

THE SEAMAN'S COMPANION



BY
JOHN FLAVEL.

The Seaman's Companion

Wherein the Mysteries of Providence, relating to SEAMEN, are opened; their Sins and Dangers discovered; their Duties pressed, and their several Troubles and Burdens relieved.

In six practical and suitable SERMONS

John Flavel, 1628-1691

To all Masters, Mariners, and Seamen

SIRS,

YOUR ready acceptance of my former labors for you, has encouraged this second and last endeavor of mine this way to serve you. I have for many years been convinced of the great use and need you have of the following discourses: But the motives that quickened me to their publication at this time, were especially these two:

FIRST, The hand of the Lord has gone forth with terror against you; this winter many of your companions are gone down to the bottom. Such a doleful account of shipwrecks from every coast, and such sad lamentations as have been heard in almost every maritime town, cannot but deeply affect every heart with sorrow and compassion, and has engaged me in this service for the remnant that is left.

SECONDLY, The seasonable and prudent care his Majesty has at this time manifested for the regulation and preservation of your Newland trade, and encouragement of your honest industry therein, has also provoked me to hasten this design, for the regulation of your lives and manners, without which all external means will signify but little to your true prosperity.

This little manual contains the sum of your duty in the several parts of your employments, and faithfully discovers the temptations and dangers attending you in them all. Upon which consideration it is fitly entitled, The Seaman's Companion.

As God has cast my lot among you, so he has inclined my heart studiously to promote your welfare. I have been, by long observation, convinced, that one principal cause of your miscarriages, is the neglect of God in your outsets. Did you pray more, you might expect to prosper better. Indeed, if that Epicurean doctrine were true, that God concerns not himself about the affairs of this lower world, but leaves all things to be swayed by the power of natural causes, your neglect of prayer might be more excusable: But, while successes and disappointments depend upon his pleasure, it cannot but be the most direct course you can steer to ruin all, to forget and neglect God in your enterprises. To cure this evil, and prevent the manifold mischiefs that follow it, the first sermon is designed. And if the Lord shall bless it to your conviction and reformation, I may then comfortably apply the words of Moses to you, [Deuteronomy 33:18](#). "Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out."

You often hear the terrible voice of God in the storms; and are at your wit's end, not knowing what course to take, nor which way to turn for safety and comfort: And yet how soon are all those impressions worn off? and those mercies which (while new) were so affecting, after a few days become stale and common. I have, therefore, in the second sermon, labored not only to direct and support you in those straits, but have also endeavored to fix the sense of those providences upon your hearts, and instruct you how to make due improvements of them, by answering the several aims and designs of them.

It has been much upon my heart, to what and how many temptations to sin you are exposed in foreign countries, where lawful remedies are absent, alluring objects present, and temptations exceedingly strengthened upon you, by hopes of secrecy and concealment: And, indeed, for a man whose heart is not thoroughly seasoned with religion, and awed by the fear of God, to converse in such places, and with such company, and not be polluted with their sins, is, upon the matter, as great a miracle, as for the three children to come out of the fiery furnace without an hair singed, or the smell of fire upon their garments. I have therefore prepared for you the best preservative from these temptations in the third sermon, which the Lord make an effectual antidote to your souls against the corruptions that are in the world through lust.

I have frequently observed the mischievous influence that success and prosperity have had upon some of you: How the God of your mercies has been forgotten, and his mercies made instruments of sin against him: How apt are men to ascribe all to their own wisdom, care and industry, as if God had no hand in it? The fourth sermon therefore leads up your thoughts to the fountain of all your good, and drops many very seasonable and necessary cautions upon you, to keep you humble and thankful under prosperity.

And because men will not own God in their success, but sacrifice to their own net; God often teaches them the evil of it, by sad losses and disappointments: Yes, disappointments sometimes follow the best of men, and that in the most just and honest employments. To caution the former sort, and support the latter in such a case, I recommend the fifth sermon to your serious consideration, not doubting, if the blessing of God go forth with it, but it may prove a very seasonable and useful discourse to you in that condition.

And, lastly, because it is so common for seamen to forget the many mercies they have received in a voyage, when it is over, and God has brought them to the havens of desire, and among their relations, I have, in the last sermon, instructed them in their duty, and labored to work in such a sense of mercies upon their hearts, as may engage them to a due and thankful acknowledgment of God in all.

You see, by this brief account, how honest the design is in which I have engaged for you. But I am sensible, that the management is very defective, it being dispatched in haste, and when my hands were filled with other work, and my body clogged with many infirmities. But, such as it is, I heartily devote it to the special service of your souls, and remain

Yours, in all Christian service,
JOHN FLAVEL
Dartmouth, Jan. 21, 1675.

SERMON I

THE SEAMAN'S FAREWELL

[Acts 21:5, 6](#). "And we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed; and when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship, and they returned home again."

THIS scripture gives us an account of the manner of Paul's embarking at Tyre, in his voyage for Jerusalem; and therein an excellent pattern for all that go down into the seas, to do business in the great waters. It is true, his business, in that voyage, was not to get an estate, but to witness to the truths of Jesus Christ with the hazard of his

life. Many discouragements he met with in this voyage, and not the least at Tyre, where he met with certain disciples that said to him, by the Spirit, that he should not go to Jerusalem, though, in that, they followed their own spirit; but he is not to be dissuaded: Like that noble Roman, and upon a more noble account, 'he judged it necessary to go, but not to live.' The disciples seeing his unalterable resolution, express their affections to him at parting, by bringing him to the ship, and that with their whole families, wives and children, verse 5. therein giving him the last mark of their dear respects.

In the farewell, their Christian affections are mutually manifested by two sorts of actions,—namely, Sacred and Civil—in prayers and salutations.

1. Prayers; the best office one Christian can do to another. As prayer is the best preface, so certainly it is the best close to any business or enjoyment: In which prayer we may note the place, posture, and matter or scope.

FIRST, The place; it was upon the shore, the parting place near to which the ship rode, waiting for Paul: And this was no unusual thing among them in those days. Tertullian tells us, "they sent their prayers to Heaven from every shore;" and elsewhere, he calls them, *orationes littorales*, "shore prayers." So customary it was for holy men, in those days, to be taken into the ship or boat from their knees, not from the tavern or ale-house.

SECONDLY, The posture; "They kneeled down." As all places, so all postures have been used in prayer. Some have used one posture, and some another; but this is the common and ordinary posture: Knees when they can (as an ingenious author speaks) then they must be bowed.

THIRDLY, The matter and scope of the prayer, which though it be not expressed, yet may with great probability be argued from the place and occasion, to be, as Erasmus speaks, for a prosperous voyage, and divine protection. He knew to what, and how many hazards of life they are hourly exposed, that border so near unto death, as mariners and passengers at sea do; and therefore would not commit himself to the sea, until first he had solemnly committed himself to God, whose voice the winds and seas obey: Nor was he willing to take his leave of his friends, until he had poured out his heart to God with them, and for them, whose faces he might never see again in this world, and engaged their prayers also for him.

2. As their affections were mutually manifested by this sacred action, prayer; so by civil ones too, affectionate embraces and salutations. "When we had taken our leave one of another." Salutations were used among the Jews, both at their meeting and parting. This latter consisted in words and gestures; the usual words were, "The Lord bless you," [Ruth 2:4](#). "Peace be unto you. Grace be with you," etc. The gestures were kissing each other. These were kisses which a Cato might give, and a Vestal receive. In both these, namely, their prayers for, and salutations of, each other, they manifested their Christian affections mutually, but especially by their prayers at parting. Hence note,

DOCTRINE: Those that undertake voyages by sea, had need not only to pray earnestly themselves, but also to engage the prayers of other Christians for them.

They that part praying, may hope to meet again rejoicing; and those designs which are not prefaced with prayer, cannot wind up with a blessing. There are two sorts of prayer, stated and occasional.

Stated prayer is our conversing with God, either publicly, privately, or secretly, at the constant seasons allotted for it, in the returns of every week and day.

Occasional, is the Christian's address to God at any time upon extraordinary emergencies, and calls of providence; or, when we undertake any solemn business, (and what more solemn than this?) and then the chief matter and scope of prayer is to be suited to the present occasion and design in hand; of this sort is that I am here to speak. Now in opening the point, I will show,

(1.) What those special mercies are that seamen should pray for, when they are to undertake a voyage.

(2.) What influence prayer has upon those mercies, and how it must be qualified for that end.

(3.) What aid and assistance the prayers of other Christians may contribute to the procurement of them.

And then make application of all.

(1.) We will inform the seamen, what those special mercies are he should earnestly pray for, when he undertakes a voyage.

And among those mercies to be earnestly requested of God by him, the first and principal is, the pardon of sin; a mercy which must make a part of every prayer, and at this time to be earnestly sued for. Guilt is that Jonah in the ship, for whose sake storms, shipwrecks, and ruin pursue it. It is said, [Psalm 148:8](#). "That the stormy winds fulfill God's word." If the word there spoken of be the word of God's threatening against sin, as some expound it, then the stormy winds and lofty waves, are God's sergeants sent out with commission to arrest sinners upon the sea, his water-bailiffs to execute the threatenings of God upon them, in the great deeps. Hence those expressions of scripture, [Numbers 32:23](#). "Be sure your sin will find you out;" and [Genesis 4:7](#). "Sin lies at the door." In both which places the Spirit of God compares a man's guilt to a blood-hound, that pursues and follows upon the scent wherever a man goes. And indeed our sins are called debts, [Matthew 6:12](#). Not that we owe them to God, or ought to sin against him; but metonymically, because as financial debts oblige him to suffer that has not with which to pay, and expose him to the danger of sergeants and bailiffs wherever he shall be found; so do our sins, in reference to God, who has reckoned with many thousands of sinners upon the sea, there arrested them by his winds and waves which he sent out after them, and laid their bodies in the bottom of the sea, and their souls in the bottom of Hell. Oh! that is a dismal storm, that is sent after a man, to drive soul and body to destruction! with what heart or courage can that man go down into the deeps, and expose himself among the raging waves and roaring winds, that knows God has a controversy with him; and for ought he knows, the next storm may be sent to hurry him to the judgment-seat of the great and terrible God? Certainly, friends, it is your great concern to get a pardon, and be at peace with God; a thing so indispensable, that you cannot have less; and so comprehensive, that you cannot desire more. If sin be pardoned, you are safe, you need fear no storms within, whatever you find without: But woe to him that finds at once a raging sea, and a roaring conscience; trouble without, and terror within; ship and hope sinking together. You are privy to all the evils and wickedness of your hearts and lives. Yon know what treasures of guilt you have been heaping up all your days; and think you when distresses and extremities come upon you, conscience will be as quiet and still as it is now? No, no, guilt will fly in your faces then, and stop your mouths. O therefore humble yourselves at the feet of God for all your iniquities; apply yourselves to the blood of sprinkling; pray and plead with God for remission of sin; without which you are in a woeful case to adventure yourselves at sea to those imminent perils of life.

(2.) Another mercy you are earnestly to pray for is, That the presence of God may go with you, I mean not his general presence, which fills the world; that will be with

you, whether you pray for it or no; but his gracious special presence, which was that Moses so earnestly sued for in [Exodus 33:15](#). "If your presence go not with me, carry us not hence." He and the people were now in a waste howling wilderness, but bound for Canaan, that earthly paradise; yet you see he chooses rather to be in a wilderness with God, than in a Canaan without him; and no wonder, for this gracious presence of God, as to comfort, is all that a gracious soul has, or desires to have in this world; and as to security and protection from dangers, it is the only asylum, sanctuary, and refuge in the day of trouble. If the presence of God be graciously with us, it will guard the heart against terror in the most imminent distress, as you see, [Psalm 23:4](#). "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death that is (through the most apparent and imminent dangers of death), yet will I fear no evil for you are with me." And indeed there is no room for fear; for with whoever God is in a gracious and special manner present, these three matchless mercies are secured to that man.

FIRST, That God's special providence shall watch over him in all dangers, [Psalm 91:1-4](#). "He shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty; he shall cover you with his feathers, and under his wings shall you trust." As the hen gathers her brood under her wings, not only to cherish, but to defend them from all danger, so God takes his people under his providential wings for their security.

SECONDLY, He appoints for them a guard of angels, whose office is to watch over, and minister to them in all their straits. So we read, [Psalm 91:11](#). "He shall give his angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways." Many invisible services they do for us. Luther tells us the angels have two offices—to sing above, and watch below. These are as a life guard to that man with whom the Lord is.

THIRDLY, He readily hears their cries in a day of distress, and is with them to save and deliver them. So verse 15. "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him, I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honor him." O what a matchless mercy is this! how many times, when poor seamen have seen death apparently before their eyes, have they cried, mercy! mercy! How ordinary is it for their eyes, on such occasions, to add salt-water, where alas, there was too much before? But now to have God with you in such an hour of straits, to hear, support, and deliver you: O you cannot estimate the worth of such a mercy! Pray therefore, for it is a mercy indispensably necessary for you; and say to him, as Moses, "Lord, if your presence may not go with us, carry us not hence."

(3.) A third mercy you are specially concerned to beg of God, is, that you may be kept from the temptations to sin you will meet with when you are abroad in the world. The whole world lies in wickedness, [1 John 5:19](#). Every place, every employment, every company has its snares and temptations attending it: And you know you have corrupt natures, as much disposed to close with temptations as tinder is to catch fire: So that unless the preventing, restraining, and mortifying grace of God be with you, they will but touch and take. If there were no devil to tempt you externally; yet such a corrupt heart meeting with a suitable temptation and occasion, is enough to overcome you; [James 1:14](#). "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed." Alas! you know not what hearts you have until temptations prove them; and what comfort can you take in the success and prosperity of your affairs, be it never so great, if you return with consciences polluted and wounded with sin. He who brings home a pack of fine clothes, infected with the plague, has no such great bargain of it, however cheap he purchased them. O therefore beg earnestly of God that you may be kept from sin: pray that you be not led into temptation.

(4) Pray for divine protection in all the dangers and hazards to which you shall be exposed. You know not how soon your life and estate shall be in jeopardy: This night you may sleep quietly in your cabin, tomorrow you may be tugging at the

pump, and the next night take up your lodging upon a cold rock. How smartly does the apostle James reprehend the security of trading persons; [James 4:13, 14](#). "Go to now, you that say, today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away." How easily can God dash all your designs, and hopeful projects in one hour! You know you are every moment as near death as you are near the water, which is but a remove of one or two inches. How poor a defense is the strongest ship against the lofty seas and lurking rocks? How innumerable are the accidents and contingencies in a voyage, which the most skillful navigator cannot foresee or prevent?

They are, as the Psalmist speaks, at their wit's end, [Psalm 107:27](#). But O how secure and safe amidst all dangers, is that man whom the Lord takes into his special protection? And he will not shut out those that sincerely commit themselves to him: The winds and seas obey his voice: he can with a word turn the storm into a calm, [Psalm 107:29](#). or order means for your preservation, when you seem lost to the eye of sense and reason. I have heard of a young man, that being in a great storm at sea, was observed to be very cheerful, when all the rest were as dead men; and being asked the reason of his cheerfulness in a case of so much danger? He replied, 'Truly, I have no cause to fear, for the pilot of the ship is my father.' O it is an unspeakable comfort when a man has committed himself unto the hands of God, as a Father, and trusted him over all!

(5.) Pray for counsel and direction in all your affairs and undertakings, and lean not to your own understandings. "I know, O Lord, (says the prophet) that the way of man is not in himself, neither is it in him that walks, to direct his own steps," [Jeremiah 10:23](#). Undertake nothing without asking God's leave and counsel. How many that have stronger heads than yon, have miserably ruined themselves and their designs by trusting to their own prudence? "A man's heart (says Solomon) devises his way; but the Lord directs his steps," [Proverbs 16:9](#). We must still preserve the power of God's providence, says one; God would not have us too carnally confident. The Lord can blast your enterprise, though managed with never so much wisdom and contrivance. You are not only to look to God as the author of success, but as the director and guide of the action. It is by his conduct and blessing, that all things come to pass. If your designs succeed not, you are presently ready to ascribe it to ill fortune, and say, you had bad luck; when indeed you ruined it yourselves, in the first molding it, by undertaking it without asking counsel of God: "In all your ways acknowledge him," [Proverbs 3:6](#).

(6.) Pray for success upon your lawful employments and designs, and own it to be from the Lord. You have an excellent pattern in Abraham's servant, [Genesis 24:12](#). "O Lord God of Abraham your servant, send me good speed this day." He reverences the sovereignty of providence, and acknowledges success to be a flower of the imperial crown, and the bridle that God has upon the reasonable creature, to dispose of the success of human affairs. I look on that business or design in a fair and hopeful way to prosper, wherein we have engaged God to be with us, by asking his counsel, and recommending the success to his blessing. These are the mercies you are to pray for.

SECONDLY, Next I will show you what influence prayer has into those mercies you are to pray for; and it has much every way. To be short, it has a threefold influence into them.

(1.) It is a proper and effectual mean to obtain and procure them. God will have everything fetched out by prayer, [Ezekiel 36:37](#). "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." God gives not our mercies for prayers, nor will he give them without our prayers. This is the stated method in which our

mercies are conveyed to us; and therein the wisdom and goodness of God are eminently discovered. His wisdom in making us to see the Author of every mercy in the way of receiving it, and securing his own glory in the dispensing of every mercy: His goodness to us in sweetening every mercy this way to us, and raising its value in our estimation. Prayer coming between our wants and supplies is a singular mean to raise the price of mercies with us, and engage us to due improvements of them. So that is an idle pretense for any to say, God knows our wants, whether we pray or not; and if mercies be decreed for us, we shall have them, though we ask them not: for though God knows our wants, yet he will have us to know them too, and sensibly to feel the need of mercy. And though prayer be altogether needless to his information, yet it is very necessary to testify our submission; And though it is true, if God have decreed mercy for us, we shall have it; yet it is not true, that therefore we need not to pray for it: For decrees exclude not the second means, nor render the creature's duty unnecessary. "I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall you call upon me, and you shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you," Jee. 29:11, 12. So that it is plain, mercies must be expected in the way of prayer, that being God's appointed way, and stated method in the dispensing of them.

(2.) As prayer has influence into the procuring of our mercies, so it has a singular influence into the sweetening of them: no mercies so sweet as those that are received upon the knee. There is a twofold sweetness men taste in their earthly enjoyments: one is natural, and that those that never eye God in them, may relish as much as others; the other is spiritual and supernatural, resulting from the consideration of the way in which, and the end for which they are given: and I am confident, such is the refreshing sweetness of mercies coming in the way of prayer, that they derive a thousand times more sweetness from the channel through which they come, than they have in their own natures. So that it was rightly observed by him that said, 'A believer tastes more sweetness in the common bread he eats at his own table, than another can do in the consecrated bread he eats at the Lord's table.' And then,

(3.) Prayer has a sanctifying influence upon all our enjoyments, and therefore no wonder it makes them so sweet: what you obtain this way, you obtain with a blessing, and that is the sweetest and best part of any enjoyment. So you find, [1 Timothy 4:5](#). every creature is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. One mercy of this kind is better than ten thousand promiscuously dispensed in the way of common providence: by these no man knows love or hatred; but these surely come from God's love to us, and end in the increase of our love to him. So that you see prayer has a manifold influence upon our mercies: But it is not any kind of prayer that does thus procure, sweeten, and sanctify our mercies to us: some men's prayers rather obstruct than further their mercies; but if it be the fervent prayer of a righteous man, directed by the rule of the word to the glory of God, we may say of such a prayer as David said of Saul's sword, and Jonathan's bow, it never returns empty.

THIRDLY, I shall show what aid and assistance the prayers of others may give to the procurement of the mercies we desire; for you see this instance in the text, it was the united joint-prayers of the disciples with Paul, that on this occasion was judged necessary.

