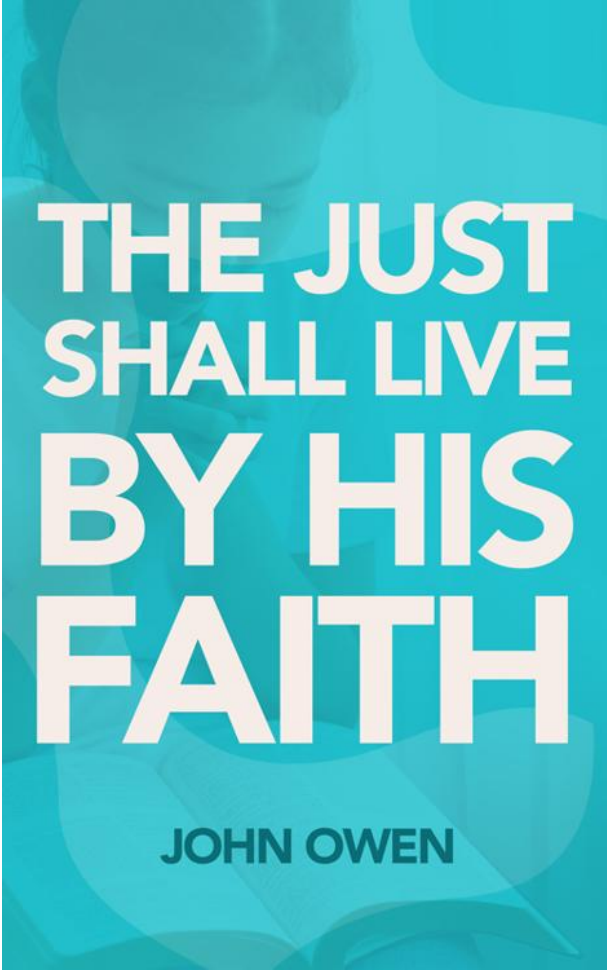


**THE JUST
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The Just Shall Live by His Faith

by John Owen

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THE USE AND ADVANTAGE OF FAITH IN A TIME OF PUBLIC CALAMITY

"The just shall live by his faith."—HAB. 2:4.

THIS is the first time these words are mentioned in the Scripture, but they are three times quoted by the apostle Paul: he preached, as it were, thrice upon them, Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38; for it is

full of heavenly matter, and is made use of by the apostle to several purposes. I know no one text that hath been more preached upon, or more written upon by them who have treated of the life of faith;— how the just live the life of justification, and how they live the life of sanctification, the life of consolation, the life of peace, the life of joy, the life of obedience, etc. My design is quite of another nature, and is that which falls in with the design of the prophet in the first use of the words; as we shall presently see.

You know that, for many years, upon all these occasions, without failing, I have been warning of you continually of an approaching calamitous time, and considering the sins that have been the causes of it. The day is with the Lord,—the year and month I know not: but I have told you that "judgment will begin at the house of God;" that in the latter days of the church, "perilous times will come;" that God seems to have "hardened our hearts from his fear, and caused us to err from his ways;" and that none knows what "the power of his wrath" will be. In all these things I have foretold you of perilous, distressing, calamitous times; and in all men's apprehensions they now lie at the door, and are entering in upon us. Now I must change my design; and my present work will be, both upon this and, if I live, upon some other occasions, to show how we ought to deport ourselves in and under the approaches of distressing calamities that are coming upon us, and may reach, it may be, up to the very neck.

What this text teaches us is, that in the approaches of overwhelming calamities, and in the view of them, we ought, in a peculiar manner, to live by faith. That is the meaning of the place.

And that this is our duty appears from this passage and the context. For the prophet had received a vision, a dreadful vision, from God, of the coming in of the Chaldeans, and of the destruction they would bring upon the church and upon all the land, in the foregoing chapter. Having received this vision, he considers what is his own duty, and what is the duty of the church, in the approaches of this distressing, calamitous season. Why, saith he, verse 1, "I will stand

upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved."—"God will reprove me; there will be great arguings between God and my soul: I know my own guilt and sin, and I would be in a readiness to have something to answer God when I am reproved,—something to betake myself unto. The answer," saith he, "I will betake myself unto is this, 'The just shall live by his faith.' " Two things are here included:—

First. Saith he, "I will betake myself" (as the apostle makes use of it) "unto Jesus Christ for righteousness. I have nothing else to answer God when I am reproved."

Secondly. "I will pass through all these terrible and dreadful dispensations of providence that are coming upon me, by living the life of faith:" a peculiar way of living, as we shall presently see. When the flood was coming upon the world, Noah was "a preacher of righteousness," 2 Pet. 2:5. What righteousness did Noah preach? Why, that righteousness whereof he himself was partaker; for he "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith," Heb. 11:7. When the flood was coming, Noah preached the righteousness of faith to the world, that they might escape, if they would attend unto it; but it was rejected by them. Wherefore, I say, in the approach of a calamitous season, there is, in an especial way and manner, a living by faith required of us. But you will say, "What is a calamitous season?" or, "When do you esteem a season calamitous?"

I will give you two things for the description of such a season as I judge to be manifestly calamitous:—

1. When it exceeds the bounds of affliction, or when the dispensations of God's anger in it cannot be reduced to the head of affliction. Ezek. 21:9, 10, 13, "Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD; say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth? it contemneth the

rod of my son, as every tree. Because it is a trial, and what if the sword contemn even the rod?" The rod comprises all affliction; but God will bring a sword,—a judgment that shall not be reducible to the head of affliction; it shall contemn it. Now, I say, let it be what it will, when a calamity doth befall a people, or the church of God, that cannot be reduced to the head of affliction, but that every one shall find there is anger, judgment, wrath in it; then it is a distressing time.

2. When judgments fall promiscuously upon all sorts of persons, and make no distinction, then I take it to be a distressing time; for they strip men of the comforts they cherish in their own minds. Job 9:22, 23, "This is one thing, therefore I said it, He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked." "What! doth God always do so? doth he never make a distinction about judgments?" Yes, sometimes; but "if the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent." When God brings a scourge, or a sword that shall slay promiscuously, that shall seize upon, destroy, and devour the innocent, so that they shall not escape, he will be as one that standeth by rejoicing to see how they carry themselves under their trial.

