary to what we thought the moſt rational Expectations. Of this only there was Certainty, that we had the loudeſt Call to adopt the Pſalmiſt's Prayer: *O God, thou haſt caſt us off, and ſcattered us; thou haſt alſo been diſpleaſed: O turn thee unto us again. Thou haſt moved the Land, and divided it: heal the Breaches thereof, for it ſhaketh* *. And praiſed be his Name, that we can now add the Words which follow thoſe: *Thou haſt given a Token for ſuch as fear thee, that they may triumph becauſe of thy Truth* †.

And we have accordingly triumphed in this comfortable Earneſt of Proſperity, returning to us after ſo long an Abſence, with a Joy as cordial and univerſal, as perhaps this Nation ever expreſſed. May both our Friends and our Enemies know it, and draw the natural Concluſions from it, to the Encouragement of the former, the Diſmay of the latter. But then, if we *triumph* only for the Safety of our Perſons and Properties, and not *becauſe of God's Truth*, and pure Religion; if we rejoice, and overlook the Author of our Joy, *the Giver of all Victory*; we ſhall fall inexcuſably ſhort of

* Pſalm lx. 1, 2. † Verſe 4.

our

our Duty, and the Example ſet us by the Apoſtle: who ſubjoins immediately to his Account of the Danger, which he had eſcaped,

II. A thankful mention of his Defender from it: *God, who had delivered, and did ſtill deliver him.*

It is evidently both as eaſy for the Supreme Being, and as worthy of him, to govern the Univerſe, as to create it. Indeed the only Purpoſe, for which Divine Wiſdom could create it, muſt be to conduct every Part of it to a right End: and the ſmalleſt Parts are no more beneath his Attention, than the greateſt; for He is infinitely above all. What Reaſon thus teaches, holy Scripture confirms with important Additions: informing us, that a future Day is appointed for the full and final Diſplay of his Juſtice and Goodneſs towards the Children of Men; but that in the mean time his Providence is active, ſo far as the Conſtitution of Things eſtabliſhed by him permits, and not the leaſt Occurrence comes to paſs, without the ſuperintending Care of *our Father, which is in Heaven* *. We are often indeed ignorant, by what Means he acts:

* Matth. x. 29.

for he is able to influence, unperceived, not only the Courſe of inanimate Nature, but the Minds of rational Agents, and to produce the greateſt Events from the ſlighteſt Occaſions. We are often equally ignorant of his Views in acting: for *we know but in Part* *; whereas *all Things are naked and open to the Eyes of Him, with whom we have to do* †. The Imperfection of our Diſcernment therefore muſt be no Hindrance to our Faith: but our plain Duty is to reverence implicitly thoſe Proceedings of His, the Manner and Grounds of which are hid from us; as well as to pay him more particular Acknowledgments on account of ſuch as we underſtand.

For in many Caſes the Hand of God is clearly viſible: but no-where more than in the Correction, and yet Preſervation of *States profeſſing his holy and eternal Truth* ‡: as indeed there cannot be on Earth fitter Objects of his righteous Providence. Thus in all Ages he hath watched over his Church. Thus more eſpecially he hath treated this Church and Land, ever ſince the Reformation: *viſiting our Offences with the Rod, and our Sin with*

* 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12. † Heb. iv. 13.
‡ Office for *November* 5.

Scourges;

Scourges; nevertheleſs his loving Kindneſs hath he not utterly taken from us, nor ſuffered his Truth to fail *. *Many a time have they fought againſt me from my Youth up, may* Iſrael *now ſay; yea, many a time have they afflicted me from my Youth up, but they have not prevailed againſt me. The Ploughers have ploughed upon my Back, and made long Furrows: but the righteous Lord hath hewn the Snares of the Ungodly in pieces* †. And ſurely in the Troubles, which we have undergone of late, a pious and thoughtful Mind may trace evident Footſteps of Divine Interpoſition. Why elſe, on the one hand, did our Enemies increaſe, prevail, and eſcape, ſo ſurpriſingly, for ſo long together? Why, on the other, did they ſo unaccountably miſs the faireſt and moſt palpable Opportunities of undoing us effectually; neither purſuing at home the Advantages they had gained, nor procuring the Succours, which their Friends abroad in all Prudence ought to have ſent them? And why, laſtly, have they allowed us to obtain ſo deciſive a Victory, in a few Moments, at the Expence of ſo little Blood loſt on our Side, (would God their own;

* Pſalm lxxxix. 32, 33. † Pſalm cxxix. 1—4.

poor deluded Wretches, could have been ſpared) when both from the Encouragement of their preceding Succeſſes, and the Neceſſity of exerting themſelves to the utmoſt in this Criſis of their Fate, a very obſtinate Engagement was to have been expected? Whence have theſe Things happened thus, but that *God ruleth in the Kingdom of Men* *? *The Lord maketh the Devices of the People to be of none Effect, and caſteth out the Counſels of Princes. But the Counſel of the Lord ſhall endure for ever, and the Thoughts of his Heart from Generation to Generation. Bleſſed are the People, whoſe God is the Lord Jehovah; and bleſſed are the Folk, that he hath choſen to be his Inheritance* †.

Let us learn therefore, and acknowledge, for it is a very bad Sign if we are unwilling, that both our Dangers and our Deliverances are from above. This will in no degree leſſen the Guilt of our Enemies: for they were prompted by their own Wickedneſs unjuſtly to attempt, what Heaven for Our Wickedneſs might juſtly have permitted. Nor can it ever be a Plea for yielding tamely to their Enterprizes, that God makes uſe of them to ſerve

* Daniel v. 21. † Pſalm xxxiii. 10, 11, 12.

his

his Purpoſes. We know not the Extent of thoſe Purpoſes; which he will certainly execute, as far as they extend: and are therefore to do our evident Duty. If he ſuffers our Adverſaries to attack our moſt valuable Rights, he both impowers and commands Us to defend them: and they, who conſider themſelves as his Inſtruments for this End, will act with unſpeakably more Faithfulneſs and Zeal, than ſuch as are induced by worldly Motives alone; which frequently other worldly Motives, and ſometimes very trifling ones, may outweigh: whereas there is no Counter-balance to a Principle of Conſcience. Nor doth it in the leaſt detract from the Merit of our Soldiers and Commanders, that *the Salvation of the Righteous cometh of the Lord, who alſo is their Strength in the Time of Trouble* *. Every Preeminence is more eſtimable for being his Gift; every great Action, for being done by his Guidance: and the higheſt of thoſe, who have wrought this Deliverance for us, are ſurely the moſt deeply ſenſible, that the nobleſt of their Diſtinctions is, being employed by their Maker, and Fellow-Workers with him, for the Support of genuine Religion, virtuous Liberty,

* Pſalm xxxvii. 40.

and public Happineſs. This Way of Thinking will inſpire the moſt compoſed Moderation, along with the moſt undaunted Bravery: and whoever makes it the Baſis of his Conduct, will be intitled to all Demonſtrations of Reſpect from Men; and yet abundantly contented with *the Honour, that cometh from God only* *.

Every thing that befalls us therefore, adverſe or proſperous, let us look on it as proceeding from the juſt and good Pleaſure of our heavenly Father: humble ourſelves before him in all our Afflictions; and, which is our preſent Concern, be thankful to him in all our Rejoicings. *If the Lord himſelf had not been on our Side, let* Iſrael *now ſay, if the Lord himſelf had not been on our Side, when Men roſe up againſt us: they had ſwallowed us up quick, when they were ſo wrathfully diſpleaſed at us: yea, the Waters had drowned us,——the deep Waters of the Proud had gone over our Soul. But praiſed be the Lord, who hath not given us over for a Prey unto their Teeth* †. This is the Language, that expreſſes the Truth of our Caſe: and it is of infinite Importance, that we own it unanimouſly. For the Sovereign Diſpoſer of

* John v. 44. † Pſalm cxxiv. 1—5.

the

the Univerſe will neither be denied nor forgot, without vindicating the Glory of his Name: and he hath long ago pronounced the Sentence: *They regard not in their Mind the Works of the Lord, nor the Operation of his Hands; therefore ſhall he break them down, and not build them up* †. But the Duty and the Neceſſity of ſuch Regard will more diſtinctly appear, by conſidering,

III. The Reaſons, for which the Apoſtle was firſt brought into Danger, then brought out of it: that he might learn by the former *not to truſt in himſelf*; and by the latter, *to truſt in God, which raiſeth the Dead.*

Now if there was Need of improving St. *Paul* in this Leſſon, much more is there of teaching it others. And never perhaps was any Nation, at leaſt which made Profeſſion of Faith in Chriſt, ſo deplorably inattentive to it, as ours. Our Wealth, our Fleets, our Valour, have been, for many Years paſt, till very lately, our continual Boaſt. And in vain had the Scripture forewarned us: *Curſed is He, that truſteth in Man, and maketh*

† Pſal. xxviii. 6.

Fleſh

Fleſh his Arm, and whoſe Heart departeth from the Lord *. How then ſhould God convince us of ſo pernicious an Error; and ſhew us, that we were not ſufficient to ourſelves? By the very Method, which he hath taken. *He hid his Face, and we were troubled* †: Storms roſe around us; and the moſt dangerous, where we thought there was nothing to produce any: our Navy proved no Protection; our Valour ſunk into panic Terrors; our *Riches* were on the Point of *making themſelves Wings and flying away* §; a general Bankruptcy threatened us; and what the *Kings of the Earth, and all the Inhabitants of the World would not have believed, the Adverſary and the Enemy were* near *entering into the Gates of Jeruſalem* ‡. Who could poſſibly have apprehended, that the landing of ſix or ſeven Men ſhould have put this great Nation into ſuch Confuſion? Who could ever have conceived, that the Diſturbers of our Peace ſhould have multiplied and conquered as they did; ſhould have advanced and retreated, and ranged at Will through our Land, with ſo perfect Security, for ſo long a Time? And what is all

* Jer. xvii. 5.
† Pſal. civ. 29.
§ Prov. xxiii. 5.
‡ Lam. iv. 12.

this,

this, but a Call from God to know ourſelves, and abaſe our Pride before him: a practical Declaration, *that no Fleſh ſhall glory in his Preſence* *.

But neceſſary as this Inſtruction is, yet ſingly it is not enough. When irreligious Perſons have found by Experience, that they cannot rely on their own Strength, they have no other left to rely on: and ſo are tempted to deſpair in their Minds, to fail in their Duty, to ſeek Refuge in cowardly and treacherous Artifices for their own Preſervation. But very different are the Sentiments of the pious Man's Heart. Let ever ſo unexpected Calamities happen, let ever ſo alarming Dangers approach, with ever ſo little Appearance of ſurmounting them: ſtill he knows, that nothing can be ſo dangerous, as to deſert the Poſt, in which God hath placed him; and that *He, who is faithful unto Death, ſhall receive a Crown of Life* †. At the ſame Inſtant therefore, that he ſaith, *There be many that fight againſt me, O thou Moſt Higheſt*, he is enabled to ſay alſo, *nevertheleſs, though I am ſometime afraid, yet put I my Truſt in Thee* ‡. And this

* 1 Cor. i. 29.
† Rev. ii. 10.
‡ Pſal. lvi. 2, 3.

is

is the Spirit, which God intends to excite, by ſending, after extreme Perils, remarkable and ſudden Deliverances. From theſe it is natural to learn Faith in Him, *that raiſes the Dead*, that reſtores from the moſt helpleſs Condition; and ſince *he hath delivered*, to form reviving Hopes, that *he will yet deliver*; which we may and ought to do now. He hath given us a Victory ſpeedier, cheaper, completer, than we could even have flattered ourſelves with. He hath given it by the Means of a young Prince, whoſe confeſſed Abilities, vigilant Attention, unwearied Diligence, and intrepid Firmneſs, on all Occaſions, as well as his wonderful Succeſs on the preſent, afford us the juſteſt Ground of Perſuaſion, that he is choſen by Providence for the Service and Support of his Father, his Family, his Country. And the ſame God, who hath *begun to ſhew his mighty Hand* *, can, with the ſame Eaſe, accompliſh his good Work, and bring it to Perfection.

But then, alas! what avails it that he can, unleſs we have Cauſe to truſt that he will? And whence ſhall we have this?

* Deut. iii. 24.

Thankfulneſs

Thankfulneſs for paſt Mercies undoubtedly is the Way to ſecure future. And juſt now we ſeem in earneſt thankful. But if our Gratitude prove to be ſuperficial and ſhort-lived, like that of the *Jews*, *They ſang Praiſe unto him: but within a while they forgat his Works, they would not abide his Counſel*; what can we expect elſe, than Judgments like theirs? *Then he lift up his Hand againſt them, to overthrow them* †. Our State, though vaſtly altered for the better, is ſtill a very undeſirable, indeed a very melancholy one. Our Burthens are unavoidably augmenting, and our Strength waſting. Foreign Force may ſoon renew our inteſtine Commotions: or even, without their Intervention, ſubject us all directly to itſelf. The Failures of our Friends give us, Year after Year, new Reaſon to ſay with the Pſalmiſt: *O be Thou our Help in Trouble: for vain is the Help of Man* *. *Put not your Truſt in Princes, nor in any Child of Man: for there is no Help in them. Bleſſed is He, that hath the God of Jacob for his Help, and whoſe Hope is in the Lord his God* §. But we cannot hope for the Continuance of his Protection, unleſs we

† Pſal. cvi. 12, 13, 26. * Pſal. lx. 11.
§ Pſal. cxlvi. 2, 4.

anſwer the Intention of it: which the Nature of the Thing, as well as Holy Writ, aſſures us is, *that being delivered out of the Hands of our Enemies, we may ſerve him without Fear* †. It is not then, that we may ſin againſt him without Fear: that we may return ſecurely to the Follies and Vices, the Impiety and Profaneneſs, from which we abſtained, while his Hand lay heavy upon us. Then we profeſſed to obſerve Days of Faſting and Prayer. And what was the Language of them? "Spare "us, good Lord, that we may ſafely go on to "be as bad as we have been, and worſe?" Surely not. Some indeed expreſſed, even in the midſt of Danger, an open Scorn of them: others were evidently kept from it by mere outward Decency. Many however were awakened, ſpoke and thought ſeriouſly, reſolved well, prayed heartily. But are they not moſt of them already, or ſhall we not find them ſoon, relapſed again into their old Neglect? For ſuch hath always been the Courſe of human Nature, unleſs carefully reſtrained by conſcientious Vigilance. *When he ſlew them, they ſought him, and turned them early, and inquired*

† Luke i. 74.

after God: and they remembered, that God was their Strength, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheleſs, they did but flatter him with their Mouth, and diſſembled with him in their Tongue. For their Heart was not whole with him: neither continued they ſtedfaſt in his Covenant *. After this Feint of Reformation, they grew, as Men always do, wickeder than before. And I beg you attend to the final Conſequence. *When God ſaw this, he was wroth, and took ſore Diſpleaſure at Iſrael: He delivered their Power into Captivity; and their Beauty into the Enemy's Hand* †.