Now considering prayer according to its use and end, as a mean of obtaining mercy from the Lord; the more disposed, apt, and vigorous the means are, the more surely and easily the mercies are obtained which we pray for. There may be much zeal, fervency, and strength in the prayer of a single saint: Jacob alone may wrestle with God, and as a prince prevail; but much more in the joint, united force of many Jacobs: if one can do much, many can do more. O what may not a blessed

combination of holy and humble spirits obtain from the Lord! If one man's heart be dead and out of tune, another's may be lively and full of affection. Besides, God delights in those acts of mercy most, by which many are refreshed and comforted; and where there is a common stock of prayers going, like a common adventure in one ship, there the return of prayer, like the return of such a ship, makes many glad hearts. Certainly it is of great advantage for the people of God, to engage as many as they can to pray for them. When Daniel was to obtain that secret from the God of Heaven, [Daniel 2:17, 18](#). he makes use of his three friends to improve their acquaintance with God, and interest in God for him upon that occasion. "Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah his companions, that they would desire mercies of the God of Heaven concerning this secret." Some Christians have greater intimacies with God than others, they are special favorites in the court of Heaven; and what an advantage is it to be upon their hearts, when they are with God, judge you. I remember St. Bernard having spoken of the due frames and tempers that Christians should strive to work their hearts into, when they are engaged in this work of prayer, concludes with this request, *Et quum talis fueris, memento mei*. And when your heart (says he) is in this temper, then remember me. Oh! it is a singular mercy to be interested in their prayers that are in special favor with God! it is true, Jesus Christ is the great favorite, for whose sake all prayers are heard: and without his intercession, the intercessions of an Abraham, a Moses, a Jacob, signify nothing, but in the virtue of his intercession, the intercessions of others may be singularly advantageous to us. Job's friends were good men, but yet they must go to Job, and get his prayers for them before God would be entreated for them, [Job 42:8](#).

And, indeed, upon the contrary, it is a sad sign that God designs not to give us that mercy which he takes off our own hearts, or the hearts of others from praying for. When he says, Pray not for such a man, or for such a mercy for him, the case then becomes hopeless, the mercy is set, and there is no moving it, [Jeremiah 14:11](#). But if once a spirit of prayer be poured upon you, and upon others too in your behalf, you may look upon the mercy as even at the door, and count it as good as if it were in your hand. And thus you see what the mercies are you should pray for; what influence prayer has upon them; and what assistance the prayers of other Christians may contribute to the obtaining of them; so that your hearts may be excited and encouraged, not only to pray for yourselves, but to engage as many as you can to seek the Lord for you, as you see Paul here did, when he was undertaking his dangerous voyage. In the next place I shall apply it.

Uses

USE 1. And, first, This may serve sharply to reprove the generality of our seamen, who mind everything necessary to their voyage, except prayer, the principal thing; who go out in voyages without asking God's leave or blessing. And here three sorts of persons fall under conviction, and just rebuke.

FIRST, Such as do but mock God, and delude themselves by heartless, dead and empty formalities. Some there be that dare not altogether slight and neglect prayers, but pro forma, they will do something themselves; and it may be as a compliment, or, at most, as a customary thing, will desire the prayers of others: but, alas! there is no heartiness or sincerity in these things; they are no way affected with the sense of their own wants, sins, or dangers; they never understood the use, nature, or end of prayer. We blame the blind Papists, and that justly, for their blind devotions, who reckon their prayers by number, and not by weight; and truly, there is but little difference between theirs, and some of our devotions. It is St. Augustine's counsel, "Do you learn to have in your hearts what every one has in his lips." O that you would once learn to be in earnest with God! to pray as men that understand with whom you have to do; and what great things you have to transact with God! ah, my friends, you may believe it, that if ever you had felt the weight of sin upon your

consciences, and had had such sick days and nights for it, as some have had, you would not ask a pardon so coldly and indifferently as you do. If you did but know the benefit of God's presence with you in troubles, how sweet it is; or could but apprehend how terrible a thing it is to be left of God, as Saul was in the day of distress, you would weep and make supplication for his gracious presence to go forth with you; and would say, with Moses, "If your presence may not go with me, then carry me not hence." But, alas! these things appear not to you in their reality and importance. And hence is all that wretched formality and deadness of spirit.

SECONDLY, It rebukes much more such as wholly slight and neglect prayer, as a useless and vain thing; who undertake designs without prayer, not at all acknowledging God in any of their ways. And it is justly to be suspected, there are multitudes of such practical atheists among seamen, as well as other orders of men. Poor men! my heart mourns over you; you are certainly a forlorn set of men, who live without God in the world. It was anciently said, "he who would learn to pray, let him go to sea:" But now, how long may a man be at sea, before he hear a praying seaman! Let your families from which you part, witness what conscience you have made to seek God, as you have been here directed, before your outset: it is said, [Deuteronomy 33:18](#). to the tribe of seamen, "Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out." But in this case we may invert the words, and say, Mourn, O you seamen, in your going out. How deplorable a case is this? Let your cabins witness what conscience you make of the duty of prayer: you can talk and sleep there, but when did you pray there? You there hear the voice of God in the roaring seas; but when did God hear your voice in prayer? You see the wonders of God in the deeps, wonders of creation, and wonders of preservation; but mean time you yourselves are the greatest wonders that are to be seen in the sea: men immediately depending upon God for their lives, liberties, and estates, every moment, and not once owning or acknowledging him by prayer.

The very Heathens will rise up in judgment against you, and condemn you. I remember Plato brings in Alcibiades asking Socrates, How he ought to express his resolution and purposes? To whom he thus answers; "Before every undertaking you must say, If God will." And we know the eastern nations would undertake nothing of moment, without first acknowledging God by prayer. The Greeks óõã Èåù, by the leave or blessing of God is known to all. The Turks will condemn such as you are, for they fail not to pray five times a day, however urgent their business be. The blind and superstitious Papists will condemn you, with whom it is a proverb, Mass and meat hinder no man. Oh! where will you turn? And who shall comfort you when trouble comes upon you? Wonder not at crosses and disappointments in your business; how can you expect it should be otherwise, as long as God is neglected, yes, disowned? Say not, this is the fruit of ill luck, but of your profane neglects. If the success of all your business depends upon God (as none but Atheists dare deny) then certainly the direct and readiest course a man can take to destroy all, is to disengage God by a sinful neglect of him. The most compendious way to ruin, is to forget God, and cast off prayer. "Pour out your fury (says the prophet) upon the heathen that know you not, and upon the families that call not upon your name," [Jeremiah 10:25](#). Will nothing less than extremity make you cry to God? Wonder not then, if God bring you unto that extremity which your profaneness makes necessary for your awakening.

THIRDLY and lastly, How much sadder, and more deplorable, is the case of those that not only neglect to call upon the name of God by prayer, but do also wound his name through and through by their cursed oaths and blasphemies? who instead of going on board praying, as Paul here did, go on board cursing, swearing, and blaspheming his great and dreadful name; not going from their bended knees, but drunken ale-benches, to the ship.

O the admirable patience of God! O the power of his long-suffering! that ever that ship should swim one hour above water, that carries such loads of sin and guilt within it! It is noted in [Genesis 4:26](#). in the days of Seth, "That then men began to call upon the name of the Lord." Some translate the word, invocation, or prayer, and some profanation; then began profaneness in calling upon the name of the Lord. In a mournful feeling of this dishonor done to God by it, Seth calls the son that was born to him in those times, Enoch, or Sorrowful. Sure I am, however the word be here to be translated, there is a vile generation in our days, that instead of calling upon the name of the Lord by prayer, do call upon it profanely, rending and tearing that great and terrible name with the language of Hell. Poor man! with what hope or encouragement can those lips of your, in the day of your extremity, cry, Mercy! mercy! that have struck through the sacred name of God so many times with blasphemy! O that you would lay it to heart! O that this day God would set your sins in order before you.

Is this a beginning that promises a comfortable issue? Do you thus prepare yourselves to meet death and danger? O my soul! come not you into their secrets! O let God rather strike me perfectly dead while I live, than afflict my soul through my ears with these dreadful dialects of the damned.

USE 2. In the next place, this point is exceeding useful, by way of exhortation, to persuade all men, and particularly seamen, to be men of prayer; to imitate that noble pattern in the text, and no longer to live in the neglect of a duty so necessary, so sweet, and so beneficial to them, as the duty of prayer is. O that you did but know the excellency of this duty! how would you give yourselves unto prayer! As David speaks, [Psalm 109:4](#). Now to persuade you to be praying men, and no longer to live in the neglect of so excellent a duty, I will offer these motives to your consideration.

Motive 1. God has stiled himself a God hearing prayer. For your encouragement to this duty, he has assumed this title to himself, [Psalm 65:2](#). "O you that nearest prayer, unto you shall all flesh come." You cry not as the Heathens do, to stocks and stones, that cannot help or hear them that seek to them, but to the living and true God, by whom never did any upright soul lose a prayer. And to come home to your case more fully, he is a God that hears the prayers of poor distressed men upon the seas, when all hope and human help have utterly failed them. So you read in [Psalm 107:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28](#). "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep: for he commands, and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves thereof: they mount up to Heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he brings them out of their distress." So that what the Psalmist elsewhere speaks of the mystical depths of trouble, is true here even in a proper literal sense: "Out of the depths have I cried unto you, O Lord, hear my voice," [Psalm 130:1, 2](#). Many a prayer has been heard, and miraculously answered upon the sea. There have men been convinced, and fully satisfied, that it is not in vain to cry to the Lord. So evident and clear have been the appearances of God at the cry of the poor distressed creatures, that they have sensibly and thankfully acknowledged him according to his name; "The hope of the ends of the earth, and the confidence of them that are afar off upon the sea," [Psalm 65:5](#). Who is there among you, that has not either heard of, or himself been an example, and instance of this truth? I might here insert many famous examples to confirm it, but the case is too plain to need them, and it would be too great a digression.

Motive 2. Prayer is certainly the best relief to the distressed. We may say of it, as David said of the sword of Goliath, give me that, for there is none like it. You that are seamen, know what the use of the pump is, when the waters leak into your ship, and of what use the scupper-holes are to you, when waves break and dash over your

necks: why, of the same use is prayer, when sorrow leaks into your hearts, and distresses are ready to overwhelm your souls. This gives a vent to that which else would quickly sink you. "Your heart shall live that seek the Lord," [Psalm 69:32](#). Prayer will buoy up your fainting spirits; it will sensibly ease an oppressed heart. No fear of fainting, while a man continues praying. Luther was accustomed to call prayers the leeches of his cares and troubles. O but if troubles come in upon a man every way, and he have no vent, no outlet for them when the ordinary vents of reason, courage, and resolution are all choked (as sometimes they are) and there is no support or relief coming in from Heaven; what a wretched forlorn condition is such a poor creature in? O therefore get acquaintance with this excellent duty.

Motive 3. All secondary means of deliverance and comfort necessarily depend upon the will and pleasure of God, and signify nothing without him. What the Psalmist says of an horse, I may say of a ship, [Psalm 33:17](#). That it is a vain thing for safety. Alas! what a poor defense is it against those giant-like waves of the sea? And that men (especially seamen) may be convinced of this, God has many times caused those stately and strong-built ships to perish, and be dashed all to pieces, and preserved those that were not safe in them upon a plank or broken piece of the ship, [Acts 27:44](#). which has carried them more safely to the shore than it could do. And will you not yet see that means signify nothing without God, and that your dependence upon him is necessary in every condition, and the acknowledgment thereof so too? I am persuaded there would not be half so many shipwrecks and disappointments as there are, if your carnal confidence in the means were less, and your reliance upon the Lord more. Therefore it is that you so often receive the sentence of death in yourselves, that you may learn not to trust in yourselves, but in God, Oh! were but your sails filled by prayer, how prosperous would your designs be?

Motive 4. Whatever deliverances from dangers, or success in business, you receive out of the way of prayer, can yield you but little comfort; for they are not sanctified to you. You maybe delivered, though you pray not, and success may follow those that seek not God for it; but that which you call deliverance is rather a reservation to future misery; and that you call success, is but a snare to your souls. You have the things, but not the comfort and blessing of them. God may give you your desire to your ruin: your lives may be rescued for a time from death, that you may fill up the measure of your iniquities. Your affairs may prosper, and that prosperity may destroy you, [Proverbs 1:32](#). At best it is but an effect of common providence; and of such deliverances you can never say as Hezekiah said of his; and every one that receives the like mercy in the way of prayer, may say of his, [Isaiah 38:17](#). "But you have in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for you have cast all my sins behind your back." I deny not, but a deliverance by the hand of common providence is a mercy in itself; and it may prove a very great mercy to you in the event, if time thereby added to your life be a space of repentance; else it is but a short reprieve of your damnation, and leaves you to perish under greater guilt than was upon you before. But, on the contrary, how sweet are those mercies that come in the way of prayer; that discover God's love to you, and inflame yours to him? One such mercy is worth a thousand of the former.

Motive 5. Consider all you that go out without prayer, how soon you may be out of a capacity of prayer. Now you will not, and shortly you may not, have one opportunity to pray for evermore: now unbelief shuts your mouths, and shortly death may do it. How soon may you be past your prayers, both your own and others, and be fixed by death in your unalterable condition? O seek the Lord therefore while he may be found, call upon him while he is yet near. Now is your praying season, hereafter there will be no use of prayer. "For this (says the Psalmist) shall every one that is godly pray unto you, in a time when you may be found: surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come near unto him." [Psalm 32:6](#). that is says Deodate upon the place, in the time of the general destruction of sinners, as it

was in the deluge; then there is no coming near to God by prayer, nor can you come near him in the day of your particular destruction, by the flood of great waters. O therefore live not a day longer in the profane and sinful neglect of this great duty of prayer!

Objection: Why, but I observe those that pray not, generally escape as well as they that do.

Answer. This objection was once made by a soldier in the time of fight, when he was pressed by his companion to pray; and God quickly stopped his blasphemous mouth with a mortal bullet. Have a care of such bold atheistic pleas; they greatly provoke the Lord against you: I had rather die praying, than live prayerless.

Objection: But to what purpose is it for me to pray, if I am unregenerate? God hears not such prayers, if I make them: and besides, the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.

Answer. Labor therefore to get into a regenerate state, and be not persuaded to rest a day longer in so sad a condition. However in the mean time you must know, that prayer being a part of natural worship, all men, even the unregenerate, are obliged to it by the light and law of nature; otherwise the neglect of it could not be their sin.

Objection: But many pray, and receive not: I myself have often done so.

Answer. "You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss," [James 4:3](#). If we were disposed to receive as God is to give, we should not be long without the answer of our prayers.

(1.) If your persons were accepted through Christ, your prayers should be accepted too, [Genesis 4:4](#). But you are in a state of nature, destitute of the Spirit, [John 15:7](#). And so your voice is to God not the voice of a child, but a stranger.

(2.) If your prayers were regulated by the will of God, they could not miss of the desired success; [1 John 5:14](#). "If we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us."

(3.) If your prayers had more faith and fervency, they would not return empty; see [James 1:6](#) and [5:16](#). Well then, object no more against your duty, but in the fear of God, apply yourselves to it, and dare not to go forth in any design, until you have by prayer recommended yourself and your affairs to God. Go alone, my friends, retire from the world; and say not you cannot spare time for prayer; better anything else were neglected than this. Tell the Lord, you are now launching forth into the ocean, and know not what this, voyage may bring forth. Possibly you may never return to the land of your nativity any more; but however it shall please him to dispose the event, beseech him with all earnestness, that you may have the pardon of sin sealed to you before you go. O beg him to separate guilt from your person, before you be separated from your habitation and relations; lest that stroke that shall separate your soul from your body, should eternally separate both soul and body from God.

Desire of the Lord that his presence may go with you wherever you shall go. Tell him it is the fountain both of your safety and comfort. Desire him if his presence may not go with you, not to carry you hence. All the relief you have against trouble, is wrapped up in that promise of his, I will be with him in trouble. Tell him, those will be tasteless comforts, and succourless troubles, in which he is not.

Entreat the Lord with all importunity, to keep you by his fear, from the sins and temptations that are in the world. Tell him you are sensibly affected with the danger which your own corrupt heart will everywhere expose you to: sins in buying and selling, into which you may easily be drawn by an earthly covetous heart: sins in

drinking, wherein you may be entangled (except he keep you) by evil company and an irregular appetite: sins of impurity, by which you may be overcome in the absence of lawful remedies, and presence of alluring objects, except his fear quench the temptation, and break the snare.

Be earnest also with the Lord for his gracious protection of you in all your dangers. Tell him, you can not be in safety any where, but under the shadow of his wings. Tell him, at what time you are afraid, you will trust in him; and beseech him, that when your heart shall be overwhelmed with fears and troubles, he will lead you to the rock that is higher than you. Beseech him also to give you counsel in all your straits and difficulties, that you may not lean to your own understanding, but that he will make your way plain before you.

And if it be his good pleasure, that he would bless your just and honest enterprizes with success and prosperity; which if he shall do, tell him it is your desire, and beg the assistance of his grace, that you may improve all your mercies to his praise. If thus you set forth in the fear of God, you may expect a sweet success, and happy issue.

SERMON II

THE SEAMAN IN A STORM

[Psalm 107:23-28](#)

"Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters, They see the works of the LORD, And His wonders in the deep. For He commands and raises the stormy wind, Which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens, They go down again to the depths; Their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, And are at their wits' end. Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble, And He brings them out of their distresses. "

THIS psalm contains an excellent account of the mysterious and admirable effects of providence: and this paragraph contains that vein or branch of divine providence which respects seamen; a sort of men more immediately depending upon the favor of providence than any men in the world; though all do necessarily and continually depend upon it.

In these verses we have a description, both (1.) of the persons, (2.) of the danger, (3.) of the deliverance, by the wonderful working of divine providence for them.

FIRST, A description of the persons about whom this wonderful providence is exercised: "They that go down to the sea in ships; that do business in great waters;" the periphrasis of a seaman. These are said to go down to the sea in ships, not because the sea is lower than the land, but because it is lower than the shore, which is the rampart raised by providence against its inundations. And their end or design in going down into the sea, is not pleasure and recreation, but to do business, that is to export and import such wares and commodities as are necessary, if not to the being, at least to the well-being of the several kingdoms and countries of the world. These are the men here spoken of, who "see (more than any) the works of the Lord,

and his wonders in the deep." Works and wonders by an *ái äéá äöíéí*, an usual figure, is as much as his wonderful works; namely, of creation, in the strange and monstrous productions of the sea; and of preservation, with respect to themselves, in the dreadful dangers they there encounter. Thus the person or subject is described.

SECONDLY, The danger is likewise described in which these sea-faring men are sometimes involved: and indeed the Psalmist here gives us a very rhetorical and elegant description of their condition in the stormy sea; and shows us how deplorable their state and condition is at such a time. Where we are to note both the causes and effects of these tempests.

1. The causes; and they are twofold.

FIRST, The principal cause, the will and pleasure of God. He commands and raises the stormy winds. This is God's prerogative: none can raise winds but himself, and if devils or witches do it at any time, yet it is still by his permission; as you see in [Job 1:12, 19](#) the Lord is said to hold the wind in his fists, [Proverbs 30:4](#) as a man holds a wild fierce beast in a chain, or by a collar: and when they blow, "He brings them out of his treasures," [Psalm 135:7](#). There is indeed a natural cause of winds, of whom philosophers give us this rational account, "That it is a hot and dry exhalation raised 'from the earth by the power of the heavenly bodies, which being repelled or forced back by the coldness of the middle region, moves obliquely or slantingly, and sometimes very violently through the air." But though this be the natural cause of the winds, yet this does not at all restrain the absolute sovereignty of God over them. It is he who commands and raises them, as the text speaks; and though it be said, [John 3:8](#). "The wind blows where it wills;" yet that expression makes it not an arbitrary creature; but the meaning is, either thus, It blows where it wills, for any opposition that man can make to it, though it cannot blow where it wills in respect to God. Or thus, such is the great variableness and instability of the winds, blowing now this way, now that, that it seems to move with a kind of spontaneity, as a bird does in the air: though indeed it does but seem so, for all its motions are ordered of the Lord. And you cannot say in this sense, as [1 Kings 9:11](#). "That God is not in the wind," Now when it pleases the Lord to show his power upon the great deeps, he sends forth these winds out of his treasure. This is the principal cause. Then next,

2. We have the instrumental, subordinate and next cause of the storm; and that is, the 'winds lifting up the waves of the ocean.' There is naturally in the sea a continual agitation and rolling of its waters hither and thither; it cannot rest, as the prophet speaks of it; but when a violent wind blows upon it, the ocean is incensed and enraged; and the winds roll moving mountains of water before them. Then, like wild beasts, the waves seem to break loose and rage; not only to be *latrantes undas*, as Virgil calls them, barking waves, but *êôîáôá áñnéá*, raging waves, as Jude speaks, verse 13. Yes, roaring waves, as our Savior stiles them, [Luke 21:25](#). Thus of the causes of the storm principal and subordinate. Next we have,

SECONDLY, The terrible effects of the tempests, and that both upon their bodies and their minds.

