FAST SERMONS.

SERMON I.

[*Preached on occasion of a Public Fast, May 11th,* 1692.]

ISAIAH viii. 12, 13.

Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

THESE words are part of a sermon preached at a time when the people of Israel were under the prevailing apprehensions of a foreign invasion from Syria, in confederacy with Ephraim, the ten tribes; see *chap.* vii. 1, 2. and after that, an inroad made with a mighty force by Sennacherib, *chap.* viii. 7, 8. It is with reference to both these that the prophet does here comfort and direct the people of God. The work of ministers is not to direct the affairs of states, it is out of their sphere; but to direct the graces of God's people, according to the various outgoings of God's providence. They are so to understand the times, as to know what Israel ought to do, 1 Chron. xii. 32. Observe,

1. His challenge to God's enemies, *v.* 9, 10. He does, as it were, throw down the gauntlet, and bid defiance to them and all their power: Come do your worst, with might or multitude; be your confederacies never so well formed, your plots never so deeply laid; though you bring into the field an army never so numerous, so well armed, so well disciplined, and so well paid; though you be never so confident of success; all this conduct, all this courage, will be so far from preventing, that it will but accelerate and aggravate your ruin. Thus with a holy bravery does he address the enemies, and teach the virgin, the daughter of Sion, to despise them, and to laugh them to scorn, Isa. xxxvii. 22. It is a fruitless attempt, and will appear so at last. Now this assurance is grounded not upon the countenance of second causes, but the presence and presidency of the Almighty: *God is with us*, i. e. the cause is God's, and he will own it. It notes not only his presence with us, but his taking part with us, as captain and leader, and one interested. Where truth, righteousness, and love are, there God is. Encourage yourselves with this: *More are they that be with us, than they that be with them*, 2 Kings vi. 16. If God be with us, infinite wisdom, power, and goodness are with us; and then what can finite powers and policies do, 2 Chron. xxxii. 7, 8. Rom. viii. 31.

2. His counsel to God's people, in the text. It was generally a time of prevailing fear, and those fears dishonourable to God, disquieting to themselves; and therefore he is here sent to help them against these fears. He speaks experimentally, having been himself *instructed with a strong hand.* Those are likely to teach others effectually, that are themselves thus instructed. That word that comes from the heart will reach to the heart. That which he does here deliver to them, he says he had received from the Lord: see Isa. xxi. 10.

1. He dissuades them from a sinful fear, *v.* 12.

2. He directs them to a gracious fear, *v.* 13.

For the 1st. A dissuasion from sinful fear, which it seems was the *way of this people*, *v* 11. It was an epidemical disease, and men are apt to be carried down the stream. *Say ye not, A confederacy.* These words may be understood two ways:

1. Be not associated in their confederacies. Do not join with those that, for the securing of themselves, enter into confederacy with the Assyrians, or any other foreign force; to which it seems many among them, through unbelief and distrust of God and their cause, were inclined. Now, do not thou join with them; *say not, A confederacy*, i. e. think not

of a confederacy, do not go about to secure yourselves by any sinful leagues. We must take heed of joining ourselves in confederacy with any of the disturbers of the peace, and betrayers of the land, either out of restlessness of spirit, as those that are given to change, or out of particular discontents, or fear of the enemies prevailing, or from any other base principle. Though sinners entice thee, consent thou not, Prov. i. 10. Meddle not with them that are given to change, Prov. xxiv. 21. Approve yourselves the quiet in the land. Seek the peace of the nation. This is a caution of which I hope none of you stand in need. It is very hard to have any charity for those, who (whatever their pretences be) at such a day as this talk of making a captain to return into Egypt. Let not my soul come into their secret.

2. Be not afraid of their confederacies. Do not say, A confederacy, to or of every thing that this people say, A confederacy. It is an expression of their fear; they are generally seized with a panic, and talk of nothing but a *confederacy*,—A plot, a plot; dismal news,—Syria is joined with Ephraim. What will become of us?—Must we fight, or must we fly, or must we yield? Thus *their hearts were moved, ch.* vii. 2. Do not you say as they say, *neither fear ye their fear, i. e.* that fear with which they fear, or objectively, that of which they are afraid. We must not be conformed to the fears of this world, Jer. x. 2. Fear not that with which they would terrify you, 1 Pet. iii. 14. Let neither the reports that are abroad, nor the common apprehensions that people have upon them, fasten any terrible impression upon you. *Nor be afraid:* the word signifies such a fright as causes a shaking and trembling, as *ch.* vii. 2. Neither fear you their fear; *much less be so affrighted,* so some read it. The caution is thus doubled the more to encourage them: compare Isa. vii. 4.

Doctrine. That when the enemies of the church have sinful confederacies on foot, its friends should watch against the sinful fears of those confederacies.

1. It is no new thing for the enemies of the church to have their confederacies on foot. Hand joins in hand, and wicked leagues are made. Though the enemies be many, yet their name is *Legion*, incorporated in prosecution of the same cursed designs, Ps. lxxxiii. 3, 5, 7. The dragon and his angels are of one mind to give their honour to the beast, Rev. xvii. 13.

2. There is a lawful fear of these confederacies, which is to be allowed besides that which is natural, for Christianity is not stoicism. There is also a prudential fear; a fear of diligence, such as quickens to the use of lawful means; thus Jehoshaphat feared, 2 Chron. xx. 3. Just and rational fears are of use to sharpen endeavours.

3. But there is a sinful fear of these confederacies, which is to be striven against.

Show I. When is this fear of these confederacies sinful.

1. When it comes from an ill cause—as distrust of God, and of his power and faithfulness. Examine if that be not at the bottom of it;—over-credulity of reports: believing every word; hearkening to every groundless surmise; mistaking the shadow of the mountains for men, and the sunshine upon the waters for blood. Or it proceeds from a conformity to the world, that *wonders after the beast*, Rev. xiii. 4. subscribing to their admiration,—*Who is like the beast?* When our fears arise from hence, they turn into sin: and there is nothing more subtle than the cause of our fears, and which is more commonly palliated with pretences; therefore search them to the bottom.

2. When it produces ill effects; when our fear gets the mastery of us, and plays the tyrant, not only over reason, but over grace; when it fills us, Isa. xxxiii. 14.

(1.) It is sinful when it confounds our spirits, when it puts the soul into disorder, and so disfits it for any duty; when we live in careful suspense, Luke xii. 29. When these fears unhinge our spirits, discompose our souls; when they fill us lying down and rising up; when they deprive us of all self-possession; then they are sinful, Luke xxi. 19.

(2.) When fear clouds our joy, it is evil. We should be always rejoicing in the Lord, and seek consolation in his promises; but when joy is damped by our fears of the confederacies of enemies against us, those fears are excessive. Jehoshaphat feared the invading enemy, and yet went singing to the battle, 2 Chron. xx. 21. It should not be in the power of any creature to hinder our delight in God, Hab. iii. 17.

(3.) When fear conquers our faith, and prevails to its discouragement, it is unseasonable. Faith is our shield, and fears are sinful when they snatch our shield out of our hand. Faith is our cordial, and fears are sinful when they render the cordial useless, as the fear of Peter when he was sinking, Matt. xiv. 30, 31.

(4.) When it clogs our prayers and endeavours; when it diverts us from our duty, draws us from God, deadens and distracts us in our duty; so that we have no heart to stir a step to help ourselves, or to run any hazards, or with any courage to encounter any difficulty;—as Israel in Egypt, Exod. vi. 9. —much more when it puts us upon the use of sinful and irregular means; it is highly exceptionable.

Show II. Why the friends of the church should not be afraid of the confederacies of the enemies of the church.

This fear is contrary to the will of Christ, John xiv. 27. It is opposed to the character of the saints, Ps. cxii. 7. It is against the law of faith and love, 1 John iv. 18. It is displeasing to God, who takes no pleasure in his people's torment. It weakens ourselves, discourages others, dishonours religion, and

gives Satan great advantage. Such are the evil effects of all prevailing fears. I would only suggest, that in this case it is very unreasonable, all things considered, that we should fear the confederacies of the enemies of the church.

1. We are sure of a good God, that can baffle their designs, and turn their counsels headlong; infatuate all their politics, and blast their devices. If we speak of strength and wisdom, these belong to the Most High. *God is with us*, therefore fear not their fear. God sees not as man sees. Prevailing fear of man, evidences a prevailing forgetfulness of God, Isa. li. 12, 13.

2. We are sure of a good cause. If the cause of religion and of truth, the rights of kingdoms and the peace of nations, be a good cause, surely ours is so. Fear argues a distrust of our cause. The providence of God hath by amazing steps led us into the cause, and led us thus far in it; and he that has begun is concerned in honour to finish.