If therefore it be aſked, what we ſhall do to ſhew our Thankfulneſs acceptably, the Anſwer is plain: *Walk in all the Commandmends and Ordinances of the Lord blameleſs* §; but practiſe thoſe with more eſpecial Zeal, which either our Circumſtances particularly require, or our Hearts tell us we have particularly tranſgreſſed.

Common Prudence is one Part of our Duty, which we have unaccountably ſlighted. We have increaſed Amuſements and Gayeties to a Degree unexampled, juſt when Provi-

* Pſal. lxxviii. 34—37. † Ver. 60, 62.
§ Luke i. 6.

dence

dence hath called us moſt loudly to thoughtful Conſideration. We have increaſed Expenſiveneſs to an equal Degree, when perhaps our own Fortunes, but certainly thoſe of Multitudes, whom our Example tempts and often almoſt forces to Imitation, are incapable of bearing it. And both theſe Indiſcretions have produced perſonal Miſeries and national Inconveniences without Number. We have diſregarded, and affected to diſregard, the Care of our Families, and the proper Buſineſs of our ſeveral Employments, though ſometimes perhaps important ones, not only to indulge our Appetites, but to gratify our Caprices: Behaviour, in every Rank and Station, fruitful of Miſchief; but in the higher, of moſt dreadful and extenſive Miſchief. In Matters of national Concern, we have followed our private Intereſts, Reſentments, Friendſhips, inſtead of Truth, and Right, and general Good. We have framed and ſupported uſeleſs and hurtful Diſtinctions and Diviſions; and been unjuſtly vehement in mutual Reproaches; till our Enemies were encouraged to fancy, that one half of us was ready to join them. We have vilified our Governors, till we had almoſt diſowned the Bleſſings of Government:

and

and it was very near being too late, that our Affection to an Eſtabliſhment, on which our whole Happineſs depends, revived, after an Indifference, that foreboded immediate Ruin. Let us never forget more what we have been ſo ſeaſonably convinced of now: but always eſteem as highly our Laws and Liberties, and the auguſt Houſe that ſecures them, as we did in that Hour, when the Hazard of loſing them was moſt imminent. But let us amend in every other Point alſo: and while there is yet *Space to repent* *, become a ſober-minded, frugal, induſtrious, honeſt, and united People. For we cannot elſe continue a free one: neither the Juſtice of God, nor the Connexions of human Affairs will permit it.

Theſe then are fundamental Rules of private Prudence. With thoſe of public Wiſdom we have no Concern here, beyond two Particulars. The Firſt is, our Obligation to pray, that God would incline thoſe, who are in Authority over us, to conſider ſeriouſly what have been the Cauſes of our Troubles, and direct them to proper Remedies: would enable them to preſerve, both in Puniſhments and Precautions, the true Medium between too great

* Rev. ii. 21.

Severity and too great Indulgence: would inſtruct them, how to reconcile all that wiſh well to the Community; and how to prevent others from renewing any more our Sufferings, or their own. The Second is, our conſequent Obligation to diſtruſt our own Judgment, rather than theirs, in Matters of ſuch Difficulty; and to uſe our faithful Endeavours, that what they determine may become effectual.

But how rightly ſoever we are diſpoſed in theſe reſpects, if we continue to entertain the ſame Contempt of Religion, which we have manifeſted for a long Time paſt, it is in vain to *truſt, that God will* continue to *deliver us*. How much, or how little Forbearance he may exerciſe, cannot be ſaid: but ſooner or later, *except we repent, we muſt periſh* *. For, let us think of it or not, He is the Ruler of the World: and he will approve himſelf to be ſuch, by inflicting on thoſe, who ſlight him, the Vengeance they deſerve. Indeed, could he leave them to themſelves; as *the Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wiſdom* †, ſo caſting it off is the Inlet of Folly. Reli-

* Luke xiii. 3. † Pſal. cxi. 10. Prov. ix. 10.

gious Motives are the only ones, that can, in all Caſes, either prompt to what is right, or reſtrain from what is wrong, with ſufficient Force: and when this Tie is broken, no other will hold. Reaſon plainly ſhews it: Scripture hath repeatedly foretold it: the Experience of all Ages confirms it: and there is no Room left for us to carry the Trial further, without utter Deſtruction. We have been ſinking for a great while, in proportion as we grew vicious and profane, till at laſt we were plunged in the very Depth of Diſtreſs. Once more however, after ſeeming quite rejected, we have received a kind Encouragement. But if we let Judgments and Mercies both be loſt upon us; what can there remain, but final Ruin?

Think then with yourſelves, why ſhould we not now return to God? Gratitude is a generous Principle of Action: and he hath furniſhed us with an Opportunity for it. Hope is a nobler one than Fear alone. And who can tell, what Hope there may be yet for this Nation, would we but apply to our offended Father with virtuous Penitence? He can raiſe us Friends where we leaſt expected it, and change the Hearts of our bittereſt Adverſaries.

For *he refraineth the Spirit of Princes, and is wonderful among the Kings of the Earth* *. *When the Ways of a Man pleaſe the Lord, he maketh even his Enemies to be at Peace with him* †. But if their Enmity continues, he can check, he can break their Power, at its very Height: and *ſtrengthen the Hands* §, direct the Counſels, proſper the Undertakings of his People; ſo that *no Man ſhall be able to ſtand before them* ‡. *For His is the Greatneſs, and the Glory, and the Victory, and the Majeſty* ⊥: *For the Kingdom is the Lord's and He is the Governor amongſt the Nations* ∽. *Let it be thy Pleaſure, O Lord, to deliver us: make Haſte, O God, to help us. Let all thoſe that ſeek thee, be joyful and glad in thee: and ſuch as love thy Salvation ſay alway, The Lord be praiſed* ++.

* Pſal. lxxvi. 12.
§ Neh. vi. 9.
⊥ 1 Chr. xxix. 11.
++ Pſal. xl. 16, 19.
† Prov. xvi. 7.
‡ Joſh. i. 5.
∽ Pſal. xxii. 28.

A

SERMON

PREACHED at the

Pariſh-Church of St. *James*, *Weſtminſter*,

October 9, 1746.

Being the Day appointed for a GENERAL THANKSGIVING to ALMIGHTY GOD for the Suppreſſion of the late unnatural REBELLION.

SERMON VII.

JOHN v. 14.

Afterward Jeſus *findeth him in the Temple, and ſaid unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: Sin no more, leſt a worſe thing come unto thee.*

AFTER ſeven yearly Faſts, we have now through God's Mercy, before we have deſerved it, one Day of general Thankſgiving: and ſurely our Concern is to employ it ſo, that we may hope for more. Now there can be no wiſer or kinder Direction for this Purpoſe, than that of our Lord in the Text. He had juſt healed the Perſon to whom he ſpeaks, and therefore certainly did not mean to uſe him harſhly in theſe Words: but indeed to ſhew him ſtill greater Goodneſs, than he had done already; as much greater, as Spiritual and Eternal Welfare is than Temporal. His Cure had been the heavieſt of Misfortunes to him, had he behaved improperly upon it. But *Jeſus found him in the Temple*, whither probably he went with a

devout Heart, to give God Praiſe. This promiſed well concerning him: yet by no means rendered a ſtrong Warning to him ſuperfluous. Permit me therefore, finding You, and God be thanked that I find ſo many of you, in the Temple on a like Occaſion, to treat you in a like Manner. And think it not ſtrange, I beſeech you, if at preſent you hear not ſolely the Voice of Joy, though never was a juſter Occaſion for it, but are exhorted, even now, to *ſerve the Lord in Fear, and rejoice unto him with Reverence* *. I hope many Teachers of his Word will dwell this Day on the ſame Subject: for the Advice, here given by our gracious Maſter, comprehends every thing that our Condition requires.

I. A thankful Senſe of the Bleſſing, which we have received. *Behold, thou art made whole.*

II. A firm Reſolution of virtuous Obedience in Return for it. *Sin no more.*

III. A prudent Conſideration of the Danger of behaving otherwiſe. *Leſt a worſe thing come unto thee.*

I. A thankful Senſe of the Bleſſing, which we have received. *Behold, thou art made whole.*

* Pſalm ii. 11.

At

At this Time laſt Year, and for many Months after, we had a very afflicting Senſe of the Judgments, that threatened us: the whole Nation had it, and with the utmoſt Cauſe. Our Religion, our Liberties, our Lives, our public Independence, our private Properties, were all at Stake. Our Forces were few, unſucceſsful, and diſheartened: the Rebels were numerous, fluſhed with Victory, and increaſing. Then, beſides what appeared, we knew not how much more Evil we had to apprehend, from abroad or at home, from the Fury of our Enemies, from the Coldneſs of our Friends. The Danger too was no leſs imminent than great: and muſt ſoon cruſh us, if not ſoon averted. We ſaw, and felt, and trembled at it; we exerted ourſelves againſt it with a Spirit, never known amongſt us before: and God forbid we ſhould have forgotten, God forbid we ſhould ever forget, the Impreſſions that we had ſo lately, firſt of the Terrors impending over us, then of the Felicity of their ſudden Diſperſion.

It is true, we are not yet perfectly *whole*. Far from it, Heaven knows. But what would we have given once for ſo happy an Approach towards it, as we now poſſeſs? Our domeſtic

Foes

Foes are fallen in Battle, or cut off by Juſtice, or driven into other Lands, or abſconding in Corners of their own, impoveriſhed and diſarmed, and taught by Experience neither to rely on themſelves, nor their faithleſs Allies. Our Soldiery have recovered their ancient Courage and Character. The Nation in general hath united in active Loyalty: we are known and truſted one by another; known and dreaded by our Adverſaries, who had ſtrangely miſtaken our inteſtine Diviſions, bad as they were, for ſomething much worſe. Our Diſtemper is at leaſt expelled from our Vitals, and driven to the extreme Parts. We have Notice, we have Time, to provide againſt a Return of it: and poſſibly at preſent *France* may be feeling from us, in her own Dominions, a ſmall Share of the Sufferings, which She projected for Ours, while We are enjoying in Peace all that we feared to loſe. Whatever we may want therefore to make our Happineſs complete, we ought to be moſt deeply ſenſible, that our Portion of it is remarkably large: ſo large, that there is not ſurely a Nation upon Earth, with which any one of us, in the midſt of all that we have to complain of and lament, would be willing on the whole to change Conditions.

But

But then, as often as we conſider to how comfortable a Degree we are *whole*, we ſhould always recollect, by what Means we were *made whole*. Our Saviour was not afraid the poor Man, whom he cured, ſhould forget that he had regained the Uſe of his Limbs, but how he had regained it. And if He, who had been miraculouſly healed, yet had need of being reminded to whom he owed his Health: much more ſhould we, who have been ſaved by the ordinary Methods of Providence, be careful to fix it in our Hearts, whence the ineſtimable Benefit was derived. And here let us allow their full Proportion of Praiſe, even to the human Means: to the Juſtice and Mildneſs of his Majeſty's Government, and the Proſpect of continued Security and Tranquillity under his Deſcendants; Bleſſings, which the Riſque of loſing excited the moſt vigorous Efforts for preſerving; to the Valour, the Prudence, the Vigilance, the Activity of his illuſtrious Son; to the Bravery and Indignation, thus inſpired into his Officers and Troops; to the unexampled Unanimity, Zeal, and Liberality of his faithful Subjects, the Nobility, the Gentry, the Clergy, the Commonalty of the Realm Let us ever acknowledge our Obligations

tions to the Merits of all these. But still let us remember, that Men are only Instruments in the Hand of the Almighty. We have owned this all along by our Prayers: let us own it sincerely in our Thanksgivings also; and not receive, without suitable Gratitude, what we begged with such uncommon Earnestness. It is just as true at this Hour, as it was then, that *except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain* *. From his Displeasure came our Danger: from his compassionate Goodness, our Deliverance. *Therefore despise not* either *the Chastenings* or the Mercies *of the Almighty. For he maketh sore and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his Hands make whole* †. It cannot be less criminal towards God than Men, it is unspeakably more, to ask Assistance, and when we have had it, not acknowledge it. He doth not indeed want our Acknowledgments: but he hath still an equal Right to them; and that he requires them not for his own sake, but for ours, is surely no Reason, why we should withhold them.

But you will say, "We do acknowledge "God's Mercy in delivering us, and will ne-

* Psalm cxxvii. 2. † Job v. 17, 18.