(1.) External upon their bodies; it tosses them up and down in a dreadful manner, which the Psalmist elegantly expresses in the text, "They mount up to Heaven, they go down to the depths," a lofty hyperbolical expression.

They seem to mix with the very clouds, and then open deep graves for them in the bottom sands. Yes, it moves them not only perpendicularly, lifting them up, and casting them down, but obliquely and circularly also. "They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man," or, as some translate, *agitantur in gyrum*, they run

round: they are, indeed, moved according to the unstable motion of the waves, on whose proud backs they are mounted. This is the external effect of the storm upon their bodies.

(2.) The internal effect of it upon their minds, which is far more terrible. For it is said here, Their soul is melted because of trouble, and they are at their wit's end. Both which expressions do import a greater commotion and storm in the passions of the mind, than that is in the waves of the sea. The stoutest spirit quails and melts when it comes to this; and the wisest artist is at his wit's end. Thus you have the description of the persons, and of their danger, both in the cause and effects upon the body and mind. Next,

(3.) We have their deliverance by the wonderful hand of Divine Providence, in verse 27. "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he brings them out of their distress." Their usual cry in such extraordinary exigencies, is, mercy! mercy! Now they can pray that could not pray before. Extremity drives them to their knees, not only with cries, but vows to the Lord, and he delivers them out of their distresses: some delivered one way, and some another, but all in a stupendous way, which cannot but astonish them that are so delivered, and make them acknowledge the finger of God was in it.

From all this we observe,

DOCTRINE: That the preservations and deliverances of seamen in the dreadful storms and tempests at sea, is the wonderful work of Divine Providence.

"The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein;" [Psalm 111:2](#). And, among his providential works, none greater and more admirable than those which seamen daily behold in their great and marvelous protections upon the sea.

Now the glory of Divine Providence towards seamen shines and displays itself in three things especially, first, In making the ocean navigable for them at any time. **SECONDLY**, in preserving them from shipwrecks in the fury and stress of weather. **THIRDLY**, In finding out ways, and strangely providing means of safety, when their ships are lost, and broken upon the sea.

1. It is a wonderful providence of God to make the ocean navigable for men at any time; that such a fluid body as water is, which cannot support a stone or bullet of an ounce weight, should yet, by reason of its own saltiness, and the innate property of timber, be able to support ships of such vast burden, which are carried from place to place, being mounted on the backs of its proud waves. Who can but acknowledge a most wise providence, in gratifying the natural wit and desire of man, which fits him for converse and traffic with foreign nations; with instruments and materials so fit for his purpose as timber, iron, hemp, pitch, the loadstone, and whatever else is necessary for this purpose? I cannot open the wisdom of God's providence in this respect to better advantage than I find it done by the learned pen of Dr. More, in his Antidote against Atheism, page 58. 'Navigation (says he) being of so great consequence to the delight and convenience of human life, and there being both wit and courage in man to attempt the seas, were he but fitted with right materials, and other advantages requisite; when we see there is so pat a provision made for him to this purpose, in large timber for the building of his ship, a thick sea-water to bear the ship's burden; in the magnet or loadstone for his compass; in the steady and parallel direction of the axis of the earth for his cynosura; and then observe his natural wit and courage to make use of them; and how that ingenite desire of knowledge and converse, and of the improving of his own parts and happiness, stir him up to so notable a design: we cannot but conclude from such a train of causes,

so fitly and congruously complying together, that it was really the counsel of a universal and eternal mind, that has the overseeing and guidance of it,' etc.

2. But (to come home to the case before us) that men should be preserved at sea from immediate ruin in the dreadful tempests that befall them there; this is a mysterious and admirable work of God: that a poor ship should not be swallowed up by the furious ocean, when mountains of water come rolling towards it with an horrid noise, and give it such dreadful stripes: when seas roll over it, and so cover it with the waves, that for a time they know not whether they sink or swim; to see it emerge out of such fatal dangers, keep up its head, and mount upon the backs of those lofty seas that threaten immediately to overwhelm it: O how great is the power and care of providence in such a case! especially if you consider these following particulars, among many others, which threaten ruin on every side: and should but one of these many contingencies befall them, in the eye of reason they are lost men.

1. Of how many parts, compared together, does a ship consist? These parts indeed are fastened together with bolts of iron; but being in so many planks, what a wonder is it that none springs, that no bolt gives way, or seams open, while every part works with such violence, and so great a stress of weather lies upon it. Should such a thing fall out, (as it is a wonder it should not), how soon would the ship swim within as well as without?

2. How often are they put from their course by stress of weather, and know not where they are; not being able, for many days, to take any observation? so that they must go where winds and waves will drive them: for there is no dropping anchors in the main, nor resisting the course of the seas, to which they can make no more resistance than a child to a giant. And how is it they are not dashed upon the rocks, or foundered in the sands, seeing the winds shape their course, and not are? But there is a God that steers your course for you when you cannot.

3. How often are you even fallen upon rocks and shores before you see them, and are almost past hope before you begin to fear? Sometimes almost imbayed, and as much as ever you can do to weather a rock or head-land, which you discerned not until it was almost too late.

I remember Dr. Johnson, in that ingenious and wonderful narrative of his voyage to the Sound, when he had survived two shipwrecks, and was embarked in the third ship, 'We had not (says he) been above two or three hours at sea, but there was a sad distraction among us in the ship, and the mariners crying, mercy! mercy! for we had almost fallen foul on a rock, which lay so cunning in the water, that we did not espy it until we were upon it; but by the goodness of God we sailed close by it, and so escaped it: the least touch of it had been our ruin.'

4. How often do you ride at anchor in furious weather, near rocks and shores? Your lives, under God, every moment depending upon a cable and anchor: if the one break, or the other come home, you are lost men. And how wonderful is it they do not! what is a cable in a storm, but as the new cords with which the Philistines bound Samson, and as easily would they be snapped asunder like a thread of tow, were it not for the care of providence over you? These, and an hundred other accidents which hourly threaten you, might, and would send you down to the bottom, but that the Lord permits it not so to be.

5. And yet more wonderful than all this; how often does God suffer ships to founder and sink under you, and to be dashed to pieces against the rocks, and yet preserve you when the ordinary means of preservation are cut off and gone? Who like these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep?

For, first, sometimes a small boat shall save them, when a stout ship could not: thus many of them have been wonderfully preserved; and thus the aforementioned author relates the manner of this wonderful preservation. 'Our ship (says he) had sprung a leak, or rather a plank, and was ready to sink: O how the face of every man was changed at this affrightment! one was at his prayers, another wringing his hands, a third shedding tears, when we had no need of more salt-water. After this fit they fell to work, and (as it is usual in such extremes) we were all busy in doing nothing, and did we knew not what. The master's mate, whom we sent down to search out the leak, quickly returned to us with a sad countenance, trembling hands, gnashing of teeth, a quivering tongue, and words half spoken, signifying unto us, that the wound was incurable. Here was now no room for counsel, neither had we time to ask one another what was best to be done; but we presently cast out our long-boat, and shot off eight or ten guns, which seemed to be so many tolls of a passing-bell before our death. I leaped into the boat, but leaped short, one leg in the boat. Now were we left in the north seas, which seldom wear a smooth brow; but at this time contending with the wind, swelled into prodigious mountains. It blew half a storm, and we were now in a small vessel: what credit could we give to our safety in a small and open shallop, when so stately a castle of wood, which we but now lost, could not defend itself against the insolence of the waves? We were many leagues from any shore, having no compass to guide us, nor provisions to sustain us, and the night grew black upon us—Nothing but a miracle could preserve us, being out of the reach of human help—We fell to prayer, and our extremity pleaded for us:—For in this moment of death, when we were without the least expectation of deliverance, he sent a ship to us, which we must needs confess to be the finger of God,' etc. Thus he—And thus has been the wonderful door opened in extremity to multitudes more for their escape: but, oh! how astonishing are these ways of the Lord? Well may we say, "His ways are in the sea, and his paths in the great deep, and his footsteps are not known," [Psalm 77:19](#).

SECONDLY, Sometimes they shall be cast upon a rock in the sea, where they shall be preserved until some other way of deliverance come; yes, preserved strangely, God blessing a small matter of provision which they saved to sustain them; though they said of it, as the widow of Sarepta to the prophet, [1 Kings 17:12](#). "I have but an handful of meal, and a little oil, and I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die." Or if they could save nothing, yet a few muscles or birds eggs, with God's blessing, have sustained them until the time of mercy come. This has been the case of many. Think upon this you that abuse the good creatures of God by drunkenness: how sweet would a cup of fresh water be to you when reduced to such extremity? Oh! if your hearts be not harder than the rocks you lay upon, how would such extraordinary mercies melt you into love and thankfulness?

THIRDLY, Sometimes they have been wafted to the shore safely upon the wreck, or by making a raft of the broken pieces of the ship, and torn sails, and ropes; and upon this (God knows, a poor security against the boisterous waves) have they ventured themselves: a sinking man (as we say) will catch at a bulrush. Paul, and those that suffered shipwreck with him, were thus saved; "The centurion commanded, that they which could swim, should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land; and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship; and so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land," [Acts 27:43, 44](#).

Oh, the miraculous works of the Lord! to save by such contemptible and improbable means! Who can but with great joy see and acknowledge the finger of God to be here? "Lo, these are parts of his way; but how little a portion is heard of him?" [Job 26:14](#).

1. USE of reproof. If your preservation in storms at sea, be the wonderful works of Divine Providence, then divers of you deserve to be sharply reproofed from this

truth. And I beseech you suffer the word of reproof meekly and penitently. I shall speak nothing to reproach you; no, it is not to reproach, but to reform you: and if you hate reproof, and mock at counsel, God may shortly speak in such thundering language to your consciences, as will be terrible for you to bear. I remember, it is said of St. Bernard, That while he was seriously reproofing the profaneness of one (and if I misremember not, it was his own brother) who was a soldier, and observing how he slighted his holy and serious counsel, his spirit was greatly grieved at it, and he told him, 'Brother, God I fear, will shortly make way to your heart with a sword, to which my words can find no access:' And the event soon verified the sad prediction. I pray God none of you may be taught by captivities and shipwrecks what it is to reject faithful reproofs and wholesome counsel, seasonably given for your good. You that read these lines, seriously ask your own consciences these following questions.

(1.) Have you not soon forgotten the works and wonders of the Lord, which your eyes have seen? It may be, for the present, you have been sensibly affected with your danger, and the mercy of God in your deliverance, but has it remained upon your hearts? I doubt these mercies have been written in the dust, which should have been engraved, as in the rock, forever. Thus it was with Israel, a people that saw as many wonders wrought for them by the immediate finger of God, as ever did any people in the world: and yet it is said of them, even after the Red-sea deliverance, in which "God divided the sea for them, when the waves thereof roared," [Isaiah 51:15](#). and with which, for the present, their hearts were greatly affected; for it is said, [Psalm 106:12](#). "That they believed his word, and sang his praises;" but in the next verse you read, that a little time easily wiped out the sense of this mercy; for it is said, verse 13. "They soon forgot his works, and waited not for his counsels." I doubt this was not the sin of Israel only, but is the case of many of you at this day. Well, God did not forget you in the time of extremity, though you so quickly forgot him. Think not to excuse yourselves from this guilt by saying, you do still remember the thing: you may do so, and yet be said to forget his mercy: for a deliverance may be remembered by him that received it two ways; namely, speculatively and affectingly. A speculative remembrance is only to call to mind the story of such a danger and preservation; this you may do, and yet God account himself forgotten, except you so remember it as still to feel the powerful impressions thereof upon your hearts, softening and melting them into thankfulness, love, and dependence upon the God of your salvations.

(2.) Have you not walked very unanswerably to your deliverances, yes, and to the solemn engagements you made to God in the day of your distress? I fear some of you have walked after God has rescued you by a wonderful immediate hand from the jaws of death, as if you had been delivered to do all these abominations. As it is [Jeremiah 7:10](#). It may be the last week or month you were reeling to and fro upon the stormy sea, and staggering like drunken men; and this, reeling and staggering along the streets really drunken. O horrid abomination! do you thus requite the Lord, who pitied you in your distress, and, being full of compassion, saved you when you cried to him? Is this the fruit of your wonderful salvation? If a man should have told you in that day it would have been thus, you yourselves could not have believed it, but would have answered as Hazael did to the prophet, [2 Kings 8:13](#). 'What! is your servant a dog, that he should do such things?' Yet so it was, and so it is still: the Lord humble you for this great wickedness. If this be all the fruit of mercy and deliverance, it had been better for you that you had gone down to the bottom then, rather than to live only to treasure up more wrath against the day of wrath, and fill up your measure.

(3.) Are there not a sort of atheistic seamen, who own not providence at all, either in the raising of these horrid tempests, or in their marvelous preservation in them! but look on all as coming in a natural way, and their escape to be only by good fortune and chance? How wonderful a thing is it in the eyes of all considering men, that

providence should take any notice of them in a way of favor, that so wickedly disown it, and so directly disoblige it? How can you possibly shut your eyes against such clear light, and stop your ears against such loud and plain language, whereby the power and goodness of God proclaims itself to you in these providences! Ah! methinks you should most readily and thankfully subscribe that great truth, [Psalm 68:20](#). "He who is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." But though men see signs and wonders they will not believe; yes, though they themselves become wonders to the world by their miraculous deliverances, yet so brutish and stupid are they, that they will not see the hand, that saves them. Take heed what you do: you set yourselves in the direct, way to destruction by this, and highly provoke the Lord to abandon and cast you out of the care of his providence: and if he once do so, you are lost men.

(4.) And yet more vile (if more vileness can be in sin) than all this: is there not a generation of wretched men among you, that fall a swearing, cursing, and blaspheming God, even when he is uttering his terrible voice in the tempest, and every moment threatening to intomb them in the deep? When you should be upon your knees bewailing your sins, and pleading with God for mercy, (as I doubt not but some of you do) to be yet more and more provoking him, daring him to his face; and yet more incensing his indignation, which is already kindled against you; who, that hears this can chose but admire the riches of God's patience and forbearance towards such men? The very heathen mariners in a storm called every man upon his God, [Jonah 1:5](#). We say, extremity will cause the worst of men to pray, and compose the vainest spirit unto seriousness; but it seems by you it will not. Is this the frame and temper you will meet death in? What! speaking the language of devils and damned spirits before you come among them; hastening on your own ruin as if it were too slack and lingering in its motion? The Lord open the eyes of these miserable creatures, and convince them, that they are not only going to Hell as others are, but that they are the forlorn of all that wretched crew that are bound thither; and proportionably will be their misery, except they repent.

2. USE of exhortation. This point is yet farther improvable for you by way of exhortation, serving to press you to those proper duties which God calls you to by his terrible providential voice in the storms, and by your wonderful deliverances.

1. And the first lesson you are to learn from hence is, To adore the power of God. O what a manifestation of Divine power is here! you are the men that see more than others the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. It is one of God's ends in showing you these wonders, "To make his mighty power known," [Psalm 106:8](#). O what a terrible voice does God utter upon the seas when the heavens are black above you, the furious winds and dreadful thunders rattling about you, the seas and waves roaring beneath you! Is not this voice of the Lord full of majesty? Does it not awe your hearts, and make them tremble? In three things his infinite power is discovered to you.

FIRST, In raising these terrible tempests, and that from so small and weak a beginning as a thin vapor from the earth is; this is the wonderful work of God, [Psalm 135:7](#). "He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; he makes lightnings for the rain, he brings wind out of his treasures."

SECONDLY, In limiting and bounding their force and power; what prodigious effects else would follow: The wind is a fierce and boisterous creature, and would (if God did not by his providence restrain it) destroy and overturn all, both by sea and land; or if Satan, who is stiled The prince, or power of the air, were left at liberty to execute his malice by such an instrument, not a ship should cross the seas, nor a house be safe at land; as is evident enough by the furious haste he made to overturn the house with an horrible tempest upon Job's children, as soon as he had received a permission from Heaven to do it.

And, THIRDLY, No less visible is the power of God in calming and appeasing the stormy winds, and remanding them into his treasures. [Psalm 107:29](#). "He makes the storm a calm." Yes, he does so in the very nick of time, when all is concluded lost. Thus you read in [Mark 4:39](#). "When the waves beat into the ship," so that it was now full, and the disciples cried unto the Lord, "Master, care you not that we perish? He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace, be still; and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Just as one would hush a child, Peace, be still. O the sovereign power of God! how should it be revered and adored by all that behold it, in these marvelous effects of it?

2. The second lesson you are taught by this doctrine is, To admire the mercy of God. Mercy is no less discovered than power; yes, the power of God is put forth to give his mercy a fair occasion to shine forth in your deliverance. God sometimes permits your dangers to grow to an extremity, and delays your deliverances to the last moment, until all hopes of safety are gone, upon the like reason that Lazarus's resurrection was deferred, that the work of God in your preservation may commend itself to you under the greatest advantage.

O that you would view these mercies in all their endearing circumstances! I can only hint your duty generally in this case; you may enlarge upon it, if you have hearts fit for such a blessed work. And mark particularly the multitudes of mercies that are complicated and involved in one deliverance. Observe the season when, the manner how, the means by which your salvation was wrought. It is a thousand pities that so much of God's glory and your comfort, as any one, even the smallest circumstance may contain, should ever be lost.

3. Lastly, And above all, See that you answer God's ends in your deliverance: If those be lost, God may say concerning you, as David did of Nabal, [1 Samuel 25:21](#). "Surely, in vain have I kept all that this fellow has in the wilderness; so that nothing was missed of all that pertained to him; and he has requited me evil for good." So here, in vain I kept this fellow upon the sea, when I suffered others to sink; in vain have I preserved his life, liberty, and estate so often by an out-stretched arm of power and mercy to him, seeing he requites me evil for good.

O let me entreat you to be careful to comply with the designs and ends of God in these your wonderful preservations! If you inquire what God's ends or designs in your deliverance are, I answer,

FIRST, It is to lead you to repentance. "The goodness of God (says the apostle) leads you to repentance," [Romans 2:4](#). Do you not know the voice of mercy? Why, it bespeaks your return to God. It may be that you have spent all your life, to this day, in the service of sin: You never redeemedst one of all your precious hours to consider your own estate, to bewail your sin and misery, to seek after a saving interest in Christ. Why, now here is a providence fallen in that does, as it were, take you by the hand, and lead you to this great and necessary work. The end of God in raising this storm was to deliver you from the more dreadful tempest of his wrath, which, without repentance, must shortly overtake your soul in the blackness of darkness forever. Now God has awakened your conscience by this fright, made it charge home your sins upon you, terrified you with dismal apprehensions of death and Hell. O what a fair opportunity and advantage has he now put into your hand for repentance, reformation, and gaining a saving interest in Jesus Christ! If this season be lost, conscience suffered again to fall into any dead sleep, and your heart be again hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, you may never have such an opportunity for salvation opened to you any more.

SECONDLY, If this end be answered, then a farther design God has in your deliverance, is to engage and encourage your soul to a dependence upon God in future straits and dangers. This is food for faith; and now you are furnished with

experience of the power, mercy, and goodness of God, to enable you to rest yourselves upon him when new exigencies befall you. If God exercise you with such extremities another time, you may say with the apostle, [2 Corinthians 1:10](#). "Who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver; in whom we trust, he will yet deliver us."