Now, this is enough to give satisfaction as to what I intend by a distressing, calamitous time:—it cannot be reduced to the head of affliction; and it slayeth suddenly and promiscuously the perfect and the wicked; and, it may be, "the good figs shall go first into captivity." I am not much otherwise minded; and God may have mercy for them in that dispensation. I shall now show you these two things:—I. How we shall live by faith,—how we should deport ourselves; what faith will do in such a season,—what our duty is under the approach of these calamitous, distressing times that are coming upon us. II. I shall show you how faith doth and will carry it under other perplexities that we have upon us, that we either feel or fear:—

I. Faith will guide and act the soul, under the approach of these distressing calamities, in these following things:—

1. It will give the soul a reverential fear of God in his judgments. So it did unto the saints of old, Heb. 11:7, "By faith Noah, being warned of God;" εὐλαβηθεῖς,— "moved with a reverential fear." There is no man that is not stout-hearted and far from righteousness, but is, upon God's warning, moved with a reverential fear of God in his judgments. It was so with David, Ps. 119:120, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments," He was not afraid as to outward judgments, but under them his flesh trembled with a reverential fear of God. And so was it with the prophet Habakkuk, upon the vision he had of the approach of the Chaldeans, chap. 3:16, "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops." He had a reverential fear of God in his judgments working upon him. According to my best observation of things in this state wherein we are, the generality of people may be distributed under these three heads:—

(1.) There are some that are, indeed, really afraid of approaching judgments; they do not know how soon they will reach unto themselves, their persons, their families, their relations, their estates, —all that they have laboured for, and exerted their utmost care and industry about in the world; the flood flies at the door, ready to carry all before it; they fear every day. Some men die, also, for fear of dying; they are poor for fear of poverty;—they will part with nothing, because they fear they must part with all. A strange contradiction of spirit! Now this is not the work of faith. So far as it prevails upon any of our spirits, God will rebuke us for it, Isa. 51:12, 13, "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the LORD thy maker, and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor?" (chap. 8:10,) "and hast not sanctified the LORD in thy heart, nor made him thy fear?" Who art thou? God hates this sinful fear; it is an abomination unto him. This is nothing but the fear of self; we will keep all warm about us, while we are in this world, and are afraid of the besom of destruction.

(2.) There are others who utterly despise these things,—take no notice of them; who do not think any such distressing calamity shall come upon them: if it does, they shall deal well enough with it. Isa. 28:14, 15, "They have made a covenant with death, and with hell are they at agreement;" and say, "When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us." They have a thousand ways to disinterest themselves from any thing of the most distressing calamity that is coming over the world. This swallows up the generality of mankind, and is that which the prophet doth so reflect upon, Isa. 26:11, "When thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them."

(3.) The other sort is mentioned in Judges 5:6, and may be called way-side men, idle, discursive men, that have nothing else to do but to walk up and down and talk, and are not concerned with a reverence of God and his judgments; they talk of them as if there were no God in heaven to regard them, or as if they had no concernment with him. If we have the least true saving faith in exercise, it will cast this cursed frame out of our hearts, it will be daily working it out of our souls, and will bring us to that which I told you is its proper work "God," saith the psalmist, Ps. 9:16, "is known by the judgment which he executeth." And what of God is principally known in the judgments which he executes in the world, is but little considered. That which God makes known of himself in a peculiar manner in these dreadful dispensations is, his majesty, his holiness, and his power.

God will appear to be awfully majestic and wonderfully glorious in such dispensations. He speaks of himself upon that occasion, Isa. 2:20, 21, "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth." If we have the light of faith to let it in, we shall see a majesty and glory in God's actings, even in his public and distressing judgments,

—such a greatness and a glory that the soul will be constrained to bow down before him.

God doth in his judgments also manifest his holiness; of which we shall speak afterward. So Rev. 15:4, "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy." How doth this appear? "For thy judgments are made manifest." When God makes his judgments manifest, his holiness will appear. And so, when Habakkuk came to plead with God about that great judgment of the Chaldeans which gave occasion to my text, he cries out, "O LORD my God, my Holy One, thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity."

God in them also glorifies himself in his power. He sets up one, and pulleth down another, and doth whatsoever he pleases. Herein he manifestly shows his sovereign power.

Now, to live by faith, is to cast out all those cursed frames before mentioned, and to bring this frame into your hearts, as the foundation of all that follows,—namely, that you have a reverential fear of the majesty, the holiness, and the power of God, in all his judgments: and without this, we shall not please God in any thing we do. These are the true sayings of God. If there be another frame in us, this dispensation will pierce to the very soul before it be over: that is the first thing.

2. Where faith hath filled the soul with a reverential fear of God, its first work will be, to put the soul upon preparing and providing an ark for itself: so it was in the great example of our faith before mentioned. Noah, being moved by fear, "prepared an ark," wherein he saved himself and his family. Let men pretend what they will, unless they are under a strange, careless stupidity and security (which, I fear, is upon the generality of professors), they cannot, in such a season as this, but be preparing some reserve for themselves. "What shall we do when this comes upon us?" They have some predominant reserve. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city," Prov. 18:11;—he may lose a great deal, but he will save enough for himself:

so the strong man trusts to his strength, the wise man to his wisdom: one thing or other men prepare for themselves, to be an ark against the storm comes; and those who do not so, they fluctuate up and down at uncertainties, hoping that by one way and means or another, that they know not of, they shall be carried above all, have a good issue,—that it shall not be as this or that prophet or minister foretells, but that some way they shall escape. This is not to prepare an ark; which is the work of faith to do. And here I shall inquire into two things:—(1.) What is this ark that is to be prepared; (2.) How we ought to enter into it, or how we are to make especial entrance into it, in reference to an approaching calamitous season. I say,—

(1.) This ark is Jesus Christ. Faith in him is necessary. In this chapter of my text, where inquiry is made what shall be answered unto God, and what course shall be taken upon the coming in of the overflowing flood of the Chaldeans; this is the course to be taken, "The just shall live by his faith." What is that? It is to seek for righteousness by Christ; to seek afresh for justification and life by Christ. There is no other way, no other ark; and he is described as this ark in that well known place, Isa. 32:2, "And a man" (that is, Jesus Christ) "shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land:" that is the ark. I know not how to describe [better] what I intend by securing ourselves in the ark, like the description the prophet here gives, though in terms metaphorical. Likewise in Mic. 5:5, having given a promise of Christ, he adds, "And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land." To betake ourselves to the ark, is to betake ourselves to the fountain of our peace. And so Ps. 2:12, "If God's wrath be kindled but a little"—How then? "Blessed are all they that betake themselves unto him—"trust in him." In whom? In the Son;—"Kiss the Son." And surely, my brethren, the wrath of God is now kindled, not a little, but a great deal, in all sorts and ways. The indications of the wrath of God are upon the spirits of men of all sorts,—of professors, of the world, in their own persons, in all

societies and relations. Where are we, then, to betake ourselves, but unto Christ? "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

