

there to glean among the sheaves. Thou commandest thy servants, the ministers of the bread of life, to let fall handfuls for our souls to gather. Thou spreadest thy skirt over us, and marriest us to thyself, and we become thine. Oh! for grace to abide by thee, and never, never to seek another field to glean in, nor by creature confidences to forget our entire dependence upon thee. Be thou all in all to our souls: for in thee all fulness dwells, and all the Father's love and Spirit's grace come to our souls in and through thee. Thou art such a Saviour and Goel-Redeemer as our souls need; and are we not, blessed Jesus, sinners suited for the display of the riches of thy grace to be manifested upon? Here, therefore, may our souls fix, cleave unto thee, and abide in thee, for thou hast betrothed us to thyself, until, at the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven, we are brought home to dwell with thee for ever, Amen.

FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

IT is not certain, that Samuel was the author of this book, which bears his name, though, probably, he might be the writer of that part of it which contains so much of his own life and ministry, which is prosecuted to the end of the twenty-fourth Chapter. But it is certain from this very cause, that neither the close of this first book of Samuel, nor the whole of the second book could be his. The general title therefore given to it in our Bibles, should seem to be the more proper: otherwise called *the first book of the Kings*. But, (as I have before remarked in the general observations, introductory to the perusal of either of the books of the sacred volume), it is not so material to us in the present hour, to be informed *who* the person was, the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to appoint as a scribe, for committing his truths to record; as to discover in the book itself, the blessed marks and well known characters, that it was written under his immediate inspiration. When the Reader is himself illuminated to know the Spirit's testimony, and can plainly read that testimony in the sacred writings; these are the grand things to be attended to, and the *imprimatur* of the Holy Ghost, which is to be looked for. And in these points, both the first and second books of Samuel, carry with them the fullest assurance.

In point of time, the history contained in the first book of Samuel, relates to the annals of the world about eleven hundred and

fifty years before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the history itself comprizeth a period of about fourscore years.

I would earnestly beg the Reader to look diligently, as he passeth through the perusal of this book of God, for sketches and outlines of the blessed Jesus. And yet more earnestly, rather than lean to his own understanding, beg the enlightening grace of the Holy Ghost to open to his view the several sweet tokens here given of the Redeemer. Depend upon it, here is a great deal contained in it, that hath peculiar reference to the Lord Jesus. God never left himself without witness, concerning the promised seed, in any one age or period of his Church. The apostle Peter in his sermon to the Jews, expressly assures us of Samuel's ministry concerning Jesus: *All the prophets (saith he) from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.* Acts iii. 24. And when we find that memorable promise of Jehovah, delivered to Eli, and which is recorded in this book of Samuel, in which God pledged himself to raise up a faithful Priest that should build him a sure house, and walk before his Anointed for ever: (Chap. ii. 35.) Surely there is enough in this blessed book of God, to convince us of the grand, and important things contained in it, to call up our most earnest attention, and to prompt the mind to be looking out for New Testament mercies, covered under an Old Testament dress.

Oh! thou, who hast given all scripture by inspiration, and hast directed it, and made it profitable, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; do thou blessed Spirit of all truth, direct both the Writer's and the Reader's mind into the truth, as it is in Jesus; that we may know the things which are freely given unto us of God; that what is written, whether in the law of Moses, or in the Prophets, or in the Psalms, concerning Jesus, may be opened to our understandings, that we may understand the scriptures, which will make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Amen.

CHAP. I.

CONTENTS.

F *This Chapter opens with an account of Samuel's family; of his father Elkanah, and his mother Hannah, particularly. The distress of his mother, by reason of her being childless; the temptation of her adversary on this score: her earnest prayer to God; Eli the Priest taking notice of her fervor in prayer, and mistaking for drunkenness, what he saw of her wrestling in prayer with God, reproves her; Hannah satisfies Eli, and obtains his good wishes, that the Lord might hear and answer her petition: Hannah is blessed of God, with a son, and Samuel is born; offerings are made in consequence thereof, to the Lord, in Shiloh. These are the principal things contained in this Chapter.*

NOW there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name *was* Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite:

Perhaps the pedigree of Samuel is here noticed, by way of manifesting the particular tribe of Israel, to which he belonged.

2 And he had two wives; the name of the one *was* Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

The having more wives than one, never did, nor ever can produce happiness. That it was from the lustful affections of our fallen nature, and not of divine authority, is evident from what our Lord said upon it: *that from the beginning it was not so.* Matt. xix. 8. And moreover, as marriage is a beautiful type of the mystical union between Christ and his Church, this sweet order is broken in upon by such means. See Ephes. v. 25—33.

3 And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, *were* there.

This is the first time, as far as I recollect, that we meet with this title of *the Lord of Hosts*, in the word of God, Jehovah Sabaoth. It is a very precious one to God's people, and the believer finds great comfort in it, when he calls to mind at any time, amidst the hosts of foes he hath to encounter, that his God in covenant, is the God of all the armies of heaven, and of all the inhabitants of the earth, and that he governeth them according to his will. Dan. iv. 35. The tabernacle of the Lord was set up in Shiloh, and this explains the cause wherefore the pious Israelites went up yearly to Shiloh. Joshua xviii. 1.