If your first deliverance were a deliverance without a promise, when you were without Christ, what encouragement have you to depend upon him, when his end is answered in your repentance and conversion; and, being in Christ, are entitled to all the promises.

THIRDLY, and lastly, God's end in your marvelous preservations and deliverances is to furnish you for, and to engage you to a life of praise. O how should the high praises of God be ever in your mouths! you have seen his works and wonders in the deeps; and this is it which the Psalmist presses upon you as a becoming return for your mercies, in the words following my text; "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

O with what warm and enlarged affections should you express your thankfulness to the God of your salvation! and say as David, "What am I, O Lord God, and what is my father's house, that you should do such great things for me?" Was such a life as mine worth the working of so many wonders to save it? O Lord, you know it has been a life spent in vanity. Your glory has not been precious in mine eyes, but my life has been precious in your eyes. Many more useful, and less sinful than myself have perished, and I am saved. O Lord, show me the designs and gracious ends of these deliverances. Surely there is some great thing to be done by me, or else so great a salvation had not been wrought for me. The Lord saw in what a sad case my poor soul was, to be summoned immediately before his judgment-seat: that if I had gone down under all my guilt, I had sunk to the bottom of Hell: But you, in love to my soul, have delivered it from the pit of corruption, that I might yet enjoy a season for salvation, and be once more entrusted with the precious talents of time and means. O that I may not reject or abuse the grace of God in this new instrument, as I have too often done in the former! let me not live as one delivered to commit all these abominations!

And now after all that is come upon me for my evils, seeing you, my God, have punished me so much less than my iniquities deserve; and have given me such a deliverance as this, should I again dare to break your commandments? [Ezra 9:13, 14](#). "O let this new mercy produce a new heart and life!"

SERMON III

THE SEAMAN'S PRESERVATIVE IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

PSALM 139:9, 10

"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea; even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me."

IN this psalm the omnipresence and omniscience of God are the subjects of the Psalmist's meditation; and these attributes are here promiscuously discoursed, not

only because of the near affinity that is between their natures, but because the one is the demonstration of the other: It is evident God knows all things, because he fills all places. Touching the omniscience of God, he discovers the infinite perfection of that attribute by the particular and exact notion it takes of all our ways: verse 3. "You compass my paths, and are acquainted with all my ways." Of all our words; verse 4. "There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, you know it altogether." Yes, of all our thoughts; and that not only in the instant of their conception, but long before they were conceived; verse 2. "You understand my thoughts afar off," even from eternity. Thus he displays the omniscience of God: And then to make demonstration of the truth and certainty of this doctrine of God's omniscience, he proves it from his omnipresence: q. d. He who fills all things cannot but know all things. Now God's presence fills Heaven, yes, and Hell too, verse 8. And all parts of the earth and sea, even the remotest, verse 9, 10. And therefore no creature, nor action of any creature, can escape his cognizance. It is not here as among men; if a malefactor be condemned by the laws of one kingdom, he may escape by flying into another; but it is far otherwise here; for says the Psalmist, (personating a guilty fugitive endeavoring to make an escape from the arrest of God's justice), "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me."

In which words you have these two things mainly remarkable.

1. The greatest security and encouragement to a sinner supposed.
2. That supposed security and encouragement utterly destroyed.

1. The greatest security and encouragement to a sinner supposed; "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea." Where two things seem to offer towards his protection.

FIRST, The place; the remotest part of the sea; by which you are to understand the most obscure nook in the creation; farthest removed from an inspection or observation.

And, SECONDLY, his swift and speedy flight after the commission of sin, to this supposed refuge and sanctuary: It is here supposed, that a sinner should fly as swift as the light of the sun, which in a moment shines from the east to the west, and so the meaning is, could I flee with a celerity equal to the sun, or his beams of light, which breaking forth in the morning, do in an instant enlighten the remotest parts of the hemisphere: Could I as swiftly flee to the most obscure, remote, solitary place in all the world. Thus the sinner's security is supposed.

2. This supposed security and encouragement is utterly destroyed; "Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right-hand shall hold me." The leading hand of God is not here to be understood, as a directing or guiding hand, to show the fugitive sinner the way of his escape; but contrarily, "Your hand shall lead me," as a keeper leads his prisoner back to the place of custody, from which he endeavored to escape. And the following clause is exigetical: "Your right hand shall hold," or detain me, namely, in strict custody. So that the sum of all is this:

DOCTRINE: That the whole world affords no place of secrecy or security for a sinner to escape the observing eye and righteous hand of God.

Jonah fled from the Lord to Tarshish; but could he escape so? No, the Lord sent a storm after him, which brought back the fugitive, [Jonah 1:3, 4](#). We read, [Isaiah 29:15](#). of such "as dig deep, to hide their counsels from the Lord," that is They plot, contrive, and study to conceal their wicked designs, to sin with greatest secrecy and security. But what can possibly be a covering from Him to whose sight all things are naked and manifest? Where can a sinner be hidden from him whose presence fills

Heaven and earth? [Jeremiah 23:25](#). The scripture gives full proof to this great truth. It is clear from [Proverbs 15:3](#). "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." And again, [Job 34:21, 22](#). "For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he sees all his goings; there is no darkness, nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." Whoever goes about to conceal a sin in secret, attempts a foolish and impossible design, [Psalm 44:21](#). "Shall not God search this out? For he knows the secrets of the heart: For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth," [2 Chronicles 16:9](#).

Now in the handling of this point I purpose to show you,

1. That men are often induced to sin upon hopes of secrecy and concealment.
2. That to sin upon these encouragements, strongly argues their natural atheism: They think they are safe if men know it not; they reckon not upon God's discovery of them.
3. That these encouragements to sin are vain things, it being impossible any place can hide a sinner from God; and how it appears that the eye of God is, and must needs be upon us, and our actions, wherever we are, and however closely we endeavor to hide them: And then apply it.

FIRST, Men are often induced to commit sin upon the hopes of secrecy and concealment. Sin (especially some sorts of sin) carry so much shame and odium in them, that it restrains men from the open practice of them; but if Satan can persuade them they shall never be divulged to their reproach, they will venture upon them. See that text, "The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, no eye shall see me, and disguiseth his face," [Job 24:15](#). Reckoning himself secure if he can carry his wickedness under a veil of darkness, not caring what wickedness he does, so he may do it un-discerned: It is not the acting of sin, but the discovery of it that puts them into terrors. So it is added with respect both to the adulterer and the thief, verse 17. "The morning is to them as the shadow of death, if one know them; they are in the terrors of the shadow of death," that is If a man, especially a man in authority, a magistrate meet them, it is as if the image of death passed before them in a vision. So those idolaters, [Ezekiel 8:12](#). "Son of man, have you seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the house of his imagery? For they say, the Lord sees it not." They conclude all is well, if nothing appear. This encouragement of secrecy is the great argument by which Satan prevails with men to commit any sin that has shame or danger attending it: But his promises of concealment are usually made good, as his promises of great wealth are to witches. This is the encouragement.

SECONDLY, Next I will make evident to you, that to sin upon this encouragement argues atheism in him that commits it. This is plain, for, did men believe the omnipresence and omniscience of God, such an encouragement to sin as secrecy could have no force with them. Thus, when the ancients of Israel practiced their idolatry in the dark, it is plain they thought God saw them not, [Ezekiel 8:12](#). "For they say, the Lord sees us not, the Lord has forsaken the earth;" that is They did not really believe God's omnipresence and omniscience. And Job tells us, chapter 31:26, 27, 28. "That if he had beheld the sun in his brightness," that is to admire and worship it as a God; or, "his heart been secretly enticed, he should have denied the God that is above." Every one that is enticed to sin upon the encouragement of secrecy, does so far deny the God that is above. If such a man did really believe there is a God that sees him, "whose eyes are as flames of fire," [Revelation 1:14](#). "To whom the darkness and the light are both alike," [Psalm 139:12](#). it were impossible he should be so terrified at the discovery of a creature, and so secure and wholly unconcerned at the discovery of God: It could not be that the observation of the great God should not so much trouble them, as the observation of a little child.

Thus we find the inward thoughts of men's hearts concerning God discovered by their bold attempts upon secret sins, [Isaiah 40:15](#). "Woe to them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark; and they say, who sees us, and who knows us?" They think if their works are shrouded under a veil of darkness, they are safe enough; if they can escape the bar of an earthly God (a magistrate) they shall never be accountable at any other bar. We have another sad instance of the same impiety in [Psalm 73:11](#). "And they say, how does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" If men did not fancy to themselves there is no God, or (which is all one) that he is like unto themselves, one that cannot see in darkness, they could never encourage themselves as they do, to sin upon such a foolish pretense.

THIRDLY, But my proper business in this place, is to prove, that these encouragements to sin are vain things: That no sinner can hide himself from the eye of God. This is plain both from scripture and reason.

The scripture speaks full home to this truth. [Proverbs 5:21](#). "The ways of a man are before the Lord, and he ponders all his paths." To ponder or weigh our paths is more than simply to observe and see them. He not only sees the action, but puts it into the balances, with every circumstance belonging to it, and tries how much every ingredient in the action weighs, and what it comes to. So that God has not only a universal inspection upon every action, but he has a critical inspection into it also. "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed," [1 Samuel 2:3](#). So [Jeremiah 13:25, 27](#). "You have forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood: I have seen your adulteries and your neighings, the lewdness of your whoredoms and abominations; q. d. You forget there is a God in the heavens that beheld you, and did truly believe all was safe, because secret from man. In this falsehood or cheat put upon you by the devil and your own atheistical heart, you did trust. But I have seen you, and all your secret lewdness. It is a proverb among sinners, *Sinon caste, tamen caute*. Carry the matter, if not honestly, yet warily: If you have a mind to sin, yet order it so that the world may be never the wiser. But how vain a thing is this? If men do not, the Lord does see it; "I know, and am a witness, says the Lord," [Jeremiah 29:23](#). Thus the scripture speaks roundly and fully to the point in hand.

But because the atheism of the world is so great, and it is a hard thing to convince men of this great truth, so as to overawe them from any secret sin by it; I will, by rational arguments, demonstrate the truth to every man's conscience, and give you plain and full evidence, that however secretly men carry their sinful designs, yet the Lord must needs be privy to them; and it is impossible they should escape his cognizance.

1. For, FIRST, He who formed all cannot but know all: the workman cannot be supposed to be ignorant of any part of his own work. Now God is the former of all things; every place and every person he has made: where then shall the workers of iniquity hide themselves? You have the folly of sinners, in thinking to conceal themselves from the eye of God, convinced and reprov'd by this very argument, [Isaiah 40:15, 16](#). "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord, and their works are in the dark: and they say, who sees us? And who knows us? Surely, your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for, shall the work say to him that made it, he made me not? Or, shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, he has no understanding?" q. d. Think you by deep-laid designs, by the advantage of darkness, by the molding and new-molding your crafty designs in your heads, as the clay is molded now unto this, then into the shape by the potter's hand, to hide it from me? O brutish creatures, and without understanding! am not I the God that formed you? And can it be supposed I should not know the most secret thoughts, plots, and designs of my own creatures, who cannot contrive a design, nor conceive a thought with me? How absurd is this? Find out a place which God made not, or a creature which he formed not; and then your

pretenses to that creature's concealment from God in such a place, may have some color: and this argument is again urged to convince the brutish atheist, [Psalm 94:8, 9, 10](#). "Understand, you brutish among the people, and you fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, shall he not hear? He who formed the eye, shall he not see? He who chastens the heathen, shall not he correct? He who teaches man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity;" so that it is the vainest of all vanity in the world, to think of hiding your sins from the Lord.

2. He who sustains all cannot but know and discern all. You that seek to hide counsel from the Lord, don't you know, "That in him you live, move, and have your being?" [Acts 17:28](#). Do not you derive that very power from him, which you abuse by sinning against him; And do you depend necessarily and continually upon God for all? Must he give you the power to move, and by that power can you move beyond him, and get out of his reach? You cannot think a thought without him, and yet can exclude him from those very thoughts which you had no power to conceive, but from him? Exercise but common reason in the case, and it will hiss at your absurd designs.

3. He who governs all can be ignorant of nothing. There is a perpetual influence of providence, swaying and governing all the creatures, and all their actions; else the very ligaments of nature would crack, and the world break up and disband. This providence extends itself to the least and lowest of creatures and their actions, [Luke 12:6](#). a sparrow falls not to the ground without it. "The great God has something to do about the most minute and inconsiderable things;" yes, the most contingent and uncertain things, as is the disposal of a lot, [Proverbs 16:33](#). And indeed this omniscience of God is that which is necessary to this universal government. How shall he rule that person, or in that place which he knows not? Indeed earthly governors may do so; it is not necessary they have a personal immediate cognizance of each place and person in their dominions: it is enough that they be virtually and mediately governed by them; but it is not so with God: it is necessary his eye should immediately see all the parts of his dominion. He could not rule the world, if he were not an omniscient God. [Psalm 66:7](#). "He rules by his power forever; his eyes behold the nations; let not the rebellious exalt themselves."

4. He who has set a spy to observe and note what every man does, cannot but know his actions, however secret they be. Now, so it is here; God sends a spy with you, to observe and record your most secret actions and thoughts, in every place, I mean your own consciences, from whose observation none of your ways can possibly be exempt. The sense of this made the heathen say, Turpe quid ansuruste sine teste time. When you are attempting a sinful act, fear yourself without any other witness; conscience is privy to your most secret designs and thoughts; [1 Kings 2:44](#). "You know all the wickedness which your heart (that is your conscience) is privy to:" and if conscience know all, God must needs see and know it. So the apostle reasons, from the lesser to the greater, [1 John 3:20](#). "If our heart condemns us, (which is there put for conscience) God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things." If the spirit of a man knows the things of a man, much more he who formed that spirit, and endowed man with it.

5. He who knows things more secret and unsearchable than our most secret actions can be, must needs know them however secret they be. Now there are many things more close and secret than any action of ours can possibly be, and yet God knows them. The thoughts of the heart are more secret than any external action; so secret, that no creature can search them; the devil himself has but a conjectural guess at them: "But the Lord tells unto man what is his thought;" as in [Amos 4:13](#). So [Jeremiah 17:10](#). "I the Lord search the heart, I "try the reins;" that is The most obscure, inward and deep secrets lodged in the heart; nay, which is more, he not only knows our thoughts when they are formed and conceived in the heart, but long

before their conception; [Psalm 139:2](#). "You know my thoughts afar off." Divines generally interpret it from eternity; even so long before they were actually thought, he foreknew every thought we should think; and what can be imagined more secret and indiscernible, than a future thought.

Now if this be known to him, how much more are our thoughts formed into projects and designs, and these executed by external actions? O deceive not yourselves with hopes of secrecy! Nothing can be a secret to him that knows the counsels of all hearts.

6. He who providentially brings to light the most secret contrivances of men, and publishes them before all Israel, and before the sun, must needs see them, and know them. How closely had Achan covered his wickedness: He never suspected a discovery, yet God brought it to light. With how much contrivance was the sin of David covered! yet God discovered it: "You did this thing secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun," [2 Samuel 12:12](#). Histories abound with examples of God's bringing to light murders, so secretly committed, that it was impossible they should ever be revealed in this world, without a miracle of providence; and yet so they have been brought to light. Bessus, having committed such a murder, imagined the swallows that were chattering in the chimney had said, Bessus killed a man, and thereupon confessed the fact. How secure were the contrivers of the popish powder-plot, that Catholic villainy, in a double sense having sworn all their accomplices to secrecy, and managed the whole design so closely that Guy Faux, upon the discovery of it, said, The devil must needs be the discoverer of it. How easy were it to expatiate upon this theme? But I will not be tiresome in instances: all ages are the witnesses of this truth. Who can then deny or question that great or confessed truth, [Daniel 2:28](#). "There is a God in Heaven that reveals secrets:" and if he reveals them, he must needs know them.

7. He who will judge all secrets, cannot but know them. "Now God will judge the secrets of men in that great day," [Romans 2:16](#). "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil," Eccl 12. The Judge of the whole earth will not judge at random; his judgment will be infallible, because his omniscience is so. "His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he sees all his goings; for he will not lay upon man more than right, that he should enter into judgment with God," [Job 34:21, 23](#).

So that the truth of this point is beyond all controversy and contradiction, that the whole world affords no place of secrecy or security for a sinner to escape the observing eye, and righteous hand of God.

The uses follow in these inferences.

INFERENCES

1. Inference, If this be so, then time, place, and opportunity, however much they seem to promise secrecy and concealment, should never further a temptation to sin.

Suppose all circumstances concurring, so that in the eye of reason you seem secured from the shameful consequences of sin; yet, methinks, the consideration of this truth should sufficiently deter you from a wicked purpose; [Proverbs 5:20](#). "And why will you, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his goings." There be four things which strengthen temptations to sin, and particularly the sin of impurity upon seamen. FIRST, The absence of lawful remedies. SECONDLY, The presence of alluring objects. THIRDLY, The instigation of wicked examples. FOURTHLY, And the hopes of concealment, being remote from their acquaintance: so that their sins, in probability, shall never disgrace them. This last circumstance is not the least: O how many has it prevailed upon! but I

hope you will never yield to this temptation, whose heart and strength are broken by this consideration of the eye of God upon you. A chaste woman being once solicited to folly, told him that solicited her, she could never yield to the motion, until he could find a place where God should not see.

Nay, my friends, it should do more than restrain you from the gross acts of sin; it should powerfully curb the very thoughts and first motions of sin in your hearts. That was the use holy Job made of this truth, [Job 31:1](#). "I have made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid? Does he not see my ways, and count all my steps?"

Suppose you should carry your wickedness so close, that none on earth should know it; yet the Lord sees it, and will bring it into judgment, and your own conscience is privy to it. I pray, sirs, tell me, is it not a great comfort to a malefactor, that he acted his crime so closely, that none but the judge, and one authentic witness more, (whose testimony is as good as a thousand) beheld it? Why, this is the case of all secret sinners. But, to press home this great and necessary truth more particularly, I beseech you to consider,

1. God does not only behold you, but beholds you with detestation and abhorrence in your ways of iniquity: It is a sight that grieves him to the heart, [Genesis 6:5, 6](#). "And the Lord saw the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Here was wickedness, great wickedness, breaking out externally, and evil, only evil, and that continually, working internally; so that both heart and life were evil extensively, intensively, and protensively. This the Lord saw; and how it affected him, the sixth verse tells you: "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth; and it grieved him at the heart:" Ah! it cuts him to the heart to see your sinful hearts and courses. Nothing can be so contrary to the pure and holy nature of God as this is: this made the prophet admire how his patience could endure such a sight, [Hebrews 1:13](#). "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and can not look upon iniquity; wherefore look you upon them that deal treacherously?" etc. As if he should say, Lord, how can you behold yourself affronted by vile creatures, and hold your hands from avenging it? O the stupendous patience of God!

2. It does not only grieve him to the heart, but it puts his patience to the greatest trial and exercise in beholding it: therefore he is said "to endure with much long-suffering," [Romans 9:22](#). It does, as it were, create a conflict between his patience and justice: he is so provoked by your sin, that he expresses it as a difficulty to bear it, [Amos 2:13](#). "I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves:" burdened until the axle-tree of infinite patience be ready to crack under the weight.

Nay, THIRDLY, He does not only see your evils, but he registers and records them, in order to a day of reckoning with you for all together, except you repent; [Deuteronomy 32:34](#). "Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?" A metaphor taken from the clerk of the assize, who seals up the bag of indictments against the time of trial. You think if you can blind the eyes of men, all is well, you shall hear no more of it: ah! but it is sealed up among God's treasures; that is the things he records and reserves for the day of account.