(2.) But now, it would not have advantaged either Noah or his sons to have an ark prepared for them, unless they had a door to the ark. "Make a door," saith God to them, "that ye may have entrance." To obtain an interest in Christ is the general work of faith all our days. But how shall we be able now to make an especial entrance into this ark, suitable unto the state and condition wherein we are, and to approach a calamitous season that is hastening upon us? I know but of one way for our making an especial entrance into this ark, Jesus Christ, in reference to such a season; which is, the solemn renovation of our covenant with God. This is the way that hath been used by the church from the foundation of the world, without any instance of the contrary;—that, when a storm was coming, if ever they were delivered from it, they entered into the ark, by the renovation of their covenant with God. And seeing the end is certain, we are thus afresh to enter into this ark, Jesus Christ. It is no wisdom in civil things to remove a means, unless we have a better to substitute in the room of it; and it is so in spirituals. I desire all that fear God would stir up their hearts and thoughts, and offer to us (if they can) a better way for this church, or any church, to enter into the ark in the approach of a storm than this, and it shall be embraced. This church hath done so; though I begin to fear some look upon it as a very dead, sluggish commodity, they know not how to trade with. But do not mistake, you have no such thing lies by you in the sight of God this day. Do not despond, the day is approaching "when others shall come" (as in Zech. 8:23) "and lay hold upon your skirts, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." Some,—blessed be God, and let his holy name be exalted!—have far outgone us already, both in zeal and warmth and courage, under a sense of engagements that are upon them. I look for no safety, no deliverance, in the trials and afflictions that are coming upon the earth, but what is had in the way of believing. I value not those that are otherwise minded. Bless God, who hath provided for you this door of entrance before the flood comes and the rain falls; bless God, I say, for it, and

make use of it, and be able to plead it with God: and let the Lord know that you have made your choice to be his, and are under his care, and not under the protection of the world. I will not say you shall be saved temporally, but you shall be saved eternally; I cannot say you shall have peace with men, but you shall have peace with God; I cannot say you shall not lose your lives, but I will say you shall not lose your souls: and these are our principal concernments. Make good your entrance. A door made into the ark will do you no good, unless you enter in and make good your entrance at the door. How shall we make good our entrance into the ark, that we may have safety therein? If we are not at this work, we have no faith. Why, stand to your engagements,—stand to the performance of those duties God requires at your hands; not only as there is no one thing required but what is a special duty of the new covenant, but stand to them now as those that have been your entrance into the ark, where God will give you all that rest that in this world you can be partakers of. This is another work of faith in the approach of a calamitous time.

3. If we live by faith in the approach of a calamitous season, this will put us upon the search and examination of our own hearts, what accession we have made to the sins that have procured these judgments. This is that which faith (where it is in any measure sincere) will assuredly put us upon; and it is that God doth now in an especial manner call for. Now, the sins which do and have procured these judgments are of two sorts:—(1.) The open and flagitious sins of the world. (2.) The sins of churches and professors.

(1.) The open and flagitious sins of the world. The apostle reckons them up together, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." He doth it again in Eph. 5:5, 6, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of

disobedience." He reckons them up also in Gal. 5:19, etc., "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, and such lik." There is a marvellous large copy written out of these texts in the nation at this day: every man may read an exposition of these things in the practice of multitudes. Some will say, they bless God they are free from these things; and so they hope they have had no hand in procuring the judgments of God that are coming upon the nation; let them fall upon them and their interest who are guilty of these provoking abominations, such as for which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against their ungodliness. Why, it is well if they are not guilty of any of these sins; but the seed and foundation, even of all these sins, lie in our nature, if not in our persons, and what eruptions they have made towards the provoking the eyes of God's glory I know not. But suppose you have escaped these pollutions that are in the world through lust,—

(2.) There are other sins—sins of churches, and of professors—that, in reference to Christ's mediatory kingdom, have as great influence for the procuring of judgments as the worst sins of the world have for the procuring of judgments in his providential kingdom. I know a time when there was a storm, wherein a whole vessel, and all that were in it, were like to have been cast away; but one Jonah, that was in the ship, was the cause of the storm.

I shall just mention the judgment-procuring sins of churches and professors, which are reduced in Scripture to these four heads:—

[1.] Lukewarmness; which was the judgment-procuring sin of Laodicea.

[2.] Contenting ourselves in outward order and freedom from scandal; which was the judgment-procuring sin of Sardis, and will prove ruinous to the best churches in the world.

[3.] Want of love among ourselves, and division in churches.

[4.] Earthly-mindedness, and love of the world, and conformity to it, that is found among the generality of professors.

THE USE OF FAITH UNDER REPROACHES AND PERSECUTIONS

"The just shall live by his faith."—HAB. 2:4.

YOU may remember, I spake occasionally from that of the psalmist, Ps. 97:2, "Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne;" and from thence took occasion to consider what is our especial duty when clouds and darkness are round about us, as they are at this day. And some of you know I have had a great persuasion that the clouds that are gathering will, at least in their first storm, fall upon the people of God. I must repeat it again and again; I have been warning you for some years, and telling you it would be so. The present frame wherewith I have to conflict in my own spirit, and that frame of spirit which I have observed in others, the state and condition of all churches and professors, so far as I know, is,—they are gone into a dreadful security. I speak my heart, and what I know with reference unto our present state and the cause of God; we are gone, I say, into a dismal security: which still confirms me that the storm will come upon us, and that it will not be long ere we feel it. My design is, therefore, to show you how we ought to behave ourselves under the perplexities and difficulties we are to conflict withal in this world. And I have not sat studying for things to speak, but only tell you the experience of my own heart, and what I am labouring after. I have already showed you what our duty is under the approach of these distressing, calamitous times that are coming upon us, and what faith will do in such a season.

II. I am now, in the second place, to show you how faith will carry it under other perplexities, that either are present or are coming upon us. And here I shall show you,—1. How we may live by faith, under all the reproaches and persecutions that do or may befall us, upon the account of that order and fellowship of the gospel, of that way of God's worship, which we do profess. 2. How we may live by faith, with reference unto the returning upon us of antichristian darkness and cruelty, if God shall suffer it so to be. 3. How we may live by faith under an apprehension of great and woful decays in churches, in church members, in professors of all sorts, and in the gradual with-drawings of the glory of God from us upon that account.