3. We are sure of a good issue at last. Though there may be some difficulty and struggle in the birth, yet there will be joy when the man-child is born. Though it may be long before the top-stone be brought forth, yet it will be produced at last. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.

For the 2nd. We are here directed to a gracious religious fear—*Sanctify the Lord of hosts*. Having showed us whom we should not fear, he here shows us whom we should fear. Fear is a stream that will have its course. The best way to keep it from overflowing and doing mischief, is to direct it into, and keep it in, the right channel. Such is our Saviour's advice, Luke xii. 5. This is to prevent their walking in the way of the ungodly, as Prov. xxiii. 17. The remedy against imitating sinners, is to be continually in the fear of the Lord.

DOCTRINE. That the gracious fear of God is a special preservative against the prevailing fear of man. The way to be delivered from the fear of the people of the world, is to be governed by the fear by which the people of God are influenced.

Show, I. What this religious fear of God is. It is often put in Scripture for all religion. The fear of the Lord *is the beginning of wisdom*, Prov. ix. 10. the first step towards wisdom, Job xxviii. 28. I shall understand it of that religious fear which has regard to God in reference to his church. When enemies are confederate, dangers great, and mighty things upon the wheel, then,

1. *Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself.* God is here styled the Lord of hosts, for the comfort of his people, who had many and mighty hosts against them, and few or none for them. It is an encouraging title, as Ps. xlvi. 7, 11. Luther's Psalm. *Sanctify*;—as we are said to magnify him, not to make him holy or great, but to esteem him so. Behave towards him as a holy God. His holiness is his most glorious attribute, Isa. vi. 3. *The Lord of hosts.*

2. *Let him be your fear, i. e.* the object of your fear. Do not fear these two kings, but fear God. God is called the *fear of Isaac*, Gen. xxxi. 53.

3. *Let him be your dread.* It is repeated for the more emphasis, the word answers to that other, *v.* 12. and signifies properly, one that terrifies. Fear God more, and then you would fear man less. Now at such a time, when multitudes are saying, A confederacy, a confederacy,—to sanctify God, and to make him our fear and our dread, has these things in it.

(1.) To own his sovereignty. Acknowledge him as the director of all second causes, giving life and law to all their motions. See the most powerful instruments, when they appear most formidable, under his check. Acknowledge the Lord of hosts himself, without dependence upon any creature, nay, upon whom all creatures do depend. See what it is to sanctify God at such a time, Ps. xlvi. 10. *Know that I am God*, the sovereign ruler of all the creatures. Enemies are but the rod in his hand, Isa. x. 5. Every creature is what he makes it.—*Know that the Lord is greater than all gods*, Exod. xviii. 11.

(2.) To observe his outgoings. Take notice of him; his wisdom, power, and goodness in all his motions. To sanctify God, is not only to acknowledge his universal sovereignty, but his particular agency in all events. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, Isa. xxviii. 29. not only the events themselves, but all the circumstances of events. He expects we should consider the operation of his hands, see the outgoings of our God, our King, Ps. lxviii. 24; cvii. 43. God is sanctified when he is taken notice of, Hos. xiv. 9. Stand still and see the salvation of God, Exod. xiv. 13.

(3.) To dread his wrath. To *sanctify* him, and make him our fear, is to stand continually in awe of him, filled with an apprehension of his terrible majesty displayed in his providences. If the power and anger of a mortal worm be so formidable, and his resentments threatening, what then is the power and anger of the great Jehovah, the God to whom vengeance belongs? Ps. lxviii. 35. When God answers in terrible things, it is in righteousness, Ps. lxv. 5. see Ps. lxxvi. 7, 8. The providences of God are compared to the giving of the law upon Mount Sinai, Hab. iii. 3, &c. When Sennacherib invaded Judah, this was the lesson to be learned, Isa. xxxiii. 14. *Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?*

(4.) To depend upon his mercy. The fear required, is not to drive us from him, but to draw us to him. God is sanctified when he is trusted by our confidence in him. We declare that we believe he is a holy God, for his holiness is the foundation of his covenant, Ps. lxxxix. 35. Those that fear God,

and those that hope in his mercy, are joined, Ps. cxlvii. 11. At such a time rely upon God for preservation and deliverance. Cast your cares and fears upon him; leave all in his hands; faith glorifies God, Rom. iv. 20.

(5.) To admire his counsels. *Sanctify the Lord*, i. e. praise and magnify him; speak of his glorious outgoings with wonder, especially in your praises fasten upon his *holiness*, as Exod. xv. 11. give him the glory of that attribute, his purity and freedom from sin, giving no countenance to iniquity, pleading a righteous cause, performing his promise. This is sanctifying God; and this must be done with a very awful reverence of that God with whom we have to do; convinced that our praises are no additions to his glory.

(6.) To acquiesce in his disposals. To sanctify God at such a time, is to submit to him without objecting: *Be silent, O all flesh*, Zech. ii. 13. Not disputing against, but silently submitting to, the methods of God's government. We then make him our fear, when we dare not except against any thing that he does: see Hab. ii. 20. It is not for us to prescribe to God, or to arraign the methods he takes, Zeph. i. 7.

Show, II. How this would preserve us from sinful fears of the confederacies of the enemies of the church. To see and be affected with the greatness of God, would help to discover to us,

1. The enemies' pomp eclipsed. Man appears great, till he comes to be compared with God, and then all his glory vanishes as the twinkling of the glow-worm before the noon-day sun. They have then no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth. An awful sight of God in his greatness would dazzle the eyes to all sublunary glory, and then that great pomp which is apt to strike such a terror appears but vain show, Acts xxv. 23.

2. The enemies' power restrained. The more we stand in awe of God the less we shall fear men, because men are but the staff in his hand. God has them in a chain, he has a hook in their nose, Isa. xxxvii. 29. their power is a limited power: see Neh. iv. 14. When we are enlarging the occasions of our fears, and representing them dreadful, then keep up great thoughts of God. Think not so much what enemies can do, as what they *cannot do*, Luke xii. 4, 5. Why shouldst thou be afraid of a man that shall die, Isa. li. 12, 13. Enemies are high, but there is one higher than they are. The more God is sanctified by us, the more we shall be satisfied in God.

For application. Let us apply this,

1. To our particular interests, especially the concerns of our souls. It is the sum of all practical religion, to sanctify the name of God, and to make him our fear. Learn this lesson, and put it in practice every day in every thing. Keep up a holy filial fear of God continually; a godly fear. Let this rule you. Maintain an awe of God upon your spirits. Be frequent and serious in holy adorations of God, and let your affections and actions be answerable. Devote yourselves to the fear of God, Ps. cxix. 38. Walk in the fear of the Lord, Acts ix. 31. God is sanctified by the spiritual and holy worship and conversation of those that profess to be near to him. You pray that God's name may be sanctified, act accordingly. God must be sanctified in every prayer, Lev. x. 3. Making God our fear would restrain us from sin, Ps. iv. 4. Neh. v. 15. it would constrain us to duty, 1 Sam. xii. 24. In reference to all your personal affairs, set the Lord still before you. Make God your fear, and you would not be so apt to fear losses, crosses, and the wrath of man.

2. To the public concerns of the church, and to those the occasion of the day does especially call our thoughts. I hope you do concern yourselves in these things. It is not all one to you whether Christ's kingdom and interest sink or prosper. Your hearts are trembling for the ark; are they not? Let not that trembling prevail too far. My errand to you to-day, is to say, Fear not. You hear great talk of the power of France, and their designs against us of this nation, to bring us again into slavery, to re-enthrone popery and tyranny, Isa. vii. 6, &c. Well, *be not afraid of the Assyrian*, Isa. x. 24. *Be strong and courageous*, 2 Chron. xxxii. 7. Though you see others afraid, tell them you know better things, and do not walk in the way of this people.

Direction 1. Keep in with God. Fear came in with guilt, Gen. iii. 10. The sinners in Sion are afraid, Isa. xxxiii. 14. afraid where no fear is, Ps. liv. 5. Guilt puts an edge upon our fears. Make your peace with God every day. When foul weather and an evil conscience meet together it goes hard. It is the pardoned upright soul that can look danger in the face without change of countenance, Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16. He that walks uprightly walks with a holy humble confidence, Prov. x. 9.

2. Keep out false reports. If we hearken to every story that is brought us, we shall soon see the ruin of our hopes. The most credulous are the most fearful. It has been the cursed policy of France, by lying stories to propagate fears, and by them to betray the succours that reason offers: compare Neh. vi. 5—13. Those that are naturally fearful, are apt to catch at any thing that will gratify their distemper.

3. Keep down the workings of an unsanctified fancy. When we allow our hearts the liberty of meditating terror, we create bugbears to ourselves, and then frighten ourselves at the view of them; and therefore learn to correct the extravagances of your fancies. Keep thy heart with all diligence.