4. God does not only see you, but he will also one day make you see yourselves and your ways, and that with horror and consternation. You think you shall taste nothing but the sweet and pleasure of sin; but how are you deceived? The days are coming when sin, that is now pleasant, shall be turned into wormwood and gall. You will not see the evil of it; and because you see it not, you think God does not. "These things (says God) have you done, and I kept silence, and you thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself; but I will reprove you, and set them in order

before your eyes," [Psalm 50:21](#). God sees them now, and he will make you see them too, by opening your eyes in this world graciously, or in that to come judicially.

5. God does not only see your ways, but he will make all the world see them too: For, "there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed, nor covered, that shall not be made known," [Matthew 10:26](#). "There is a day when God will make manifest the hidden "counsels of the heart," 2 Corinthians 4:5. "When that which has been spoken in darkness shall be heard in light; and that which you have spoken in the ears in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house tops," [Luke 12:3](#). Well then, whenever the occasions and opportunities of sin are presented to you, under this encouragement of security, I beseech you remember this truth, that no place can hide you from the eye of God. He sees all your ways, yes, he sees them with abhorrence; the sight of them is the greatest exercise of his patience. His sight of them is not a transient glance, but he sees and records your evils; they are sealed up among his treasures: He sees, and will make you see them too with horror, when he shall set them in order before you: he sees them, and will make angels and men see them in the great day. O then, never let secrecy any more encourage you to sin!

2. Inference. What prodigious sinners must they be, that seek no covert from their sin in darkness, but with an impudent face declare, yes, glory in their shame; who are not ashamed to sin openly with a bare face, and a whore's forehead? These are sinners of the first magnitude. "They declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not," [Isaiah 3:9](#). It is as natural to man to endeavor to hide his sin, as Adam, and you see from the text, guilty sinners gladly would, if it were possible, fly to any obscure corner from the observation of God and men; and it is a mercy God has planted such an affection as shame is, in the soul of man, to be a bridle to restrain his exorbitant lusts. But yet there is a generation of monstrous sinners, who have so far unmanned themselves, "That they are not at all ashamed when they commit abominations, neither can they blush," [Jeremiah 6:15](#). If there be any remains of shame left in them, they exercise it upon a wrong object: they are ashamed of that which would be to their glory, and glory in that which is their shame; they add impudence to their sin, and blush not to proclaim that which others study to conceal.

Such a vile temper as this shows a man even ripe for wrath; he has even filled up his measure, and is come to the very culminating point and top of wickedness. There be some men arrived to such a degree of holiness, that all that converse with them judge them even ripe for Heaven: they speak the dialect, and have the very savor of Heaven upon them. Others are come to such a prodigious height of impiety, that understanding men cannot but conclude they are near unto damnation; they speak the very language, and have the very scent of Hell upon them. Such are they that openly declare their sin as Sodom, and glory in their shame.

Thus we see some drunkards will glory in their strength, to pour down wine and strong drink, and can boast of the number of their cups: some adulterers can glory in their acts of wickedness, not suffering themselves to damn their own souls, but laboring to infect and corrupt as many as they can by their filthy tongues, that they may draw them into the same misery. We can hardly tell how to screw up sin one peg higher than this: first to practice sin, then defend it, then boast of it. Sin is first a man's burden, next his custom, next his delight, and then his excellency. Lord, where is man fallen! that holiness should ever be his disgrace; and sin, yes, the vilest of sins, his glory! O the power of Divine patience!

3. Inference. If the eye of God searches every obscure corner in the world, to behold the evil that is committed there, then certainly the eye of God cannot but look into every secret place in the world to see the good that is done there. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," [Proverbs 15:3](#). The good as well as the evil; yes, he beholds with delight the good done in secret.

As some sinners seek corners to act their wickedness in, and cannot satisfy themselves to commit sin in the light, (for, as our Savior says, [John 3:20](#). "He who does evil hates the light;") so, on the contrary, a truly godly man seeks corners to pray in, to meditate in, and to examine his own heart in, and thinks these duties of godliness can never be managed with too great a privacy; not that he is in the least ashamed of his duty; no, that is not the reason, but he is afraid of hypocrisy, when duties lie too open, and exposed to the eyes of men. A sinner takes his full liberty to vent his corruptions when he can do it in secret; and a saint takes his full liberty to vent and exercise his graces, when no eye but the eye of God sees him. "You, when you pray (says our Savior) enter into your closet and shut your door, and pray to your Father which is in secret, and your Father (which sees in secret) shall reward you openly." O how much better is it, both as to your present comfort and future account, to get into a corner to pray, than to whore and drink? To pour out your souls to God graciously, than to pour out your lusts against God so wickedly? How contrary are the principles of grace and corruption? The study of sinners is to hide their evils from the eyes of men: the study of a saint is to hide his duties from the eyes of men: The sinner would not have the world suspect what he has been about; nor would the saint have all the world know what he has been about. The way of an adulterer is as the "way of an eagle in the air, or as a serpent upon a rock;" that is a secret way, where they leave no prints or tracts behind them. "So is the way of an adulterous woman; she eats and wipes her mouth, and says, I have done no wickedness," [Proverbs 30:19, 20](#). By wiping the mouth is there meant preventing all suspicion; suffering no sign of the action to remain upon them: So, contrarily, a gracious person that has been with God in secret prayer, or fasting, when his duty is ended, he labors to avoid all ostentations. And therefore you have the caution from Christ, [Matthew 6:17, 18](#). "But you, when you fastest, anoint your head, and wash your face! that you appear not unto men to fast, but unto your father which is in secret." The meaning is, carry your private duties so close, that none may know what passes between God and you: When you have been entertained in secret with hidden manna, a feast of fat things, wipe your mouth in a holy sense, that is wipe off all suspicion of hypocrisy and vanity by a prudent and humble concealment. "Religion does not lay all open, as we say:" As sinners have their secret pleasures, their stolen waters which are sweet to them; so the saints have their secret delights in God, their hidden manna, which no man knows but he who eats of it. And as the eye of God vindictively beholds the one, so it delightfully beholds the other; and so you find it, [Canticles 2:14](#). "O my dove, (says Christ to the church) that are in the clefts of the rocks, in the secret places of the stairs: Let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance lovely." Let this encourage you to secret duties; let not others find more pleasure in secret lusts, than you can do in God and secret duties.

4. Inference. Does the eye of God see all the evil and wickedness that is committed in all the secret corners of the world! How admirable then is the patience of God towards the world! Who can imagine how much wickedness is secretly practiced in a town or city every day? Or if all the villainies that are perpetrated in a small circumference in one day were known to us, we should admire that God does not make us like Sodom, for judgment and desolation before the next day. What then are the innumerable swarms of sin, which are as the sands upon the sea-shore, from all the parts and corners of the earth! Alas, there is not the ten thousandth part of the grosser sort of wickednesses committed in the world, that ever comes to our eye or ear; and if it did, we cannot estimate the evil of sin, as God does; nor feel with that resentment the burden of it, as he does: and yet the long-suffering God forbears it with infinite patience. Surely his power was not more discovered in making the world, than it is in forbearing to destroy it again for the wickedness that is in it. But the world stands for the church's sake that is in it. "And were it not that the Lord of hosts had left us a small remnant, we had been as Sodom, we had been like unto Gomorrah," [Isaiah 1:9](#). There is also an elect remnant to be called and gathered by the gospel out of it in their several generations: and when that number shall be

accomplished, God will set fire to the four quarters of it, and it shall lie in white ashes; until then the long-suffering of God waits.

5. Inference. If God sees all the secret wickedness that is committed in every corner of the world; how clear is it that there is a judgment to come, and that this judgment will be exact?

That there is a judgment to come, is by this manifest; and also that there is abundance of sin committed in the world, which never comes to light here, nor never will in this world. It is true, men's sins are open; and the judgments of God upon them are as open; but it is not so with all. The apostle says, [1 Timothy 5:24](#). "Some men's sins are open before-hand, going before-hand to judgment, and some men's they follow after." Some men's sins are written, as it were, in their foreheads, every one sees them; but others follow after, are not discovered until the day of the revelation of the secrets of all hearts, and then that which is now done in closets shall be proclaimed as upon house-tops: Though they were never put to shame for their sins, in the places where they committed them, yet God will shame them before men and angels. This is the day to judge secrets, [1 Corinthians 4:5](#).

And, as it is certain there will be such a judgment, so it is certain this judgment will be exact; for the judge of all has seen all: Whatever he charges any man with, has been acted before his face, [Psalm 90:8](#). "You set our secret sins in the light of your countenance." Here can be no mistake, the omnipotent God will judge for what he has seen; "For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he sees all his goings, for he will not lay upon man more than right, that he should enter into judgment with God." The meaning is, he cannot mistake in his judgment being omniscient, and having seen all the ways of man; so that there can be no plea offered by any man for the rever. of his sentence.

O then let us be exact and careful, as well in our secret as in our public actions; for God shall bring every work in judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, [Ecclesiastes 12](#). ult.

6. Inference. Lastly, if the eye of God be in every place upon us, and all our actions; then let those whose condition of life has sent them out of the eyes and observations of their parents and masters keep the sense of God's eye upon their hearts, as ever they would escape sin and ruin.

It is no small advantage to young unprincipled persons, to live under the discipline of pious and careful governors; but it often falls out, that they are early transplanted into another soil, sent into foreign countries in order to their education or employment; and as often are there corrupted and debauched by the evil examples of the places where they reside; they learn another language, or drive another trade than what their parents or masters designed them for. But if the sense of this great truth might accompany them where-ever they are, O what a sovereign antidote might it prove against those deadly poisons of temptations! This alone would be a sufficient preservative. If our children and servants have but the awful sense of God's eye upon them, we may turn them loose into the wide world without fear.

If Providence shall direct this discourse to your hands, my heart's desire and prayer for you is, that the Spirit of the Lord would imprint this great truth upon your hearts. And I am the more moved to endeavor your preservation, upon the consideration of the apparent danger you are in, and the manifold disappointments and mischiefs that must unavoidably follow the corrupting of your tender years. The danger you are in is great, whether you consider,

FIRST, The infecting, catching nature of sin. No plague is more infectious and insinuating than sin is. Many are the wiles, devices, stratagems, and baits, Satan lays to draw you into sin, [2 Corinthians 2:11](#). Or,

SECONDLY, The proneness that is in your own nature to close with the offers and temptations that you are tried with; it is as great a wonder if you escape, as that one that lives in a pest-house should remain healthy; or that dry tinder should not catch, when thousands of sparks fly about, and light upon it. Or,

THIRDLY, The absence of all those means by which you have formerly been preserved from sin. You are now without the ordinances of God, the family duties, the admonitions, counsels, examples, and observations of your parents, masters, and friends: All which have been of great use to keep you from sin, and repress the vanities of youth. Or, Lastly,

FOURTHLY, The manifold furtherance or temptations which your age afford; Childhood and youth are vanity. Inconsiderateness, rashness, injudiciousness, and the want of experience, do all cast you into the very snare. See how the Holy Spirit has signified the danger of persons at your age, in [Proverbs 7:7](#).

All these things do greatly endanger you. And if any, or all of them together, prevail to the vitiating and corrupting of you, then what a train of sad consequences will follow upon it! For,

1. The great God will be dishonored and reproached by you, even that God whose distinguishing mercies are now before your eyes, and should be admired by you; that caused you to spring up in a better soil, and not from idolaters in a land of darkness.

2. Conscience will be wounded and polluted with guilt; and though, at present, you feel not the remorse and gnawings of it, yet now you are preparing for it. The sins of youth are complaints and sorrows of old age, [Job 13:26](#).

3. The hearts of your friends, if godly, will be grieved and greatly troubled to find their expectations and hopes disappointed; and all those prayers for you, and counsels bestowed on you to come to nothing. If an unequal match by Esau was such a grief of heart to Isaac and Rebecca, what will profaneness and impurity be to your parents? [Genesis 26:34](#).

4. The serviceableness and comfort of your whole life, will, in all probability, be destroyed by the corruption of your youth. If blossoms be withered, and buds nipped, what fruit can be expected? To conclude,

5. Your precious and immortal souls are hazarded to all eternity. And "what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" [Matthew 16:26](#).

All this mischief may be happily prevented by the serious consideration of this point you have now been reading. For if God shall fix that truth in your hearts by faith, then,

FIRST, Instead of running with others into the same excess of riot, you will keep yourselves pure and unspotted in an unclean defiling world. You will answer all temptations to sin, as Joseph did, [Genesis 39:9](#). "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

SECONDLY, Instead of joining with others in sin, you will mourn for the sins of others. You will say with David, [Psalm 120:5](#). "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshec, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" Your soul, like Lot's, will be vexed from day to day with the filthy conduct of the wicked, [2 Peter 1:17, 18](#).

THIRDLY, Instead of returning to your country with a wounded name and conscience, you will return full of inward comfort and peace, and to the joy of all

your friends and relations.

FOURTHLY, To conclude, You will give fair encouragements to the expectations of all that know you, of becoming useful instruments of the glory of God, and benefit of the world in your generation. O therefore beg of God that this truth may be deeply engraved upon your hearts.

SERMON IV

THE SUCCESSFUL SEAMAN

DEUTERONOMY 8:17, 18

"And you say in your heart, My power, and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth; but you shall remember the Lord God; for he it is that gives you power to get wealth."

THIS context contains a necessary and very seasonable caution to the Israelites, who were now passing out of the wilderness straits into the rich and fruitful land of Canaan, which abounded with all earthly blessings and comforts. Now, when the Lord was about to give them possession of this good land, he first gives them some wholesome caveats to prevent the abuse of these mercies. He knew how apt they were to forget him in a prosperous estate, and ascribe all their comfortable fruition to their own prudence and valor: to prevent this, he reminds them of their former estate, and warns them about their future estate: he reminds them of their former condition, while they subsisted upon his immediate care in the wilderness; verses 15, 16. "Who lead them through the great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water:" here were their dangers and wants. "Who brought you forth water out of the rock of flint, who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers knew not:" here were their supplies in these straits. "That he might humble you, and that he might prove you to do you good at your latter end:" here was the wise and gracious design of God in all this.

But wherein did God humble them by feeding them with manna? Were they not shrewdly humbled (says Mr. Gurnall) to be fed with such a dainty dish, which had God for its cook, and was called angels food for its delicacy? It was not the baseness of the fare, but the manner of having it, by which God intended to humble them. The food was excellent, but they had it from hand to mouth; so that God kept the key of their cupboard, they stood to his immediate allowance; this was an humbling way. But now the dispensation of Providence was just upon the change; they were going to a land, "where they should eat bread without scarceness," verse 9. and have their comforts in a more natural, stated, and sensible way; and now would be the danger. Therefore,

He not only reminds them of their former state, but in this text cautions them about their future estate, "Say not in your heart, my power, or the might of my hand, has gotten me this wealth," etc. In this caution we have these two things especially to observe:

I. The false cause of their prosperity removed.

II. The true and proper cause thereof asserted.

1. The false cause removed: "Not their power, or the might of their hand." That is said to be gotten by the hand, which is gotten by our wisdom as well as labor: head-work, and wit-work, are hand-work in the sense of this text. It cannot be denied but they were a great people, prudent, industrious, and had an excellent polity among them: but yet, though they had all these natural external means of enriching themselves in that fertile soil, God will, by no mean, allow them to ascribe their success and wealth to any of these causes: for alas! what are all these without his blessing?

2. The true and proper cause asserted: "It is the Lord that gives you power to get wealth;" that is All your care, labor, wisdom, strength, signify nothing without him; it is not your pains, but his blessing, that makes your designs to prosper: and therefore in all your prosperity, still acknowledge him as the Author of all. Hence note,

DOCTRINE: That the prosperity and success of our affairs are not to be ascribed to our own abilities, but to the blessing of God upon our lawful endeavors.

We find two proverbs in one chapter, that seem to differ in the account they give of this matter; and indeed they do but seem so. It is said, [Proverbs 10:4](#). "The hand of the diligent makes rich;" ascribing riches and prosperity to human diligence. And verse 22. "The blessing of the Lord it makes rich." But these two are not really opposed to each other, but the one subordinated to the other. The diligent hand, with God's blessing upon it, makes rich; neither of them alone, but both conjoined. A diligent hand cannot make rich without God's blessing; and God's blessing does not ordinarily make rich without a diligent hand. And these two are put together in their proper places, [1 Chronicles 22:16](#). "Up and be doing, and the Lord be with you." It is a vain pretense for any man to say, If the Lord be with me, I may sit still, and do nothing; and a wicked one to say, If I am up and doing, I shall prosper whether God be with me or not. The sluggard would gladly prosper without diligence, and the atheist hopes to prosper by his diligence alone: but Christians expect their prosperity from God's blessing, in the way of honest diligence.

It is a common thing for men to benumb their own arms, and make them as dead and useless by leaning too much upon them: so it is in a moral as well as a natural way: all the prudence and pains in the world avail nothing without God. So says the Psalmist, in [Psalm 127:2](#). "It is in vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrow, for so he gives his beloved sleep."

A man would think, he who rises early fares hard, works hard, sits up late, cannot but be a thriving man; and probably he would be so, if God's blessing did second his diligence and frugality. But the Psalmist intends it of diligence in a separate sense; a diligent hand working alone, and then it is all in vain, and serves only to confirm the common proverb—Early up and never the nearer. Labor without God cannot prosper; and labor against God will not only destroy itself, but the laborer too.

Now, that this is really so as the doctrine states it, I shall endeavor to make evident.

1. By a general demonstration of the whole matter.

2. By a particular enumeration of the ordinary causes and means of all success, which are all dependent upon the Lord's blessing.

FIRST, That success in business is not in the power of our hand, but in the hand of Providence to dispose it as he pleases, and to whom he pleases, appears by this,

'That Providence sometimes blasts and frustrates the most prudent and well-laid designs of men; and in the mean time succeeds and prospers more weak and improbable ones.' What is more common in the observation of all ages than this? One man shall toil as in the fire, for very vanity; run to and fro, plot and study all the ways in the world to get an estate, deny back and belly, and all will not do: he shall never be able to attain what he strives after, but his designs shall be still fruitless. Another has neither a head to contrive, nor a hand to labor as the former has: nor does he torture his brains about it, but manages his affairs with less judgment, and spends fewer thoughts about it, and yet success follows it. It shall be cast in upon some, who as they did not, so, considering the weak management of their business, had little rational encouragement to expect it; and fly from others, who industriously pursue it in the prudent choice and diligent use of all the proper means of attaining it. And this is not only an observation grounded upon our own experience, but confirmed by the wisest of men; [Ecclesiastes 9:11](#). "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all." If two men run for a prize, reason gives the prize to the swiftest: if two armies join battle, reason gives the victory to the strongest: if two men undertake a design to get wealth, reason gives the riches to the wisest; yes, but Providence sometimes disposes it quite contrary to the verdict of reason, and the prize is given to the slowest, the victory to the weakest, the estate to the more shallow capacity; so that these events seem to fall out rather casually than answerably to the means employed about them. And who that observes this, can doubt but it is the hand of God's providence, and not our diligence that disposes the issues of these things? For why does God so often step out of the ordinary way, and cross his hands, as old Israel did, laying the right hand upon the younger, and the left upon the elder: I mean, give success to the weak, and disappointment to the strong, but to convince us of this great truth which I here bring it to confirm? And because men are so apt to sacrifice to their own prudence, and disown providence, therefore it sometimes makes the case much plainer than so: it denies riches to the industrious, that live for no other end but to get them, and casts them in upon those that seek them not at all, and indeed are scarcely competent for business. Aristides, one of the wisest men of his age, was yet still so poor, that Plutarch said, it brought a slur upon justice herself, as if she were not able to maintain her followers. Socrates, one of the prime Grecian sages, was so exceeding poor, that Apuleius could not but note, "That poverty was become an inmate with philosophy;" when in the mean time, the empty, shallow, and foolish, shall come up with it, and overtake it without any pains at all, which others prosecute in the most rational course all their life, and all to no purpose. Thus it was noted of pope Clement V. None more rich, none more foolish. And this is the ground of that proverb, Fortune favors fools. Though the author of that proverb, in nick-naming providence, showed as little wisdom as he who is the subject of it.