4 And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions:

5 But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion: for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb.

It is not very easy to form a clear opinion what those portions were, which Elkanah gave to his family upon those occasions. Probably it was a custom in the families of Israel, when in their yearly visits to the tabernacle, to testify their fellowship and communion with one another in this way by gifts, when assembling to enjoy communion with God.

But be those portions what they might, Hannah's was peculiarly marked, as being worthy, more distinguished, or better than the rest. Probably to testify that notwithstanding her barrenness, she was not the less lovely in her husband's eyes. Sweet thought, suggested to the Reader in this scripture! Jesus loves his church under all her weaknesses and barrenness. His love is the result of his own free grace, not her merit. And oh! what a worthy portion doth he give to his poor, empty, unprofitable, and barren followers! Dearest Jesus! be thou my portion, for thou alone art worthy. In thee, my soul will possess all things!

6 And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb.

Observe how Satan takes occasion to harrass God's afflicted ones. How he doth misconstrue the Lord's dealings, and tempt poor exercised souls to fret, even though the affliction is of the Lord. That the Lord had shut up the womb of Hannah, should have been enough to have reconciled her to the dispensation. But Reader, where shall you and I look for an example of one, who when the Lord appoints a trial, can readily and cheerfully adopt this language, *I know O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.* Psm. cxix. 75.

7 And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat.

It should seem that the exercises of poor Hannah's mind, were most severe when she went up to this annual feast. Yes. Whenever the Holy Ghost more graciously calls forth the soul into devotion, then the enemy most powerfully besets the soul with his temptation, either by himself, or his agents. And as the enemy attacks most in those holy seasons, so do our own corruptions bestir themselves most at this time, from within. Paul groaned under this, when he said, *I find then a law that when I would do good evil is present with me.* Rom. vii. 8.

8 Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? *am* not I better to thee than ten sons?

I should be led to conceive, that the abstinence here spoken of, concerning Hannah, did not refer to her daily, ordinary food; but the feast of the sacrifice. It was the custom in Israel, not to partake of the Lord's feast, in certain seasons of mourning. See the case of Aaron: Levit. x. 16—20. compared with Deut. xxvi. 14. And is not the christian's feast at the altar of commemoration of Jesus, to the same amount? As it is a feast *upon* a sacrifice in which the believer receives it, in token that he is accepted in the beloved, and hath found peace with God, in the blood of the cross; like the early church, every true partaker is supposed to celebrate the holy supper, as is recorded, from

house to house, eating their meat with gladness, and singleness of heart. See Acts ii. 46, 47. If we spiritualize the speech of Elkanah to Hannah, in this verse, and view the words as the language of Jesus to his church, how precious are they. Surely He is dearer than a thousand: for he hath given us in himself, a name better than of sons and daughters. Isaiah lvi. 5.

9 ¶ So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD.

It is more than probable, that Hannah moved by her husband's remonstrance, or what is yet more likely still, awakened by grace in the heart, from an higher authority than her husband, had been won over to partake of the feast of sacrifice. And as this sacrifice had wholly an eye to Jesus, perhaps his blessed Spirit awakened her to devotion. You may always mark it down as a most unquestionable truth, that whenever the Lord is about to visit, and bless any of his people, he pours out, sooner or later, a spirit of grace, to incline them to prayer.

10 And she *was* in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

The Holy Ghost hath been very particular, to mark the earnestness of Hannah's soul, in prayer. Reader! you will not overlook I hope, who it was that, being in an agony, prayed more earnestly. Oh! thou precious Lamb of God! how lovely art thou, in every renewed view! Luke xxii. 44.

11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

God is pleased, sometimes, that we should be particular in our askings. See Isaiah xlv. 11. John xvi. 24. The dedication of this man-child, which Hannah prayed for to God, as a Nazarite, perhaps was taken from Hannah's knowledge of the story of Samson. There was some similarity in the cases. Samson was a child of promise, and Samuel a child of prayer. See Judges xiii.

12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth.

13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only

her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

The great earnestness Hannah used in prayer, called forth the attention of Eli. No doubt it must have been very earnest. Her whole soul was convulsed and engaged in it. And her wrestling was like that of Jacob; *I will not let thee go except thou bless me.* See Gen. xxxii. 26, compared with Hosea xii. 3, 4.

14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.

It is worthy the Reader's remark, that when the Holy Ghost was poured out with such a fulness of power, on the minds of the apostles, at the day of Pentecost; the lookers on, had the same thought as Eli here had, that the apostles were full of new wine. Oh! for such an effusion of the blessed Spirit upon my soul, that my whole frame might feel this precious warmth, as one beyond himself. Acts ii. 13.

15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I *am* a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.