1. How may we live by faith, with reference unto those reproaches, that scorn and contempt, which are cast upon the ways of God which we profess, that worship of God wherein we are engaged, and that order of the gospel that we do observe, with the persecutions that will attend us upon the account thereof? Truly, I may say of it as the Jews said to Paul about Christianity, Acts 28:22, "As for this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against." The whole world seems to be combined, that the name of Israel, in this way, may no more be had in remembrance. There are few that are concerned about these things while it is well with them, their families, their relations, estates, inheritances. Let the ways of God be reproached, what is that to them? they are not concerned in it. They cannot say, as the psalmist doth, when he speaks in the person of Christ, Ps. 69:9, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." Perhaps some of us are more sensible than others (or, at least, have reason so to be) of those reproaches that are continually cast upon the ways of God, seeing they are more particularly upon us; but to those that are not concerned in this scorn and contempt, I would say three things:—

First. What evidence have you that you have a concern in God's glory? For these things are those whereby God is glorified in this world; and if you are not concerned when there are so many

reflections thrown upon it, pray consider what evidence you have in yourselves of any concernment in the glory of God.

Secondly. What evidence have you that you have a love to these things, that can hear them reproached, scorned, contemned, and never be moved at it? An honest, good man, would find himself concerned if his wife or children were reproached with lies and shameful things, because of his interest in them; but for them that can hear the ways of God reproached every day, and, so long as it is well with them and theirs, are not concerned thereat,—they can have no evidence that they have a love unto them. Nehemiah cries out upon such an occasion, chap. 4:4, "Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity." God hath made special promises to such as are thus concerned: Zeph. 3:18, "I will gather them," saith he. Whom will he gather? "Them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden." The solemn assemblies were reproached and mocked; and there were some of them (not all) to whom this reproach was a burden. "These," saith God, "I will gather;"—"gather them under my gracious protection."

Thirdly, To add one word more: If you are not concerned in the reproaches that are cast upon the ways of God, persecution shall awaken you, and either make you concerned or put an end unto all your profession.

Now, the inquiry is, how, under these difficulties that we have to conflict withal, we shall glorify God, and pass through them without loss,—unto our spiritual advantage?

The apostle, in the 10th chapter to the Hebrews, where he describes this very condition I have been speaking of, doth fully direct us. "Ye endured," saith he, "a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had

compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods," etc., verses 32–34. But how shall we carry ourselves under this condition here described? "Now," saith he, verse 38, "the just shall live by faith."

What is the work of faith in this condition, that we may glorify God, and carry it through to a good and comfortable issue to ourselves? Call your own hearts to an account, and see how faith will work to give you support and supply. I will tell you what I am labouring after in my own heart; and the Lord direct you to find out what will be more useful! What will faith do in such a case? I answer,—

(1.) Faith will give us such an experience of the power, efficacy, sweetness, and benefit of gospel ordinances and gospel worship, as shall cause us to despise all that the world can do in opposition unto us. Here I would cast my anchor, and exhort you not to be confident of yourselves; for nothing else will keep and preserve you. An opinion, a well-grounded opinion and judgment, will not preserve you; love to this or that man's ministry, will not preserve you; that you are able to dispute for your ways, will not preserve you (I can give you instances wherein they have all failed);—resolutions that, if all men should leave them, you would not, are insufficient. Nothing can preserve you but a sense and experience of the usefulness and sweetness of gospel administrations, according unto the mind of Jesus Christ. This faith alone can give you. "Desire," saith the apostle Peter, "the sincere milk of the word," 1 Epist. 2:2;—"Desire, and labour to continue in, the ordinances of the gospel, and the worship of God under the administration of the word." How? "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," verse 3; otherwise you will never desire it. I should hope that, through the grace of God (and otherwise I do not hope it), I might yet continue (if, indeed, I could keep alive) an experience that, in the dispensation of the word, I find a constant exercise of faith in God, delight in him, love to him;—if I find that I come to the word as expecting to receive from God a sense of his love and supply of his grace; I should then, I say, have good hope, through grace, that ten thousand difficulties should never shake me in my

continuance in this way. But if it be otherwise, there will be no continuance nor abiding. I mention these things, because, to the best observation such a poor worm as I am can make, there is a mighty coldness and indifferency grown upon the spirits of men in attending to the worship of God. There is not that life, spirit, courage, and delight in it as hath been in times past; and if so, where it may end God only knows. This, I say, is the first thing that faith will do in this state, if we set it on work. If we would but labour to stir up faith to find those supplies of spiritual life and strength in the ways of his worship and ordinances,—if we would labour to overcome prejudices, and set ourselves against sloth and negligence,—we should find ourselves as other men, and greatly set at liberty as to what the world can do unto us. This is that which faith can do for us in such a state of things; and this is that I would be labouring to bring my own heart unto.

(2.) Faith, in such a season, will bring the soul into such an experimental sense of the authority of Jesus Christ, as to make it despise all other things. I profess, if it were not for the authority of Christ, I would renounce all your meetings; they would have neither form nor comeliness in them why they should be desired. But a deep respect unto the authority of Christ (unless our evil hearts are betrayed by unbelief and weakness) is that which will carry us through all that may befall us. Faith will work this double respect unto the authority of Christ:—

[1.] As he is the great head and lawgiver of the church, who alone hath received all power from the Father to institute all worship; and whoever imposes herein usurps his crown and dignity. All power to institute spiritual worship is given unto Christ in heaven and in earth. What then? "Go, therefore," saith he, "and teach men to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," Matt. 28:18–20. Bring your souls to this exercise of faith, that those things we do are commanded us by Christ, who is the sovereign Lord of our consciences, who hath sovereign authority over our souls. We must all appear before his judgment-seat, who will require of us whether

we have done and observed what he hath commanded us or no. Do not only say these things, but labour greatly by faith to affect your consciences with this authority of Christ, and you will find that all other authorities will come to nothing, however you may suffer for it.

[2.] Faith respects the authority of Christ, as he is "Lord of lords, and King of kings;" as he sits at the right hand of God, expecting all his enemies to become his footstool; as he hath not only a golden sceptre in his hand, "a sceptre of righteousness," wherewith he rules his church, but also an iron rod, to break all his enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel. If faith exercises itself upon this power and authority of Christ over his enemies, it will pour contempt upon all that the world can do. You cannot be earned before any magistrate, but Christ is there present, greater than them all,—who hath their breath in his hands, their lives and their ways at his disposal, and can do what he pleases with them. Faith will bring in the presence of Christ in such a season; when otherwise your hearts would fail for fear, and you would be left unto your own wisdom, which is folly, and your own strength, which is but weakness. But if you have but faith working in the sense of this authority, it will make you like those well-composed persons in the 3d of Daniel. Do not wonder at the greatness of their answer and the composure of their spirits when they looked on the fiery furnace on the one hand, and the fiery countenance of terrible majesty on the other. "Know, that God," say they, "whom we serve, is able to deliver us out of thy hand; but if not,—if God will not give us this present deliverance, be it known unto thee, O king, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image," verses 17, 18. Faith will give us the same composure of spirit, and the same resolution; and with these things should we relieve ourselves under the worst that can befall us.