"ver

" ver deny it." But if after a while you never think of it more, you might almoſt as well deny it. Or if you think of it, and are not moved by it, that is worſe than forgetting it. Or ſuppoſe you have ever ſo warm a Feeling of his Favours, yet if you refuſe to make a proper Return for them, this is worſt of all. And what Return doth he demand? Some hard and unnatural, or expenſive and ruinous Service? No: the moſt reaſonable thing in itſelf, and the moſt beneficial to Us and our Fellow-Creatures, that poſſibly can be: what the Text expreſſes,

II. A firm Reſolution of virtuous Obedience. *Behold, thou art made whole: ſin no more.* God hath been gracious to you: be you dutiful to him. Sin is at all times equally abſurd and ill-deſerving. It is ſetting up our own perverſe Will againſt the Authority of our Maker and Sovereign Lord; our own Paſſions and Caprices, againſt the Wiſdom of our heavenly Father: thinking, that we can proſper in Oppoſition to the Almighty; or if not, preferring Rebellion and Miſery to Fidelity and Happineſs. But to ſin on, directly in the Face of diſtinguiſhing Mercies, juſt vouch-

ſafed,

ſafed, this is the moſt ſhocking Aggravation of the worſt thing in the World: a Crime ſo heinous, that perhaps you may reſent being thought bad enough to need a Caution againſt it. But the impotent Man, whom our Saviour healed, was not, that we know, a Sinner beyond others. And therefore, could we of theſe Nations truly ſay, that we are not ſuch neither; ſtill the Caution, given Him, would be a ſeaſonable one to Us. We have at leaſt ſinned enough to deſerve what we have ſuffered, which is more than a little. And had we deſerved nothing farther, yet, as *Elihu* remarks in the Caſe of *Job*, *Surely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I have born Chaſtiſement, I will not offend any more* *.

But, to ſee how far ſuch Advice is neceſſary for us, it will be requiſite, not to keep in Generals, but deſcend to Particulars. And they muſt be ſuch, as relate to each of us in our private Capacities: for I am not ſpeaking now to Bodies of Men, or to ſingle Perſons in high Stations. May God beſtow plentifully on all ſuch, Grace to conſider, what the Warning, *ſin no more*, directs Them to, while we conſider, what it directs Us to. And I appre-

* Job xxxiv. 31.

hend

hend the preſent Occaſion calls upon us to avoid, for time to come, four Kinds of Sin eſpecially: to diſregard Religion no more; to miſbehave towards our Rulers no more; to encourage Party-Diſputes and Contentions no more; to indulge extravagant Pleaſures and Amuſements no more.

1. To diſregard Religion no more. Perhaps this is the Nation upon Earth, where it is regarded the leaſt, (our Neglect of God's Worſhip in our Churches, our Families, our Cloſets; the impious Talk, the infidel Books, that abound every-where, afford lamentable Evidences of it) though we have confeſſedly the greateſt Bleſſings to incline us to be religious, and the moſt rational Inſtruction how to be ſo. Notwithſtanding this, who is there amongſt us, of any Age, that doth not perceive, how much commoner and opener both Indifference and Profaneneſs are grown within his own Time, within a ſmall Part of it? Who was there amongſt us lately, of any Thought, that did not ſtrongly fear we were become ſo intirely unconcerned about the Matter, that even Popery would have had no Terrors for us? God be thanked, it hath proved otherwiſe. And permit me to add, let Them be thanked alſo, by whoſe

whoſe long deſpiſed and reproached Labours, a Spirit of Piety had ſtill in ſome meaſure been kept alive: and by whoſe earneſt and ſeaſonable Exhortations an unexpected Degree of Proteſtant Zeal was principally raiſed. Do us the Juſtice then to bear it in Mind, that you wanted our Help, and you had it. The Enemies of the Government avowedly hate us for what we have done: if its Friends will not love us for it, our Caſe is hard indeed. But, however you think of Us, learn at leaſt to think of the Religion we profeſs, as the trueſt Support, indeed as an eſſential Part, of our happy Eſtabliſhment. Not that preſerving it for political Purpoſes alone will be at all ſufficient: they, who aim at no more, will come ſhort even of that. God will diſappoint them, Men will ſee through them: and Infection will ſpread from Hypocriſy, as well as Profligateneſs, though not quite ſo faſt, yet till at length the whole Frame is corrupted and deſtroyed.

You may plead, that however profane the Nation may be, we are anſwerable each for himſelf only. But indeed, ſo far as our Behaviour can properly influence, we are anſwerable beyond ourſelves. Do we then endeavour to diſcountenance Irreligion, and encou-

rage Seriouſneſs in thoſe who belong to us, in thoſe with whom we converſe? Do we, as our Saviour hath enjoined us, *confeſs Him before Men* *? Or do we not on many Occaſions outwardly appear *aſhamed of him*, while inwardly our Hearts condemn us for it?

But were we to anſwer for ourſelves alone, what Anſwer could we give? We are as good as others, perhaps. And what if others be very bad? Will that excuſe Us from being what the Word of God, and our own Conſciences, tell us we ought to be? If not, are we indeed ſuch? Is Concern for our future Happineſs, is Reverence and Love of God, the great Principle within our Breaſts? Do we really love him the better for theſe very Mercies, for which we are now met to praiſe him? We hope ſo, perhaps. But what Proof have we given of it, by ſerving him better ſince? And if none, while the Motive was freſh upon our Minds, what is to be expected afterwards, unleſs the preſent Call awaken us, as Heaven grant it may?

2. The next Point of Inſtruction is, to miſbehave towards our Rulers no more. The Connexion is inſeparable, *Fear God: honour*

* Matth. x. 32. Luke xii. 8.

the King *. *For by Him Kings reign, and Princes rule; Nobles, and all the Judges of the Earth* †. For which Reaſon we are to reſpect, not only the Perſon of our Sovereign, but, to uſe the Apoſtle's Words, *All that are in Authority* ‡. For without a Number of ſuch, Government cannot be adminiſtered. And Profeſſions of Duty to Him, with unjuſt Bitterneſs againſt thoſe whom he intruſts, and cauſeleſs Oppoſition to the Meaſures they adviſe, betray either groſs Inſincerity, or pitiable Weakneſs, or an Impetuoſity of Temper, that ſhould be better governed. This however doth not reſtrain thoſe, to whoſe Rank or Office it belongs, from uſing the faithful, though poſſibly ſometimes unpleaſing, Freedom of giving ſuch Counſel, or propoſing ſuch Laws, as public-ſpirited Prudence appears to direct. Nor doth it reſtrain any one from expreſſing, in a proper manner, his Opinion of whatever public Meaſures may conſiderably affect Him, or the Whole, provided he hath Ground to think himſelf a Judge of them. But it ought to reſtrain all Perſons from being vehement, and judging harſhly, where perhaps they are

* 1 Pet. ii. 17. † Prov. viii. 15, 16.
‡ 1 Tim. ii. 1.

unqua-

unqualified to judge at all: from indulging ſuch Behaviour, ſuch Language, or even ſuch Notions, as are injurious to Governors, or hurtful to the Ends of Government; as may excite or cheriſh Diſloyalty, or unreaſonable Diſſatisfaction, or barely promote Unconcernedneſs about thoſe, whom Providence hath ſet over Us.

How far we have been guilty of theſe things, it is much fitter that each one ſhould think ſeriouſly for himſelf, (for it is a very ſerious Matter) than that any one ſhould take upon him to tell others, eſpecially from this Place. I ſhall only ſay therefore, that every Sort of Perſons may have been guilty: ſome by wrong Compliances, and Abuſe of Power and Favour; ſome by ill-founded Complaints and Reſentments; all by diſguiſing ſelfiſh Views under plauſible Pretences. But whoever the Criminals are, the Crime is very great. Not only thoſe in Authority ſuffer by it, when they ought not, which alone is grievous Injuſtice, but the Community in general ſuffers deeply with them. The wrong Things of this Kind, which are ſaid and done, give the Ill-deſigning dreadful Advantages againſt their Superiors; and hurry the Inconſiderate, even

who mean well, into Wildneſſes almoſt incredible. Nay, the Wiſe and Good are inſenſibly cooled and alienated by them. And then is the Juncture for attempting to overturn a Conſtitution. We have felt this: and therefore we ſhall be inexcuſable, unleſs we remember it; remember to *abſtain from all Appearance* * of Undutifulneſs; to *keep our Mouths with a Bridle, while the Wicked* or the Weak *are before us* †; on no Occaſion to expect more from our Rulers, than we juſtly may from human Creatures, like ourſelves; to bear it patiently, if our moſt equitable Expectations are not always anſwered; and *accept* and acknowledge *every worthy Deed they do*, and ſurely they have done many, *with all Thankfulneſs* ‡. Acting thus, very probably, might have prevented the late Rebellion, and may prevent another.

3. A further Caution, cloſely connected with the preceding, is, to encourage Party Contentions no more. For they always break in, and uſually to a high Degree, be it ever ſo undeſigned at firſt, on the Reſpect owing to our Governors. Or could that be avoided,

* 1 Theſ. v. 22. † Pſalm xxxix. 1.
‡ Acts xxiv. 2, 3.

one Side will be tempted to patroniſe, for the ſake of Popularity, what they know, or eaſily might know, is wrong; to oppoſe what is uſeful, or even neceſſary; to conſtrue the worthieſt and wiſeſt Conduct unfairly; to prefer the Support of their Cauſe before the Service of the Public; to imagine or pretend, that the Prevalence of it will produce every deſirable Effect; when both Reaſon and Experience demonſtrate, that little, if any, Good is like to follow from it, and poſſibly much Harm. The other Side, in return, are tempted to reject what they ought to forward; to inſiſt on what they ought to give up; to oppreſs their Adverſaries by ſuperior Power; to accuſe them of being what they are not, till perhaps they provoke them into being what they would not be. And on both Sides theſe Diſputes engage Men's principal Attention to the Neglect, of their common Welfare; drive them into doing bad Actions, and countenancing bad Perſons; make foreign Friends afraid to rely upon us; and both foreign and domeſtic Enemies bold to enterpriſe againſt us. Their late Enterpriſe was chiefly founded on our Diviſions: which neither They, nor indeed We, could have ima-

gined would have ſuffered us to unite againſt them ſo ſoon, and ſo heartily, as we did. God be praiſed, who inclined our Hearts to it: but let us *ſin, no more.* Each Party ſees, that the other have ſinned: each might ſee, that they have ſinned themſelves: both muſt ſee that the Event was nearly pernicious: let us take Warning for the future.

But it will be of ſmall Advantage not to oppoſe one another, if we all agree in behaveing amiſs: and therefore,

4. The laſt Caution is, to indulge extravagant Pleaſures and Amuſements no more. It is but too viſible, how much, living intirely to Trifles and Follies hath increaſed in the upper Part of the World: and Madneſs for Diverſions and Entertainments, even in the middle and lower: together with moſt profligate Intemperance and Debauchery in the loweſt of all. Now vicious Indulgencies are deſtructive to our temporal, as well as our Spiritual Intereſts; to the Health and Strength, that ſhould labour for and defend the Public; to the Honeſty and Regularity, that ſhould ſecure private Peace and Comfort. Merely imprudent Gratifications, by devouring Time and Money, as they do beyond Imagination, deſtroy Induſtry, and propagate Poverty;

Poverty; which, we must be sensible, is making yearly frightful Advances upon us. And when Wickedness is instigated by Necessity, the worst of Consequences may justly be apprehended. Those of mean Rank are then fully ripe for any Mischief: and what Mischief might we not have dreaded from them ten Months ago, had Providence permitted the Rebels to reach our Capital? Persons of better Condition, when distressed, will too often sacrifice every other Consideration to the urgent one of supplying their Wants, real or fancied; prefer their own present Profit, sometimes a trifling Profit, before the common Safety; heighten groundless Discontents, to take Advantage of them; nay, join in Rebellion itself against their Consciences; of which we have lately had a most remarkable Example, and ingenuous Confession *. May it prove an useful Preventive!

A further great Evil is, that immoderate Lovers of Pleasure will of course favour the vilest Wretches, who contribute to their Entertainment; and too frequently depretiate the worthiest Character, if it be a grave one:

* See *Foster*'s Account of the Behaviour of the late Earl of *Kilmarnock*, after his Sentence, p. 6, 7, 10, 11, 41.

whence proceed Inconveniencies without Number. But were this deſpicable Inclination hurtful no otherwiſe; it would be extremely ſo, by taking off the Mind from Application to Things of Moment. Even in Perſons the leaſt conſiderable, Indolence, and Inattention to their proper Buſineſs, may have extenſive bad Effects: and when it grows general among ſuch, it ſenſibly impoveriſhes and weakens, and tends to ruin a Nation. But they, who are intruſted with Matters of Importance, may, not only by a Series of Neglect, but by the ill-timed Indulgence of an idle Humour for a Day or an Hour, cauſe irretrievable Miſchief to a Society, that hath purchaſed and depends on their beſt Vigilance and Induſtry: which therefore are due to it, not only in Point of Honour, but of indiſpenſable moral Obligation in the Sight of God.

Theſe, I apprehend, are the chief Particulars, in which we ſhould learn, from being made whole, to ſin no more. And every one ſhould apply them to examine and direct himſelf, not to inveigh againſt others: and remember, that the utmoſt Punctuality and Zeal in ſome Parts of his Duty, will not be accepted, as an Atonement for tranſgreſſing or overlooking any of the reſt.

III.

III. The laſt general Head, comprehended in the Advice of the Text, is, A prudent Conſideration of what may follow, if we diſregard it: *Sin no more, leſt a worſe Thing come unto thee.* Perhaps we may think, that nothing worſe can come. And ſo perhaps thought the poor Man, to whom this was ſaid firſt: for his Illneſs had been a very deplorable one. Yet our Saviour gave Him the Warning: and let Us take it alſo. Whoever goes on to offend, after receiving ſignal Mercies, is plainly a greater Sinner: and let him not doubt, but God can ſend him a heavier Puniſhment, even in this World, and make *his laſt State worſe than the firſt* *. Indeed, ſhould only what we have already felt return upon us: the Tenderneſs of a wounded Part will augment both the Fear and the Pain. And how little Probability of it ſoever we diſcern, as one dreadful Danger hath grown up out of nothing, ſo may a dreadfuller of the ſame Nature. Our Sins, if we amend not, will enfeeble and divide us yet more: our inteſtine Foes may take new Courage: our foreign ones may ſupport them better: God may

* Matt. xii. 45.

refuſe

refuſe intirely *to go forth with our Hoſts* †; and any thing may have any Effect, that he pleaſes. Hitherto we have only been waſhed by the Waves: the next time we may ſink under them: that ſurely would be worſe. And they, who have now ſuffered ſo much from us, would with Reaſon become vaſtly more formidable to us, were they to ſucceed hereafter, than if they had ſucceeded lately.