4. Keep hold of the promise. Do not build your hopes upon the smiles of second causes, but upon the word of promise. Live upon that, even then

:n subsequent events seem to cross it. Against e believe in hope, Rom. iv. 18. that is God's r of trying faith.

. Keep up prayer. Prayer is the great remedy fear. Abide and abound in that duty. Do not ık your praying work is done, when the public k of a fasting day is over. Continue praying the peace of Jerusalem. Let fear strengthen yer, Gen. xxxii. 11. and prayer will weaken fear. e God no rest till he establish, and till he make ısalem a praise in the earth, Isa. lxii. 6, 7.

SERMON II.

Preached July 12th, 1693, on occasion of a Public t.]

ISAIAH xlii. 21, latter part.

He will magnify the law, and make it honourable.

ε whole word of God is of use to direct us in yer; and we have great need of such direction; the truth is, we know not what to pray for as we ht, nor could we expect to succeed, did not the rit in the word, as well as the Spirit in the heart, s help our praying infirmities. But one special : of direction in the word is the promises, from ch we must derive matter for prayer, both in re- ıce to public and personal concerns. Promises not designed to supersede, but to regulate, excite, encourage, prayer: see Ezek. xxxvi. 37. It is d for us to know what to expect. God has in his d told us, not only what he expects from us, but ıt we may expect from him, and to this, faith in yer is to have a regard. As to public affairs, ıld you know what God will do, and conse- ntly what we are to desire, it is this,—*he will ıify the law, and make it honourable.* Some notice he various readings and senses of the words may be unprofitable.

. Some read and understand it as an account of ıt God had done; the favours he had bestowed ın the people of Israel, whom the prophet had n reproving and threatening for their idolatry, ıdness, and obstinacy; an aggravation of which, : the distinguishing kindness of God to them. ł thus they read it as setting forth,

ł.) The root of that favour. *The Lord was well ıed for his righteousness' sake, i. e.* God had a ject and favour for them, not for the sake of any rit of their own, but for the sake of his own right- sness, *i. e.* his faithfulness to his promise made heir fathers; see Deut. vii. 7, 8. because he would ıove himself a covenant-keeping God. Into this must resolve all the divine favours; all the plea- e God takes in his people, their persons, and their performances, which is otherwise unaccountable. It is *for his righteousness' sake*, for the sake of his goodness and his promise. He is pleased with them because he has said he would be so; loves them, because he said he would love them. Or, for the sake of Christ's righteousness, which is called the righteousness of God. That is the foundation of all our acceptance with God, and therefore of that only we must make mention, Ps. lxxi. 16. Eph. i. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 5. God is not well pleased with sinners, but for the sake of some righteousness, something to satisfy divine justice, and to answer the demands of a broken law.

(2.) The fruit of that favour, in what particular instance it appeared, even in giving him the law. Some understand it thus; *The Lord was pleased for the making of him*, i. e. that people, *righteous, to give him a great law, to make him illustrious:*—and so we have

The great design of God in giving him the law; it was to *make him righteous.* Though we cannot be justified by the law, yet we may and must be sanctified by it. The design of the law is to destroy our sins, and to produce in us a conformity to the will and likeness of God.

We are also led to observe the excellency of the law. It is a *great law.* It is full of precepts and rules. It is a law about great things, Hos. viii. 12.—the love of God and our neighbour, the ordinances of worship, the preservation of peace, the reformation of the heart and life: these are great things, no trifling matters. It is a great law, for great things depend upon it,—our everlasting condition. Others take this view of the passage, *God delighted in him for his righteousness' sake, he magnified him with his law, and dignified him.* God did the people of Israel this great honour, to give them his law. Considering whose law, what kind of law, and how given, it was a distinguished honour to them to have it: see Deut. iv. 7, 8. Note, It is a great honour and dignity to have the law. When God would magnify and dignify his people Israel, he gave them his law.

It is an honour to a people to have the law in their books, to have it among them. He has not dealt so with other nations, Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20. This was one of the peculiar privileges of Israel, Rom. iii. 2. Where ordinances are, there the glory dwells, Ps. lxxxv. 9. When they are parted with, the glory is departed, 1 Sam. iv. 22. God promised Abraham to make his name great, and he did it by giving the law to his seed, so making them a peculiar treasure, and a kingdom of priests to himself, Exod. xix. 5, 6. This is the honour of England, that we have Bibles, and have them in a language we understand: see Deut. xxxiii. 2—5.

It is an honour to a person to have the law in his heart. God dignifies a soul when he puts his law into it. The yoke of Christ is an honourable yoke.

The greatest of men need not be ashamed to wear it. The greatest preferment is to be Christ's humble servant. This honour have all his saints, they are magnified and dignified with his law. His secret is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant. Take up with nothing short of this honour; be ambitious of this preferment. It is the greatest shame to be without the law of God, as it is the greatest honour to be under the law to Christ. *Receive his law*, with the whole heart.

2. We read it as an account of what God would do for the future. The people of Israel are described, *v.* 20. as a provoking people, and, *v.* 22. as a miserable, oppressed, ruined people. They might think, surely in all this God will be very much a loser; what will become of his honour? Let them leave this to God; *he is well pleased for his righteousness' sake.* Their ruin is the manifestation of his justice and righteousness, therefore he is well pleased; he is comforted in it, Ezek. v. 13. Not for their ruin' sake; for it is no pleasure to the Almighty to afflict, much less to destroy; but for his righteousness' sake; that all the world may observe the impartiality of his justice, Amos iii. 2. And he will be no loser in his glory at last; he *will magnify the law.* If they will not magnify the law by their obedience to it, God will magnify it himself, by punishing them for their disobedience. One way or other, sooner or later, God will have honour, he will be sanctified, Lev. x. 3. This may be understood,

(1.) As the counsel and purpose of God. This is that which he has determined, in which all providences centre.

(2.) As the comfortable expectation of the saints. It may be taken as spoken by the prophet, pleasing himself with the thought, however things go, he will *magnify the law:* this is that in which the Lord is well pleased; and if he be pleased, we have no reason to be displeased.

DOCTRINE. That that which is the purpose and design of God, with which the desires and hopes of all the saints do concur, is some way or other to magnify the law, and to make that honourable.

I. *Explication* 1. By the *law* here, I understand the whole revealed will of God concerning man's duty and happiness; the prohibitions and precepts, with those promises and threatenings which are the sanctions of the law. The law is taken for all the Scripture. It is a law-book. It is given by inspiration of God, as the great Lawgiver. The gospel is called *a law*, Isa. ii. 3. *the law of faith*, Rom. iii. 27. *the law of the spirit of life*, Rom. viii. 2. *the law of liberty*, James ii. 12. and concerning that many understand the text. Look upon the gospel as intended, not only to save us, but in order to that, to rule us. We must *obey* the gospel.

2. By the magnifying of this law, I understand God's doing of that in his providence, which declares and proves the greatness of the law. The law is a great law, but he magnifies it when he makes it to appear great; as God himself, who is infinitely great, is yet said to be magnified, Mal. i. 5. He is said to magnify his word above all his name, Ps. cxxxviii. 2. above all other things by which he has made himself known. He magnifies the authority and truth of the law, its power and efficacy, and its righteousness. The honour of the law is, to be obeyed, to command and direct: when it is so, then he makes it honourable. It is the honour of the law to be clear and plain, to be so reasonable, as to be above dispute or objection. When God's law appears thus, and is accepted and submitted to, then it is made honourable.

3. I say, this is the purpose and design of God. We know not the purposes and designs of God, further than as he is pleased to make them known to us. They are secret in their particular movements, but clear from the word in their general tendency.

(1.) This he will do at last. Shortly he will magnify the law, when he will make it the rule of judgment at the great day. This book shall be opened, Rev. xx. 12. not only the books of men's consciences and God's omniscience, as records of fact, but the books of the Old and New Testaments, as records of law: see Rom. ii. 16. James ii. 12. However now the law is despised by the atheists and profane ones of the world, as an antiquated statute, the day is coming, when it will be magnified in the eyes of all the world, and by it the doom will be passed concerning the eternal state of those that now despise it. The book of the law seems now to be lost with many, they live as if there were no such book, but then it will be found. The great rule of judgment you have in the gospel law: see Mark xvi. 15, 16. These words shall judge us, see John xii. 48. Then this despised gospel will be honourable. When heaven and earth shall be dissolved, this word shall abide, Luke xvi. 17. Matt. xxiv. 35. and then it will appear great. It will then be the honour of this evangelical law, that it will be strictly executed. It cannot be evaded, escaped, contradicted, or charged with injustice, as men's laws often are,—weak, or defective, or unjust, which make them dishonourable. Every sinner's mouth will be stopped with the acknowledgment, and every saint's mouth opened with the admiration, of the equity of the law, and of all the proceedings upon it.