16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

How evidently was the mind of Hannah under the gracious influence of the Spirit; and how meek an answer did grace enable her to make, to the unjust charge. Reader! depend upon it, nothing can induce this, but the sweet teachings of God the Holy Ghost. If you or I at any time, are enabled to subdue our angry passions, or curb our unruly lusts, it is by the Spirit alone, that *we mortify the deeds of the body.* Rom. viii. 13.

17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant *thee* thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

Observe, how her meek answer wrought upon the mind of Eli. *A soft answer turneth away wrath.* But in all this, as in every other instance, how doth the matchless example of Him, who when he was reviled, reviled not again, meet our observation in every direction. 1 Pet. ii. 23.

18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

Reader! I do beg you to remark the blessed effects of prayer, on

the mind of Hannah. After she had poured out her heart in prayer to God, she went her way, and her countenance was no more sad. Such should be the uniform conduct of God's people. When I have committed my cause to Him, faith should act with firmness, in the assurance that believing I shall receive. Luke xi. 9, 10.

19 ¶ And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her.

Doth not this pious family set an example to every traveller? You see they would not set out upon their journey until they had first asked a blessing on their journey. See Jacob's conduct on this occasion: Gen. xxviii. 20, 21. The Lord's remembrance of Hannah, is a short, but expressive account of his mercy. The prophet Malachi uses a beautiful figure, when he calls it a book of remembrance. Malachi iii. 16.

20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, *saying*, Because I have asked him of the LORD.

I would have the Reader to notice in this verse, the expression, *when the time was come about*. There is a time to favor Zion. We are in haste for all we ask. But the Lord's time is the best time. The Lord waits this time to be gracious. If the Reader would mark this in his memorandums, it would be of great use to him, in waiting the Lord's answers to prayer. Isaiah xxx. 18. Samuel signifies *asked*. So that Hannah called the child by this name, to remind both him, and her, that being thus given in answer to prayer, every motive of gratitude demanded his being dedicated to the service of the great Giver. Reader! if you and I were thus to name our blessings, which the Lord bestows upon us in answer to prayer, should we not have many that we might also properly call our *Samuels*?

21 And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow.

22 But Hannah went not up, for she said unto her husband, *I will not go up* until the child be weaned, and *then* I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever.

23 And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou

have weaned him; only the LORD establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.

I only detain the Reader with one observation on these verses, which is just to remark, that while ungodly mothers may find reproof from Hannah's conduct, in that her absence from the house of God, in her nursery, was only for a season, in order that she might better rear this child for God's service for ever; whereas carnal parents stay away under pretence of family concerns, and neither go themselves nor send their little ones to his worship. Pious mothers may here learn how, when their detention at home is with an eye to the future glory of God, Hannah's example becomes their pattern. Paul's advice is worth regarding, in this instance particularly. 1 Tim. v. 14.

24 ¶ And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child *was* young.

It is not certain at what age Samuel was first presented. The weaning here spoken of, doth not perhaps mean from the breast only: but as he was to be the Lord's servant, Hannah weaned him as much as possible from her over affections. Creature comforts should all be so weaned, by those who would find suitable room, for the great Creator's love.

25 And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.

The offerings were costly. Here was the sin-offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offering, all presented. It was the custom in the Church of God, to make dedications with sacrifice. See Psalm l. 5.

26 And she said, O my lord, *as* thy soul liveth, my lord, I *am* the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD.

27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him:

28 Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.

With what humbleness did Hannah remind Eli of the past, in order that she might praise the Lord yet more for the present. *Lending* her child to the Lord is a more suited term, than *giving*. For what

have we to give, that are but tenants of a day? Reader! it is sweet to observe, that though all the gifts of our God to us, are but as things lent, and which the bountiful giver may recall again whenever he pleaseth; yet there is one precious, blessed Gift he cannot, he will not recall, and that is, his Christ. Every other gift we may lose. But God our Father gives us Jesus to have, and to hold for ever. Oh! precious, precious Gift! Precious, precious Giver! Some have thought that what is said here, in the close of the chapter, that *he worshipped the Lord there*; means, that the child Samuel is the person spoken of. No doubt a child so wonderfully distinguished, as his after life shews, might from his very earliest years, and under such godly parents, be taught to pray. O that parents would teach their little ones, with the first dawn of apprehension, to lisp out the praises of Jesus! Is it not out of the mouth of babes and sucklings the Lord ordaineth strength? Psm. viii. 2.

REFLECTIONS.

How sweetly the Holy Ghost teacheth the Church in the history of all characters, the universal taint which marks our poor fallen nature! Elkanah, though a pious man, cannot be content without breaking the order of God, in a double marriage. And Hannah, though a partaker of grace, must have a child, or she is a woman of a sorrowful spirit. Oh! how fully doth God the Spirit teach us, by such views, the necessity of redemption by Jesus. Dearest Redeemer! we humbly feel our need of thee, and earnestly pray to be interested in thee. Lord! without thee, and thy righteousness, what are the best of men, but sin and corruption!