But where is the Impoſſibility, that without the Help of Enemies at home, the powerful and inveterate one, which we have abroad, may enſlave us ere long immediately to itſelf: and That without granting even the ſhort Reprieve to our Religion, Liberties, and Properties, which perhaps from the former we might hope? Our only Defence againſt both is in God's good Providence: and our only Ground of Truſt in That is, If we *ſin no more*. For freſh Provocations, it muſt be expected, will bring on ſeverer Judgments. Let us often recollect then, that He, who hath delivered us out of the Hand of our Enemies, can full as eaſily deliver us into it: and if he doth not, ſtill hath us continually in his own. Every thing

† Pſal. cviii. 11.

terrible, Fire, Famine, Peſtilence, waits on his Orders. At this inſtant we are ſuffering heavily by the laſt, though hitherto confined to our Cattle. But how much longer and more general a Ravage it may make amongſt Them, or to what other Species of Creatures it may extend at length, and whether not to our own, which of us can ſay?

But indeed, without any other Scourge at all, Sin alone, by the natural Conſequences, which Heaven hath originally annexed to it, is able to ruin us very completely. Contempt of God and our Duty may overturn on a ſudden, but muſt undermine gradually, in proportion as it prevails, every Bleſſing that we enjoy: fill every Family with Diſorders and Diſtreſſes, aboliſh mutual Faith and Confidence, open a wide Door to Fraud and Force, defeat the Execution of Juſtice, make our envied Conſtitution ineffectual to its great Ends, and turn all the Good of it into Evil: *till we are able to bear*, as was the ancient Complaint in like Circumſtances, *neither our Diſeaſes, nor their Remedies* *. The more Immorality ſpreads, the deeper Root

* Liv. Hiſt. Præf.

it

it ſtrikes: the Difficulties of checking it increaſe; the Numbers and Vigour of thoſe who endeavour to check it, leſſen. Some Diſtempers, by the Fermentation, which they excite, work their own Cure. But Wickedneſs is a Gangrene, which deſtroys the Part it ſeizes: and, if it approaches towards being univerſal, muſt end in Death. External Force, like an acute Diſeaſe, though for a time it bears down all before it, may ſtill, by the Vigour of Nature, be thrown off unexpectedly: but an internal Principle of Diſſolution, that hath corrupted the whole Maſs of Humours, admits no Relief.

Or ſuppoſe a ſinful Nation, either by ſtopping ſhort of the Extremity of Sin, or by an uncommon Delay of Divine Juſtice, neither of which can reaſonably be expected, were to eſcape temporal Ruin ever ſo long: yet there will be *a worſe*, an infinitely *worſe Thing*, *come* without fail, and that very ſoon, to every Sinner in it; the final Vengeance of God in the next Life: which will be, as it ought, peculiarly ſevere on thoſe, who *deſpiſe the Riches of his Forbearance and Long-ſuffering*; *and will*

will not know, that his Goodneſs leads them to Repentance †.

I am very ſenſible, that this may appear a comfortleſs, an intimidating Manner of ſpeaking to you: and exceedingly unſuitable to ſo joyful a Solemnity, as the preſent. But why then will not all who hear me, why will not this whole Land reſolve on that Amendment, without which no true Comfort can be adminiſtered to them? Relieve us then from the Neceſſity, for we muſt deal faithfully with you, of ſaying on Thankſgivings juſt the ſame terrifying Things, that we do on Faſts. It would afford us the higheſt Delight to omit them, on both: to ſet before you only pleaſing Views, and deſcribe your Condition in the Language of the Pſalmiſt: *Happy are the People, who are in ſuch a Caſe: yea, bleſſed are the People, who have the Lord for their God* *. It is intirely your own Fault, that Motives of Fear are ever mentioned to you. Our gracious Maker hath furniſhed us plentifully with a much better Ground of Obedience, by the numerous Mercies, which we have long enjoyed, and ſtill continue to enjoy. Think but a little of the

† Rom. ii. 4. * Pſal. cxliv. 15.

natural

natural Advantages of this Iſland; of the Civil, the Spiritual Privileges, that have diſtinguiſhed it for Ages; and what Requitals they deſerve: think but, how complicated a Bleſſing this laſt Deliverance is: and labour to be induced, as much as you can, by the Bounties of God to ſerve him. But let us be conſcious alſo, that our Imperfection, our Depravity, needs Awe, as well as Love, to move us; and uſe the joint Efforts of both, to produce in our Souls that filial Sorrow, and penitent Return to Duty, which will prove the Inlet, and is the only one, to all manner of Conſolation.

They, that thus *ſow in Tears*, are intitled to *reap in Joy* *: *their Mouth may be filled with Laughter, and their Tongue with Singing* †: they may with Propriety, not only give, as they are bound, the more ſerious Demonſtrations of pious Gratitude, but indulge every lighter Expreſſion of a chearful Heart, that Innocence and Prudence allows. Outward Rejoicing for Mercies, without inward Concern for Unworthineſs, and fixed Reſolution of virtuous Improvement, is an abſurd and inſolent, and will be a ſhort-lived Triumph.

* Pſal. cxxvi. 6. † Ver. 2.

Praiſe

Praiſe is not ſeemly in the Mouth of a Sinner: for it was not ſent him of the Lord *. But when humble and hearty Devotion hath preceded, Gladneſs and Exultation, kept clear of Exceſs and Riot, may and ſhould follow, on Occaſions like this. The Grief of our Offences ſhould be loſt, for the time, in a thankful Senſe of God's Goodneſs: a chearing Hope be entertained, that *He, who hath delivered, will deliver* §; and our Behaviour ſhew to all around us, what our Hearts feel. This was the Direction, immediately given to the *Jews*, when once they had been made ſenſible of their Tranſgreſſions, in their public Aſſembly for a Thankſgiving, on their Return from the Captivity: and I conclude with reciting it. *The Levites read in the Book, in the Law of God, and gave the Senſe, and cauſed them to underſtand the Reading. And all the People wept, when they heard the Words of the Law. Then Nehemiah the Governor, and Ezra the Prieſt, and the Levites, that taught the People, ſaid unto them, This Day is holy unto the Lord your God: mourn not, nor weep. Go your way, eat the Fat, and drink the Sweet, and ſend Portions unto*

* Ecclus. xv. 9. § 2 Cor. i. 10.

them,

*them, for whom nothing is prepared; for this Day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye ſorry, for the Joy of the Lord is your Strength. And all the People went their way, to eat and to drink, and to ſend Portions, and to make great Mirth; becauſe they had underſtood the Words, that were declared unto them**.

* Neh. viii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 12.

A

SERMON

PREACHED at the

Pariſh-Church of St. *James*, *Weſtminſter*,

January 7, 1746-7.

AND

At KING-STREET CHAPEL,

February 17, 1747-8.

Being Days appointed, by HIS MAJESTY's Proclamation, for GENERAL FASTS, on Occaſion of the War.

SERMON VIII.

PSALM CXXII. 6.

O pray for the Peace of Jeruſalem: *They ſhall proſper, that love thee.*

GOD hath planted in the Hearts of Men, and it is a ſtrong Proof of his Goodneſs to us, a Principle of tender mutual Benevolence; which Reaſon enjoins us to exert on all Occaſions: and Revelation both threatens our Tranſgreſſion of this Rule with the ſevereſt Puniſhments, and encourages our Obſervance of it by Promiſes of the moſt effectual Aſſiſtance and nobleſt Rewards. But as all Mankind is an Object too large, for the Generality of Perſons to embrace in their Affections, and for the reſt to think of actually benefiting; the Scripture hath very juſtly appropriated our *Love*, to *our Neighbour:* to every one, who is any way brought near enough to us, to be capable of receiving any Service or Mark of Kindneſs from us: according to our Saviour's moſt ra-

tional Explication of that Term *. And each Nation of the World being only a more extenſive Neighbourhood, of Perſons combined together, under one Head, for common Advantage: the Views of the ſeveral Members of it may well reach thus far; but ordinarily ſcarce farther. And therefore Love to our Country hath been ever conſidered, not merely as an important and excellent Virtue, which it always is, when genuine and judicious; but as filling the whole Compaſs of reciprocal Duty, which it uſually doth, provided we proportion it rightly to the various Relations, which we bear to each Perſon in the Society. Now this is the Affection, which the Pſalmiſt ſo warmly recommends in the Text: *Peace* being well known to ſignify, in holy Writ, all Sorts of Proſperity; and *Jeruſalem* being the Centre of Unity of the *Jewiſh* People, both in religious Affairs and Civil. *For thither the Tribes went up, to give Thanks unto the Name of the Lord: and there was the Seat of Judgment, even the Seat of the Houſe of* David †.

During the latter Part indeed of the Time, that their Government ſubſiſted, they had

* Luke x. 29, *&c.* † Pſalm cxxii. 4, 5.

moſt

moſt of them a Zeal for their Country, which excluded Charity towards the reſt of Mankind. But this was a Corruption, not a Precept, of their Religion. For no Law of any other Nation ever enjoined ſo ſtrictly both Juſtice and Mercy to Strangers, as theirs: though it did provide againſt needleſs Intercourſe with them, to prevent Imitation of their evil Cuſtoms. It is true, they were commanded to extirpate the Inhabitants of *Canaan*. But theſe were grown to ſuch a Height of monſtrous Idolatry, unnatural Luſts, and ſhocking Barbarities, as the Wiſdom of God ſaw to be incurable. And he choſe the *Iſraelites* for *his Miniſters, Revengers to execute Wrath upon them* *, that they might learn to abhor what they had been employed to puniſh. This done, their Commiſſion expired: for it reached to no other Nation. And in fact, they were as quiet Neighbours to the Heathen round them, and as dutiful Subjects to their *Chaldean*, *Perſian* and *Grecian* Maſters, as any other People. Nor did the Text more plainly require them to *pray for the Peace of* Jeruſalem, than the Prophet *Jeremiah* doth, *to ſeek the Peace of the City, whither they were*

* Rom. xiii. 4.

carried Captives, and pray unto the Lord for it *.

We need not therefore ſcruple to imbibe Love of our Country from the Sacred Writings of the *Jews*: and much leſs have we Cauſe to imagine, as ſome would perſuade us, that this is a Virtue not preſcribed to Chriſtians. It is true, that as the *Romans* had long been ravaging the World, and the *Jews* in our Saviour's Days were evidently ruining themſelves; both of them prompted to what they did by a narrow-minded and unjuſt Vehemence for their national Intereſt and Honour: he earneſtly recommended, as it was neceſſary, not the particular Paſſion, of which they had already too much; but the general Diſpoſition, which they wanted, of good Will to all Men. For that is the only ſure Foundation of ſocial Behaviour: and while it reſtrains Perſons effectually from doing any thing wrong in favour of their Country, will incite them powerfully to do every thing right. In teaching this Doctrine therefore, and indeed throughout his whole Conduct, he ſhewed the kindeſt and wiſeſt Regard to his undeſerving Fellow-Citizens: for whom, ill as

* Jer. xxix. 7.

he

he was treated by them, he fully appears to have had the moſt affectionate Concern. Witneſs his Tears and pathetic Expoſtulations: *O* Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, *thou that killeſt the Prophets, and ſtoneſt them that are ſent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not* *. *If thou hadſt known*, or as it rather ſhould be tranſlated, *O that thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy Day, the Things, which belong unto thy Peace* †. Witneſs again his peremptory Command, even after he had been crucified there, *that Repentance and Remiſſion of Sin ſhould be preached in his Name to all Nations, beginning at* Jeruſalem ‡. The ſame heroic Sympathy his great Apoſtle St. *Paul* expreſſes, after the ſevereſt Uſage, in the ſtrongeſt Manner, *for his Brethren, his Kinſmen, according to the Fleſh*, declaring ſolemnly before *Chriſt and the Holy Ghoſt, that he had great and continual Sorrow and Heavineſs in his Heart* on their Account §. He hath not indeed exhorted the Chriſtians, whom he favoured with his Epiſtles, to the Love of their ſeveral Countries: for they were

* Matth. xxiii. 37. † Luke xix. 41, 42.
‡ Luke xxiv. 47. § Rom. ix. 1, 2, 3.

all under one Dominion, and designed by Providence to remain so. He hath not exhorted Magistrates to study the Welfare of those, over whom they presided: for there were no believing Magistrates; and it might have been deemed presumptuous, and ill intended, if he had laid down Directions for others; or foretold explicitly so soon, that the Gospel would come to have Authority on its Side. But he hath sufficiently, though obliquely, intimated to Rulers, what their Office requires of them: and urged private Subjects most convincingly and awfully to such Behaviour, as will render Communities quiet and flourishing.

Love of our Country therefore is an undoubted Christian Duty. And we shall both be directed and encouraged in the Performance of it, if we consider, as the Text leads us,

I. Wherein the Public Welfare consists.
II. How we are to express our Regard to it.
III. What Advantages will flow from expressing it as we ought.

I. Wherein it consists. Now plainly the Happiness of any Society is that, which the Persons, who compose it, do or may enjoy in

it. And therefore wide Extent of Dominion contributes nothing to the Happineſs of a State: for ſuch unwieldy Bodies are ſeldom or never kept long in good Health. Much leſs is military Glory the Point to be had in View, any farther than is needful to ſecure a peaceable Poſſeſſion of all important national Rights. For ſuch a Purpoſe, War is lawful: and they, who hazard their Lives in it, worthy of high Honour. But in all Caſes it is accompanied with dreadful Evils: of which we are apt to conſider the heavy Expence, as if it were the only one; and forget the Sufferings, and miſerable Deaths, of ſuch Multitudes of human Creatures, though every one of them is a Murder, committed by the Authors of this Calamity; beſides the innumerable Diſtreſſes of Relations and Friends, the Devaſtations, Inhumanities, and Wickedneſſes of every Kind, which never fail to be its Attendants. Then if the Event of all ſhould turn, as God grant it always may, to the Diſadvantage of the Aggreſſors, here is much Miſchief brought on their Neighbours, only to bring more on themſelves. Or ſuppoſe their Succeſs be ever ſo great, the Injury done by them will be great in proportion: they will receive

little

little real Good from it, and have paid very dear for that, even in this World: and in another, God will take effectual Care, that no one ſhall have Cauſe to rejoice in having broken his Laws, and uſed his Creatures ill.