(2.) This he is doing every day. This is the tendency of all events; so I understand the text. He will in the course of his providence magnify the law. Would you resolve the difficulties of providence, and know what God is doing? It is this, he is honouring his law. The great things that God has in store for his church in the latter days, are all summed up in this.

4. With this the desires and hopes of all the saints

cur. This is that which God will do, and this is : which the saints would have done; for the ex-tations of the saints are grounded upon and ded by the word which God has spoken. I come, h Christ;—Come, saith the church, Rev. xxii. 20. that are sanctified and renewed after God's ge, will and refuse as God does. They are *well sed* with that which he is well pleased with. d's glory is the great comfort of God's people. It pecial comfort to ministers that are complaining, he prophet here, that people do not observe what y say, that God will magnify the law for all this, . lv. 10, 11.

I. I would show more particularly, in what in-nces the great God does, and will, magnify the and make it honourable; bring credit to the gos-, 2 Cor. iii. 10, 11. and to the Scriptures.

. In the convincing of gainsayers. When the orance of foolish men is put to silence by the ver of the word, then the law is magnified: see Cor. xiv. 24, 25. Acts vi. 10; xviii. 28. It is si-ced by the plain and powerful efficacy and energy the word. When those that have espoused and up errors against truth, are convinced in their nsciences that they are in the wrong, then the rd is made honourable. Many instances there ve been of this, and more will be, when thousands all be slain, *i. e.* a multitude of prevailing errors, ffled and borne down by the sword, out of the outh of Christ, Rev. xix. 21. When truth gets ound, and error loses, by the plain preaching of e word without secular force, here is the law agnified.

2. In the conversion of souls, and much more of tions, the law is made honourable. When it is ghty, through God, to the pulling down of strong lds, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.—when a great harvest of souls gathered in to Jesus Christ,—when many are turned om darkness to light, Acts xxvi. 18.—when great ners are changed, the strong man armed dispos-ssed,—when the word of God grows and prevails ightily, Acts xix. 20.—when it appears quick and werful, Heb. iv. 12.—then is it magnified. This is ork that God is carrying on in the world, and will hile any of the elect remain uncalled, though some-mes it seems to pause. God has a remnant among ews and Gentiles, he has other sheep that must be ought in, and in this he magnifies the law. We now not what tendency present events may have wards honouring the divine word.

3. In the carrying on of the work of national re-rmation. As far as truth gets ground against error; he purity of ordinances against idolatry, superstition, and corruption in ordinances; and a gospel way f worship is established; so far the law is magnified: he word being the rule of faith, worship, and prac-ce. This is work that God will do, though there be ifficulty in the way of it, and great opposition given to it, and it may seem sometimes to stand still, or to go back. When it is carried on by the powers, and policies, and laws of nations, then the law is magnified. When kings are nursing fathers, the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour to the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 24. When it is carried on by unlikely instruments, as by Luther, in Germany, and here in England, by Edward VI. and queen Elizabeth. Not by might nor by power, Zech. iv. 6, 7. Here is the law magnified. The more of God the less of man.

4. In the composing of the divisions and breaches of his churches. Nothing does more reflect upon the law of Christ, and make it dishonourable, than the divisions that are among Christians. God will find out some way or other for healing; he will pour oil into these wounds, Isa. xi. 6, 13. they all shall be one; and that will magnify the law, and retrieve the credit of Christianity. As far as formality, and bigotry, and imposition go out of request, so far there is a direct tendency towards this healing work. He has said it, and he will do it, that the Lord shall be one, and his name one, Zech. xiv. 9. There shall be one heart, Jer. xxxii. 39. Ezek. xi. 19. It must be done by the law of love, which will thus be magnified, not by compulsion.

5. In the correcting of his own people when they offend him. This God will do for the honour of his law, lest it should savour of partiality. Those that are near to him, must not go altogether unpunished. Judgment begins at the house of God, 1 Pet. iv. 17. The tokens of God's displeasure against those that profess relation to him, make the word honourable. Never was the law so magnified, as it was in the death of Christ: see Numb. xiv. 20, 21.

6. In the confounding of all his implacable enemies. The man of sin is to be consumed by the breath of Christ's mouth, *i. e.* the preaching of the gospel, 2 Thess. ii. 8. When the everlasting gospel is preached, Rev. xiv. 6. presently Babylon is fallen, is fallen, *v.* 8. This is for the honour of the law; when the walls of Jericho are thrown down with the sound of rams' horns, and the Midianites defeated with lamps and earthen pitchers. This God will do: the law shall be honoured with the victory, over all those that fight against it and oppose it; it will be a burthensome stone, as the ark to the Philistines.

7. In the comforting of all the Lord's people under their greatest trials. The law of Christ has been, and will be, greatly honoured by these experiences of the saints, Ps. cxix. 54, 92. This has borne them up under great sufferings, has been their stay, their cordial, their song, and it will be so more and more. God will magnify the law, by bringing his people to rest themselves upon that, to seek their comforts and hopes from the Scriptures.

8. In the concurrence of all events to the fulfilling of the Scripture, especially the prophecies and pro-

mises that relate to the state of the church in the latter days. This will be to the honour of the Scriptures, that no word there shall fall to the ground. Providence is the transcript of the word; as we have heard, so have we seen, Ps. xlviii. 8. God will make good every word that he has spoken, he will be known by his name Jehovah. David has it often, Ps. cxix. *According to thy word.* All that God does is that the Scriptures may be fulfilled.

Use 1. If this be so, that God will magnify the law and make it honourable, then what are we to think will become of those that vilify the law, and make it contemptible?

(1.) In doctrine: as the papists, that set up another guide, another rule, in opposition to it. They vilify the law by making its authority to depend upon the authority of the church, without which, they will tell you, they regard it no more that Æsop's fables. They set up human traditions to be received with equal veneration. The very soul of popery consists in a vilifying of the Scriptures.

(2.) In practice. Those careless and profane persons, by whom the great things of the law are counted as a strange thing, that slight their Bibles, despise the commandment of the Lord. The language of every wilful sin is against the law, 2 Sam. xii. 9. They who speak contemptuously of prayer, Job xxi. 14, 15. and of the table of the Lord, Mal. i. 12—14. despise his word. The world is full of atheism. Religion is made a matter of ridicule, and the professors of it are trampled upon with the greatest scorn, Lam. iv. 2. Those that do thus you see are walking contrary to God, Lev. xxvi. 21. fighting against God, Acts v. 39. You may read what they are doing, Ps. ii. 1—3. and you may see there what will become of them.

They will be defeated. It is a vain thing, *v.* 1. God shall laugh at them, *v.* 4. It is to no purpose to vilify that which God will magnify, for sooner or later God will bring all the world to be of his mind. The truth is great, and it will prevail.

They will be destroyed if they continue in it. He will speak to them in wrath, *v.* 5. The attempt will be to their own ruin. They shall be lightly esteemed, 1 Sam. ii. 30. They shall have their faces filled with everlasting shame and contempt, Dan. xii. 2. 2 Thess. ii. 10—12.

2. If this be so, it speaks comfort and encouragement in reference to public affairs. This is good news to all the Lord's people, that God will magnify the law. Let us believe this word,

(1.) When we are grieved at the abounding of sin, and the great contempt of God's law. All that love the law cannot but be so, Ps. cxix. 53, 136, 158. It is comfortable to think, that for all this God will magnify it, whether you and I live to see it or no. I do not doubt but the Scriptures will be more in credit than they now are; and then the wickedness of the wicked will come to an end. Those that side with the law are certainly on that side that will prevail at last, in spite of all opposition. Who shall live when God doth this?

(2.) When we are perplexed with dark and intricate providences, wheels within wheels, sometimes moving backward, we know not what to make of things, and are perfectly at a loss what God is about to do with us. Let this comfort us, that all these events are tending towards the magnifying of the law. The Scripture is in a course of fulfilment, the kingdom of Christ is in its establishment, and his conquests in their progress, Rev. vi. 2. When the mystery of God shall be finished, we shall see an agreement between the providence and the prophecy: see Rev. x. 7. The remembrance of the security of the church of God, may comfort his people while reflecting upon the power and malice of their foes, Isa. xiv. 32.

(3.) When our expectations are disappointed, as to temporal deliverances, we may be satisfied that God will magnify the law and make that honourable; and then it is no matter what becomes of us, though we be trampled upon, and be as nothing; see Isa. xxx. 20, 21. The glory of God, and the honour of his law, should be preferred before any other concern whatsoever: see Zeph. iii, 12, 13. God is magnifying the law by this; teaching us to magnify that more, and other guides and confidences less. God will be sanctified in those that are about him.

3. Let us endeavour as far as we can to magnify the law, and to make it honourable; let us concur with God in this good design.