See Reader in this verse of Hannah's petition, the blessed effects of prayer! What cannot prayer accomplish! Prayer can shut up, and open again the windows of heaven. For *Elias* we are told, was a man of like passions with ourselves; and yet at his cry, so the Lord answered. *Hannah* was one also partaking of human infirmity. And yet the Lord proved himself a prayer-hearing, and a prayer-answering God. Oh! for faith, to plead with God in Jesus's name, nothing doubting, and our Lord Jesus hath said, that *all things we ask believing we shall receive*.

I detain the Reader with one observation more, in the dedication of Samuel to the Lord, to remark the sweetness, and graciousness of pious parents making a solemn surrender of their little ones to the Lord. To whom shall we commit them, but to Him from whom we have received them? May not every pious parent say; 'All cometh, Lord, from thine hand, all is thine own, and of thine own do I give thee.' But how is this subject heightened to the soul of the believer, in the recollection that such was the unequalled love of the Father to a lost world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end, that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life: Oh! for ever blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

CHAP. II.

CONTENTS.

We have in this Chapter, the song of Hannah in her devout thanksgivings to the Lord, for her Samuel. She had dedicated the child to the Lord's service, and then closes the subject with praise. Besides this, the Chapter contains an account of the increase of Elkanah's family: of the sin of Eli's family; a man of God sent to reprove Eli: the threatened death of Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, in one day: the gracious promise of God's raising up to himself, a faithful Priest, and the degraded state of the house of Eli.

AND Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.

There is a great deal of the spirit of prophecy, as well as the spirit of prayer and praise, in this hymn of Hannah's, and therefore demands our attention the more. Though it is called a prayer, yet it contains subject also of information to the Church. The special mercy Hannah had received, gives occasion to her, to comfort the people of God in all ages with an assurance of the Lord's mercies to others. But principally I would call upon the Reader to observe, how much gospel is contained in it, and how evidently the Holy Ghost must have been shedding his sweet influences upon the mind of Hannah, when speaking as she doth in this verse, of rejoicing in God's salvation. Is not this plainly referring to the Lord Jesus? Did not the dying patriarch say the same? Gen. xlix. 18. And is not Jesus expressly called, Jehovah's salvation? Isaiah xlix. 6.

2 *There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.*

I pray the Reader not to overlook the great warmth of devotion, expressed in those words. The unspotted holiness of Jehovah, calls forth we are told, the unceasing adoration of the blessed. Hannah first celebrates this glorious perfection of our God, which plainly proves that one, and the same Spirit operated upon her mind, and their's. And here by the way, Reader, is a plan opened to your heart, to see whether the same Spirit operates upon you. The song of saints and angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, is of the holiness of Jehovah. None but redeemed souls can rejoice in it. Devils and spirits of darkness know that Jehovah is holy, but cannot love him for it. But his people rejoice in this glorious perfection, because in the holiness of their surety, the Lord Jesus, they see this holiness glorified, and their redemption eternally secured. I would have the Reader also consider, and then, as the blessed Spirit shall instruct him, judge for himself, whether Hannah when calling Jehovah a Rock, did not evidently allude to Jesus, who in all the eventful journeys of Israel, through the wilderness, was the

Rock that followed them, and whom the Apostle decidedly declares to have been Christ. Compare Exod. xxxiii. 21, 22. Exod. xvii. 6. Numb. xx. 8—11. 1 Cor. x. 4.

3 Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let *not* arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

If the Reader looks closely to this, and the past verse, he will perceive, that Hannah is engaged to celebrate several of Jehovah's divine perfections. First his holiness; next his Power; then his Wisdom; and next his Justice. Reader! it is delightful to contemplate the astonishing perfections of God, as they are in himself. But it is doubly so, when we contemplate them, as all pledged in covenant engagements, ready upon every occasion, to be brought forward into exercise, for the blessing and security of his people.

4 The bows of the mighty men *are* broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.

5 *They that were* full have hired out themselves for bread; and *they that were* hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.

Some have thought, that Hannah is here triumphing over *Penninah*, who before insulted her. But I conceive, that Hannah's mind was soaring to an higher subject. It is the triumph of the Church of Jesus over all her adversaries, that she had in view. And here is large scope for the illustration of these precious truths. The vows of the carnal, in their own strength, are broken. The full in their own righteousness, are sent empty away. While on the contrary the Lord satisfieth the hungry with good things; and poor barren souls are satiated with the bread of life.

6 The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.

7 The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifeth up.

8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, *and* lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set *them* among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth *are* the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them.

These are all so many beautiful repetitions of the same important doctrine, in asserting God's sovereignty over all things, both in the kingdoms of providence, and of grace. And it is sweet when the heart

finds a cordial assent, in all the circumstances of our own warfare. Reader! what can afford more solid joy, than the contemplation of the Lord Jesus, in the character which John saw him in, and which corresponds to what is here said: He hath the keys of hell and death. Rev. i. 18.