The next Pre-eminence, commonly imagined to conſtitute the Proſperity of a State, is that of Wealth; and its uſual Source, Commerce. Now undoubtedly Riches are a valuable Inſtrument, both of common Defence, and ſeparate Enjoyment. But then they are alſo a dangerous Incentive to Luxury and Debauchery: by which Perſons grievouſly diſtreſs themſelves, their Families, their Acquaintance, the Public, in many Ways, alas! but too well known. And many, whom Affluence doth not immediately ſeduce into groſs Vices, it leads however to Indolence and Ignorance, to the Admiration of Trifles and Follies, and thence to the Neglect, and afterwards the Contempt and Ridicule, of virtuous and prudent Conduct. This wrong Taſte being once formed, high Honours and pompous Appearances are thought neceſſary by ſome; the idleſt Gratifications and Vanities, by others: the Means to procure and ſupport them muſt be found: and when their Incomes fail, as the largeſt,

with

with such Management, will fail; they must supply the Defect by any Baseness or Iniquity, that they can; at least any such, as general Practice, in a Time of general Corruption, makes a shift to keep in tolerable Countenance. This Example in the upper Part of the World is followed of course by the lower: their Industry lessens, their Expences increase, their Principles are depraved, they and their Families ruined; they seek for Relief in Fraud, Violence, or Intemperance, and plunge themselves by each deeper in Misery. Even of the Regular and Diligent, the home Labour is much of it imployed on Things useless or hurtful; the foreign Trade, in importing Superfluities. This Procedure must as necessarily empoverish the Public, as it must any single Person, or Number of Persons: for the whole Number of them is the Public. And in such Circumstances, whatever present Shew of Strength and Plenty there may be, is fallacious: like the over-full and florid Look of a diseased Body, caused by a too indulgent Regimen; and under the superficial Appearance of redundant Health, betraying to the Skilful evident Symptoms of the most fatal Distempers, already begun, if not far advanced.

Another

Another Thing, conſtantly and juſtly mentioned, as a main Ingredient in political Happineſs, is Liberty: an invaluable Privilege; but often miſunderſtood, and ſtill oftener abuſed. Abſolute Liberty, to do what we will, is abſolute Power. If one alone, or a few, have this, the reſt are in Slavery: if all have it, the whole muſt be in Confuſion. Liberty therefore, in order to preſerve it, muſt be reſtrained by Law, in whatever Caſes the Exerciſe of it may affect others. And Regulations by Authority are neceſſary, not only to prevent mutual Encroachments, but to aſcertain each Perſon's Claims and Expectations; and to inſtruct every one, what he is to do, and what to avoid, for the common Benefit. Now legal Proviſions for theſe Ends ought to be juſt and equitable, ſuited to the State of Things, known and fixed. And thoſe, which a Nation makes for itſelf by its choſen Repreſentatives, are ſo very much the moſt likely to have theſe Properties; that living, as We do, under a Conſtitution purpoſely contrived for making, on every Occaſion, ſuch as we want, is the greateſt of Civil Bleſſings, provided we turn it not, by our own Fault, into a Curſe.

But

But to prevent this, beſides Care and Impartiality in framing Laws, there muſt be a general Obſervation of them: elſe they were enacted in vain. Even ſuch, as are in their Nature the moſt variable, muſt be obſerved while they laſt. For not only the total Neglect of them will fruſtrate their beneficial Intent, and open a Door to yet worſe Irregularities; but the partial, beſides having this unhappy Effect in its Degree, will introduce a very dangerous Kind of Inequality: good Subjects muſt be Loſers by their Obedience, and bad ones Gainers by their Tranſgreſſion.

Still more eſſentially doth the common Welfare conſiſt in the Practice of ſuch Rules of Conduct, as are in themſelves, and therefore always, obligatory: in abſtaining from Violence, Fraud, promiſcuous Lewdneſs, Intemperance, Extravagance; in performing carefully the proper Buſineſs of our ſeveral Stations; in providing diligently what is needful for ourſelves, and thoſe who belong to us; in relieving the Poor with prudent Bounty; in behaving with Reſpect to Superiors, with Condeſcenſion to Inferiors, with Friendlineſs to Equals, with peculiar Affection to thoſe, whom either Nature or voluntary

tary Ties have united to us more closely. These are the main Things, on which social Happiness depends. A Nation may be small and weak and poor: and yet the Persons, who compose it, may enjoy their Beings very comfortably. But however great and powerful and rich it is, Folly and Wickedness will bring Misery on each Particular; which, put together, is general Misery: and will besides gradually weaken and dissolve the whole. For the principal Supports of a State confessedly are, the Numbers, and Health, and Strength, and Industry, and Probity, and Concord, of the several Members of it: all which, good Morals promote, and bad undermine.

But as human Laws, in Multitudes of Instances, cannot punish, and much less prevent, the Breach of moral Obligations: the chief Security of Regard to them, in any Society, must proceed from Reverence of the Divine Laws. And as the Precepts of Christianity are vastly more determinate, accompanied with Communications of far greater moral Powers, and enforced by Sanctions of unspeakably stronger Terror to Sinners, and sweeter Consolation to pious Minds, than the

Dictates

Dictates of Nature, unassisted by Revelation: establishing a practical Belief of the Gospel is securing and completing the Provision for National Felicity. This will, in all Cases, restrain Men from what is wrong, animate them in what is right, make them easy and happy under every Suffering. Besides, Profession of the same Faith and Hope, and Participation of the same Worship and Sacraments, must give so peculiar a Sacredness and Endearment to the Bonds of civil Union, that Zeal in the common Cause of our Country and our Religion, at once, will be intrepidly active, and indefatigably persevering *. *For my Brethren and Companions sakes, I will wish thee Prosperity: yea, because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek to do thee Good* †. Then to all the Advantages, flowing naturally from Piety, we cannot doubt but God will superadd his Blessing, and withhold it from the Profane: for his own Words are, *Them that honour me, I will honour: and they, that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed* ‡. Nor must a further Consideration ever be omitted,

* Dion. Halic. Ant. Rom. l. ii. c. 23.
† Psal. cxxii. 8, 9. ‡ 1 Sam. ii. 30.

for

for it is a very important one: that unleſs true Religion be cheriſhed and practiſed, falſe Religion will inſinuate itſelf and prevail. For the Mind of Man muſt have ſome: as the Experience of all Ages proves, and our own particularly; amongſt whom the Increaſe of Infidelity is accompanied with that of Popery: an Evil, which ought to be highly formidable to us; as it muſt of courſe, if ever it gain Power enough, not only overturn our preſent happy Eſtabliſhment, but introduce the cruelеſt Tyranny over the Souls and Bodies and Eſtates of Men.

Having now ſeen, wherein the public Welfare conſiſts, we ſhould all with great Seriouſneſs conſider,

II. How we are to expreſs our Regard to it. The Manner, preſcribed in the Text, according to our Tranſlation, is, *Praying for the Peace of* Jeruſalem: according to others, Aſking or inquiring concerning its Peace. Both imply, having it much at Heart. And whatever we have deſervedly at Heart, ought jointly to engage our watchful Solicitude, and our earneſt Petitions. I ſhall begin with the firſt.

Pretences

Pretences to public Spirit, if they are not ſincere, uſually cover hurtful Deſigns. Therefore we ſhould examine ourſelves cloſely, for Self-deceit is wonderfully frequent, *of what Spirit we* indeed *are* * : whether private Paſſions or Intereſts, concealed under ſpecious Appearances, do not influence our Diſcourſe and Behaviour, perhaps our very Thoughts. And, ſo far as we have need to know, we ſhould make the ſame Inquiry concerning others alſo: forming our Opinions of them with Charity, yet with Caution. But, ſuppoſing the common Good be ever ſo really Our Object and Theirs: unleſs we underſtand well the Tendencies of Things, we may do it irreparable Harm, inſtead of furthering it: and therefore ſhould always be, according to St. *James*'s admirable Direction, *Swift to hear, ſlow to ſpeak, ſlow to Wrath* † : impartially diligent to learn the Truth, where it is our Buſineſs to judge and act; backward to meddle, where it is not; reaſonable and moderate in all Matters. But let us conſider our Duty more diſtinctly, in relation to the ſeveral Articles, that were ſpecified under the preceding Head.

* Luke ix. 55. † James i. 19.

As Defence againſt Enemies is an eſſential Ingredient in publick Happineſs: Rulers are bound to provide for it with Vigilance, and Subjects to contribute to it with Chearfulneſs; far from repining at neceſſary Burthens, though heavy ones. But we ought to oppoſe with double Vigour, from Principle as well as Intereſt, the deliberate, and habitual, and perfidious, and inſolent Diſturbers of Mankind: yet always remembring, that the only lawful Aim, even in the juſteſt War, is an equitable Concluſion of it. *The Lord give Strength unto his People, the Lord give his People the Bleſſing of Peace* * *!*

Again: as national Wealth, and private Plenty of the Conveniencies of Life, are deſirable in Communities, but Luxury and Extravagance deſtructive to them: all Perſons, in their Stations, ought ſo to promote the former, as to diſcourage the latter at the ſame time: which they will do moſt ſucceſsfully, by ſetting Examples to others of decent Frugality, and Attention to their own Affairs; by honouring worthy Characters, though in mean Circumſtances; and expreſſing, in every proper Way, Diſlike and Contempt of Baſeneſs, Debauchery,

* Pſal. xxix. 10.

Profuſion,

Profuſion, Admiration of undeſerving Things, Neglect of important ones; be they, who are guilty of ſuch Faults, ever ſo diſtinguiſhed by their Rank or Accompliſhments.

Further: as Liberty is a Bleſſing of ineſtimable Value in Society, it ought to be aſſerted with the utmoſt Reſolution and Watchfulneſs, not only againſt open Aſſaults, but every Practice, that may ſecretly and ſilently impair it: yet with religious Care, neither to *uſe* it, nor unwarily aſſiſt others to *uſe* it, *for a Cloke of Maliciouſneſs* *; nor hazard the Deſtruction of it, by Attempts of improving it to a viſionary Perfection. Therefore Power, in a requiſite Degree, muſt both be allowed and diligently ſupported: They, in whoſe Hands it is placed, muſt both be obeyed and humbly reſpected, *not only for Wrath, but alſo for Conſcience Sake* †; even the Subordinate, much more the Supreme: their whole Conduct muſt be viewed with Modeſty and Candour; their good Actions and Intentions acknowledged with due Thankfulneſs; their Miſtakes and Failings, imagined or real, born with that Mildneſs, of which we have All Need, to excuſe our own. And the ſame equitable Tem-

* 1 Pet. ii. 16. † Rom. xiii. 5.

per ſhould always be preſerved between private Perſons, one towards another; were their Differences about public Affairs of ever ſuch Moment, whereas they are frequently nominal or trifling; and were they ever ſo ſure of being in the right, whereas poſſibly both of them have Reaſon to diſtruſt it. This is the Method, and it is the only one, by which we can ever hope to ſee *Jeruſalem built as a City, that is at Unity in itſelf* *.

Further yet: as good Laws, and the Obſervation of them, are neceſſary to the public Welfare; all, who have a Share in Legiſlature, ought to contrive or aſſent to ſuch, and oppoſe others, without ſuffering any Conſideration to bias them: all Magiſtrates ought to execute them with Uprightneſs and Courage, yet with Humanity; and all Subjects, to obey them diſintereſtedly, and procure Obedience to them zealouſly.

But the Laws of Morality require peculiar Attention, for our Country's Good, as well as our own. Every Perſon, who tranſgreſſes theſe, *teaches* his Neighbour, *teaches* his Family, *an evil Leſſon againſt himſelf* †, in Points of the greateſt Conſequence. And every Govern-

* Pſalm cxxii. 3. † Eccluſ. ix. 1.

ment,

ment, which connives at ſuch Tranſgreſſions, when it can ſafely puniſh them, connives at the Ruin of the People intruſted to its Care. But eſpecially every free Government, guilty of ſo culpable Remiſſneſs, be it to court Popularity, be it to ſerve what preſent Turn it will, undermines the only Ground it hath to ſtand upon. For without Virtue, Liberty cannot ſubſiſt.

Nor indeed without Piety can Virtue ſubſiſt. For our good Affections are ſo weak, our bad Inclinations ſo vehement, and the Temptations of the World ſo numerous and inticing, that we need every poſſible Preſervative. And evidently the Fear of God is the moſt awful Reſtraint from doing ill: and the Love of God the moſt delightful Inducement to do well. True Religion therefore muſt be eſtabliſhed by the Authority of the Legiſlature, but with the tendereſt Regard to ſcrupulous Conſciences: and upheld in Reputation by the Countenance and Example of the Great. Its Miniſters muſt be induſtrious, and their Superiors muſt ſee that they are, in teaching and defending it, and adorning their Doctrine by reſpectable and amiable Behaviour. Its Profeſſors muſt be aſſiduous Attendants on its Exerciſes

in the Congregation, and ſerious Practiſers of its Injunctions at home.