(1.) Put a high esteem upon the law of God. Place it among your chief privileges. Esteem it more than riches, Ps. cxix. 72. than pleasure, Ps. xix. 10. than necessary food, Job xxiii. 12. Buy the truth; part with any thing for it. King Edward VI. would not tread upon a Bible. Know whose law it is, and what kind of law, Rom. vii. 12, 14. Do not think meanly of the Scripture, or of any part of it.

(2.) Attend to the reading and hearing of it, with all reverence and readiness of mind. Look upon the Scripture as no ordinary book; receive it as the word of God, 1 Thess. ii. 13. Acts x. 34. What saith my Lord unto his servant? Speak, for thy servant hears. Make it to appear that you do indeed magnify the law; not sleeping, gazing, or whispering while it is preached. See how reverently the law was to be received, Exod. xix. 10, 12.

(3.) Let the law of God have a place in you, the innermost and the uppermost place. The greatest honour you can do the law, is to let it dwell in you richly, Col. iii. 16. Get it written in your hearts. Set it as a seal there. Hide it there, Ps. cxix. 11. in your understandings, memories, and affections. Love it dearly; meditate in it, Ps. i. 3.

.) Let all your words and actions be kept in a
stant conformity to the law of God. Be ruled
t in every thing. Let the law of God command
r thoughts, your tongues, your time, and your
te. Make it your counsellor, and your com-
ıder.

.) Do what you can to advance the credit of the
with others. Aim at this in your respective
es in your families, and among your neigh-
rs. Take all occasions to speak in honour of the
ptures. Bear your testimony against sin, and
serious godliness. Lead others to love the law
God.

.) Since we can do but little towards the magni-
g the law, let us be earnest with God in prayer,
he will do it himself. It is the scope of the first
e petitions of the Lord's prayer. He can make
law honourable, and he will do it. Father, glo-
thy name, is an answered prayer, John xii. 28.

SERMON III.

Preached June 10, 1702, *on occasion of the Public
t upon the declaration of war against France and
in.*]

Jeremiah xiv. 7.

*Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou
it for thy name's sake.*

E prophet is here praying for those against whom
prophesied, and yet not guilty of any inconsist-
y with himself. As God's messenger he prophe-
l against them, but as their friend he interceded
them. Thus God himself reveals his wrath
inst all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,
l yet has no pleasure in the death of sinners.
l had told him before, it was to no purpose to
y for them, *ch.* vii. 16; xi. 14. The decree was
e forth. And yet he does pray for them; not in dis-
dience to God, for that, though expressed as a
hibition, was only intended to show the deplora-
ness of their case; that they by their sins had
h *forfeited* their interest in his prayers, and did
wise *defeat* the success of them. But Moses in-
eded for Israel, even after God had said *Let me
e*, Exod. xxxii. 10, 11. The case of a people is
y sad, when the prayers of God's prophets for
m are restrained. But as he continued to pro-
sy to them, who would not hear him speaking
m God to them, so he continued to pray for them,
o by their sins hindered the success of his speak-
to God for them. Thus he made good two of his
cals which he had occasion afterwards to make;
, *ch.* xvii. 16. *Neither have I desired the woful
;* the other, *ch.* xviii. 20. *I stood before thee to
speak good for them.* This prayer has reference to a double distress, which the people were now in; two of God's sore judgments were with them.

1. They were engaged in a war with a potent enemy, so that abroad in the field the *sword devoured*, *v.* 18.

2. They were threatened with famine, *v.* 1. God had withheld the rain from them. With this also God has threatened us; but his remembering mercy in the midst of wrath in this matter, is an encouragement to us to hope that, in the other, he will not deal with us as our sins have deserved. In the midst of the melancholy description of the judgment, he thus turns to God: and well it is for us that we have a God to go to in every exigence. In the text here is,

1. A penitent confession of sin, *Our iniquities testify against us; i. e.* they come in as undeniable evidence against us, which we cannot gainsay. The matter is plain, for *our backslidings are many* and plain. He includes the iniquities of their ancestors, *v.* 20. *though it* be so; intimating that this was a thing that made against them, and that discouraged their prayers and hopes.

2. A pleading prayer for mercy, *Do thou it*, even that of which we have need; that for which we are waiting upon thee. Lord, *do thou it for thy name's sake.* This reaches both the designs of the appointment of this fast, which is, to *humble ourselves for our sins*, and to implore *God's blessing on our arms*, *&c.* And I would willingly speak what is apposite, not only to the work, but to the whole work, of the day, in its day.

I. I shall observe some things from the text,

1. For our assistance in repentance and humiliation. This is the first work in our conversion to God, and ought to be our daily work in our walking with God. The life of a Christian ought to be a life of repentance, as well as a life of faith; for the best saints, while in this world, must own themselves sinners. Here is a concise confession, *Our iniquities testify against us.* The prophet puts himself into the number, being one of them: and who can say, I have contributed nothing to national guilt? when we know we have all sinned.

Doctrine. True penitents see their iniquities testifying against them. Our sins are witnesses against us.

1. They *testify*, for they are plain and evident; what they say against us is not whispered in a corner, but is *testified;* not found *by secret search*, Jer. ii. 34. but graven upon the horns of our altars, Jer. xvii. 1. Sin has a voice crying in God's ears, and testifies what it has to say. Conscience, by which it gives in its evidence, is instead of a thousand witnesses; hence we read of the testimony of conscience.

2. They testify *against us*, as a witness against a man in a cause. Our sins are witnesses against us

in many cases. Sin is *against us*, as well as God. Every sin in the guilt of it is *Satan*, an adversary to us. It is called in as a witness, to *answer* against us, to disprove and overthrow our pleas.

(1.) If we boast of ourselves and our own excellences, our *iniquities testify against us*. They are witnesses against our pride and self-conceitedness, and disprove the high opinion we are apt to have of ourselves, and lay us low. Conviction of sin does for ever exclude boasting. Do we value ourselves upon our wisdom? Our iniquities are evidence against us, and prove us fools. Never let the wise man glory in his wisdom for the world, since the wisest know how foolishly they have done for their own souls. Are we proud of parentage or clothes? Our sins prove us vile in our birth, and naked to our shame, Rev. iii. 17. This is a humbling testimony against us—what have we to be proud of, that are convicted lepers, and convicted rebels?

(2.) If we trust to our own righteousness, and insist upon innocency as our plea, our iniquities testify against us. If we plead Not guilty, and say we have not sinned, behold clouds of witnesses appear against us, and confront us. Does not thy own heart know that *thou art the man?* Is not the matter of fact plain against thee? see Jer. ii. 23, 25. Hence sin is said to be set in order, Ps. l. 21. as witnesses set in order before the prisoner.

(3.) If we build our hopes for heaven upon our privileges and performances, our iniquities testify against us. Do we claim heaven as a debt? Our sins show the vanity of our claim, for they are a forfeiture for which none of our good works can atone, or take away. Our iniquities are as the cherubim with the flaming sword, Hos. vii. 1. Our sins are as a partition-wall, and keep good things from us. Do you cry, The temple of the Lord? What means then our disobedience?

(4.) If we quarrel with God, as dealing unjustly or unkindly with us in our afflictions, our iniquities will testify against us, and will witness to our face, that we deserve what is laid upon us, and a thousand times more. These are witnesses that *justify God* in all that is brought upon us, and prove that he has done right, Neh. ix. 33. If we accuse God, these are witnesses that will answer us, and will tell us we are punished less than our iniquities deserve.

Inference 1. If our iniquities testify against us, let us then by true repentance testify against them, and against ourselves because of them. This becomes us upon a fast day, to judge and condemn ourselves; to take shame to ourselves; and own that we are no more worthy to be called God's children.

2. Let us fly to Christ and the Spirit to testify for us. Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me. The blood of Christ speaks for us as our sins speak against us, and it speaks better things than that of Abel: this purges and pacifies the conscience. Christ is an advocate against the accusations of sin, to take off the force of the evidence; the Spirit is a witness for us, a witness in us.—I shall observe some things,

2. For our assistance in prayer and supplication. *Though* our sins testify against us, yet we are encouraged and imboldened to pray, Ps. lxv. 3. Though we have provoked thee to do nothing for us, but all against us, *yet do thou it;* give the mercies for which we are waiting upon thee. We are here taught,

(1.) To refer ourselves to God in prayer; *Do thou it, i. e.* do with us as thou thinkest fit. It is not fit for us to prescribe to infinite wisdom and sovereignty, but as David, *Here I am*, 2 Sam. xv. 25. Do thou *it*, methinks, is like that, Isa. xlvi. 4. *I am he.* Not, Do thou it in this way, at this time, by this instrument; but, Do thou it: see Judg. x. 15.