By all which, this point is in the general made good: it is not industry, but providence, that directs and commands the success of business: It being much in the attaining of riches, as the apostle says it is in the obtaining of righteousness: "The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness; but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness," [Romans 9:30, 31](#). So it is here, for the vindication of the honor of providence, which men would scarcely own, if it did not thus baffle them sometimes: they that follow the world cannot obtain it; and they attain it that follow it not; that all men may see their good is not in their own hand; and lest man, who is not only a covetous creature, and would engross all to himself, but as proud as covetous, should ascribe all to himself. But this will further appear,

SECONDLY, By a particular enumeration of the ordinary causes and means of all success in business, which are all dependent things upon a higher cause.

Now, if we proceed upon a rational account, we shall find five things required to the success of our affairs: and that I may speak to your capacity, I will instance in that affair of merchandising in which you are employed, as the hands that execute what the heads of your merchants contrive; and will show you, that neither their wisdom in contriving, nor your skill and industry in managing their designs, can prosper without the leave and blessing of Divine Providence. Let us therefore consider what is necessary to the raising of an estate in that way of employment; and you will find, that in a rational and ordinary way, success cannot be expected, unless,

1. The designs and projects be prudently laid, and molded with much consideration and foresight. An error here is like an error in the first concoction, which is not to be rectified afterwards. "The wisdom of the prudent (says Solomon) is to understand his way;" that is, to understand, and thoroughly to consider, the particular designs and business in which he is to engage. Rashness and inconsiderateness here has been the ruin of many thousand enterprises. And if a design be never so well laid, yet,

2. No success in business can be rationally expected, except there be an election of proper instruments to manage it. The best laid design in the world may be spoiled by an ill management. If the person employed be either incapable or unfaithful, what but trouble and disappointment can be expected? "He who sends a message (says Solomon) by the hands of a fool, cuts off the legs, and drinks damage." It is as if a man should send him on his business that had no legs to go; that is one that is incompetent for the business he is employed about. All that a man shall reap from such a design is damage: and if the instrument employed be never so capable, yet if he be not also faithful to the trust committed to him, all is lost; and such is the depth of deceit in the hearts of men, that few or none can be secured against it. Solomon was the wisest of men, and yet fatally miscarried in this matter; "He seeing the young man (Jeroboam) that he was a mighty man of valor, and that he was industrious, made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph," [1 Kings 11:28](#). And this was the man that rent the kingdom from his son, even ten tribes from the house of David. And yet,

3. Let designs be projected with the greatest prudence, and committed to the management of the fittest instrument; all is nothing as to success, without the concurrence of health, strength, favorable winds, security from the hands of enemies, and perils of the deep. If any of these be wanting, the design miscarries, and all our projects fail. How often are hopeful and thriving undertakings frustrated by the failure of any one of these requisites? "Go to now, you that say, today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and remain there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away," [James 4:13, 14](#). How soon are the purposes of men's hearts broken off, and their thoughts perish in one day? They think to send or go to such a place, and there enrich themselves, and return prosperous; but sometimes death, sometimes captivity, sometimes cross winds, dash all their hopes.

4. Proper seasons must be observed, else all success and expectation of increase is lost. "There is (says Solomon) a season for everything, and a time to every purpose under the sun," [Ecclesiastes 3:1](#). This being taken, gives facility and speedy dispatch to a business; and therefore he gives this reason, why man miscarries so frequently, and is disappointed in his enterprizes because he knows not the time; [Ecclesiastes 9:11](#). 'He comes (as one says) when the bird is flown.' It is a wise and weighty proverb with the Greeks, 'That there is much time in a short opportunity!' That is, a man hitting the season of a business, may do more in a day, than losing it, he may be able to do in a year. This is of a special consideration in all human affairs, and is the very hinge upon which success turns: So that to come before, is to pluck apples

before they are ripe; and to come after it, is to seek them when they are fallen and perished.

5. Lastly, in getting wealth the leaks of our estates must be stopped; else we do but put it into a bag with holes, as the prophet's phrase is in [Hag. 1:9](#). If a man lose as much one way as he gets another, there can be no increase. Hence it is, that many are kept low and poor all their days: If one design prospers, yet another miscarries; or, if all succeed well abroad, yet there is a secret consumption of it at home, by prodigality, riot, luxury, or a secret curse upon it, which the scripture calls God's blowing upon it, [Hag. 1:3](#). If therefore by any of these ways our gains molder away, we do but disquiet ourselves in vain, and labor in the fire for very vanity. Thus you see what things are requisite to the advancement of an estate upon a prudential account.

Now let us particularly observe what a dependence there is upon Providence in all these things; and then it will be clear that our good is not in our hand, nor success at our beck, but it is the Lord that gives us power to get wealth. For,

As to the molding and projecting of a design, we may say, both of the prudent merchant and ingenious seaman, what the prophet does of the gardener, [Isaiah 28:10](#). "It is his God that instructs him to discretion, and teaches him." There is, indeed, a spirit in man, "But it is the inspiration of the Almighty that gives understanding," [Job 32:8](#). The faculty is man's, but the light of wisdom, whether natural or spiritual, is God's: and the natural faculty is of itself no more capable of directing us in our affairs, without his teaching, than the dial is to inform us of hours without the sun's shining upon it. And because men are so dull in apprehending, and backward in acknowledging it, but will lean to their own understandings, thence it is that prudent designs are so often blasted, and weaker ones succeeded.

And no less does Providence manifest itself in directing to, and prospering the means and instruments employed in our business: it is of the Lord that they prove ingenious, active and faithful servants to us; that your factors abroad prove not malefactors to you; that every design is not ruined by the negligence, ignorance, or treachery of them that manage it. If God qualify men to be fit instruments to serve you, and then providentially direct you to them, his hand is thankfully to be owned in both. It was no small mercy to Abraham, that he had so discreet, pious, and faithful a servant to manage even his weightest affairs so prudently and prosperously for him. Laban, Pharaoh, and Jethro, never so prospered, as when Jacob, Joseph, and Moses, had the charge of their business. Laban ingenuously acknowledged, "That he had learned by experience that the Lord had blessed him for Jacob's sake," [Genesis 30:27](#). A heathen you see is more sincere in owning the mercy of God to him in this case, than many professed Christians are, who sacrifice all to their own net, and burn incense to their drag, that is idolize the means and instruments of their prosperity, and see nothing of God in it.

And then as to the preservation of those that go down into the sea to do our business in the great waters; who can but acknowledge this to be the peculiar work of God? Does not daily experience show how often poor seamen are cut off in the prosecution of our designs, sometimes by sickness, sometimes by, storms, and sometimes by enemies, to whom they become a prey? If they escape all these, yet how often do they lie wind-bound, or hindered by cross accidents, until the proper season be over, and the design lost? Certainly, if providence shall so far favor men, as to prevent all these; command winds fit for their purpose, restrain enemies, preserve life, and carry them safely and seasonably to their ports, it deserves a thankful acknowledgment; and those that do not acknowledge providence, do disoblige it.

Lastly, Who is it that stops the leaks in your estates, prevents the wasting of your substance, and secures to you what you possess? Is it not the Lord? How many fair estates moulder away insensibly, and come to nothing! Certainly, as there is a secret blessing in some families, so that themselves can scarce give any account how they are provided for, so there is a secret blast and consumption upon others, which brings poverty upon them like an armed man. And this is the true sense of that scripture, [Hag. 1:6](#). "You have sown much, and bring in little. You eat, but you have not enough: you drink, but are not filled with drink: you clothe you, but are not warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put it into a bag with holes;" or, as in the Hebrew, a bag pierced, or bored through; what goes in at one end, goes out at another, and so all labor is lost; nothing stays with them to do them good. So that it is an undeniable truth, that prosperity and success are not to be ascribed to our abilities, but to the blessing of God upon our lawful endeavors.

INFERENCES

1. Inference. And if so, how are they justly reprovably, that wholly depend upon means in the neglect of providence; that never eye God, nor acknowledge him in any of their ways? This is a very great evil, and highly provoking to the Lord; it is the fruit and discovery of the natural Atheism of the hearts of men. How confident are men of success and prosperity, when second causes lie for it, and smile upon them? And, on the contrary, how dejected and heartless when they seem to lie cross to their hopes? O how few consider and believe that great truth, [Ecclesiastes 9:1](#). "That the righteous, and the wise, and their works are in the hand of God!" To be in the hand of God, notes both their subjection to his power, and to his directive providence. Whether your works be in your hand, or put out of your hand, they always are in God's hand to prosper or frustrate them at his pleasure.

Foolish man decree events without the leave of Providence: as if he were absolute lord of his own actions, and their success. Indeed, you may then speak of success, when you have asked God's leave; [Job 22:28](#). "Acquaint yourself with God, then shall you decree a thing, and it shall be established." But your confidence in the means, while God is neglected, will surely be followed either with a disappointment or a curse. For what is this but to labor without God, yes, to labor against God? For so do all they that give the glory of God to the creature: that set the instrumental and subordinate in the place of the principal efficient cause. It is just with God to deny you your comfort in those things wherein you rob him of his glory.

2. Inference. How vain and unreasonable are the proud boasts of men, in the midst of their successes and prosperity! If God be the sole author of it, and it is not in your power, nor the might of your hand, that has gotten you this wealth; why do you glory in it, as if it were the effect and fruit of your own prudence and industry? How soon do the spirits of men rise with their estates? How haughtily do they look? How proudly do they speak? What a sensible change of temper does this small change of condition work? it is an exceeding hard thing to keep down the heart when providence exalts a man's estate. Says Augustine, It is a great felicity not to be overcome by felicity. That man is surely rich in grace, whose graces suffer no eclipse by his riches. It is as hard to be prosperous and humble, as to be afflicted and cheerful. But to keep down your heart in times of success and prosperity, I will offer you, reader, a few humbling considerations about this matter.

1. And the first is this: Though providence do succeed and prosper your earthly designs, yet this is no argument at all of the love of God to your soul: you may be the object of his hatred and wrath for all this. No man knows either love or hatred by all that is before him, [Ecclesiastes 9:1](#). How weak an evidence for Heaven must that be, which millions now in Hell have had in a greater measure than you have? The least ounce of grace is a better pledge of happiness, than the greatest sum of gold and silver that ever lay in any man's treasury. Externals distinguish not

internals? you cannot so much as guess what a man's spiritual estate is, by the view of his temporal. Ishmael was a very great man, the head of a princely family, but, for all that, excluded from the covenant, and all its spiritual blessings, [Genesis 17:20, 21](#). He who reads the 73. Psalm, and the 21. of Job, will plainly see how wretched a case that man is in, who has no better evidence for the love of God than this amounts to.

2. Be not proud of outward prosperity and success; for providences are very changeable in these things; yes, it daily rings the changes all the world over. Many a greater estate than yours, and every way as well, yes, far better secured to the eye of reason, has he scattered in a moment. It is the saying of a philosopher, speaking of the estates of merchants and seamen; I like not that happiness that hangs upon ropes. I need not here cite histories, to confirm this truth: there is none of you but can abundantly confirm it to yourselves, if you will but recollect those instances and examples which have fallen within your time and remembrance. It is a poor happiness that may leave a man more miserable tomorrow, than he who never arrived to what you have, can be.

3. Pride not yourselves in your success; for as providences are very changeable, so the change seems very near to you, when your heart is thus lifted up, especially if you be such, to whose eternal happiness God has any special regard: to be sure he will pull down that proud heart, and quickly order humbling providences to that end: "He looks upon every one that is proud, to abase him," [Job 40:11](#). The heart of good Hezekiah was tickled with vain-glory, and he must needs show the king of Babylon's servants all his treasures, and precious things; and at that time came the prophet Isaiah to him with a sad message from the Lord, that all these treasures, in which he had gloried, must be carried to Babylon, [Isaiah 39](#). If you hope comfortably to enjoy the good of providence, provoke it not by such vain ostentations.

Exercise fear in prosperity, and think with yourself, when your heart is most affected with it, that while the boast is in your lips, the scene may alter, and your happiness be turned into sorrow. While that proud boast was in the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar, the voice from Heaven told him, "His kingdom was departed from him," [Daniel 4:30, 31](#). Pride shows, that prosperity, which feeds it, to be at its vertical point.

3. Inference. If success in business be from the Lord, then certainly the true way to prosperity is to commend our affairs to God by prayer. He takes the true way to thrive, that engages God's blessing upon his endeavors. "Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass," [Psalm 37:4](#). It is a vile thing for any man to grudge that time that is spent in prayer, as so much time lost in his business. But having pressed this point before, I shall add no more here.

4. Inference. Does all success and prosperity depend upon, and come from God? Then let it be faithfully employed to his glory. "If it be of him, and through him," then there is all the reason in the world it should "be to him," [Romans 11:36](#). You do but give him of his own, as David speaks; "All this store comes of your hand, and is your own," 1 Chronicles 29:16. He never intended your estates for the gratifying of your lusts, but to give you a larger capacity thereby of honoring him in the use of them. O consider, when God has prospered your estates abroad, and you return successfully home, how you have an opportunity of honoring God, and evidencing your sense of his goodness to you, by relieving the poor with a liberal and cheerful charity; by encouraging the gospel, and making them partakers of your good things, who labor for your souls, and dispense better things to you than you can return to them. I would not here be misinterpreted, as though I pleaded my own interest, under a pretense of pleading God's; no! God forbid; I am well satisfied with a capacity of doing any good, however little I receive; nor can many of you reap the

fruit of my labors: but I would not leave you ignorant, or regardless of so great and plain a duty as this is: you are bound to this retribution, by a plain and positive precept, [Galatians 6:6](#). "Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teaches, in all good things." You are obliged to do it, proportionably to the success God gives you in your trade, 1 Corinthians 16:2. And when you have so done, not to think it any great matter, [1 Corinthians 9:11](#). but the discharge of a plain and necessary duty.

5. Inference. Let not your hearts be satisfied with all the success and increase of the world, except your souls thrive as well as your bodies, and your eternal concerns prosper as well as your temporal. It was a pious wish of St. John for Gaius his host, "That he might prosper, and be in health, even as his soul prospered," 3 Epist. John, verse 2. But it were to be wished, that your souls did but prosper as your bodies and estates do. It is a poor comfort to have an increasing estate, and a dead and declining soul. When a considerable present was sent to Luther, he earnestly protested, God should not put him off with these things. O friends! I beseech you take not up in these enjoyments!

6. Inference. Lastly, If God be the author of all your success, how prodigious an evil is it to make your prosperity an instrument of dishonoring him that gave it; to abuse the estates providence gives you, to rioting and drunkenness? Do you thus requite the Lord! is this the thanks you give him for all his care over you! and kindness to you would never be able to bear that from another, which God bears from you. If God do you good, O do not return him evil for it!

SERMON V

THE DISAPPOINTED SEAMAN

LUKE 5:5

"Master, we have toiled all the night, and have caught nothing!"

THESE words are the reply made by Peter unto Christ, who, in the former verse, had commanded him to "launch out into the deep, and let down the nets for a draught." Peter is discouraged as to any farther attempt at that time, having already taken so much pains to so little purpose: "We have (says he) toiled all the night, and have taken nothing." In which reply we note these two things:

1. The great pains he and his company had taken in their honest calling and employment to get a livelihood; "We have toiled all the night." No calling more lawful, no diligence in an honest employment could be greater; not only to spend the night, when other laborers take their rest, in watching, but in toiling. The word *ἐδούλοῦσαν* comes from a verb that signifies wasting, tiring, spending, labor. Here was great diligence, even to the wearying and! wasting of their spirits: "They toiled, and that all the night."

2. The unsuccessfulness and fruitlessness of their labors, they caught nothing. Though their design was honest, and their industry great, yet it succeeded not

according to their desire and expectations: it proved but lost labor and pains to no purpose. Hence the note will be,

DOCTRINE: That God sometimes frustrates and blasts the most diligent labors of men, in their just and lawful callings.

What employment more honest, or laborious, than that of the gardener, who eats his bread in the sweat of his brow, and sustains all that spending toil and labor, by an expectation of fruit in the season? And yet sometimes it so falls out, that after all his labors and hopes, he reaps nothing but shame and disappointment. [Joel 1:11](#). "Be astonished, O you gardeners: Howl, O you vine-dressers, for the wheat, and for the barley, because the harvest of the field is perished."

The employment of the mariner is as lawful as it is beneficial; what he gets, is gotten with imminent hazard of life and liberty, as well as watchings and labors; and yet it so falls out, sometimes, that they labor but for the wind, and spend their strength for very vanity: God cuts off their expectations and lives together. There is a time when they return rich and prosperous, and a time when they either return empty, or return no more. So it was with Tyre, that renowned mart, and famous emporium; the flourishing and fall of whose trade you have in [Ezekiel 27:33, 34](#). "When your wares went forth out of the seas, you filled many people; you did enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of your riches, and of your merchandise." Here was their prosperity and success; but will this day always last? Shall the sun of their prosperity never set? No; the change was at hand; for in the next verse the scene alters. "In the day when you shall be broken by the seas, in the depths of the waters, your merchandise, and all your company in the midst of you, shall fall."

Now if we search into the grounds and reasons of these disappointments by the hand of providence, we shall find them reducible to a threefold cause and reason.

1. The sovereign pleasure of God so disposes it.
2. The good of the people of God requires it.
3. The manifold sins of men in their callings provoke it.

FIRST, The sovereign pleasure of God so disposes it. He is the Rector of the universe, and as such will still assert his dominion. It is his pleasure to establish this order in the world, to exalt some, and depress others; to set some above, and others below: all must not be rich and great, but some must be poor and low, and to these ends providences are suited: On some it smiles, on others it frowns: [1 Samuel 2:7](#). "The Lord makes poor, and makes rich; he brings low, and lifts up." And certainly there is much of Divine wisdom shining forth in this ordination and disposition of persons and their conditions. If providence had alike prospered every man's designs, and set them upon a level, there had been no occasion to exercise the rich man's charity, or the poor man's patience. Nay, without frequent disappointments, providence itself would scarcely be owned in successes, nor these successes be half so sweet to them that receive them, as now they are. The very beauty of providence consists much in these various and contrary effects: So that with respect to the infinite Wisdom which governs the world, it is necessary some should be crossed, and others prosper in their designs.

SECONDLY, And if we consider the gracious ends and designs of God towards his own people, it appears needful that all of them, in some things, and many of them in most things (relating to their outward condition in this world) should be frustrated in their expectations and contrivances. For if all things here should succeed according to their wish, and a constant tide of prosperity should attend them.

1. How soon would sensuality and earthliness invade their hearts and affections? Much prosperity, like the pouring in of much wine, intoxicates, and overcomes our weak heads and hearts. Earthly, as well as heavenly objects, have a transforming efficacy in them; there cannot but be much danger in those earthly things that give or promise us much delight. Can a Christian keep his heart as loose from the smiling, as from the frowning; world? We little think how deeply it insinuates into our affections in the day of prosperity; but when adversity comes, then we find it.

2. How soon would it estrange them from their God, and interrupt their communion with him? He is certainly a very mortified and heavenly Christian, whose walk with God suffers no interruption by the multitude of earthly affairs, especially when they are prosperous. When Israel was settled in the midst of the riches and delights of Canaan, then say they, (even to their Benefactor, the Author of all their prosperity) "We are lords, we will come no more to you," [Jeremiah 2:31](#). Or, if it do not wholly interrupt their communion, yet secretly destroys and wastes the vigor, life, and sweetness of it. So that Divine Wisdom sees it necessary to cross and disappoint them in the world, to prevent the mischievous influences that prosperity would have upon their duties. He had rather you should miss your desired comforts in these things, than that he should miss that delightful fellowship with you, which he so desires.

3. How reluctant should we be to leave this world, if constant success and prosperity should follow our affairs and designs here? we see that notwithstanding all the cares, fears, sorrows, crosses, wants, and disappointments we meet with from year to year, and from day to day; yet we are apt to hug the world in our bosoms. As bitter as it is, we court it, admire it, and zealously prosecute it. We cling to it, and are reluctant to leave it, though we have little rest or comfort in it. What could we do then, if it should answer our expectation and desires? If we grasp with pleasure a thorn that pierces and wounds us; what would we do if it were a rose that had nothing but delight and pleasure in it?