But particularly, in both Places, they muſt be earneſt with God for their Country's Proſperity, and fervently *pray for the Peace of Jeruſalem.* Many can do little elſe: but all can do ſo much for it. In ſome of our Endeavours to ſerve the Public we may err: in this we are ſure to be right. Often we know not, what is beſt for it: Our heavenly Father always doth. Poſſibly in Times of Difficulty and Danger we may be tempted to deſpair of the Commonwealth: Praying for it will remind us, that its Fate is not in the Hands of Men, but of the Almighty. In all times, Reſentments, Intereſts, Prejudices, frequently blind and miſlead us: devout Applications to Heaven will compoſe our Paſſions, purify our Intentions, obtain us Light to guide our Steps, and enlarge our Views. Perhaps we have been diligent enough, or more than enough, in the Uſe of other Means, conducive, as we imagined, to public Good: but have never, humbly and heartily, uſed this. And yet, if we believe a righteous Judge of the World, we muſt ſurely believe, that he takes Notice of the Addreſſes, which his poor Creatures, with

pious

pious Affections, offer up to him. Or could we doubt it otherwiſe, we are fully aſſured of it in his Sacred Word. Not that naming our Wants informs him, or Acts of ſervile Submiſſion delight him, or unfit Importunities prevail on him: but that praying *in Spirit and in Truth* *, while it ſeems intended to influence Him only, hath a powerful Influence on Us: and by ſtrengthening the Senſe it expreſſes, how dependent we are on his Mercy, and what Qualifications are needful to obtain it, fits us at the ſame time to receive it, and grow better by it: whereas beſtowing his Favours on thoſe, who are too negligent of him to aſk for them, might neither be ſuitable to the Holineſs of his Nature, and the Honour of his Government, nor indeed contribute to their final Advantage. Why then ſhould not we addreſs ourſelves to the Lord of all, not in outward Form only, but inward Reality; not merely at diſtant Seaſons appointed for it, like this, but every Day of our Lives; that he would graciouſly protect the Community, of which we are Members, and inſtruct and excite us to perform properly our Duty towards it? His own Declaration, even after he had

* John iv. 23.

promiſed a Bleſſing, is: *I will yet for this be inquired of by the Houſe of* Iſrael, *to do it for them* *. And the Direction of his Prophet is, *Ye, that make mention of the Lord, keep not Silence, and give him no Reſt, till he eſtabliſh, and till he make* Jeruſalem *a Praiſe in the Earth* †.

Affectionate Vigilance therefore to do each his Part for the Service of the Whole, and conſtant Prayer, that God would *proſper the* united *Work of our Hands* ‡, are the genuine Demonſtrations of that Regard, which we owe to the publick Welfare. Let us now conſider,

III. What Advantages will flow from expreſſing it in this due Manner. *They ſhall proſper that love thee.* Worldly Proſperity is deſigned to partake of the Uncertainty of all worldly Things: but, ſo far as any thing on our Part can ſecure it, a virtuous and pious public Spirit muſt. Princes, Magiſtrates, Teachers of Religion, military Men, private Perſons of all Ranks and Profeſſions, who thus expreſs the Love of their Country, will be loved by it, and love one another. Such Union

* Ezek. xxxvi. 37. † Iſai. lxii. 6, 7.
‡ Pſal. xc. 17.

will

will give them both the higheſt Pleaſure, and the greateſt poſſible Strength: nothing will be done to betray or thwart the general Intereſt, but every thing imaginable to promote it: they will be bold in Dangers, perſevere through Difficulties, furniſh mutual Aſſiſtance at any Hazard: Allies will know they can truſt them; Enemies will reſpect and dread them. Indeed they will have no Enemies, but ſuch as oppoſe Truth and Right: and therefore, when they are driven to War, they will conſider themſelves as fighting the Battles of God. But uſually they will enjoy Peace, at home as well as abroad, and taſte the Comforts of it without Allay: each delighting in the other's Good; each feeling the Tranquillity, the Wealth, the Honour of the Community, as his own; and rejoicing with humble Thankfulneſs, that His Share in the Production of it hath not been wanting. If ſuch Happineſs be ſeldom ſeen, the Reaſon is, that ſuch Diſpoſitions towards it are ſeldom general. But let them be ever ſo uncommon, and Affairs for want of them ever ſo unproſperous; whoever ſacredly preſerves them in himſelf, and faithfully exerts them when he can, *his Soul ſhall proſper*, as

St.

St. *John* expreſſes it *: be filled with the Conſolation, that he hath meant and endeavoured well, though ſurrounded with Examples and Temptations to the contrary; and that none of the Calamities, that have happened or may happen, can be laid to his Charge. Were he to be intirely deſerted by other Men, he would ſupport himſelf by our Saviour's Reflexion: *Behold, the Hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye ſhall be ſcattered, every Man to his own, and ſhall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, becauſe the Father is with me* †. Some, however, in the worſt of Times, will probably bear witneſs to him on Earth: but God will certainly look down upon him with Approbation from Heaven; and bleſs him with a pleaſing Conſciouſneſs of his Favour, the Foretaſte of future Reward.

Let us now, on the other hand, contemplate the Effects, I do not ſay of downright Ill-will to the Public, which few perhaps can be wicked enough to harbour knowingly, but of Indifference, and preferring other Conſiderations to its Advantage. If Perſons in Stations of Truſt, ſupreme or ſubordinate, regard Empire, abſolute Power, Profit, Pleaſure, Indo-

* 3 John, ver. 2. † John xvi. 32.

lence,

lence, as their Felicity: Inferiors will in proportion be ſacrificed, oppreſſed, exhauſted, neglected. If theſe Inferiors are principally intent on their own private Gratifications of any Kind: even where they have no Share in the Government, they will hurt it by ſerving it remiſſly or unfaithfully, and be miſerable by unwilling Subjection. But where the Government is mixed, and divided between the Sovereign, the Nobles, and the Repreſentatives of the Commonalty; as it cannot be carried on at all in that Form, without Profeſſions, on every Side, of a patriot Spirit: ſo in the Degree, in which theſe Profeſſions are falſe, there will be a wide Door open for ſupine Miſmanagement, ſelfiſh Projects, Corruption, Treachery: the vileſt of Men will ſhelter themſelves under plauſible Appearances and favourite Names; and be ſupported by Parties, which they have artfully raiſed or careſſed. At the ſame time, they, who think they have the tendereſt Love for their Country, perhaps will find on Reflexion, that in truth they love only the Faction, in which they have liſted: or though it be their Country; if they have not had Tenderneſs enough for it, to examine coolly what Conduct its Intereſts require, they

may accelerate its Ruin, by increasing the Fierceness of Contention, and lending the Reputation of their good Meaning to colour over the bad Designs of others. Free Nations therefore, as they are the happiest beyond Comparison, if the general Advantage be the general Object: so they are peculiarly uncomfortable, and exposed to Danger from within and without, if Divisions inflame Men one against another, or the Attention of each be confined to himself.

Still the *Wise in their Generation* * may imagine, that however impossible it be for the Whole to prosper without the mutual Affection of the Parts, They shall prosper the better for throwing off a Principle, that will be always interfering with their Interests or Inclinations. But they cannot attempt to throw it off, or even contradict it in a single Instance, without severely condemning themselves in their Hours of Recollection. Or if they could, they will be detected, in spight of all Disguise, and abhorred by others, and most by the Worthiest: which gives the hardest Hearts much greater Uneasiness, than they are willing to own. Besides, through the Mercy of Pro-

* Luke xvi. 8.

vidence their wicked Schemes often fail of anſwering their Ends: and firſt to do wrong, and then be diſappointed of their Aim in it, is double Ignominy. Puniſhment alſo not uncommonly overtakes even the ſecureſt Criminal. But ſuppoſing the ſelfiſh Wretch to ſucceed: that Succeſs will tempt or provoke many more to imitate him in hurtful Deſigns and unfair Methods. If they act in Oppoſition to him, he may ſuffer, as he deſerves, by the Example he hath ſet: if they act in Conjunction with him, ere long ſomewhat will diſunite them. Or however, bad Precedents naturally produce worſe, and ſo they multiply continually; till at laſt the Authors and Encouragers of Miſchief are in their Turn involved in it. But were they to eſcape for Life, yet their Poſterity, whoſe Advancement perhaps is the main Point, which they have in View, muſt partake, it may be largely, in whatever the Commonwealth is brought to ſuffer: beſides the hereditary Diſgrace of ſpringing from ſuch Anceſtors. And, if ill People of every Rank would conſider, what Figures their Predeceſſors in Wickedneſs make now in daily Talk; and are likely to make

here-

hereafter in Hiſtory, if they be of Conſequence enough; and in how very different a Light Men of Probity are ſeen, when the tranſient Miſts, that Artifice, Prepoſſeſſion and Reſentment have raiſed, are diſperſed: ſurely it muſt have a beneficial Influence on their Conduct.

Or if none of theſe Conſiderations can affect them, there is yet another of infinite Moment. This Life, at beſt, is ſhort: and moſt of the buſy Actors on the Stage of the World have probably but a ſmall Part of it to come, before a ſtrict Account of their Behaviour in it is demanded. And will it be well for us then, think we, that, for the ſake of Purpoſes not to be owned, we have brought unjuſt Reproach, Uneaſineſs, Diſtreſs on our Brethren; and diſquieted, weakened, impoveriſhed, undone our common Parent, whom Nature and Reaſon and Revelation jointly require us to love and to ſerve? Or muſt it not be inexpreſſible Happineſs, for thoſe in low Stations to have diſcharged the Duties of them with faithful Affection, both to their Rulers and their Fellow-Subjects: and for thoſe in the higheſt to be able to ſay, with the excellent

Jewiſh

Jewiſh Governor, *Think upon me, O my God, for Good, according to all that I have done for this People* * ?

If there be ſolid Motives, let us all be moved by them: firſt, to uſe the utmoſt Caution, that we do no Harm to our Country; next to try, what Service we can do it: but eſpecially to endeavour, for that we every one of us can, by virtuous Lives, united Hearts, and fervent Prayers, to call down the Divine Benediction on our national Counſels and Undertakings. If indeed we conſider worldly Appearances only, we have great Cauſe to fear: if we reflect on our many heinous Iniquities, we have ſtill much greater Cauſe. But when we call to mind, what Deliverances God hath often and lately beſtowed on us, what Warnings and what Time he hath given us to repent, how ſlow and unwilling he appears to let our Enemies proceed to our total Deſtruction, it cannot but kindle in our Breaſts a moſt reviving Perſuaſion, indeed *a full Aſſureance of Hope* †, that would we but yet be unanimous and religious, we might yet by his Bleſſing be ſafe and proſperous. And may

* Neh. v. 19. † Heb. vi. 11.

the

the Lord ſo bleſs us, that we may ſee Jeruſalem *in Proſperity all our Life long* * *: but let Them be confounded and turned backward, as many as have evil Will at* Sion †.

* Pſal. cxxviii. 6. † Pſal. cxxix. 5.

A

SERMON

PREACHED at the

Pariſh-Church of St. *James*, *Weſtminſter*,

April 25, 1749.

Being the Day of THANKSGIVING to ALMIGHTY GOD for the PEACE.

SERMON IX.

PSAL. XXIX. 10.

—*The Lord ſhall give his People the Bleſſing of Peace.*

WE are met this Day to thank God for a Mercy, that hath long been the Object of our earneſt Wiſhes, and ſolemn Prayers; that we have often had but ſmall Hope of obtaining, and yet now have poſſeſſed many Months, with an increaſing Proſpect of its Continuance: on which Account our Joy is ſtill more reaſonable, though it muſt, from the Conſtitution of our Nature, be leſs warmly felt, than it was at firſt. Accordingly we have juſt been expreſſing it in the Divine Preſence. And Inſtruction from this Place was not previouſly neceſſary, to excite our Gratitude for a Benefit, ſo viſible and ſo important. But it may contribute, not a little, to fix in our Breaſts a

more durable Senſe of what we have acknowledged: and, which is the End of all, direct us to ſuch Behaviour, as will ſecure and improve the Happineſs, we enjoy.

I ſhall therefore at preſent,

I. Set before you the *Bleſſing of Peace.*

II. Shew you, that it is the *Gift of God.*

III. Preſs you to remember, that only *his People* are intitled to it: and conſequently to conſider, whether We are ſuch; and to labour that we may, in the higheſt Degree.

I. I ſhall ſet before you the *Bleſſing of Peace.*

Man appears, from the harmleſs Make of his Body, the converſable Diſpoſition of his Mind, the Tenderneſs of his Affections, the Sovereignty of his reflecting Principle, the Neceſſity of Aſſiſtance in his numerous Wants, and the Rules of Life preſcribed him by expreſs Revelation, to be formed for a ſocial inoffenſive Creature. Now the natural State of each Being is the happy one. And the Happineſs of Peace is like that of Health: it ſpreads

ſpreads through the whole of the Civil, as that doth of the Animal Conſtitution; and furniſhes Vigour and Pleaſure to every Part, without being diſtinctly perceived in one more than another: for which Reaſon we are apt to overlook the Felicity of both, till the Loſs of them for a time renews our Senſe of their Value; and even ſuch Experience uſually doth not long preſerve it in our Memory. Therefore to diſcern ſufficiently the Advantages of Peace, we muſt recollect the Miſeries of War.

To theſe we ſeldom attend farther, than we immediately feel them. And the Generality feel only the Expence: which indeed is a ſore Evil, and hath been for many Years paſt, and muſt be for many to come, a heavy Burthen to us. Perſons of low Degree are ſadly ſtraitned by it in their Enjoyment of the common Comforts and Neceſſaries of Life. Their Superiors, it is true, need only undergo a Retrenchment of their Superfluities: which they might bear, if they would, without much Uneaſineſs, or any Harm. But as too many of them are pleaſed to reckon their Grandeur and Luxury, their Follies and their Vices, the moſt

inſeparable Privileges of their Rank; they muſt, by retaining theſe, be diſtreſſed equally with others, when the Demands of the State are larger than ordinary. And as their uſual Reſource is the very bad one, of ſupplying a Fund for Extravagance and Immorality, by refuſing Acts of Piety, Charity, and Juſtice; they force Multitudes round them to ſuffer with them and for them. Frequently indeed the Load of Taxes may not be the Cauſe of this diſhonourable Behaviour: but even then it is a plauſible Pretence and Excuſe for it. Nor doth the Miſchief ſtop at particular Perſons: but the Public, exhauſted by Payments, and ſunk under Debts, becomes incapable of exerting itſelf, even for its own Preſervation, when future Occaſions require.