(2.) To take our encouragement in prayer from God only—For *thy name's sake.* God's name is all that by which he has made himself known. And we know him by his name, not by his nature. We have leave to plead, and this is the best plea—Not *for our sake.*

Doctrine. In pleading with God for mercy, the best plea is, for his name's sake. This is urged not to move God, but to encourage ourselves and one another. This plea is insisted on, *v.* 21.

Do thou that which will be most for thy glory: do as thou seest will tend most to thy own honour; or

Do this For thine own glory's sake. But what is this name of God which we may insist upon?

1. For thy mercy's sake; for when God would proclaim his name, by that attribute he proclaimed it, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. We have no merit of our own, or our land's, to plead, but it will be for the glory of thy mercy to save by prerogative. God's reasons of favour are fetched from within himself, Hos. ii. 14.

2. For thy promise' sake: see *v.* 21. *Do not break thy covenant.* God has given us his word, on which he has caused us to hope, and as far as the promise goes, our faith and prayer may go. This may be pleaded as to personal and public mercies, the word on which he has caused us to hope, Ps. cxix. 49. See 2 Chron. xx. 9.

3. For thy interest's sake in the world. The honour of his name is the great concern he has upon earth. Do it to prevent the reproaches of the enemy, that will reflect on thy name: see Exod. xxxii. 12. Num. xiv. 13. Deut. xxxii. 27. Joshua vii. 9.—to promote thy kingdom, and that thou mayst be attended with the praises of Israel.

4. For thy Son's sake. In him especially he has made himself known, and we are to pray for his name's sake, the sake of the Anointed, Ps. lxxxiv. 9. Dan. ix. 17.

II. I shall endeavour to apply the text to our work this day, and the occasion of this solemnity,—*Though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake.*

Show, 1. What it is we would have done. What is it for which we come together this day? I hope we do not cry, as froward children, for we know not what: we should have a clear and distinct knowledge of the mercies we ask.—*Do thou it.* What would we have God to do? We must not come to him with covetous and ambitious prayers, nor have we any warrant to pray that our land may be the head of a universal monarchy, and all kings and nations be tributaries. When the Most High separated the sons of Adam, he designed no other universal monarchy but his own. Nor do we come with cruel and revengeful prayers: we do not say, Do thou make the nations that are against us fields of blood and ruinous heaps. We wish not the misery of any part of mankind, nor hurt to any man. But what then?

(1.) We pray that the just rights of nations may be vindicated and maintained. In these things our eyes are to God as the *King of nations*, the God that doth righteously. Do thou this, appear against the bold and threatening power which transcribes the measures of the king of Babylon, Isa. xiv. 16, 17. The sword is drawn in Europe for the securing of the ancient landmarks, and the preventing of further encroachments; for the enslaving of nations has a manifest tendency to the ruin of religion and virtue. Lord, do this.

(2.) We pray that the suffering churches abroad may be delivered; for they are our brethren, that join with us in protestations against popery, and suffer for doing so. Lord, let not the rod lie always upon them, nor the enemy insult for ever. Though this be not the ground of the war, yet if God give success, we would hope this might be one good effect of it, and that it would strengthen the protestant interest.

(3.) We pray for the peace, safety, and prosperity of our own land. We engage in a war abroad to prevent the bringing of it into our own borders. *Do thou it*, give success to our forces abroad, and be a guard upon our own land. This must be God's doing, or it will not be done. Fleets and armies, statesmen and counsellors, generals and admirals, are what he makes them, Ps. cxxvii. 1. Unless God take our part, and come into the alliance, we can expect no success.

(4.) We pray for the flourishing of true religion and godliness among us, by the suppression of vice and profaneness, the preservation of liberty, the abounding of ministers, for our unity and strength, victory over atheism, error, and all other evils.

(5.) We pray for the entail of the gospel, and the peaceable enjoyment thereof, upon our posterity after us. What benefit we enjoy by our predecessors contracts a debt to our successors. What is committed to us we should transmit to them, as a treasure. *Lord, do thou this*; thy mercy is from generation to generation, let this fruit of thy mercy be so too. This is one of the cares of the present day,—to preserve the succession in the protestant line; for we have found the danger of a popish prince. Lord, do thou these things, in thine own way.

Show, 2. What is our great discouragement as to these things,—that *our iniquities testify against us.* This is the great discouragement—we are a sinful people. This is a day proper for the searching out of the accursed thing in our camp; the matter is plain.

(1.) We feel the effects of our iniquities; the Lord's voice would not cry to us as it doth, if the voice of our sins did not cry to him. God has begun a controversy with us in the death of the king, now, when the nation stood in need of the most accomplished martial conduct. We are not healed, not eased, not settled without fear. Our anger one towards another is the fruit of God's anger against us all. Sin makes the breach.

(2.) We see the evidences of our iniquities. They are too plain to be hid, too many and gross to be hid under the mantle of charity itself, Isa. i. 4. Jer. v. 31. Three sorts of iniquities testify against us.

[1.] The boldness of the atheists and unbelievers. This is an iniquity that testifies against us, and goes barefaced. Open defiance of God and religion; the Scriptures and sacred things ridiculed; the truths of God contradicted and exposed to contempt. How many are there in our age, in our land, of the scoffers of the latter days, 2 Pet. iii. 3. Though, thanks be to God, wholesome provision is made for the preserving of the honour of religion by some laws in the last glorious reign, yet who concern themselves to punish the dishonours done to God's name, as they do to be revenged for the indignities done to their own names.

[2.] The debaucheries of the profane. These are iniquities that testify against us, though the national testimonies borne against vice, both in this and the last reign, I would hope, lessen the guilt as national, yet they aggravate it as popular. It is an evidence men hate to be reformed. Drunkenness still abounds, Isa. xxviii. 8. and still it passes for an honour, which is the shame of men and Christians, to be mighty to drink wine. The arts of propagating vice are improved, uncleanness, swearing, sabbath-breaking: because of these the land mourns. They shame and threaten us.

[3.] The declinings, and divisions, and disagreeable walkings of those that profess religion. I mean not those of any particular party; but such as run not with the profane to an excess of riot, even they, are wretchedly degenerated from the pious zeal and strictness of their predecessors. Their love waxeth cold, and their differences are mismanaged. Diversity of apprehensions causeth alienation of affections, and we do not see that disposition to union and accommodation that we could wish; the breach is yet wide as the sea. The worldliness and

pride of professors, their private feuds and quarrels, are too apparent; and that which aggravates these sins is, that the light of the gospel still shines so clearly, and we have great peace and liberty. God has done much for us, but we have been unthankful and ungrateful, murmuring and distrustful. And now what may we expect? Shall not God visit for these things, saith the Lord? Jer. v. 29. Shall not a camp be troubled in which there are so many *Achans?* May we not expect the execution of that fearful doom, Isa. v. 5, 6. I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up: and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. And may we not fear that God should swear in his wrath that we should never enter into Canaan. I am not for propagating fears and jealousies, but repentance. Our iniquities are the most threatening symptoms, and give us the greatest cause to fear.

Show, 3. What encouragement we have as to these things,—*for thy name's sake.* If any thing be done to purpose, for our land, it must be the Lord's doing. The queen has declared that she puts her trust in Almighty God for success; and that way we must look. It is not the strength of our navy, the extent of our alliances, the prudence of our statesmen, or the valour of our generals, upon which we can depend. An arm of flesh is but a broken reed. We relied much upon the king, while we had him to fight our battles, and God would show us our folly in thinking all bound up in the life of a man. We hope God will *do it*, at least do *something* for us, grant us *some* deliverance, 2 Chron. xii. 7. that he will not abandon us quite to ruin, *for his name's sake.*

(1.) Because it will be an opportunity of magnifying himself, and his own wisdom, power, and goodness. When proud tyrants, that have been the terror of the mighty, are humbled and brought down, and the poor raised out of the dust; when great things are brought to pass by unlikely instruments, God is the more glorified. When the earth helps the woman, and the sons of the alien become ploughmen and vinedressers to the church, as is promised, Isa. lxi. 5. this is much for the glory of God's name.

(2.) Because the concerns of his gospel and kingdom among men, are so nearly interested in our affairs. We may plead for his name's sake, for we have the true religion on our side, and our share of the war is very much upon the score of religion. It is to support popery that the Prince of Wales is set up; it is to support the protestant religion that the succession is settled as it is: and this is a thing in which God's glory is concerned, as well as our comfort. We may plead as Isa. lxiii. 19. and 2 Chron. xiii. 8, 9, &c. It will be for the honour of God's name, if religion flourish at home and extend abroad; if the bulwarks of it be fortified, and the entail of it corroborated. But will it be for God's glory, that Satan's seat should again be erected there where Christ has had his throne? We may be sure that God will glorify his own name, John xii. 28. will be true to his own honour, and not give his glory to another.