THIRDLY, And as disappointments fall out as the effects of sovereign pleasure, and are ordered as preventive means of such mischief, which prosperity would occasion to the people of God; so it comes as a righteous retribution and punishment of the many evils that are committed in our trading and dealings with men. It is a hard thing to have much business pass through our hands, and no iniquity cleave to them and defile them. If God be provoked against us by our iniquities, wonder not that things go cross to our desires and hopes. God may suffer some men to prosper in their wickedness, and others to miscarry in their just and righteous enterprises; but ordinarily we find that crying sins are remarkably punished, sooner or later, with visible judgments. So that if others do not, yet we ourselves may observe the relation that such a judgment bears to such a sin.

And, from among many, I will here select these following evils, which have destroyed the estates and hopes of many.

(1.) Irreligious and atheistic neglect and contempt of God and his worship, especially in those that have been enlightened, and made profession of religion. This was the sin which brought that blasting judgment upon the estates and labors of the Jews, as the prophet Haggai tells them, chapter 1. verse 2, 4, 6, 9. compared; "They neglected the house of God," that is were careless and regardless of his worship, and, in the mean time, were wholly intent upon their own houses and interests, as he tells them in verse 2, 4. And what was the issue of this? Why, ruin to all their earthly comforts and designs. So he tells them, verse 6, 9. "You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but you have not enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe you, but there is none warm; and he who earns wages, does it to put it into a bag with holes. You looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why, says the Lord of hosts? Because of

mine house that is waste; and you turn every man unto his own house." Here are great and manifold disappointments of their hopes, a curse, a blast upon all they took in hand; and the procuring cause of all this was their eager persecution of the world, in a careless disregard of God and his service.

(2.) Injustice and fraud is a blasting sin. A little unjust gain mingled with a great estate, will consume it like a moth. The Spirit of God has used a very lively similitude to represent to us the mischievous effects of this sin upon all human diligence and industry. [Jeremiah 17:11](#). "As the partridge sits upon eggs, and hatches them not; so he who gets riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool."

Unjust gain, however long men sit brooding upon it, shall after all their sedulity and expectation, turn to no other account than a fowl's sitting upon a nest of addle-eggs uses to do: if she sit until she have pined away herself to death, nothing is produced.

You think you consult the interest of your families herein, but the Lord tells you, "That you consult shame to your houses," [Habakkuk 2:10](#). This is not the way to feather, but to fire your nest. A quiet conscience is infinitely better than a full purse; one dish of wholesome, though coarser food, is better than an hundred delicate, but poisoned dishes. If a man have eaten the best food in the world, and afterwards sips but a little poison, he loses not only the benefit and comfort of that which was good, but his life or health to boot. It may be, you have gotten much honestly; what pity is it all this good should be destroyed for the sake of a little gotten dishonestly? This is the reason why some men cannot prosper.

(3.) Oppression is a blasting sin to some men's estates and employments. It is a crying sin in the ears of the Lord, and ordinarily entails a visible curse upon men's estates; this, like a moth will suddenly fret and consume the greatest estate. [James 5:2, 4](#). "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth-eaten;" that is The secret "curse of God wastes and destroys what you get. And what was the cause? He tells us, verse 4. "Behold the hire of the laborers, that have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, cries; and the cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbath."

The oppression of poor laborers does more mischief to the oppressors, than it does to them that are oppressed. It is noted by one upon this scripture, that it is twice repeated in this text, "Which have reaped your fields;" and then again, The cry of them which "have reaped:" and the reason is, because it is their life, and so an act of the greatest unmercifulness; and besides, they are disappointed of the solace of their labors. [Deuteronomy 24:14, 15](#). "He has set his heart upon it;" that is he comforts himself in the toils and labors of the day, by reckoning upon his wages at the end of the day.

I wish those that are owners and employers of poor seamen, may seasonably consider this evil: what a woe is denounced upon him "that uses his neighbor's service without wages!" [Jeremiah 22:13](#). Or that by crafty pretenses defrauds them of any part thereof, or by tiresome delays wears out their patience, and casts them upon manifold sufferings and inconveniences while they wait for it. God has not only threatened to be a swift witness against those that oppress the hiring in his wages, but has strictly forbidden the detaining of their wages. The Jews were commanded to make payment before the sun-set, [Deuteronomy 24:14, 15](#). [Leviticus 19:30](#). Be just in all your dealings and contracts, or never expect the righteous God should smile upon your undertakings.

(4.) Falsehood and lying is a blasting sin to our employments; a sin which tends to destroy all converse, and disband all civil societies. And though by falsehood men may get some present advantages, yet hear what the Holy Spirit says of riches

gotten this way: "The getting of riches by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death," [Proverbs 21:6](#). Some trade in lies as much as in wares; yes, they trade off their wares with lies. And this proves a gainful trade (as some men count gain) for the present; but, in reality, it is the most unprofitable trade that any man can drive. For it is but the tossing of a vanity to and fro: a phrase importing labor in vain, it profits nothing in the end, and as it profits nothing, so it hurts much: they seek profit intentionally, but death eventually; that is it will bring destruction and ruin, not only upon our trades, but our souls. The God of truth will not long prosper the way of lying; one penny gotten by a laborious hand is better than great treasures gotten by a lying tongue: take heed you seek not death in seeking an estate this way. It is a sin destructive to society; for there is no trade where there is no trust, nor no trust where there is no truth; and yet this cursed trade of lying creeps into all trades, as if there were no living (as one speaks) without lying: but sure it is better for you to be losers than liars. He sells a dear bargain indeed that sells his conscience with his commodity.

(5.) Perjury, or false swearing, is a blasting sin. The man cannot prosper that lies under the guilt thereof. It is said, [Malachi 3:5](#). "That God will be a swift witness against the false swearer," that is it shall not be long before God by one remarkable stroke of judgment or another witness against so great and horrid an evil. And again, [Zechariah 5:4](#). the curse, yes, the roll of curses, "shall enter into the house of the false swearer, and shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof." This is a sin that has laid many houses waste, even great and fair, without inhabitant. The ruins of many that were once flourishing, and great men are at this day left to be the lasting monuments of God's righteous judgments, and dreadful warnings to posterity.

And thus I have showed you what are those common evils in trade, which are the causes of those blasts and disappointments upon it. It now remains that we apply it.

INFERENCE

Inference 1. Does God sometimes disappoint the most diligent labors of men in their lawful callings? Then this teaches you patience and submission under your crosses and disappointments; for it is the Lord that orders it to be so. Events are in his hand, and it is a sin of great aggravation to fret and murmur at them when they fall out cross to your desires and hopes. "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people should labor in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?" [Habakkuk 2:13](#).

To labor in the very fire, notes intense labor, such as exhausts the very spirits of men while they are sweltering and toiling at it; and yet all is to no purpose, they labor but for vanity: and whence is it that such vigorous endeavors are blasted, and miscarry? Is it not of the Lord? And if it be of the Lord, why do we fret and quarrel at his disposals? Indeed, many dare not openly and directly charge God, but seek to cover their discontent at providence, by a groundless quarrel with the instruments, who, it may be, are chargeable with nothing; but that after they have done all they could, in the use of proper means, they did not also secure the event. It is true, the dominion of providence does not excuse the negligence of instruments; and, in many cases, these may be justly reprov'd, when providence is duly honored and submitted to: But when men groundlessly quarrel with instruments, because they are crossed in their expectations, the quarrel is commenced against God himself: and our discontents with men are but a covert for our discontents with God.

Now this is a sore evil, a sin of great and dreadful aggravations. 'To be given over (says a grave author) to a contradicting spirit, to dispute against any part of the will of God, is one of the greatest plagues that a man can be given up to.' "Who are you that replies against God?" [Romans 9:20](#). It may be that you have lost an estate, your

friends fail, your hopes are fallen; God has blown upon all the projects that your heart did fancy to itself. Possibly in one day, the designs, labors, and hopes of many years are destroyed: Well, be it so, yet repine not against the Lord. Consider, he is the Sovereign, and only Lord, who may do whatever he pleases to do without giving you any account of his matters. Who can say to him, What do you? Beside, if you be one that God delights in, even these disappointments are to be numbered with your best mercies. These things are permitted to perish, that you may not perish forever; and it should trouble you no more than when your life is preserved by casting out the wares and goods of the ship. It is better that these perish than that you should perish; but if you be one that mingled sin (especially such as were before mentioned) with your trade, and so have pulled down misery upon your own head, by provoking the Lord against you: With what face can you open your mouth to complain against him? Will you lay a train to blow up all your success, and then fret against God, when you see the issue? O how unreasonable is this!

But because disappointments fall out so frequently, and it is so hard to bring our hearts to a quiet submission to the will of God under them, I will not dismiss this point until I have offered you some proper and weighty considerations to work your hearts into a calm and meek submission to the will of God; and I shall account it a great mercy if they may prevail.

Considerations

Consideration 1. And, in the first place, if you be one that fear God, consider, that disappointments in earthly things fix no mark of God's hatred upon you. He may love you, and yet cross you, [Ecclesiastes 9:1, 2](#). "No man knows either love or hatred by all the things that are before him. All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked." Yes, we often find success and prosperity following the wicked, while the rod of God is upon the tabernacles of the righteous. "These are the ungodly that prosper in the world, (says the Psalmist) while in the mean time he was plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning," [Psalm 73:12, 14](#). Well then, if you have no other ground than this, you cannot infer the want of love, from the want of success. A man may be prospered in wrath, and crossed in mercy.

Consideration 2. And what though your projects, hopes, and expectations of enlarging your estates fail; yet you may live as happily and comfortably in the condition you are, (if God give you a heart suitable to it) as if you had enjoyed all that success you so imagined and desired.

It is not the increase of an estate, but the blessing of God upon a competency, that makes our condition comfortable to us. As the estate enlarges, so does the heart. The prophet Habakkuk, speaking of the Chaldean prince, [Habakkuk 2:6](#). says, "He keeps not at home, he enlarges his desire as Hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathers unto him all nations, and heaps unto him all people." And this is the nature of every man's heart, to enlarge its desire and the greatest enlargements of providence. Still the heart is projecting for some further comfort and content, in some new acquisition; when, indeed a man is as near it in a lower condition as in the highest exaltation.

It is storied of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, that having enlarged his dominions by the conquest of Macedonia, he thirsted after Italy; and demanding the advice of Cineas, his great counselor, he asked the king what he meant to do when he had conquered Italy; Why then, said he) I mean to get Sicily, which is near, rich, and powerful. When you have gotten Sicily, (said Cineas) What then? Africa, said the king, is not far off, and there be many goodly kingdoms, which by my fame, and the valor of my soldiers, I may subdue. Be it so, said Cineas: When you have Africa, and all in it, what will you do then? Why then, said the king, you and I will be merry, and

make good cheer. Cineas replied, Sir, if this be the end you aim at, what need you venture your kingdom, person, and honor, to purchase what you have already? Surely Epirus and Macedonia are sufficient to make you and me merry: and had you all the world, you could not be more merry than you may now be.

Reader, I advise you, under all disappointments of your expectations, to bless God for any comfortable enjoyment you have. If God give you a smaller estate, and a contented heart, it is as well, yes, better than if you had enjoyed your desire. The bee makes a sweeter meal upon two or three flowers, than the ox that has so many mountains to graze upon.

Consideration 3. And what if by these disappointments, God be carrying on the great design of his eternal love upon your soul? This may be the design of these providences; and if so, sure there is no cause for your despondencies. There is a double aim of these providences; sometimes they are sent to awaken and rouse the dull decayed habits of grace, which under prosperous providences fall asleep by the intermission of acts, and remission of usual vigor and activity: And should the Lord permit things to run on at this rate, what a deplorable case would this grow to? 'Let a man live (says one) but two or three years without affliction, and he is almost good for nothing; he cannot pray, nor meditate, nor keep his heart fixed upon spiritual things: But let God smite him in his health, child, or estate; now he can find his tongue and affections again; now he awakes and falls to his duty in earnest; now God has twice as much honor from him as he had before. Now, says God, his amendment pleases me; this rod was well bestowed: I have disappointed him to his great benefit and advantage. And thus God chides himself friends with his people again.'

And sometimes they prove the blessed occasions to work grace. "If they be bound in fetters, and held in cords of affliction, then he shows them their works, and their transgression that they have exceeded: He opens also their ear to discipline, and commands that they return from iniquity," [Job 36:8, 9, 10](#).

And if this be the fruit of it, you will bless God through eternity for these happy disappointments. Then these things perished, that your soul might not perish.

Consideration 4. Be patient under disappointments; for if you meekly submit, and quietly wait upon God, he can quickly repair all that you have lost, and restore it by other providences double to you. Have you not heard, after all Job's deprivations, and the frustrations of all his earthly hopes, and his admirable patience under all, what a gracious end the Lord made with him? And why may not you hope for such a comfortable change of providence towards you, if you also carry it under disappointments as he did? Certainly sad providences are near their change when the heart is calmed in the will of God, and corrected home to him.

Consideration 5. And why should it seem so hard and grievous to you, for God to disappoint your hopes and purposes, when you cannot but know, that you have disappointed his expectations from you so often, and that in greater and better things than these?

He has looked for fruit (as it is, [Isaiah 5:4](#)) for obedience, reformation, and renewed care of duty from you many times; he promised himself, and made account of a good return of his afflictions and mercies, and you promised him as much, and yet have failed his expectation: And is it then strange that you should fail of your hopes, who have failed God so often?

O then see that you are quiet in the will of God; fret not at the defeating of your hopes, wreak not your discontent upon innocent instruments, but look to the just and holy, and good will of God in all things. The wife is sometimes angry with the

servant for what he has done, until he tells her that it was his master's order, and then she is quiet.

Has a ship miscarried, is a voyage lost, a relation dead, an estate gone, a friend carried into captivity, whose return was expected with so much delight and comfort? why, if it be so, it is the Lord has done it, and be silent before him. Your repining will not make it better; sin is no proper cure for affliction. A quiet and submissive spirit is well-pleasing to God, as well as profitable for you.

Inference 2. Does God sometimes disappoint the expectations of men in their employments? then never set your hearts immoderately upon earthly things, nor raise up to yourselves too great expectations from these things. The stronger your expectations, the heavier God's disappointments will be.

There is a double evil in over-reckoning ourselves, and over-acting our confidence about worldly things: it provokes God to disappoint us, and then makes the disappointment much more grievous when it comes.

It provokes a disappointment especially to the godly. The Lord is jealous of their affections, and will not endure that anything should be a co-rival, or competitor with him for their hearts: yes, it is so usual with God to dash and remove whatever engrosses too much of the heart, that a gracious soul cannot but reckon that comfort in great danger to be lost, which he finds to be over-loved.

If David set his heart upon Absalom, God will not only smite him, but smite David by him, and make him first the instrument of his sorrow, and then the object of it. Jonah did but take a little too much comfort in his gourd, and you know the next news we hear is, that God had prepared a worm to smite it, and cause it to wither away.

And when your inordinate hopes are crossed, as it is very probable they will be, how will your sorrows be aggravated in proportion to them? Those things that seemed to promise us most comfort, are the things that give us most sorrow. Strong affections make strong afflictions. Our sorrows usually rise from what was our hope, and our comforts from that which was the least regarded.

Inference 3. If it be so, then labor to make sure of things eternal, lest you be eternally disappointed there also. O what a sad case is that man in, whose expectations fail from both worlds! If your hopes from this world fail, yet you may bear it comfortably, if you fail not in your better hopes; but if these fail too, you are of all men the most miserable. You know by experience how sad it is to have your hopes cut off in these smaller concerns; to go forth in expectation of a profitable voyage, and to return in a worse case than you went out: it may be that you thought to get an estate, but the issue is to lose that little you had. You thought to go to such a place, and there meet with a good market, and possibly yourselves may be carried as slaves, to be sold in the same market. These disappointments are very sad and cutting things, but nothing to an eternal disappointment in your great concern.

For a man to hope he is in Christ, and in a pardoned state, and at last find himself deceived, and that all the sins of his nature, heart, and practice, lie upon him: to hope for admission into Heaven, when he is turned out of this world by death, and find the door shut against him; to cry with those poor disappointed wretches, [Matthew 25:11](#). "Lord, Lord, open to us;" and receive such an unexpected return from Christ as they did, "Depart from me, I don't you know:" Lord, how intolerable is such a defeat of hope as this! O! who can think of it without horror!

The things about which your expectations are frustrated in this world, are small things; you may be happy in the want of them: but the frustration of your hopes from the world to come, is in things of infinite weight. These disappointments are

but for a little while! but this will be forever. O therefore be provoked, even by these things to a diligent and seasonable prevention of a far greater misery.

Since these things cannot be secured, labor to secure those things that may. O that you were but as full of thoughts, cares and fears for Heaven as you are for the world! you have spent many thousand thoughts about these things to no purpose. All your thoughts about them are come to nothing; but had they been spent for your souls, to what a comfortable account would they now have turned? Friends, I beseech you make sure for eternity, and let these crosses and losses in the world be the happy occasions to awaken you to an earnest and serious diligence for your everlasting interests. Then you are no losers by your losses: nay, you will have great cause to call them prosperous disappointments, and gainful losses to you.

Inference 4. Then as you would not have the works and labors of your hands blasted, beware of those sins that provoke God to blow upon them. Think not that injustice, oppression, deceit and perjury should ever profit you. God has cursed all the ways of sin, and you cannot prosper in them. Above all, beware of atheism and irreligion: God will not own them that disown him, and slight his worship. I doubt your profanation of the Lord's day, by drunkenness, idleness, and worldly employments, is not the least cause of those disappointments and losses that have befallen you: the first day of the week, like the first-fruits of the Jews' harvests, should sanctify the whole lump.

And let none pretend that multiplicity of business will not allow them time and disposition for sabbath-work. If you be too busy to attend the Lord's service, he can quickly give you a writ of ease, and make you keep more resting days from your labors than you are willing to do. The Lord would not excuse the Israelites, no, not in their busiest seasons, the times of harvest, and the very building of the tabernacle; but all must give way to the sabbath. And I am sure the promise of blessing and success is made to the conscientious observation of it: [Isaiah 58:13, 14](#). "If you turn away your foot from the sabbath, from doing your pleasure upon my holy day; and call the sabbath a Delight, the holy of the Lord, Honorable; and shall honor him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasures, nor speaking your own words: Then shall you delight yourself in the Lord:" There is a recompense to the soul. "And he shall cause you to ride on high places of the earth:" There is a reward to the body. Godliness is profitable to all things.

SERMON VI

THE SEAMAN'S RETURN

DEUTERONOMY 33:19

"They will summon peoples to the mountain and there offer sacrifices of righteousness; they will feast on the abundance of the seas, on the treasures hidden in the sand."

THIS scripture is part of the last words of Moses: a man that in his life was a great blessing to Israel: and when he was to be separated from them by death, he pronounces distinct and suitable blessings upon all the tribes. As Christ parted from his disciples, blessing them, so does Moses from his people; only with this

difference, Moses as God's mouth pronounced, but the great God of Heaven and earth alone could confer the blessing. Moses blessed them authoritatively, but could not bless them potestatively, as Christ did. Now these words contain the blessing of the tribe of Zebulun, which was the tribe of seamen. And in them we shall consider these two parts, namely,

1. Their privilege.

2. Their duty.

FIRST, Their privilege, "That they should suck of the abundance of the seas, and of the treasures hidden in the sand." To suck the abundance of the sea is a metonymical expression, signifying as much as to be enriched and stored with the wares and merchandise imported by sea to them. Geographers attribute to the sea, arms and bosoms; and the scripture breasts. The sea, like an indulgent mother, embraces those that live upon it in her bosom, and with full flowing breasts nourishes them, and feeds them as a mother does the infant that sucks and depends for its livelihood upon her breasts.