Yet, melancholy as theſe Things are, an Article much more ſhocking, and which ought to be the firſt in our Thoughts, is that of the various and continual Toils and Hardſhips, that muſt be endured by ſuch Numbers of poor Creatures, expoſing themſelves in Defence of others, through ſo long a Courſe of Time: the Loſs of ſo many Thouſands of Lives by Sickneſs and in Battle; the Grief of ſo many Relations and Friends, the Miſeries of ſo many deſtitute

deſtitute Families: Part of theſe, our Fellow-ſubjects; not a few of them poſſibly very dear to one or other of us; a ſecond Part, our Allies; the reſt, called indeed Enemies: but it may be ſcarce any of them in Fault for that Enmity, how much ſoever their Rulers are; and all of them, in Truth, our Brethren; of the ſame Blood, and, in Eſſentials, the ſame Faith, though taught them with a Mixture of dangerous Errors.

Further ſtill: War not only weakens and afflicts a Community in theſe Reſpects, but interrupts the Freedom of Commerce, retards the Propagation of Knowlege, prevents uſeful Improvements, takes off the public Attention from domeſtic Concerns, furniſhes Occaſion for Abuſes, obſtructs the Remedy of Inconveniencies, till they grow inveterate and hard to cure; in ſhort, diſorders and unhinges the whole Syſtem of Civil Affairs. Then beſides, which is a vaſtly more alarming Conſideration yet, all the Time that Hoſtilities laſt, who can tell how they may end? And had ours ended, as they eaſily might, in our being abſolutely overcome, and obliged to accept the Victors Terms,——what would they have been!

But War is alſo a State of no leſs Wickedneſs, than Calamity and Terror. Whenever it breaks out; one Side, at leaſt, muſt have acted grievouſly contrary to Humanity and Juſtice; contrary too, in all Likelihood, to ſolemn Treaties: and that from no better Motives, than little Reſentments, groundleſs or diſtant Fears, Eagerneſs of gaining unneceſſary Advantages, reſtleſs Ambition, falſe Glory, or Wantonneſs of Power. To ſuch deteſtable Idols are whole Armies and Nations deliberately ſacrificed: though every Suffering, thus cauſed, is a heinous Crime; and every Death, a Murder. Nor will the Side, which at firſt is more innocent, fail in the Progreſs to be guilty of many ſhocking Tranſgreſſions, in common with the other. The whole Body of a People are apt to grow uncharitable, unpitying, implacable: and the Soldiery will plunge of courſe into Cruelty, Rapine, Profaneneſs, Lewdneſs, Intemperance: not to add, that when the poor Wretches have once changed the ordinary Employments of Life for this, they will be in great Danger of never ſettling honeſtly and ſoberly to them again. Some of theſe Things, to worldly

or

or inconſiderate Minds, may appear ſmall Matters. But every benevolent, or merely prudent Perſon, will eſteem them very great ones: and every pious Heart will moſt ſeriouſly mourn, that *the worthy Name, by which we are called, is blaſphemed among the Gentiles* *, through the Sins, and peculiarly the Enmities, of thoſe who profeſs the Goſpel; inſtead of its producing that *Glory to God, Peace on Earth, and Good-will amongſt Men*, which Angels proclaimed at our Saviour's Birth †.

Still this dreadful Evil, big with ſo many more, becomes, by the obſtinate Iniquity of Men, ſometimes unavoidable. It muſt be the Will of the common Father of All, that Societies, as well as ſingle Perſons, be reſtrained from committing material Injuries: elſe deſtructive ones would be committed perpetually. Now certainly amicable Methods are to be tried in the firſt Place: but often the only effectual Method of Reſtraint is by Arms: and then, *the Miniſter of God*, the ſupreme Power, *muſt not bear the Sword in vain* §. Often again, Treaties made to ſupport Allies,

* James ii. 7. Rom. ii. 24. † Luke ii. 14.
§ Rom. xiii. 4.

if

if unjuſtly attacked, are probable Means of preſerving Peace: and when that proves otherwiſe, the Aſſiſtances promiſed muſt be given, in order to reſtore it. But above all, when a Nation is directly attacked itſelf, Defence is undeniably neceſſary. And our Caſe, in the late War, was compounded of all theſe. We have therefore the Comfort, that our undertaking it was juſtifiable: and our Manner of carrying it on, I truſt, no way peculiarly blameable. But it could never be lawful to refuſe any equitable, any tolerable Conditions of Agreement, for putting an End to ſo much Guilt and Miſery. Whether thoſe, which we have accepted, are deſirable, is not a Queſtion to be diſcuſſed here. You have decided it for yourſelves in the Affirmative, by joining in this Morning's Service: and the People in general have ſhewn their joyful Concurrence in the ſame Opinion. If ſome well-meaning and able Perſons have thought otherwiſe, Diverſities of Judgments are always to be expected in ſuch Matters: and if the Ill-wiſhers to our happy Eſtabliſhment are ſorry and angry, we have the more Reaſon to be glad. Let us therefore proceed to obſerve,

II.

II. That the *Bleſſing of Peace* is *God's Gift.*

This will need only a ſhort Proof: but requires a much more ſerious and practical Conſideration, than we commonly allow it. Every Enjoyment is from His Bounty: every Suffering, His Infliction. The whole Series of Cauſes and Effects, all the Connexions of all Things, were originally appointed, and are continually ſuperintended by Him. He brings forth, in each Generation, ſuch Perſons, to act, according to their own free Choice, their various Parts on the Theatre of Life, as he foreſees will anſwer, ſometimes by their great Abilities and good Diſpoſitions, ſometimes by the contrary, his holy Purpoſes of Judgment or of Mercy. And the Influence of this one Arrangement on the Reſtoration of our preſent Tranquillity, may have been, and probably hath been, unſpeakably great. But be the Tempers, Qualifications, and Deſigns of Men what they will: he can, unperceived by themſelves, put Thoughts into their Minds, to incite, withhold, divert them to another Object, juſt as he pleaſes. Then beſides,

beſides, the intire Frame of inanimate Nature, as it was produced, is alſo actuated by Him: and he could by its original Formation, or can now by the ſlighteſt Change in the ſmalleſt Part of it, occaſion, obſtruct, alter to any Degree, the moſt important Events. And laſtly, the ſame wiſe and gracious Motives, which induced him to make the World, muſt certainly induce him to be attentive to it. And the Attention of an infinite Mind muſt comprehend the Regulation of every thing, even the ſmalleſt: but Affairs of ſuch momentous Conſequence, as Peace and War, cannot fail to occupy a diſtinguiſhed Place in the Scheme of Providence.

Theſe Deductions of Reaſon our Condition of late Years hath obliged me more than once to lay before you: but ſtill they need to be inculcated. Paſſages of Scripture too, confirming them, I have produced to you in great Numbers: but it is very eaſy, and would God it were not neceſſary, to add yet more. *I form the Light, and create Darkneſs: I make Peace, and create Evil: I the Lord do all theſe things* *. *The Heart of Kings is in the Hand of the Lord,*

* Iſaiah xlv. 7.

as

as the Rivulets of Water : he turneth it whithersoever he will *. *The Lord is thy Keeper, the Lord is thy Defence upon thy right Hand* §. And on the contrary, *Shall there be Evil in the City, and the Lord hath not done it* † ?

Frequently indeed we perceive no Marks of the Interpoſition of God in what paſſes. But we are both inadvertent and ſhort-ſighted : ignorant, not only of the ſecret Springs and material Circumſtances of many human Actions, but yet more, beyond Compariſon, of principal Purpoſes in the Divine Adminiſtration. Yet this however we know, that he is inceſſantly conducting the Affairs of the preſent World, towards a full Diſplay of his Wiſdom, Juſtice and Goodneſs, in the next : though often by Steps inviſible to our Eyes, and improbable to our Imaginations. *For his Judgments are unſearchable, and his Ways paſt finding out* ‡. Therefore in all Things we ſhould believe a Providence ; but in many we may ſee it : and very plainly in our own Caſe ; to whom true Religion and Liberty have been ſo wonderfully preſerved, in the midſt of ſuch imminent Dangers ; and Quiet and Safety ſo

* Prov. xxi. 1.
† Amos iii. 6.
§ Pſal. cxxi. 5.
‡ Rom. xi. 33.

unex-

unexpectedly reſtored, when *the Help of Man was* confeſſedly *vain* *. Nor did God only beſtow the Bleſſing, but it is He who continues it: and every Day's Peace, as well as every Day's Bread, is a new Gift from him.

Surely then we have Cauſe, not for Joy alone, but Thankfulneſs too, from the Bottom of our Hearts. And if we ungratefully diſown, or negligently forget, the Author of our Happineſs, what is it likelier, what is it fitter he ſhould do, than deprive us of it again? We may think perhaps, that we have fully diſcharged our Conſciences towards him by our Attendance on the preſent Solemnity. And God grant we may hear, it hath been every-where univerſally attended. But ſuppoſing that: outward Acknowledgments ſingly are downright Pageantry and Mockery. Nay, inward Senſe of Obligation along with them, if it bring not forth ſuitable and laſting Obedience, is imperfect, inefficacious, deluſive Homage, which our Maker cannot accept. *Herein is my Father glorified*, ſaith our bleſſed Saviour, *that ye bear much Fruit* †. And thus we are to underſtand that awful Denunciation:

* Pſal. cviii. 12. † John xv. 8.

If

If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to Heart, to give Glory unto my Name, saith the Lord of Hosts, I will send a Curse upon you, and I will even curse your Blessings *. Accordingly the Text very clearly intimates,

III. That to intitle ourselves to *the Blessing of Peace*, we must be *his People*: own his Authority by observing his Laws.

The Practice of Religion and Virtue makes Nations industrious, frugal, rich, healthy, populous, unanimous, public-spirited, fearless; yet at the same time, just, prudent, friendly: which are the very Qualities, that constitute them formidable Enemies, desirable Confederates, inoffensive Neighbours; and, so far as any thing can, will secure them Peace. But Wickedness impoverishes, enfeebles, dispirits, depopulates, disunites; extinguishes Concern for common Good, inflames selfish Appetites and Passions; renders Men rash and provoking, yet indolent and despicable. It seems hardly needful for Providence to interpose, otherwise than it hath done in the Original Appointment of Things, to exalt a People

* Mal. ii. 2.

of

of the former Character, or depreſs one of the latter. But when it is, we may expect it to be done. For God will reward what he loves, puniſh what he hates. And though his Recompences are neither perfect nor proportionable, they are real and conſiderable, even here. Experience hath found it: Scripture hath foretold it. The *Jewiſh* Nation indeed proſpered or ſuffered, according to their Doings, more conſtantly and equally, than others. But ſtill, not only *theſe Things happened to them for our Enſamples, and are written for our Admonition**: but in the ſame Ages, God viſited the Heathen alſo for their Iniquities; and *lengthened their Tranquillity*, when they *broke off their Sins by Righteouſneſs* †. Chriſtian States, we confeſs, as they were not in Being, are not mentioned, in the Goſpels or Epiſtles: but *Godlineſs hath the Promiſe* there *of the Life that now is, as well as that which is to come* ‡; and the *Revelation* of St. *John*, a prophetical Work, deſcribes whole Kingdoms, and yet larger Portions of the Earth, as undergoing the ſevereſt of temporal Judgments for the Abominations, which they had committed. We ought to be deeply affected therefore by every Declaration of

* 1 Cor. x. 11. † Dan. iv. 27.
‡ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

God's Purpoſes in this reſpect throughout his Word. And the Sum of them is: *If ye be willing and obedient, ye ſhall eat the Good of the Land. But if ye refuſe and rebel, ye ſhall be devoured with the Sword: for the Mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it* *.

Which then is Our Caſe? Are We God's People? Are we even ſenſible what that Phraſe implies? That we believe, not a preſumptuous Scheme of falſely-called rational Religion, framed by our Fancies, but the *Myſtery of the Goſpel* †: that we practiſe, not an arbitrary Syſtem of polite Morals, indulgently relaxed to ſit eaſy upon our Inclinations, but all thoſe Duties, in their genuine Strictneſs, which *the Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, came to teach: denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, living ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent World, and looking for that bleſſed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar People, zealous of good Works* ‡. Do we know ourſelves by this Picture? Or is not the

* Iſaiah i. 19, 20. † Eph. vi. 19.
‡ Tit. ii. 11—14

very different one, which I have ſo often been obliged to ſet before you, ſtill our true Reſemblance? Are we not regardleſs in general, both of a preſent Providence and of future Rewards? Have not many of us caſt off with Scorn, and moſt of us contributed to looſen, thoſe Ties of Faith and Worſhip, which in every Country elſe, and in this till of late, have always been held neceſſary, even to civil Welfare? They, who have not rejected Religion, do they not however, Numbers of them, ſlight the Exerciſes of it, wholly in private, and to a great Degree in public? Nay, ſuch as appear pretty regular in them, and ſeem to have a real Senſe of Piety, have they any Zeal for it, any Sorrow for the Decay of it? Do they not feel and expreſs more Diſlike and Contempt of thoſe whom they think, and perhaps but think, *righteous overmuch**, than of the moſt thoughtleſs about their ſpiritual State, not to ſay, the moſt abandoned? Are we not in common Life diſſolute, expenſive, negligent of our Affairs, our Families, our very Children, at leaſt in the moſt important Point, their Principles; overrun by an epidemical Rage for hourly Pleaſures and Amuſements, with an

* Eccl. vii. 16.

utter Contempt of Conſequences; which, after infecting almoſt univerſally the upper, and next to them the middle Part of the World, is yearly ſpreading wider among thoſe, whoſe Parſimony and uſeful Induſtry is the Wealth of the Nation? Are we not alſo in our political Capacities, how irreconcileably ſoever we differ, lamentably alike: void of Reverence to Authority, ſubordinate or ſupreme; attentive chiefly, if not only, to ſelfiſh or party Conſiderations, varniſhed over with tranſparent Pretences of Public Good; vehement about diſputable Matters, unconcerned about confeſſedly neceſſary ones; each Denomination, each Order and Rank, bitterly accuſing the other, and none ever thinking in earneſt to amend themſelves: extremely afraid of hurting Liberty by reſtraining Wickedneſs, but not at all of being undone by indulging it; wonderfully jealous of the Power of our own Church, which hath and deſires leſs, than ever any other in any Age; but perfectly eaſy about the daily Growth of Popery, the moſt tyrannical Empire over Soul and Body that can be, and the moſt peculiarly formidable to this Country? *My People is fooliſh, they have not*

known me: they are wise to do Evil, but to do Good they have no Understanding *.