(3.) Because God has done great things for us, and we may take encouragement from his works, which are a part of his name, Ps. lxxv. 1. God did for his own name's sake bring about the Revolution: keep our head above water through the last war, and ended it not to our disadvantage. The Lord has now of late done great things for us in the beginning of this reign. Our land is still peaceable at home, and considerable abroad. Our liberties continued, and many other benefits yet with us.

(4.) Because we call upon his name. Though we cannot say, Do it for our prayer's sake, yet we may say, Do it for that name's sake which we call upon in our prayers and praises. God manifestly gave answer to the prayers of the last fast day, in the unanimous resolves of the parliament for the public good, and the preventing of the heats that were feared, and the guiding of the counsels upon the death of the king.

Show, 4. What is our duty upon the whole matter. Now we have prayed that God will *do it*, what must we do?

(1.) Let us be daily earnest with God in prayer, for the peace of our English Jerusalem, and the prosperity of our brethren abroad. Would you approve yourselves true friends to the queen and nation, preserve and improve your interest at the throne of grace. *Cry day and night*, Luke xviii. 7.

(2.) Let us patiently bear the inconveniences of the war we are engaged in. It is a calamity, but much less than we have deserved, and necessary to prevent a greater calamity. Better be taxed than plundered by the sword of war, or our estates confiscated by the sword of persecution.—It is a hinderance to trade; those that have effects at sea, have now more need than ever to live by faith, that they may bear losses with an even mind, and lay up treasure above.

(3.) Let us every one take heed of sin, and reform our own hearts, lives, and families. It is but a mock fast, if it be not like *Nineveh's*, Jonah iii. 8. Now we have special dependence upon God, we should take special care to please him, Deut. xxiii. 9. Keep from sin, which is God's enemy.

(4.) Let us prepare for troubles, and get ready for the worst. What God may yet do with us we know not; he can secure his own name, and yet make us a desolation, Heb. xi. 17.

(5.) Let us encourage ourselves and one another in God, when we hear evil tidings.

SERMON IV.

[*Preached May 26th, 1703, on occasion of the National Fast, for success in the war with France and Spain.*]

MARK xiii. 7.

And when ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled.

By this word of Christ we are both forewarned and forearmed; for what he here says to those who were then his disciples, he says to all, *v.* 37. he says to us, for our learning.

I. We are here forewarned to expect trouble, *Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars;* and it follows, *such things must needs be;* look for no other. Is not our life a warfare?

1. This points immediately at those wars which brought on the final ruin and overthrow of the Jewish church and nation. The struggles that were between the conquerors and the conquered. The Jews resolute in their resistance, and the Romans in their conquests. This occasioned many bloody battles, and a long war for several years. Josephus's History of the Wars of the Jews largely relates the fulfilling of these prophecies. Never was there such desolation. At the same time the Romans were at war with other nations.

2. It looks further, and is intended as an intimation to us all, and to all Christians, to count upon trouble in this world; particularly to expect that in every age, more or less, there will *be wars and rumours of wars:* see *v.* 8. *nation rising against nation.* When ye *hear wars,* (so the word is,) when ye hear war at home, the noise of it, for war in a country makes a noise; never more than since the invention of guns, the most noisy way of fighting; yet of old they complained of the *noise of war,* Nahum iii. 2. Exod. xxxii. 17, 18. Some alive have heard much of this noise in our own land; not nation against nation, but neighbour against neighbour. But blessed be God, it is not our case at this day; we hear not the noise of foreign invasion or domestic insurrections.

When ye *hear the rumours of wars,* the reports or tidings of wars. We commonly call uncertain reports *rumours,* and in time of war we often hear much, but the original word signifies intelligences, that of which we hear.

DOCTRINE. That though it be very sad, yet it is not at all strange in this world, to hear of wars and rumours of wars. There are three sorts of wars:

1. Law-wars among neighbours and relations, bad enough, and very common, through too much love of the world, and too little of our brother. While there is so much folly and covetousness, so much envy and malice, among neighbours, no marvel if there be strife. There are few of the spirit of Abram, Gen. xiii. 8. We hear much of these contests; would to God we heard less! for there is utterly a fault among men, 1 Cor. vi. 7.

2. Book-wars among scholars and Christians. Different sentiments maintained by each side with great heat, too often greater than the occasion demands. We must not by these be shaken in mind. Such things must be. They are needful sometimes in defence of plain truths, and for the discovery of doubtful and controverted ones.

3. Sword-wars among nations and public interests: of these the text speaks. The first war we read of was, Gen. xiv. though probably Nimrod the mighty hunter was a soldier. As to these, we have reason upon some accounts to think it strange. Whence is it that so much mischief should be done in the world by wars? considering,

(1.) What principles there are in the nature of man. Is there not such a thing as humanity? One would wonder that ever the wit of man should be employed to invent instruments of cruelty and death; that men should be so *prodigal* of their own blood, and so *covetous* of the blood of their brethren. Man is not born for war, but naked and unarmed; not fierce, as birds and beasts of prey.

(2.) What promises there are in the word of God. It seems hard to reconcile this text with Isa. ii. 4. and with Isa. xi. 6, &c. The Jews object it. Christ himself has said otherwise, Luke xii. 51. and in the text. How shall we reconcile these two? I reply,

Those promises are in part fulfilled already. Christ was born at a time of general peace. The gospel has prevailed much to the civilizing of the nations, and as far as it is received, it disposes men to peace. The primitive Christians were of a peaceable disposition.

They will have a more full accomplishment in the latter days. Though contrary events come between, that word shall not fall to the ground.

Yet the commonness of war in every age takes off the strangeness of it. It is what we must expect in our day. A few years ago we had peace proclaimed, but war again quickly; and that crown which was then the mediator of the peace, was first itself engaged in another war. What do we hear of at this day so much as of wars? Several countries are the seats of war; cities are besieged and fields overspread with armies. Now this we are not to think strange,

Because men are so provoking to God, and he does thus in a way of righteous judgment punish them for their sins. It is the sword of the Lord bathed in heaven, that lays waste on earth, Isa. xxxiv. 5. War is one of God's sore judgments, with which he corrects the people of his wrath, Ezek. xiv. 17, 21. Sometimes God thus makes wicked men a scourge one to another, as Nebuchadnezzar was to the nations. Sometimes a scourge to

his own people, Isa. x. 6. It is sin that draws the sword, removes the defence, and sheds blood. The Lord has given the sword a charge, Jer. xlvii. 6, 7. Ezek. v. 2. But let us not judge uncharitably of those nations that are the seat of war, as if we were better than they: are there not with us, even with us, sins?

Because men are so provoking one to another, and they do thus give way to their own lusts, James iv. 1, 2. No war carried on but there is certainly a great deal of sin on both sides, as 2 Chron. xxviii. 9. But as to the cause of war,

1. Sometimes men's lusts on both sides begin the war, and where there may be a right and colour of reason on both sides, yet not such as on either to justify the taking up of arms, and while there are such follies set in great dignity, Eccl. x. 6. no marvel if we hear much of wars; punctilios of honour, inconsiderable branches of right, to which lives and countries are sacrificed by jealous princes; the mouth justly opened to denounce war, but the ear unjustly deaf to the proposals of peace.

2. Where the war on the one side is just and necessary, it is men's lusts on the other side that make it so. And if we see it, we need not marvel at the matter. Here is the original of war and bloodshed.

(1.) Men's pride and ambition sometimes make a war just and necessary. By pride comes contention, Prov. xiii. 10. He that said, I will be like the Most High, was the man that made the earth to tremble, Isa. xiv. 13, 16. Proud and haughty men, that aim at a universal monarchy, that will set up and depose at their pleasure, entail war upon the nations. Every sheaf must bow to theirs; either bend or break. Did men know themselves to be but men, they would not think themselves gods, and prove themselves beasts.

(2.) Men's covetousness and injustice sometimes make a war just and necessary. It is not strange to hear of wars, when there are those that would be placed alone in the midst of the earth, Isa. v. 8. and would command the territories and treasures of all their neighbours. This is a provocation not to be borne: see Hab. ii. 5—8. 1 Kings xx. 3, &c. The injured rights of nations must be asserted, &c.

(3.) Men's treachery sometimes makes war. No marvel we hear of wars, when *all men are liars*, and no confidence is to be put in them. When the public faith of princes and nations is pawned in vain, and the most sacred cords broken, like Samson's bands, only because a man thinks himself a Samson for strength. This is one thing that justifies our national engagement at this day. War is an appeal to God's providence against those who would not stand to an appeal to his ordinance, see Ezek. xvii. 18, 19. It is a quarrel God will avenge.