9 He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall be thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

These are very precious expressions, and all evidently referring to the mercies of the gospel. Here for the first time, we meet with the title of the Lord Jesus, as the Anointed of the Father: one of the most lovely, and distinguishing characters of the Redeemer; the Messiah, that is, the sent, the Sealed, the Anointed. Reader! it is the peculiar joy, and triumph of the followers of the Lord Jesus, that he is the Christ of God. And what a sweet thought is it, that our Christ is God's Christ. Our chosen is God's chosen. Our Holy One, is God's Holy One. So that Jehovah, and the sinner here join issue, and meet together. Hannah certainly knew this, and under the full triumph of it, positively declares that the Lord will keep the feet of his saints. And if the feet, surely, the heart, the head. And well must they be kept, whom the Lord keeps. Oh! precious assurance, founded in a precious anointed Redeemer. But this is not all. While the Lord keeps his people, his, and their adversaries he will destroy. Jesus is our King, and all enemies shall be put under his feet. So that here is assurance, that the same Anointed Lord, will save his people, and utterly consume his foes. So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord! was the close of Deborah's song, as it is here prophesied in the close of Hannah's song: while them that love him, shall be as the sun, when he goeth forth in his might. Judges v. 31.

11 And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest.

While Elkanah returns to his home with his family, the child Samuel is left under the ministry of Eli. It is sweet and interesting to behold the early introduction of children into God's service. This was the commendation of Timothy, 2 Tim. iii. 15.

12 ¶ Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.

I beg the Reader not to overlook the expression, *they knew not the Lord*; that is, they knew not the Lord in a way of communion and fellowship. They knew him in the outward hearsay account of their

Maker, but not in a way of grace. And what an awful account doth the Lord himself give of all such ministers, in the day of judgment? See Matt. vii. 22, 23.

13 And the priest's custom with the people *was, that*, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh hook of three teeth in his hand;

14 And he struck *it* into the pan or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the flesh hook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.

15 Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.

16 And *if* any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and *then* take *as much* as thy soul desireth: then he would answer him, *Nay*; but thou shalt give *it me* now: and if not, I will take *it* by force.

17 Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for the men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

I include all these verses within one point of view, and a sad view they exhibit of the horrible state of the sons of Eli in their conduct before the Lord. Alas, alas! what a wretched mind must these young men have possessed, by which their sin was not only great before the Lord, but even the minds of the people were led away thereby to abhor the offering of the Lord. I would have the Reader observe, how the Lord speaks of such awful characters, Malachi ii. 8, 9.

18 ¶ But Samuel ministered before the LORD, *being* a child, girded with a linen ephod.

19 Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought *it* to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

As *Ramoth* was not above ten or eleven miles from *Shiloh*, probably more frequent communication took place between Samuel and his pa-

rents. The Holy Ghost only takes occasion in this place to remark how Samuel was annually clothed from the attention of his mother. The linen ephod he wore was the distinction of the Levites.

20 And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, the LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home.

21 And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD.

How much those gain, who give unto the Lord! Solomon's observation is well founded; *He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord: and look what he hath given, he will pay him again.* Prov. xix. 17.

22 Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

23 And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people.

24 Nay, my sons; for *it is* no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD's people to transgress.

It doth not appear that Eli himself was concerned in this evil of his house. No doubt, he had educated his sons in the knowledge of the Lord. Perhaps he was too much relaxed in the discipline of his family; and his reproofs were not so sharp as they ought to have been. But Reader! do not fail to recollect, that grace is not hereditary. From what follows in the latter part of this chapter, it should seem that Eli did not enter into the full view of the enormity of his children's transgression. We do not hear of any prayers, or cries, he sent forth to God to reclaim them.

25 If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him? notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.

What a sweet verse is this, abstracted from the family of Eli, and applied to the case of Christians in general. Who shall intreat for the

sinner? I answer, Jesus; for so saith John, "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." Precious Redeemer! thou art both our Advocate and Propitiation; our Judge and Saviour. Thou art all we stand in need of, for the transgressions of our nature. 1 John ii. 1, 2. Observe, how sin hardens the heart, in the case of Eli's sons. The Lord had given them up to a judicial blindness. Oh! for grace to all poor sinners, to offer up continually that prayer of the Church, "From all blindness of heart, good Lord deliver us!"

26 And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.

How the mind of the Reader is relieved again and again in this melancholy account of Eli's sons, in the relation that is given by the Holy Ghost, of the progressive state of Samuel in the ways of the Lord. Reader! doth not this bring to your recollection what is said here of Samuel's Lord. See Luke ii. 52.

27 ¶ And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house?

Observe with what a solemn introduction the man of God is here mentioned: and what a most awful message he brought. Probably the revelation here spoken of, of the Lord's appearance to his father's house, referred to the general deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt; or if any thing more personal or particular was alluded to, it might have been the Lord's appearance to Aaron, the great Father of the Levites. Exod. iv. 27.

28 And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel *to be* my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?

Aaron was very eminently chosen and set apart to the priestly office; and hence became the object of envy. See Numb. xvi. 8—11.

29 Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded *in my* habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?