And these breasts do not only afford those that hang upon them the necessities of life, bread, clothing, etc. but the riches, ornaments, and delights of life also. "The treasures hidden in the sand," as gold, coral, and such like precious and rich treasures which it yields. This was the blessing and privilege of the tribe of Zebulun, whose cities and villages were commodiously situated upon the seashore for merchandise and traffic: as you may see [Joshua 19:11](#).

SECONDLY, Their duty to which these mercies and privileges obliged them: "They shall call the people to the mountain, there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness." By the mountain, we are here to understand the temple, which Moses, by the spirit of prophecy, foresaw to be upon mount Zion, and mount Moriah; which two were as the shoulders that supported it, verse 12. Here was the worship of God; the sacrifices were here offered up to him. And hither Zebulun, in the sense of God's mercies to them, should call the people, that is say some, their own people, their families and neighbors; or as others, the strangers that were among them for traffic; saying, as [Isaiah 2:3](#). "Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord, to the mountain of the God of Jacob." And here they shall offer the sacrifices of righteousness. By which we are to understand their thank-offerings for the mercies they had received of the Lord. The Jews had not only expiatory sacrifices to procure the pardon of sins committed, but eucharistic sacrifices, or thank-offerings, to testify the sense they had of mercies received. These sacrifices typified moral duties; and when these types were abolished, the apostle shows, "that the calves of our lips, the sacrifice of praise," are in the stead of them, [Hebrews 13:15](#).

So then the sum of all this is, that when they returned from sea, or had received the blessings thereof from the hand of God, they should repair to the place of his worship, and there acknowledge and praise the God of their mercies. So that the whole verse thus explained, casts itself into this doctrinal observation.

DOCTRINE: That it is the special duty of seamen, when God returns them to their habitations in peace, thankfully to acknowledge and bless his name, for all the preservations and mercies they have received from his hand.

These are mercies indeed which are obtained from God by prayer, and returned to him again by praise. When we have received our mercies, God expects his praises: After the Psalmist had opened the hazards and fears of seamen upon the stormy ocean, and the goodness of God in bringing them to their desired haven, [Psalm 107:30](#). he presently calls upon them for this duty, verse 31. "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

O that men would! why, how is it imaginable they should not? He has the heart of a beast, not of a man, that would not. Did I say the heart of a beast? Give me that word again. There is a kind of gratitude, even in beasts, to their benefactors. "The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib," [Isaiah 1:3](#).

Now the method into which I will cast the discourse, shall be,

FIRST, To open the nature of the duty, and to show you what it is to praise God for his mercies.

SECONDLY, To give you the grounds and reasons of the duty, why God expects it, and you ought to give it to him. And then,

THIRDLY, To apply it in the several uses it is improvable unto.

1. The nature of the duty needs opening; for few understand what it is. Alas! it is another manner of thing than a customary, formal, cold God be thanked. Now, if we search into the nature of this duty, we shall find that whoever undertakes this angelic work, must,

FIRST, Be a heedful observer of the mercies he receives. This is fundamental to the duty. Where no observations of mercies have been made, no praises for them can be returned. God was never honored by his unobserved mercies. When David had opened the providences of God to the several degrees and orders of men, in its various administrations, and called upon them distinctly to praise God for them; he adds, in the close of all, "Whoever is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord," Psalm 107 ult. It is God's charge against Israel, [Hosea 2:8](#). "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, "and oil, and multiplied her silver:" that is She did not observe and take notice of these mercies, as coming from my hand; but only looked at the next cause. Thus it is with many, they think not upon their own mercies: others can observe them, but they cannot; they can quickly observe what troubles befall them, but take little notice of their own mercies. Such men can never be thankful.

SECONDLY, The thankful man must not only observe what mercies he has, and from whom they come; but must particularly consider them in their natures, degrees, seasons, and manner of conveyance; there is much of God's glory, and our comfort lost for want of this. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein," [Psalm 111:2](#). And indeed, there is no employment in all the world, that yields more pleasure to a gracious soul, than the anatomizing of providence does. How sweet is it to observe the mutual respects, coincidences, and introductive occasions of our mercies; every minute circumstance has its weight and value here. He has little pleasure in his meat, that swallows it whole without chewing.

THIRDLY, The thankful person must duly estimate and value his mercies. It is impossible that man can be thankful for mercies he little esteems. Israel could not praise God for that angels food with which he fed them, while they despised it in saying, There is nothing but this manna.

And surely it shows the great corruption of our nature, that those things which should raise the value of mercies with us, cause us the more to slight them: yet thus it falls out. The commonness, or long-continuance of mercies with us, which should endear them the more, and every day increase our obligation to God, causes them to seem but cheap and small things. And therefore does God so often threaten them, yes, and remove them, that their worth and excellency may thereby be acknowledged.

FOURTHLY, The thankful person must faithfully record his mercies, else God cannot have his due praise for them. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits," [Psalm 103:2](#). Forgotten mercies bear no fruit: a bad memory in this case, makes a barren heart and life.

I confess the mercies of God are such a multitude, that a memory of brass cannot retain them. "I will come before you in the multitude of your mercies," says David, [Psalm 5:7](#). They are called "showers of blessings, [Ezekiel 34:26](#). And as impossible it is distinctly to recount all our mercies, as to number the drops of rain that fall in a shower. Nevertheless, it has been the pious care and endeavor of the people of God, to preserve and perpetuate his mercies, by using all the helps to memory they could. Therefore they have kept registers, [Exodus 17:14](#) indited Psalms, to bring to remembrance, Psalm 70 title; denominated places from the mercies received there. Thus Jacob called the place where he found so much mercy, Bethel. Hagar named the well, where God unexpectedly relieved her, Beer-lahai-roi, the well of him that lives and looks upon me, [Genesis 16:13, 14](#).

They have stamped the mercies upon the days in which they received them. Thus the Jews called those days in which God wrought their deliverance, Purim, after the name Our, signifying the lot Haman had cast for their lives; [Esther 9:26](#). Yes, they have called their mercies upon their children, [1 Samuel 1:20](#). Thus thankful souls have striven to recognize their mercies, that God might not lose the praise, nor themselves the comfort of them.

FIFTHLY, The thankful person must be suitably affected with the mercies he receives. It is not a speculative, but an affectionate remembrance that becomes us: then God has his glory, when the sense of his mercies melts our hearts into holy joy, love, and admiration. Thus David sits down before the Lord like a man astonished at his goodness to him; [2 Samuel 7:20](#). "And what can David say more? for you Lord know your servant." The mercies of God have made the saints hearts leap for joy within them: [Psalm 92:4](#). "You, Lord, have made me glad through your works; therefore will I triumph in the works of your hands." Mercies are not mercies, deliverances are not deliverances to us, if we that receive them are not glad of them.

SIXTHLY, The thankful person must order his conversation suitably to the engagements that his mercies have put him under. When we have said all, it is the life of the thankful, that is the very life of thankfulness. Obedience and service are the only real manifestations of gratitude. "He who offers praise glorifies me: and to him that orders his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God," [Psalm 50:23](#). Set down this for an everlasting truth, That God was never praised and honored by an abused mercy. God took it ill from Hezekiah, "That he rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him," [2 Chronicles 32:25](#). He who is truly thankful will say as David, [Psalm 116:12](#). "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" We then glorify God with his mercies when we employ them to right ends, when we thankfully take our own share of comfort from them, receiving them with thanksgiving, as from the hand of a father. Mr. Swinnock tells of a young man, who, lying upon his sick-bed, was always calling for meat; but as soon as it was brought him, he shook and trembled dreadfully at the sight of it, and so continued until it was taken away; and before his death acknowledged God's justice, so that in his health he ordinarily received his meat without thanksgiving.

USE all God's mercies with thankfulness; God will remember them in fury, who forget him in his favors.

And think not what God bestows upon you is wholly for your own use: but honor God with your mercies by clothing the naked and feeding the hungry, especially such as are godly. This is a due improvement of your estates; thus you may make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. Ah, how little do we

consider what praise, what glory we may occasion this way, from others, to the name of God! It is storied of Dionysius the Syracusian tyrant, that when he saw what heaps of gold and silver his son hoarded up in his closet, he asked him what he meant to let it lie there, and not to make friends with it, to get the kingdom after his death? O son (said he) you have not a spirit capable of a kingdom. Thus honor the Lord with your substance; look upon all you have as your Master's talents, for which you must give an account: and to use and employ them for God, that you may give up your account with joy; and then you will show yourselves thankful indeed. Thus you see what is included in real thankfulness. O, it is another matter than we take it to be.

2. Next I promised to give you the grounds and reasons of this duty; why you are obliged after the reception of mercies to such a thankful return of praises. And, among many, I will only single out these three, and briefly open them.

FIRST, God requires and expects it. It is so special and peculiar a part of his glory, as he will never part with it. As great landlords oblige their tenants to a homage and service, when they make over their estates to them, and reserve a quit-rent to themselves, which they value at a high rate; so God, when he bestows deliverances of mercies upon us, still reserves an acknowledgment to himself: and this is dear to him, he will not endure to be defrauded of it; much less that it be given to another. You find this reservation of praise expressly made by him in [Psalm 50:15](#). "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." Where you have the request, the grant, and the reservation in the grant, q. d. When I have granted you your desire, see you do not defraud me of my glory. There be three things in every mercy, the matter of it, the comfort of it, and the glory of it. The two first God makes over freely to us, he gives the mercies themselves, he allows us to suck out all the lawful pleasure and delight that is in them; but the third he reserves to himself, and will never part with it to any other. If an Hezekiah himself render not to God due acknowledgments, as well as God loves him, there shall be great wrath upon him and Judah for the default, 2 Chronicles 32:26.

SECONDLY, You are under manifold engagements to render it to the Lord.

(1.) Common ingenuity obliges to a due acknowledgment of favors freely received; and unthankfulness on that score is the odium of mankind. You cannot give a man a more odious character among men, than to say, He is an ungrateful man.

(2.) The examples of the very heathens will condemn you. They praised their gods, which yet were no gods, when they received any deliverance, [Judges 16:24](#). Shall idols, dung-hill deities, receive their sacrifices and praises, while the true God is forgotten?

Nay, (3.) Many of you have formally and expressly obliged your souls to it, by solemn vows and promises in the day of your distress: and yet will you deal perfidiously with God? Will you not pay the vows which your lips have uttered? Certainly you can never free your souls, from the guilt of perfidiousness against God, while you give him not the glory due to his name.

3. Lastly, Your ingratitude is the ready way to deprive you of the mercies you have, and to with-hold from you the mercies you might have in your future distresses and wants. He who is ungrateful for mercies received, provokes God to remove them. Thus it fell out with ungrateful Israel, [Hosea 2:5, 8, 9](#). "She did not know, (that is she did not with consideration and thanks duly acknowledge) that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof; and will recover my wool and my flax." Thus they suffered their mercies to lapse into the Lord's hand for non-payment of their duties. If you are weary of your mercies, and willing to be rid of them, you

cannot take a more effectual course than to forget from whom you had them, and with-hold his praise for them.

And then, for future mercies and deliverances, you have no ground to expect any more from God, whom you have thus requited for former favors. He who gives no thanks for one mercy, has little ground to expect another. It was a sad word which God spoke upon this very provocation, [Judges 10:11, 12, 13](#) when a new distress befell Israel by the Ammonites, and they cried to the Lord for help, he tells them that he had many times delivered them from their enemies: "Yet (says he) have you forsaken me and served other gods. Wherefore I will deliver you no more; go and cry to the gods which you have chosen, and let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation." Q. d. With what face can you come to me for new mercies and deliverances, when yourselves know how former mercies have been abused! Think you that I am weary of my mercies to cast them away upon such unthankful wretches? No, expect no more mercies from me, "I will deliver you no more." One of the fathers calls ingratitude: A hellish stop, which interrupts the course and current of all God's mercies. Mercy is not only a precious thing, too good to be cast away, but it is a very tender thing, and God deeply resents the abuses of it. Thus you see the grounds and reasons of your duty; it now remains that we apply it.

Uses

USE 1. It is your unquestionable duty to return praises upon every receipt of mercies? Then, in the first place, bear your shame and just reproof for your manifest unthankfulness. You dare not deny but you have received many signal and eminent mercies from the hands of God. If you should deny that, I need go no farther to prove you prodigiously ungrateful. But it is too manifest to be denied: you have found God a very present help in trouble: his mercy has often rescued you out of the jaws of death. Some of you have been in dangers in the deeps; in deaths oft: you have been put to your wit's end; all visible hope and help failed. You might have said with the Psalmist, [Psalm 113:4](#). "I looked upon my right hand, and there was none; and upon the left, but refuge failed." You have seen your companions intombed before your eyes in the seas, and concluded in your own thoughts your turn was next. You have been in danger by barbarous enemies that have chased you upon the sea to make you a prey: yes, it may be that you have been a prey to them, and never thought to have seen the land of your nativity, your houses, wives, and children, any more. You have languished under dangerous diseases, and that remote from friends and necessary accommodations; you have lost your estates, and been reduced to low ebb, and never thought to have seen a day of prosperity any more; yet has the Lord delivered you out of all your troubles. He has provided unexpected means of preservation, when the proud waters were ready to go over your souls. And though others went down before your eyes, you were marked out for deliverance, God spoke to the raging waves, saying, Touch not this man, I will not deliver him up, though I have done so by others. When cruel enemies chased you, he delivered you, causing the darkness of the night to interpose seasonably between you and them; as the dark side of the cloud shadowed Israel from the Egyptians that pursued them, [Exodus 14:20](#) sometimes giving you a favorable gale, which blew mercy and deliverance to you: sometimes by strengthening you to resist their furious attacks, and delivering you from their rage: or if he delivered you into their hands, yet there he preserved you, enabling you to endure their severities, or causing the enemy to treat you well; and finding out a way which you knew not, to bring you at last out of the house of bondage.

He pitied you under your dangerous diseases; and though necessary accommodations and means might be wanting, he was your physician, and healed you; he recovered you immediately without means, or blessed weak and small means to your good. When you were reduced by losses and captivities to a low ebb, so that you might say as the church, [Lamentations 3:17](#). I forgot prosperity; he has

not only recruited your strength but your estate also: and when both your body and estate, like an old leaky ship, have been ready to sink, he has stopped the leaks in both, careened, repaired, and launched you into the world again, as whole, as sound, and as strong as ever.

And now, reader, suffer me to account and expostulate a little with your conscience; what has the fruit of all these mercies been to you? And how have you carried it since those days, towards the God of your mercies? Have you indeed been melted by the sense of all this kindness, into love, thankfulness, and new obedience? Have these favors engaged you to more strictness in your duties, and greater watchfulness against sin? Have you said, with that good man, [Ezra 9:13, 14](#). "And now my God, seeing you have punished me less than mine iniquities deserve, and have given me such deliverances as these, should I again break your commandments?" If it be so, surely mercy and goodness shall follow you all the days of your life. The Lord then reckons all these mercies well bestowed, and will never repent that he has done you good.

But I fear this is not your case. Sure I am, there are some among you that have quickly forgotten the God that delivered you. Some that have abused him to his face, by ascribing his mercies to good luck, chance, and fortune: not once owning him as your deliverer. And some that have made his mercies weapons of sin, to wound him withal, wasting your estates by prodigality, which were given to refresh your families, and God's poor; yes, abusing them to drunkenness and luxury. And is this the thanks you return him? For which of all my good works (says Christ to the Jews) do you stone me? So say I, for which of all God's kindnesses to you, do you thus dishonor, and abuse him? O let shame cover your faces this day! Go, reader, fold down this leaf, and get you to your knees, and say, I am the man to whom this reproof is sent. I have abused the God of my mercies, I have turned his grace into wantonness. Smite with Ephraim upon your thigh, and say, What have I done? Mourn heartily for your unkindness to your best friend, "The God that has done you good all your life long, and deserves other returns from you than these."

USE 2. Lastly, It calls upon you all to be thankful for your mercies. Chrysostom once wished for a voice like thunder, that all men might hear him. O that I could so call you to this duty, that some of you might effectually hear God's call in this exhortation!

Will you own the hand that delivers you, that feeds, clothes, and heals you? Will you resolve to live the life of praise, and render to the Lord according to the benefits you have received? Will you indeed walk humbly, and thankfully, under all your deliverances, and successes, and glorify God by that with which he has comforted and refreshed you? If there be any saving knowledge of God, and spiritual sense of his love in your souls, methinks I should prevail with you; for do but weigh these following arguments seriously, and they will engage you to it.

ARGUMENTS

Argument 1. How freely have all your mercies streamed to you from the fountain of grace? There was nothing in you to engage it.

The very notion of mercy includes freeness; they are all bestowed upon us, not only as we are undeserving, but ill-deserving creatures; not only without our merits, but against our merits. And what though there be a concurrence of your abilities, head-work and hand-work in the procurement of some of your mercies, yet still those mercies are the pure effects of free-grace: for all those endeavors of yours had signified nothing to their procurement, without God's blessing; yes, and that wisdom and industry which you have used, were themselves the free gifts of God. You know there are thousands in the world as industrious and wise as you, and such

as never provoked God by such sins as you have; who yet are denied the mercies you enjoy. O how should this endear you to God!

Argument 2. How seasonably your mercies have been bestowed upon you in the very point of extremity and danger! God has on purpose suffered it to grow to an extremity, that thereby he might commend his mercy to you with greater advantage. "In the mount of the Lord it has been seen," [Genesis 22:14](#) without this God saw his mercies would have been slighted, and low prized by you: But God has watched the opportunity of bestowing his goodness upon you, for no other end but to magnify his mercies in your eyes, and make the deeper and more lasting impressions upon your hearts. Shall such mercies, which at first were so amazing and overwhelming to you, at the reception whereof you were like men that dreamed, as the Psalmist speaks, [Psalm 126:1](#) so soon grow stale and common? God forbid!

Argument 3. How special and distinguishing have some of your mercies been? God has not dealt with every one as he has with you. Are not some that went out with you found wanting at your return: They are among the dead, it may be among the damned, and you among the living, yet enjoying the capacity and the means of salvation. God has prospered your voyage, and returned you with success; you have sucked the abundance of the sea, and the treasures hidden in the sand, as the text speaks; but others may say as Naomi, [Ruth 1:21](#). "I went out full, and am come back empty." I went out full of hopes, and am come back with sad disappointments. And is not this a strong tie to thanksgiving?

Argument 4. Did not your mercies find you under great guilt? You know what your own transgressions against the Lord were, and yet such was the strength of mercy, that it brake through all your great provocations, and made its way to you through a multitude of iniquities. It came triumphing over all your great unworthiness; and is not such mercy worthy to be admired, and recorded forever! O what will affect and melt your hearts, if this will not? Surely such mercies have a constraining power in them, upon all sensible souls.

Argument 5. To conclude; if all the goodness of God which has passed before your eyes, does indeed prevail upon you to love the Lord, and fear to offend him; if it really constrains you to give up yourselves, and all you have, to be his; then all this is but the beginning of mercies, and you shall see yet greater things than these. God has more mercies yet behind, and those of a higher kind and more excellent nature than these temporal mercies are. You are now delivered from the dangers of the sea, and have escaped those perils: O but what is this to deliverance from wrath to come? You have been preserved from, or delivered out of Turkish slavery; but what is that to a deliverance from the curse of the law, the bondage of your lusts, and the power of Satan? Happy souls, if these deliverances do in any measure prove introductive to the great salvation.

THE CONCLUSION

Thus I have, as the Lord has enabled me, endeavored to chose and improve proper subjects for your meditation in every condition that befalls you. I cannot carry these truths one degree farther, it is the Lord only that can make them effectual to your souls. But it is my earnest request to you, masters, that have the over-sight, and must give an account for your companies, that you will not only read and consider these things yourselves, but that you will at fit seasons, especially upon the Lord's day, read and inculcate them upon your servants and company; and that, as those who must give an account. Will not this be a better expense of that precious and hallowed time, than to spend it in sleeping in your cabins, or drinking in tipling-houses? All that sin of theirs which you may prevent, and do not, becomes your own

sin. And have you not personal sins enough already, but you must draw the guilt of their sins upon you also? I beseech you, and it is my last request, that you will faithfully labor, that you and your companies may serve the Lord.