(4.) Oppression and persecution sometimes make war just. In this case sometimes the law of nations comes in for a timely and seasonable relief, as in our own land in the late happy revolution, on the foundation of which the present government stands, in which we are so happy. However, in the last extremity the very law of nature helps, as in the case of our brethren in France, the province of Languedoc, last and least enslaved. However, if Nebuchadnezzar be driven from among men, must men be a prey to him? Christianity teaches patient suffering, but the God of grace is the God of nature. Since the empire became Christian, perhaps the case is altered. The infraction of civil edicts is a disease which may be remedied by a method of cure of the same nature. We know what oppression does, Eccl. vii. 7. Thank God that we are not in their temptation, and pray to God that we never may, lest the remedy be worse than the disease.

II. We are here forearmed against the trouble we are bid to expect.

When you are yourselves disturbed with the alarms of war, *be not troubled*, i. e. be not inordinately dejected and cast down, be not terrified, whatever happens; keep trouble from your heart, John xiv. 1. if war come to your door.—When you hear of war abroad, hear of war proclaimed, hear of war pushed on, hear of the direful effects of war, hear of sieges and battles, marches and countermarches, famine and plunder, cities burnt, and countries laid waste; in the midst of all, *be not ye troubled*. It is both for caution and comfort. You need not be troubled, therefore give not way to it.

Doctrine. That the faithful disciples of Jesus Christ ought not to be inordinately troubled, when there are wars and rumours of wars.

1. As for others, they have reason to be *troubled*. Those that are not the disciples of Jesus Christ, and are not interested in his merit and grace, have cause for trouble when God's judgments are abroad: see Isa. xxxiii. 14. Terrors belong to them, and as for comforts, they have no part nor lot in the matter, see Luke xxi. 25, 26. Those that have the most cause to be troubled commonly put trouble furthest from them. Have not they reason to be troubled that lie under the guilt of all their sins, and the wrath and curse of an angry God, to whom the sword is like that flaming sword, Gen. iii. 24. As men are, so God's judgments are to them, 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13. To such these are indeed but the beginning of sorrows.

2. There is cause for the disciples of Christ themselves, upon some accounts, and in some degree, to be *troubled*. Christ would not have his followers to be without feeling. God calls to mourning at such a time. This is a doctrine that needs explication and limitation. When you hear of wars *be ye troubled* after a godly sort. There is a threefold *trouble* commendable:

(1.) Sympathy with the sufferers. Even the guilty

de partake of the same nature. Much more should e sympathize with the innocent countries that are e seat of war, and the righteous undertakers of a st and honourable cause. Feel for their griefs that e exposed to spoil, and hear the voice of the op-essor, and that have their lives jeoparded in the gh places of the field. Think of the sufferings of isoners, and the alarms of besieged cities;—these ifferers are our bone and our flesh.

(2.) Sorrow for sin. It is sin that makes all the ischief. Mourn for the sin that is the cause of the ar, and the sin that is the effect of it. How is God ishonoured! how are arts of sin taught and propa-ated! It should trouble us to think of the wicked-ess of the wicked; it is a thing for which horror ould *take hold on us*, Ps. cxix. 53.

(3.) Solicitude for the ark of God. For this our earts should tremble, lest religion in its various in-rests suffer damage; lest the protestant religion e weakened, and antichristian powers be strength-ned. We should be concerned, as Eli was, 1 Sam. v. 13. The desolations of the sanctuary should ouble us more than the desolations of the earth: his is a holy fear.

3. Christians ought not to be inordinately troubled. When ye hear this, *be not troubled, i. e.*

(1.) Be not disquieted, but make the best of it. It is not our wisdom to aggravate to ourselves the causes of trouble, nor to make them worse than they are. Our Saviour has here told us, such things must be; here is no remedy. God is doing his own work in all events. Thus it was before we were born, Eccl. iii. 10. and so it will be. Let us not magnify the events of our own time, as if there never were the like; there is nothing new under the sun. The his-tories of former times make our own less formidable.

(2.) Be not affrighted, but hope the best from it. When we hear the rumours of war, we must not be of doubtful mind; not as Ahaz, Isa. vii. 2; viii. 11, 12. We must not give up all for lost upon every disaster and disappointment. When rumours of wars are abroad, we have great need to watch against the prevailing fear of evil tidings, and to keep the heart fixed. Courage is an excellent virtue in time of war, and needful at home as well as abroad. Make not your brethren's heart to fail as your heart, Deut. xx. 3.

(3.) Be not amazed, but prepare for worse after it. There seems to be this also intended in the caution; compare *v.* 8. *these are the beginnings of sorrows.* Be not troubled for this, but rather arm yourselves with Christian courage and patience against the assault of the next trouble. Weep not for this, but get ready for the next, Luke xxiii. 28, 29. Faint not in these lesser conflicts, for then what will you do when greater come: see Jer. xii. 5. Several considerations will be of use to keep trouble from the heart of good Christians, when we hear of wars.

[1.] The righteous God sits in the throne judging right, therefore *be not troubled.* War is an appeal to him, and he will determine those appeals in justice, and execute the determinations by an overruling power, Ps. ix. 7, 8; xcvii. 1; xcviii. 9. God is King of nations, and presides in the affairs of nations. He has not only a negative voice, but a guiding hand, in councils of war, and treaties of peace. Men talk of the fortune of war, but it is not a blind fortune, the issue is determined by a wise God. If it be doubtful to us on which side the right lies, it is not so to God. Leave it to him, therefore, to govern the world.

[2.] The church is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, therefore *be not troubled.* We must be concerned for the church, but we have this to comfort us, God has espoused the cause of his church, and will plead it with jealousy. Whatever revolutions there are in the nations, God will secure the interests of his own church and people, Matt. xvi. 18. The Lord has founded Sion, Isa. xiv. 32. Christ will have a church, a kingdom in the world in spite of all the oppositions of the powers of darkness. The protestant cause is the cause of God, and shall arise, though it be small.

[3.] Christ is his people's peace, therefore *be not troubled.* This may comfort us in reference to others that are in the midst of these wars. The remnant of those that fear God, find rest in Christ, even in troublous times: see Micah v. 5. John xvi. 33. If trouble should ever come within our own border, here is our Noah, here is our ark, this same shall comfort us. In him we have peace with God, Rom. v. 1.—all clear and calm between us and heaven; peace in our own bosoms; all sedate and quiet there, no rumours of wars.

[4.] The name of the Lord is a strong tower, therefore *be not troubled.* Into this citadel the vanquished may retire and find shelter, and a refuge that they cannot be beaten out of, Prov. xviii. 10. This is a strong hold, inaccessible, insuperable, and which cannot be taken. The power and providence of God are fortifications which cannot be scaled, nor battered, nor undermined. What need good people fear? Ps. xlvi. 1, 2. they have always a God to whom they may go.

[5.] Men are God's hand, therefore *be not troubled.* God is doing their own work by them all this while, and they are accomplishing his purpose, though they mean not so, Isa. x. 5, 7, 15. Ps. xvii. 13, 14. They are not only restrained by his hand, that they can do no more than he will suffer them, but they are used by his hand to do what he appoints them, what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done, Ps. lxxvi. 10. Isa. li. 13.

[6.] There will come a reckoning day, when all these things shall be reviewed; therefore *be not troubled.* The seeming disorders of providence shall all

be corrected at that day, when God will come and make *inquisition for blood*, from the blood of righteous Abel. Innocent blood shed by the sword of war, as well as by the sword of pretended justice, shall be required. Behold, the Judge standeth before the door, and the mighty men shall shortly stand at his bar, Isa. xxvi. 21. Rev. vi: 10.

[7.] The wars of the nations perhaps may end in the peace of the church. God can bring light out of darkness, and meat out of the eater. The greatest perplexities of the children of men may introduce the joys of the people of God: see Luke xxi. 28. Heb. xii. 2. compare Rev. xiv. 20. with xv. 3. and see *chap.* xix. 17, 18. Glorious times we hope are reserved for the church.

[8.] However, we are sure in heaven there are no wars nor rumours of wars, therefore *be not troubled.* All will be well there. Make that world sure, seek mansions in a heavenly Father's house, and that will keep trouble from the heart. At such times, blessed are the dead, that die in the Lord, Rev xiv. 13.

To conclude: 1. Let us thankfully own God's great goodness to us in this nation—that we have peace at home, a happy government, peaceable habitations, a defence on our glory, Isa. xxxiii. 20.

2. Let us not complain of the inconveniences that attend our being interested in the present war; the expense of it, or the abridging and exposing of our trade and property.

3. Let rumours of wars drive us to our knees. Pray, pray, and do not prophesy. Spread the matter before God, and you may greatly help the cause by your supplications.

4. Patiently wait the issue with a humble submission to the will of God. Do not limit him, nor prescribe to him. Let him do his own work in his own way and time.