It should seem to be more than probable from hence, that though Eli did not himself commit the sin of profanation here charged upon his sons, yet he winked at it, and partook in the plunder. For otherwise he could not be said to have made himself fat with the chiefest of

ferings of the people. Be this, however, as it may, certain it is, from the severity of the reproof the man of God had in commission to deliver to Eli, the hoary priest was not so zealous as he ought to have been for the honor of God; but, instead of disgracing his children, and removing them from their office, he contented himself with merely making a mild expostulation. Alas! how doth nature and natural feelings blind the eye to the steady regard of God's glory and honor.

30 Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed *that* thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

Certain it is, that in the first grant of the priesthood to Aaron the grant was conditional. And it is remarkable, that Eli was descended from Aaron's youngest son, *Ithamar*, and not *Eleazar* his eldest. But no notice is taken in the sacred history, how it had been transferred from the family of Eleazar to that of Ithamar's family, as in the case of Eli it must have been done. But I conceive that an infinitely higher object the Holy Ghost hath in view, in the expression contained in this verse, and that it is meant to convey the total abolition of the Levitical dispensation, by the introduction of the gospel in the Lord Jesus. He is indeed the great High Priest, who hath duly honored his Father's righteous law, and as such, Jehovah is engaged to honor him. And all his sons are thereby made kings and priests to God and the Father. Sweetest Jesus! thou art a priest for ever, and of an everlasting priesthood. And thou makest the offerings of thy people precious, in thy salvation; for thou art both the priest, and the offering, and the altar, which sanctifieth the gift.

31 Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house.

32 And thou shalt see an enemy *in my habitation*, in all *the wealth* which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever.

33 And the man of thine, *whom* I shall not cut off from mine altar, *shall be* to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.

These are awful denunciations, and are accompanied both with an awful sign and commencement of the threatened visitation. To lose both sons in one day; and that Eli himself should be the witness of this

visitation, is a proof that all the other threatened evils would in their season surely come. See chap. iv. 17. And what a sad catalogue was to follow? None of the race of Eli should be long lived; there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever: that the family of Eli should see an enemy in God's habitation: perhaps unhallowed men exercising the priestly office: those of Eli's family, which were permitted to live, should be but for a reproach; perhaps by living in a scandalous manner: and that so far from being in the exercise of the priesthood, which had it been well conducted, would have been perpetuated in Eli's family, the lowest offices of the servants to the priests, should be eagerly sought after by his posterity to keep them from starving. Behold, Reader! the awful consequences of sin. See in the sad examples of Hophni and Phinehas, that when the kindest gifts of the people would not satisfy them; their posterity shall want a morsel of bread. See that awful scripture thus strikingly fulfilled, in visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. Exod. xx. 5. Perhaps this visitation on Eli's family was, beside lesser instances, more strikingly shewn in the days of Solomon, when *Abiathar*, who was among the descendants of Eli, was turned out of the Priest's office. 1 Kings i. 42, 49.

34 And this *shall be* a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them.

35 And I will raise me up a faithful priest, *that* shall do according to *that* which *is* in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine Anointed for ever.

Amidst all the dreadful denunciations on the family, and posterity of Eli, what a precious scripture, what a precious promise, comes in here, to give comfort to the mind? I cannot think as some have thought, that this scripture had its accomplishment in the person of Zadok, and that the anointed, before whom this faithful Priest is said to walk, meant David king of Israel. Surely, Reader, none but the ever blessed Jesus could merit the title of faithful Priest. Neither could any be considered as the truly anointed of God, but He to whom the Spirit was given without measure, and who was indeed anointed to be, at one and the same time, the Prophet, the Priest, and the King, of his people. If any difficulty should seem to arise in the Reader's mind, how Jesus could be this faithful Priest, and yet walk before himself, as it were, in his other character, as the anointed of Jehovah; this objection is at once done away, by only considering how impossible it would be to prefigure him who fills all offices, unless by such means. Hence Joseph, who in all the grand events of his going down into Egypt; being cast into prison, exalted at the right hand of Pharaoh, and made Governor over the whole land; in all these, and numberless other features of character, he most strongly typified the Lord Jesus: yet Judah, who as strikingly pointed to the Lord Jesus, in his sweet office of Intercessor, is, in that same history, represented as interceding with Joseph. We must never,

therefore, stretch any part of the sacred word so far, as not to remember the impossibility of representing divine things, by human, otherwise than in part. No doubt, in all the holy volume, Jesus is the sum, and substance. To him every type refers; every sacrifice points: in him all the promises are completed: and every prophecy is explained. Jesus is the Alpha, and Omega, of all; or, as Paul speaks, *Christ is all, and in all.* Coloss. iii. 11.