Can such a Nation hope for the Favour of Providence? Could it flourish, even were there no Providence? Evidently it is impossible. Sentiments of Religion and Virtue are the Seeds of all Happiness, the Security in all Danger, the Support in all Affliction. These are decaying apace, and wearing quite out. Habits of Prudence, formed by a careful Education, might in some poor measure supply their Place. But we have them not. In Trifles indeed we are bred up to a strict Observance of Rules and Forms and Fashions: but in Points of Consequence every one is left, from his early Youth, to do as he pleases; and They most, whose Example will be most followed. General Dislike and Shame however might restrain Persons, when they come out into the World, from several Vices, against which they had no Preservative before. But with us, there are few Vices or none, of which any body needs be ashamed: the most notoriously guilty of the worst are as well received in all Places, if not better, than other Persons. Yet, even

* Jer. iv. 22.

in

in such a State, strict Laws, vigorously executed, might deter, at least from the more immediately mischievous Crimes. But we are destitute of this Guard also. A great Part of our Laws, from the universal Remissness of the Times, are scarce executed at all: and, from the Nature of our Constitution, cannot be executed so effectually, as where Power is less bounded. Still this Constitution, with its many Defects, especially under a Prince, who, God be thanked, most cordially wishes the Continuance and Improvement of that and every Advantage to his Subjects, amply compensates for many Inconveniencies; and preserves many valuable Privileges, not enjoyed elsewhere. But then such inward Disorders must by Degrees impair and undermine it, till at length it will fall: possibly the sooner, the more safely we think we can follow our own Devices. Peace may be no Blessing to such, as will abuse it: and the Scripture hath told us long ago, that *the Prosperity of Fools shall destroy them* *. After all, it would be something, if when we had reduced ourselves to the same Condition with the rest of the World, in point of Freedom at home, by our Unworthiness

* Prov. i. 32.

and Incapacity of it, we had a Proſpect remaining of Security from abroad. Other Nations, neither free nor virtuous, though internally miſerable on both Accounts, continue for a Time, perhaps a conſiderable one, to anſwer Purpoſes of God's Wiſdom, externally potent, courted and dreaded. But what Conſolation can We draw from hence: exhauſted and burthened as we are; with ſo little to hope, as Experience hath ſhewn us, even from the friendlier Part of our Neighbours; and ſo much to apprehend from the neareſt and moſt powerful, who hath repeatedly attempted our Deſtruction, whoſe Strength in the only weak Article will be recruited with Zeal and Indignation, to whoſe Deſigns we have always been the chief Obſtacle, and whoſe Succeſs in them muſt be fatal both to our religious and civil Intereſts?

Think not, that *I am become your Enemy, becauſe I tell you the Truth* *. Would God it would permit me to ſay every thing, that was pleaſing to you. Think not, that I delight, or even mean, to foretell Evil: I mean only to caution you againſt it. And who ſhall or will, if the Miniſters of God's Word do not?

* Gal. iv. 16.

And

And what must follow? *I have seen*, saith He himself, *in the Prophets of Jerusalem, an horrible thing:—they strengthen the Hands of evil Doers, that none doth return from his Wickedness.—They say unto them, that despise me, the Lord hath said, Ye shall have Peace; unto every one, that walketh in the Imagination of his own Heart, no Evil shall come upon you.—Behold a Whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in Fury: it shall fall grievously on the Head of the Wicked.—But if they had stood in my Counsel, and caused my People to hear my Words, then they should have turned them from their evil Way* *. Think not, that, however, such Language might be spared on this Day of Rejoicing. It might so indeed, had we either been hitherto innocent, or were now duly penitent. But, being such, as God knows we are, Admonition of our Faults is indispensably necessary, to excite our Thankfulness, that we are not punished in proportion to them: and Warning of our Dangers, to remind us of proving our Gratitude by that Obedience, which alone will obtain us Protection. Would we but make this Use of the present Solemnity, then it would be a Day of Gladness indeed: a Day, *much to*

* Jer. xxiii. 14, 17, 19, 22.

be obſerved unto the Lord through all our Generations *, for laying the only Ground-work of public Happineſs. And therefore I muſt repeat to you on the Concluſion of this War, what I earneſtly recommended to your Conſideration at the Beginning of it, that when *Aſa*, King of *Judah*, was returning home, both with Peace and Victory, the Prophet *Azariah went out to meet him, and ſaid: Hear ye me, Aſa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye ſeek him, he will be found of you: but if ye forſake him, He will forſake you* †.

Other Methods to ſupport a tottering or raiſe a ſinking State, without Reformation, frequently overturn it: and at beſt are only Palliatives, temporary Expedients, to delay a little its final Ruin. *Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts,— They have healed the Hurt of the Daughter of my People ſlightly, ſaying, Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace* ‡. *There is no Peace, ſaith my God, to the Wicked* §. And not only the ſacred Writings have ſaid this; but Heathens have ſaid it who knew them not; Infidels have ſaid it, who regard them not: innumerable Facts have proclamed it in every Age. But

* Exod. xii. 42.
† 2 Chron. xv. 1, 2.
‡ Jer. vi. 9, 14.
§ Iſai. lvii. 21.

above

above all it holds in limited Governments, like ours. There muſt be public Virtue, or they cannot ſtand. There muſt be private Virtue, or there cannot be public. There muſt be Religion, or there can be neither. There muſt be true Religion, or there will be falſe. There muſt be Attendance on God's Worſhip, or there will be no Religion at all. Not four Years ago it was univerſally doubted, whether we had Principle enough, of any kind, left, to make an Effort for the Preſervation of every thing valuable to us. Moſt happily more appeared, than was expected. Yet God knows how it had proved, if the Trial had gone but a little further. And for God's ſake let us provide, as much as ever we can, againſt the next. How ſoon it may happen, is beyond human Foreſight. But in the mean while, we have ſome Leiſure, not only for perſonal Amendment, which is equally poſſible in all Seaſons, but for concerting Schemes, and executing, as well as framing, Laws for public Reformation. In War, many things, confeſſed to be right and neceſſary, are put off, becauſe the Attention muſt be confined to the immediate Danger. And if they are put off in Peace too, becauſe there is no immediate Danger,

ger, when are they to be minded; and what will be the Conſequence, if they never are?

I would by no means excite a raſh and ignorant Zeal, to be meddling where we ſee not to the Bottom of things: much leſs a factious one, to cramp and embarraſs, diſquiet and inflame. Theſe Practices muſt be hurtful: they may be pernicious: and the firſt Article in true Patriotiſm is conſcientiouſly abſtaining from them. Taking unwarrantable Steps, in Oppoſition to ſuch as we may think, whether too haſtily or not, bad Men and bad Meaſures, is only introducing additional Wickedneſs of our own, and giving others a Pretence for continuing, and even increaſing, theirs. Or ſhould we ſucceed againſt them: yet ſuch, as act ill to get Power to act well, ſeldom or never uſe it to that Purpoſe, when they have it, whatever they may intend beforehand.

The Rule then is, that each perform his own Duty ſteadily and calmly; rejoice, and acknowledge it with Thankfulneſs, when others perform theirs; and be very moderate, when he apprehends they overlook or tranſgreſs it: endeavour to rectify what is wrong, ſo far as it belongs to his Station; but *never exerciſe himſelf in Matters, which are too high for*

for him *, nor watch more ſolicitouſly over the Conduct of the State, than over his own Heart and Life. He, that neglects the latter, will ſeldom be throughly in earneſt, and ſeldomer yet impartial, about the former: or though he were, will have much leſs Weight, than a better Man. The one is incumbent on us all; the other on very few: in the one we need never miſtake or fail; in the other we muſt frequently. Therefore let us earneſtly *pray for the Peace of Jeruſalem* †: but remember that the ſureſt Way of *ſeeeking to do it* further *Good* ‡, is firſt to be at Peace ourſelves with God and with Men.

Preſſing you to general Reformation, as the Means of general Happineſs, may ſeem a very hopeleſs Expedient. But it is the only one, which Heaven hath pointed out, or will bleſs. Whether you will make uſe of it, depends on yourſelves. We are *charged, before God, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall judge the Quick and the Dead at his Appearing and his Kingdom, to preach the Word; be inſtant, in Seaſon, out of Seaſon; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all Long-ſuffering and Doctrine* §. We do ac-

* Pſal. cxxxi. 2.
† Pſal. cxxii. 6.
‡ Ver. 9.
§ 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

cordingly,

cordingly, *as Ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by us, pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, Be ye reconciled to God* *: and when we have done ſo, *we have delivered our Souls* †: but we beg you, think of your own. The fewer will amend, the more Need there is, that we ſhould add to the Number. Our doing it may be of ſome Benefit to others, we know not how great: but at leaſt will be infinitely beneficial to ourſelves. We ſhall be happy, whatever They be: happy, even at preſent; though leſs, than if all were ſo. Probably, indeed, when Times of Trouble come, we ſhall ſuffer with them: but poſſibly not, or however not ſo much as we apprehend: *For the Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of Temptation* ‡. Or if he determine otherwiſe, he will *enable us to bear it* §: and *ſuffering* now *according to his Will* ‖, is a Title to more Enjoyment in a better Life. This World is not our main Concern. They, who take it for their Portion, will be every one anxiouſly providing for his own ſeparate Advantage in it; and conſequently every one injurious to his

* 2 Cor. v. 20. † Ezek. xxxiii. 9.
‡ 2 Pet. ii. 9. § 1 Cor. x. 13.
‖ 1 Pet. iv. 19.

Neighbours, and uneasy in Himself: but let Felicity hereafter be the Point in View, and Tranquillity here will be the Result. *The Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding, shall keep our Hearts and Minds through Jesus Christ* *. Even if we suffer, not only in common with others, but more than others; if we are despised, hated, ill-treated, for what ought to procure us Honour and Friendship, our Piety, Integrity, Regularity: still the Spirit within us will support us; *we shall receive an hundredfold now in this Time, with Persecutions; and in the World to come, eternal Life* †. *Say ye to the Righteous, that it shall be well with Him: for they shall eat the Fruit of their Doings. Woe unto the Wicked, it shall be ill with Him: for the Reward of his Hands shall be given him* ‡.

Doubtless good Persons will be sorry, as they have Cause, for what the Public must undergo, unless Reformation prevent it. But at the same time they will acquiesce, as they have Cause, with intire Complacency, in the Justice of Providence: and the more, as the severest Dispensations of it are bringing for-

* Phil. iv. 7. † Mark x. 30.
‡ Isai. iii. 10, 11.

ward

ward continually, though by unſeen Ways, that bleſſed State of Things, even on this Earth, of which, however elſe improbable in itſelf, the Attributes of God afford us Hope; and his Prophets, Aſſurance. Nay, thoſe Nations themſelves, whom by his Puniſhments he makes miſerable for being bad, may by that very Miſery be made good, and then happy. *I will leave in the midſt of thee*, ſaith God to *Jeruſalem, an afflicted and poor People, and They ſhall truſt in the Name of the Lord. The Remnant of Iſrael ſhall not do Iniquity, nor ſpeak Lies.* It follows, *They ſhall feed and lie down, and none ſhall make them afraid* *.

Such a Cure, though effected by ſuch Diſcipline, would be an unſpeakable Bleſſing. But ſurely we are not reſolved, that no other ſhall do. God is trying at preſent milder Methods: and the Language of his Proceedings is, *How ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? How ſhall I deliver thee, Iſrael?—Mine Heart is turned within me, my Repentings are kindled together* †. But ſtill in the midſt of his Mercies, his Threatnings remain in full Force: and we have a ſolemn Warning, that *if, when we hear the Words of his Curſe, we bleſs ourſelves, and ſay, we ſhall have*

* Zeph. iii. 12, 13. † Hoſ. xi. 8.

Peace,

Peace, though we walk in the Imagination of our Hearts;——the Lord will not ſpare us, but his Anger and his Jealouſy ſhall ſmoke againſt us; and all the Curſes, that are written in his Book, ſhall lie upon us *. For a long time we ſeemed to think, that we might ſecurely truſt in our own Wealth and Strength, our own Policy and Bravery, let us behave to our Maker as we would. He hath given us, through a Courſe of Years, ample Conviction of our Miſtake, if any thing will convince us: and he hath given us now Time to act upon that Conviction. Let us therefore at length intitle ourſelves to truſt in Him: turn our Minds *to fear God, honour the King, love the Brotherhood* †, that is the Public: ceaſe from our profane Diſcourſe, our unbelieving Preſumption, our uncharitable Contentions, our ſelfiſh Projects, our diſſolute Pleaſures, our idle Amuſements, our faſhionable Affectations, our deſtructive Expences: beg Pardon of our Guilt, through Jeſus Chriſt; and Aſſiſtance of our Weakneſs, through the Spirit of Grace: govern our Lives by the Rules of the Goſpel; and both awe and cheer ourſelves by continual Thoughts of that *Day, when God will judge*

* Deut. xxix. 19, 20. † 1 Pet. ii. 17.

the

the World in Righteouſneſs, by that Man, whom he hath ordained *. All this is the indiſpenſable Duty of every one, were he to be ſingle in performing it: there are ſome, God be thanked, who practiſe it now: the Addition of a few, that would be exemplary, might win many more: and were but the Imitation general, hear the Promiſe made to it. ' *Thus ſaith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Iſrael: I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit; which leadeth thee by the Way, that thou ſhouldeſt go. O that thou wouldeſt hearken to my Commandments: then ſhould thy Peace be as the River; and thy Righteouſneſs as the Waves of the Sea* †.

* Acts xvii. 31. † Iſai. xlviii. 17, 18.

F I N I S.

6704 TB 289
6-20-96 32180 MS

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01152 3158

DATE DUE

HIGHSMITH #45230
Printed in USA