(3.) Faith, in such a case and condition, will bring to mind, and make effectual upon our souls, the examples of them that have gone before us in giving the same testimony that we do, and in the sufferings that they underwent upon that account. When the apostle had told the believing Hebrews, that through all their trials, tribulations, and

sufferings, they must live by faith, Heb. 10, "What encouragement," might they say, "shall we receive by faith?" Why, saith he, "Faith will bring to mind all the examples of them that have gone before you, that have suffered, and been afflicted, and distressed as you now are;"—which account takes up the whole 11th chapter, and a good part of the beginning of the 12th. It is a great thing when faith revives an example. Let us, then, by faith, carry in our minds the examples that are recorded in the Scripture. There is the example of Moses, the apostle gives it us; and it is an eminent instance: "He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." He, by the dark promise he had to live upon, endured the reproach of Christ. My brethren, take the prophets for an example of them that have suffered; and consider how the apostles have gone before us: but do not stop at them; for there is a greater than Moses, and the prophets, and apostles,—greater than even a cloud of witnesses; and that is no less a person than the Lord Jesus Christ. Heb. 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." He underwent the contradiction of sinners against himself, "and is now set down at the right hand of God." Faith, calling to mind these great examples, would give us great support under all the trials we may be brought unto, and conflict with. Whither are we going? what do we hope for? We would be where Moses is, and where the prophets are; but how got they thither? They did not get thither through the increase of riches, and multiplying to themselves lordships in the world; but by sufferings and the cross. Through many tribulations they entered into the kingdom of heaven.

(4.) Faith will receive in the supplies that Christ hath laid up for his people, in such a season. Christ hath made peculiar provision for suffering saints. And it consists in two things:—First, In his special presence with them. He will be with them in the fire, and in the water. Secondly, In the communication of the sense of God's love unto them. Their "tribulation worketh patience, and patience

experience, and experience hope; and then the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given to us," Rom. 5:3–5. Faith will bring all these things into the soul. But your minds must be spiritual, or you cannot put forth one act of faith for the bringing in this special provision that is laid up for suffering saints;— and very few attain this spiritual frame, where faith fetches in these spiritual consolations Christ hath prepared for such souls. This is one way whereby we may live by faith in such a season. Search, therefore, and make inquiry in your entrance into troubles, what sense faith gives you of the love of God, to carry you through these difficulties.

(5.) It is faith alone that can relieve us with respect unto the recompense of reward. Moses "suffered affliction with the people of God; for he had respect to the recompense of reward," Heb. 11:25, 26. The light and momentary affliction which we undergo in this world, "worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. 4:17. "Who knows, but in a few days some of us may be taken into that incomprehensible glory, where we shall eternally admire that ever we did put any manner of weight on things here below? Faith will fix your eye on the eternal recompense of reward. We have, indeed, a faith now at work, that fixes the minds of men upon this and that way of deliverance, and this and that strange accident; but we shall find that true faith will burn up all this as stubble.

(6.) And lastly, faith will work by patience. The apostle tells us "we have need of patience, that, after we have done the will of God, we might receive the promise;" and we are to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," Heb. 10:36, 6:12.

This is something of what I had to offer unto you, and, I hope, both seasonable and useful. However, it is what I can attain unto in these times of reproach, scorn, and contempt, that are cast upon us, and persecutions approaching. I say, faith will discover to us that efficacy, sweetness, power, and advantage in spiritual ordinances, as to make us willing to undergo any thing for them. Faith will bring our souls

into such subjection unto the authority of Christ, as Head of the church, and Lord over the whole creation, that we shall not be terrified with what man can do unto us. Faith will furnish us with examples of the saints of God, whom he hath helped and assisted to go through sufferings, and who are now crowned and at rest in heaven. Faith will help us to keep our eye fixed, not upon the things of this world, but upon the eternal recompense of another world, and glory therein. And faith will also work by patience, when difficulties shall be multiplied upon us.

THE USE OF FAITH, IF POPERY SHOULD RETURN UPON US

"The just shall live by his faith."—HAB. 2:4.

OUR inquiry is, how we may live by faith, with reference unto those difficulties we have, or may have, to conflict with in the days wherein we live. The last head we spake to was, how we may live by faith in reference to all the reproaches and scornful contempt that are cast upon that way of worship, that order and fellowship of the gospel, which we cleave unto, and the persecutions which we may undergo upon that account. I now proceed:—

2. The second difficulty that we have, or may have, to conflict with, is, the return of Popery into this land. Half the talk of the world is upon this subject. I have nothing to say to some among ourselves; but I verily believe, that those who have the conduct of the papal, antichristian affairs throughout the world are endeavouring to bring it in upon us. I remember what holy Latimer said when he came to die, "Once I believed Popery would never return into England; but," said he, "I find it was not faith, but fancy." I wish it prove not so with many of us. Now, that which I am to speak unto is this,—how we should live by faith, both in the prospect of the danger of it, and if it

should come upon us. I shall name unto you a few things which I exercise myself with. If you have more supporting thoughts, and a better guidance of light, I pray God confirm it unto you.

(1.) The first thing I would exercise my thoughts upon, and that my faith rests in, in this case, is this,—that there is a fixed, determinate time in the counsel of God, when Antichrist and Babylon, and idolatry and superstition, together with that profaneness of life which they have brought in, shall be destroyed. It is so fixed, that it shall not be altered: all the wisdom of men, all the sins of men, and all our unbelief, shall not hinder it a day; it shall assuredly come to pass in its appointed season. This time is reckoned up in Scripture by days, by months, by years;—not that we should know the time of it, but that we should know the certainty of it; for if it hath but so many days, but so many months and years, then it must have a certain period.

Under the Old Testament we see this all along. Saith God to Abraham, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation will I judge," Gen. 15:13, 14. They knew not the beginning nor the ending of this four hundred years; but they knew that at the end of them it should be as God had said: and "the self-same day it came to pass," Exod. 12:41. Likewise God threatens the Jews with a seventy-years captivity in Babylon: "And it shall come to pass," saith God, "when the seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation for their iniquity," Jer. 25:11, 12. The church knew not when they began, or when they would end; but this they knew, that the same day they were accomplished it should be as God had said. And so it was.