36 And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that is left in thine house shall come *and* crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! Stand still, and fully contemplate the character of Hannah, and observe, how the harp which was before hung on the willow, is now strung and sounded to the praise of Jehovah. See, how her note is changed. And the countenance which was before sad, is now lighted up in praise, and thanksgiving. And in remarking the blessed effects of grace, in this woman's experience; do not overlook the principal feature of it, in that her song of joy is not merely directed to praise God for his gift, but to praise the great Giver. She doth not dwell upon the loveliness of her Samuel, and celebrate, as a fond parent might be supposed to do, the features of his body, or the promising features of his mind. But her whole soul seems to be swallowed up in adoring the God and giver of her Samuel. Oh! how delightfully doth she hold forth the holiness, the faithfulness, the goodness and wisdom of a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God: and how sweetly she triumphs in the assurance of having this God for her Rock, and as the horn of her salvation. Reader! do not overlook that this precious covenant God is the believer's God in Jesus, in all generations. He is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. And why should not you and I find the same confidence? Oh! for grace to adopt the same assurance of faith, and in the contemplation of all his rich mercies in Jesus, to cry out, with one of old, *For this God is our God, for ever, and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.*

While the sad contrast to Hannah's song, in the awful example of Eli's family, should fill our minds with suitable reflections, and call forth prayer to be kept from all presumptuous transgressions; let us, from lamenting the wretched and corrupt state of all Levitical and Priestly ministrations, direct our thoughts, and call forth our warmest affections to Jesus, that faithful priest of God our Father, the Mediator of a better covenant, founded upon better promises. Yes! thou dear Redeemer, thou art indeed the faithful priest our God promised to raise up. Thou hast done all, according to what was in thine and our Father's heart, and in his mind. And God our Father hath built thee a sure house for ever. Oh! grant, thou great Melchisedeck, that we,

whom thou hast made kings and priests to God and thy Father, may walk before thee, the Lord's anointed, for ever. And give us to rejoice that we have such an High Priest, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. And while, as in the instance of *Eli*, we perceive that none among the sons of Aaron, whose race is mortal, and whose stock corrupt, can be exempt from sin: though the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

CHAP. III.

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter we have related to us the call of Samuel, in an extraordinary manifestation of the Lord to him by night in the temple. What the Lord said to him; his fear of communicating it to Eli: Eli's demand of Samuel to be informed of it: Samuel's faithful relation of it: Eli's solemn resignation in consequence thereof to God's will. Samuel in the close of the Chapter is said to be established in the Prophetical office.

AND the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; *there was no open vision.*

Reader! do not fail to remark, that while the sons of Eli were so worthless, this child, unconnected with Eli, attended diligently in his service. How often have we seen, and still see, in life, that while those who have all the advantages of a pious education, and pious examples, nevertheless neglect and despise the whole; others, without such advantages, come forward and improve. Oh! Reader! learn to value grace above all accomplishments. Rather, blessed Jesus, would I have thy favour in the lowest station, than without it to dwell in the palace of the great. How precious must have been, in those days, the slightest tokens of God's favour in his holy word. And ought not that blessed word of God to be very precious now? Lord! give me grace to esteem it more than my necessary food. May it be my study all the day. And may my eyes prevent the night watches that I may meditate therein. Psalm cxix. 97. 148.

2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli *was* laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, *that* he could not see;

3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God *was*, and Samuel was laid down *to sleep*;

The smaller lamps, which were lighted for common use, no doubt like other common things, were extinguished when their ministry be-

came no longer necessary. But the lamps before the altar were never suffered to go out. To intimate, no doubt, that neither the fire of Jesus's sacrifice, nor the light of the Holy Ghost's grace, were ever to cease their efficacy. Levit. xxiv. 2.

4 That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here *am I*.

It appears, that in this first call of God, Samuel was unconscious who it was that called. He knew not the voice. So is it frequently with the first manifestations of grace to the heart. When a sinner first hears the word of God, by the ministry of his servants, though the Lord's power accompanies the word, and the poor creature discovers more in it than he ever did before; yet, still he is unacquainted with the cause of its being more interesting than before, and only fancies that it is the peculiarity of the word, or the very striking nature of the sermon which he had heard, or the Providence with which he might be visited. His mind is arrested, but he doth not yet discover the cause.

5 And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here *am I*; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

^s Under the first impressions of the call, Samuel concluded that it must have been Eli, and therefore ran to him. But, when the aged Priest told him that he did not call him, Samuel was easily reconciled, and returned to his slumber. And doth not the sinner do the same, under the first impressions of grace, very frequently? Elihu describes it, when he saith, *God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not.* Job xxxiii. 14.

6 And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here *am I*; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son: lie down again.

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.

This last verse explains wherefore Samuel was unconscious who it was that called him: *he did not yet know the Lord*. But how very precious are the first views of God! How delightful, when the visions of God begin! Here might Samuel look back, in the after stages of life, when any circumstances of trial, or trouble should arise, and say, Did the Lord my God call me, when I was a child; did he reveal himself to me then, when I had no consciousness of the Lord, and will he leave me now? Is he not the same God still; and is not his mercy towards me the same? Reader! if there be similar circumstances in your life, will you not make, through grace, the same use of them?

8 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said,

Here *am* I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.