The fixing and computing of the time of the Man of Sin, of Antichrist, by days, and months, and years, is to secure our faith in the punctual determination of the season, but not to satisfy our curiosity when the season should be. But the consideration of this, that there is such a time, or a determinate season, is a great foundation of faith and

patience. Isa. 60:22, "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time." But if there be a fixed time for the accomplishment of this promise, you may ask, "How can it then be hastened?" Why, if you live in the exercise of faith and patience, it shall surprise you; it shall come when you do not think it will, nor expect it: "I will hasten it in his time;"—"I will not bring it before its time, be ye never so patient or impatient; but exercise faith and patience, and I will so order it, that it shall be a sweet surprisal unto you." And it is a means of patience, Hab. 2:3, "If the vision" seem to "tarry, wait for it; for it will surely come." When we know it will come, when we know there is such a determinate time, and that it will surely come, it is a great ground of patience to wait for it. This is a great consideration with me, and I leave it with you. Here I can exercise faith, without fancy or conjecture, that there is a certain determinate time in the counsel of God wherein he will pour out all his judgments and plagues upon the antichristian world, until Antichristianism be destroyed and rooted out.

(2.) Another thing that comforts my heart is this,—it is no less glorious to suffer under the beast and the false prophet than it was to suffer under the dragon. The book of the Revelation is chiefly made up of these two things,—of the persecutions of the church; one by the dragon, and he is conquered; the other by the beast and false prophet, and they shall be conquered. The dragon was the heathen power of the Roman empire; and it was a glorious thing to suffer under that power. They that did so are described, Rev. 7:14, 15, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." And of those that suffered under the beast and the false prophet it is said, Rev. 12:11, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." We account them great and glorious persons who won the liberty of the gospel and the Christian religion by suffering against the pagan power, and who

destroyed all idolatry by their blood, starving and "famishing all the gods of the earth," Zeph. 2:11. Never were men more glorious than they. These made up the "Turba palmifera;" that is, the company who, with palms in their hands, and a new song in their mouths, give glory unto God, Rev. 7:9–12. I say, it is not less glorious to suffer under the beast and false prophet, the second persecuting power,—that is, the papal, antichristian power,—than it was before under the pagan. This the church hath for many ages conflicted withal, and must continue to do so, until the time is come when they shall have a perfect and complete conquest over this also. It is a glorious thing, and I would have you reckon upon it as such. If a time of going into Smithfield should again come,—if God shall call us to that fiery trial or any other, whatever it may be,—remember that to suffer against Antichrist is as great and glorious as to suffer against Paganism.

(3.) Though our persons fall, our cause shall be as truly, certainly, and infallibly victorious, as that Christ sits at the right hand of God. Among the heathens, men of courage did not value their own lives, so their cause was carried on. Now, however your persons or my person may fall in this trial, yet the cause in which we are engaged shall as surely conquer as Christ is alive and shall prevail at last. Upon the first rise of the beast, it is said, Rev. 13:7, "He made war with the saints, and overcame them." The poor Waldenses looked upon themselves to be the people there prophesied of; and said, when they were under the butcheries of the papal power, "We are the conquered people of God; but there shall come forth conquerors." When going to die, they knew and believed their cause would conquer. And so, after Antichrist hath conquered and prevailed over persons for a season, at length it will come to a final issue. "They shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful," Rev. 17:14. The gospel shall be victorious. This is the third thing that greatly comforts and refreshes me,—that if God should give me the honour, the strength, and grace to die in this cause, my cause shall be victorious, as sure as if I had the crown in my hand.

(4.) The judgments of God shall come upon the antichristian world when they look not for them; when the kings of the earth do not look for them; yea, when believers themselves do not look for them;—they shall come so suddenly. The Holy Ghost saith so expressly, Rev. 18:8, "Her plagues shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire." How is it possible that one that is in the state and condition wherein she is, should have her plagues come upon her in one day? The reason is added, "For strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." Almighty strength shall be put forth for the accomplishing of it. And if this be not enough, the 17th verse tells you that it shall come in "one hour." And I do verily believe that the destruction of this cursed antichristian state (of the head of it) will be brought about by none of those means we see or know of; but that the strong Lord God shall break in upon her and destroy her by ways unknown to us. It may be to-morrow; it may be not these hundred years. She herself, when it is done, shall look for no such thing. Verses 7, 8, "She hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously; for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day." When she is boasting herself, destruction shall come;—when the kings of the earth shall have no expectation of it; for they shall cry, verse 16, "Alas, alas! that great city, Babylon, that mighty city; for in one hour so great riches is come to nought." And believers themselves will be such as the children of Israel in Egypt. When Moses came they could not believe, because of the cruel bondage they were under: it is like the day wherein God's judgments will come upon Antichrist, the old enemies of Jesus Christ.

(5.) I would consider very much with myself the greatness of the indignation of God against those that shall in the least comply with Antichristianism when it doth come upon us. In Rev. 13:11, there is mention of "a beast that had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon" (which, I think, is the pope), "and he exerciseth all the power of the first beast;" that is, he exercises a power answerable to the pagan power. And what then? Verse 16, "He caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their

right hand, or in their foreheads; and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark." No matter what the mark is; but to receive any thing of him, is to receive his mark; either in our foreheads, where we shall show it unto all the world; or in our right hands, more privately, where it may be shown when opportunity serves. What then? Why, in chap. 14:6, 7, "I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." When Antichrist would bring his mark on the foreheads of the people and into their hands, God, by his gospel, calls men from their false worship and idolatry. But what if they do not obey? The 9th and 10th verses tell us a "third angel followed, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb," etc. Some will be apt to say, "Let us make a fair composition, and use some compliance, to put an end to these disputes." No; do it at your peril. God saith you shall drink of the wine of his wrath, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and that for ever and ever. And I believe with all my heart and soul that this will be the portion of all the men and women in this nation that shall comply with any return of antichristian idolatry among us;—God shall pour out his indignation upon them.

(6.) Remember that if the trial comes, it is a day of battle; and it is not for you, when you should just engage in a battle, to be considering of this or that way or contrivance to escape. No; it is courage, and constancy, and faith alone, must be set on work, or you will not be preserved. All your wisdom and contrivances will not preserve you; but it being come to the issue between Christ and

Antichrist, "it is the girding up the loins of your mind," and a "resisting unto blood against sin," and abiding in it, that is your duty, and must preserve you. Nothing will save you but faith, courage, and constancy.

(7.) There are in the Scripture intimations, that those who, in an especial manner, cleave unto God and his worship, with faith, love and, delight, shall be preserved and saved. I do not propose this unto you as an object of your faith; all the rest I do: but I say, there are intimations that give me some satisfaction; that they who with quick and lively spirits do act faith, and love, and delight in God and his worship, or that are worshippers in the inner court of the temple, shall be peculiarly secured at such a time. But I am afraid few of us shall have it; because I see so much coldness and deadness grown generally upon us and the churches of Christ. It makes me think exercises will come upon us all; for we have need of them.

To conclude,—

First. Let not your talk about strange things keep the thoughts of these things you have been hearing out of your hearts; for you will be tried with Antichristianism before you die. We talk of news, and great things we look for in the world, and that Antichrist shall be destroyed: and so he will; but I do believe he will try us sorely in the meantime.

Secondly. Take heed of computations. How wofully and wretchedly have we been mistaken by this! We know the time is determined,—its beginning and ending is known to God; and we must live by faith till the accomplishment.

Thirdly. So many of us as have afresh engaged ourselves in covenant unto God, let us remember that we have taken the "mark of God upon our foreheads;" and it will ill become us to set the mark of Antichrist by it.

This is all I have to offer unto you as to living by faith under the apprehensions of those difficulties we have to conflict withal, in reference to the coming in of profaneness and idolatry, wherewith we are threatened by hell and the world, which are at this day combining together to bring them again upon this nation.

THE USE OF FAITH IN A TIME OF GENERAL DECLENSION IN RELIGION

"The just shall live by his faith."—HAB. 2:4.

I Am now come to the last thing that was proposed to be spoken to, and with which I shall shut up the subject, namely,—

3. How we may live by faith, under an apprehension of great and woful decays in churches, in church-members, in professors of all sorts, and in the gradual withdrawing of the glory of God from us all on that account.

I would speak unto three things:—(1.) That this is such a time of decay among us, among churches, among church-members, and professors of all sorts and ways throughout this nation; yea and other nations too, where there are any that fear God. (2.) That this is, and ought to be, a cause of great trouble and trial unto all that are true believers. And then,—(3.) I shall show you how we may live by faith in such a season,—what it is faith will do to support the soul at such a time.

(1.) That it is now such a time of decay, there are too many evidences of it. I will name a few things:—

[1.] A sense of it is impressed upon the minds of all the most judicious and diligent Christians, that do abound most in self-

examination, or do take most notice of the ways of God. Multitudes have I heard testifying of it; complaints are received from many in this nation, and the neighbouring nations, that there is a great decay, as to the power of grace and life of faith, among all sorts of professors. And some of them will go farther in their evidence, and tell us that they find the effects of it in themselves; that they find it a matter of great difficulty, requiring great watchfulness and great diligence, in any measure to keep up themselves unto their former frames; and when they have done all, they do not attain their desire. And, to increase this evidence, we are all convinced of it, or else we are notorious hypocrites; for I know not how often I have heard it prayed over in this very place. So that there is sent forth from God a conviction upon the hearts and minds of spiritual, self-examining believers, that churches, church-members, professors, and themselves, are under spiritual decays. This is the first evidence; and therefore, in such a season, it was the best part of the church that made that sad complaint, Isa. 63:17, "O LORD, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?" They were sensible that there was a judgment of the hand of God upon them.

[2.] The open want of love that is among churches, among church-members, among professors, is another evidence of decay. I will not speak of the want of love among churches one to another; but as to love among church-members, we have scarce the shadow of it remaining among us. Where men have relations, where they have acquaintance, where they have been old friends, where they agree in humour and converse,—there is an appearance of love; and where they agree in a party and faction, there is an appearance of love: but upon the pure spiritual account of Christianity and church-membership, we have, I say, scarce the shadow of it left among us. I remember how it was with us, when it was a joy of heart to behold the face of one another;—wherein there was love without dissimulation, in sincerity; love attended with pity, compassion, condescension; yea, love attended with delight. But it is dead in churches, dead among professors.

[3.] Another evidence of this decay is, want of delight and diligence in the ordinances of gospel worship. These ordinances were wont to be a joy of heart unto all that feared God; but now there is so much deadness, coldness, and indifferency,—so much undervaluing of the word, self-fulness, pride, and so much an apprehension that we know every thing,—so little endeavour to tremble at every truth, by what means soever it be brought unto us,—as gives a manifest evidence of woful decays that are fallen upon us. Dead preachers! dead hearers!—all things now go down among the churches of God and professors in these nations. And this is attended with two desperate evils; one of which I heard of but lately (but upon inquiry, I find it to be a far greater evil than I took it to be), namely, men—under an apprehension that they do not see others enlivened nor quickened as they were wont to be by the ordinances of divine worship, and finding no such thing in their own hearts neither (in all probability finding themselves to grow dead and useless)—are fallen into an opinion that there is an end of them, and that they ought to attend unto them no more. And this doth befall some that have long walked soberly and with great diligence in the use of ordinances: some in this city, and in other places, are led by foolish delusions to it, because they do not find the spirit, and life, and power of the word and ordinances in themselves and, as they think, in others. A godly and learned minister, that showed me a discourse written upon this subject, in defence of ordinances, did acquaint me with so great a number falling into this abomination, that I did not think it had been possible. This is one of the evils.

The other evil that attends it is this,—that this deadness and indifferency unto ordinances, and want of bringing our necks to the yoke of Christ therein, against all disputings and arguings of flesh and blood, hath taken such place among us, and proceeded so far, that all ways of reformation are useless. Men may make divisions, and do I know not what; but this I know, there is no way of obtaining any reformation, but for men to engage their hearts to return unto God in more delight in his service than there hath been. Some utterly forsake the assemblies; some come with great indifferency,—using

their liberty, off and on, at their pleasure. Are not these things evidences of great decays among us? To me they are. I speak not as to this congregation in particular, but as to the state of all churches that I know or can hear of in these nations.

[4.] The last evidence I shall mention of these decays among us, is our worldly-mindedness,—conformity to the world, and security. These things have been so often spoken to you, and no reformation hath ensued, that now they are looked upon as words of course; and I am discouraged from speaking of them any more. But assure yourselves, this conformity to the world, and this security that is yet found among us, is a great evidence that the glory of God is departing from us. Ministers preach against worldly-mindedness, security, etc., but it makes no impression upon the minds of men; for we can scarce give an instance of any, the least reformation. These things plainly demonstrate that we are all under great decays.

(2.) A sense of this general decay among churches, church-members, and professors, ought to be an exercise and concern unto our minds. If we think all is well with us, and are satisfied, while we are free from outward troubles, and [do] not concern ourselves about our decays, I will not say we are hypocrites, but, truly, we are poor, low, dead, carnal, unspiritual Christians. I thought to have spoken to these three heads, to show you,—

[1.] How God is dishonoured by this general decay;

[2.] How the world is offended and scandalized at it;

[3.] How the ruin of churches is hastened by it;—which will befall them assuredly, unless God recover us out of this bad state: but I shall waive these things, and proceed:—

(3.) Suppose it be thus (and we do complain of it to one another, not knowing what the issue will be, nor what it may come unto),—how shall we live by faith under this consideration? what is the work of faith in this state? If things are so (and I wish any one could evidence

they are not; but suppose, for once, that they are so), and our souls are burdened with an apprehension that they are so,—then what will faith do to enable us to pass through this exercise, and to live to God?

I will tell you something of what I find. And if God help you not to better things, make use of these, and improve them, that you may give glory to God by believing under this condition also:—

[1.] Faith will mind the soul that notwithstanding this also, yet Christ hath built his church upon that rock, that it shall not be utterly prevailed against. "The promise," saith faith, "extends itself as well to the inbred adversaries of our own souls, unbelief, deadness, and all these things, as to our outward enemies." Matt. 16:18, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Though we were all dead, helpless, lifeless, poor creatures,—though we had retained almost nothing but outward order, and had lost the very vigour and essence of faith and obedience,—yet Christ's church shall abide and stand, and those that belong to him shall be preserved. "Such and such are turned apostates," saith the apostle, 2 Tim. 2:19, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." Here is my ground of hope, notwithstanding all this, though one falls after another, though one decays after another,—"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure;" and it hath a seal upon it, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." Every one whom he hath effectually called, and built upon the rock, Jesus Christ, shall be preserved, whatever befalls the residue of the world. To see such a confluence of all manner of dangerous evils from without as are coming this day upon the church of God; and to see, in the meantime, so many evidences of a decaying spiritual state in believers themselves; it will put faith to exercise itself upon this promise of Christ,—"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." If you find your spirits at any time pressed with these things, if nothing better occurs at hand, exercise faith upon this promise of Christ, and upon the firm standing of the foundation of God,—that he knoweth who are his,

and will carry them through all these difficulties, and land them safe in eternity.

[2.] Faith will also mind the soul that God hath yet the fulness and residue of the Spirit, and can pour it out when he pleases, to recover us from this woful state and condition, and to renew us to holy obedience unto himself. There are more promises of God's giving supplies of his Spirit to deliver us from inward decays, than there are for the putting forth the acts of his power to deliver us from our outward enemies. And God is as able to do the inward work,—to revive and renew a spirit of faith, love, and holiness, of meekness, humility, self-denial, and readiness for the cross: he is able, with one word and act of his grace, to renew it; as he is able, by one act of his power, to destroy all his enemies, and make them the footstool of Christ, when he pleases. Live in the faith of this.

The psalmist saith, in Ps. 147:16, 17, "He scattereth the hoarfrost;" and the issue is, the earth is frozen,—he brings a death upon it. But saith he, in Ps. 104:30, "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit; and thou renewest the face of the earth." In like manner there is deadness upon all churches and professors, in some measure, at this time;—but God, who hath the fulness of the Spirit, can send him forth and renew the face of the soul,—can give professors and profession another face; not to trim and trick, as now so often is done; not so high and haughty, not so earthly and worldly, as is now so much seen; but humble, meek, holy, broken-hearted, and self-denying. God can send forth his Spirit when he pleases, and give all our churches and professors a new face, in the verdure and flourishing of his grace in them. When God will do this I know not: but I believe God can do this; he is able to do it,—able to renew all his churches, by sending out supplies of the Spirit, whose fulness is with him, to recover them in the due and appointed time. And more; I believe truly, that when God hath accomplished some ends upon us, and hath stained the glory of all flesh, he will renew the power and glory of religion among us again, even in this nation. I believe it truly, but not as I believe the other things I have mentioned unto you: for those I believe

absolutely,—namely, that Christ hath built his church upon a rock, and that nothing shall ever finally prevail against it; and that God hath the fulness and the residue of the Spirit to renew us again to all the glory of profession and holy obedience. These I propose as truths that are infallible, that will not fail you, and upon which you may venture your souls to eternity. And if your faith in these things will not give you support and comfort, I know not what else will.

[3.] When your souls are perplexed within you about these things, your faith will say unto you, "O my soul, why art thou cast down? Are not all these things foretold thee,—1 Tim. 4:1, 'That in the latter times some shall depart from the faith;' 2 Tim. 3:1–5, 'That in the last days perilous times shall come;' because men should have 'a form of godliness, but deny the power?' Hath it not been foretold that churches shall decay, and lose their first faith and love, in examples that have been set before you?" "Why are you surprised?" saith our Saviour, John 16:4, "These things have I told you, that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them." I was never nearer a surprisal than by this one thing, how it could possibly be, that after so many instructions,—after so many mercies, trials, fears,—after so many years carrying our lives in our hands, and so many glorious deliverances, there should yet be decays found amongst us, and such going backward. It is a great surprisal to one that considers it aright. But seeing it is foretold that so it shall be, "let us live by faith:" God hath some great end to accomplish out of it; and then all will be well. "When I have performed my whole work upon mount Zion," saith God, "then," etc., Isa. 10:12.

[4.] And lastly, faith, if it be in exercise, will put every soul in whom it is upon an especial attendance unto those duties God calls him unto in such a season. This accomplishes and completes our living by faith under such a trial as this is. If faith be in us, and in exercise, it will put us upon all these duties that God requires of us in such a season:

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1st. It will put us upon self-examination, how far we ourselves are engaged in these decays, and have contracted the guilt of them.

2dly. It will put us upon great mourning, by reason of God's withdrawing himself from us.

3dly. It will put us upon watchfulness over ourselves, and over one another, that we be not overtaken by the means and causes of these decays.

4thly. It will put us upon zeal for God and the honour of the gospel, that it may not suffer by reason of our miscarriages.

In one word, faith will do something; but for our parts, we do little or nothing. Faith will do something, I say, wherever it is, when it is stirred up to exercise; but as to these special duties, in reference to these decays that all professors are fallen under,—O how little is it we do in any kind whatever! Would we might advise with one another what to do under these decays,—to further one another in recovering ourselves from them! This, then, is what we are called to, and is required of us,—namely, faith in the faithfulness of Christ, who hath built his church upon the rock, [so] that, be things never so bad, it shall not be prevailed against;—faith in the fulness of the Spirit, and his promise to send him to renew the face of the church; faith in apprehending the truth of God, who hath foretold these things; and faith putting us upon those especial duties that God requires at our hands in such a season.

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