How gracious is the Lord, in repeating his calls. How numberless are the calls of his grace, in the experience of his people! Eli is taught before Samuel, that these repeated calls, must be from the Lord. So the ministers of God, are sometimes better enabled to explain, than the Lord's people themselves, how the Lord is dealing with them; and therefore, when at any time, souls are first brought under the awakenings of the Spirit, they would do well to consult some faithful minister, and communicate to him, what their minds feel.

9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

Samuel thus instructed, is now prepared to make answer to the call of God, when that call should be renewed. I would have the Reader remark with me, *two* things in these verses. *One* is, that the Lord now calls Samuel by name twice, Samuel, Samuel. As if, after the first discoveries of his love, his manifestations are fuller, and larger. And the *other* is, that though Eli commanded Samuel to say, Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth; Samuel omitted the word LORD: perhaps, Samuel hesitated to call the Person speaking Jehovah, until he was more fully convinced that it was Jehovah. This glorious incommunicable Name of Jehovah, all the seed of Israel were taught from their youth, to be very cautious in the use of: and never were allowed to use, but upon the most solemn occasions.

11 ¶ And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

12 In that day I will perform against Eli all *things* which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.

13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

14 And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

This information in its consequences, to young Samuel, was not so much what became interesting to him, as to the house of Eli. But yet, if we consider what is said of Samuel's sons, in the after history of his life, who walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment; perhaps, the impression of this first vision to Samuel, was designed to leave a suitable effect upon his heart. See Chap. viii. 3.

15 And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision.

16 Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel my son. And he answered, Here *am* I.

17 And he said, What *is* the thing that *the* LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide *any* thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.

18 And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It *is* the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.

These verses are very interesting. Let us admire the modesty of Samuel, who, though the Lord had thus began to manifest his revelations, it did not prompt him to be lifted up above the ordinary office of a door-opener. No! Divine favors always tend to induce humbleness of soul. Whenever the Lord exalts a soul, depend upon it, that soul, will lie lower in the dust before God. See Abraham's conduct in this particular: Gen. xvii. 3. The pious resignation of Eli deserves also to be noticed. Though this tremendous judgment was thus pronounced upon him and his household, yet he bends before it. It is the Lord that hath said it, and that is enough. Eli hath nothing more to say. Perhaps Eli viewed it as a temporal judgment: and therefore, the more readily bowed down before it; hoping that it would act as a correction, according to that sweet promise: *if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they accept the punishment of their iniquity; then will I remember my Covenant.* Levit. xxvi. 41. See another similar example in the case of Aaron's sons, when the Lord consumed them. Aaron held his peace. See Levit. x. 1—3.

19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

While looking at Samuel, in his progress towards the prophetic office, I would desire the Reader, not to lose sight of a greater than Samuel, on whom the Spirit was to rest without measure. Of Him it is also said, that *Jesus increased in wisdom, and stature, and in favor*

with God and men. Yes! the manhood of the Lord Jesus, was in all points, in the sinless state of his nature, such as ours: for it behoved him to be in all things, made like unto his brethren. Luke ii. 52. Heb. ii. 17.

20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel *was* established *to be* a prophet of the LORD.

21 And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

Successive revelations, follow the effectual calls of God's grace. Jesus hath promised his gracious manifestations, to his people; and the Father's with him. Reader! it should be the very earnest enquiry of believing souls, to search for those precious tokens of divine love. John xiv. 23.

REFLECTIONS.

I WOULD pause over this delightful Chapter, which the Holy Ghost hath graciously caused to be written for the edification of the Church; and in the call of Samuel desire to bless God for all the early manifestations, which the Lord hath been pleased to make to his people.

Who can venture to call in question the work of God, upon the heart of his people, when in the instance of a child like Samuel, we see that works so strikingly manifested, and at a time, when the rich partaker of this unspeakable grace, knew not the Lord, and was unconscious what grace meant. Let any Reader compare the striking dissimilarity, between the hoary Eli, and the young child Samuel: And then let him determine, (for to his own decision I leave it) what but grace, could have made all this difference.

If the Reader be among the youthful part of mankind, let him reflect upon the blessed manifestations here recorded, to have been made to Samuel. And are you not anxious, I would say, my youthful friend, to enjoy the same? Do you not feel the rising prayer, in the soul; *Lord, manifest thyself to me!* if not in a way so splendid, yet at least in a way so gracious, as to Samuel, that I may be a partaker also, of the grace which is in Christ Jesus!

And let not the most aged of my Readers close the book, and take leave of this Chapter, without first having dropped the knee in *prayer*, or *praise*. In *prayer*; if so be, that no evidences of the renewed life be found in his own experience; that the same God, who called Samuel, would, though at the eleventh hour, call him; and in *praise*; if the Lord hath manifested himself, as in the case of Samuel, to his soul, otherwise than he doth to the word.

Blessed Lord! help my soul to praise thee, under the humble hope and assurance, that thou hast called me out of darkness into this marvellous light, and translated me from the power of Satan, into the kingdom of thy dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

CHAP. IV.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter folds within its bosom heavy tidings for Israel in general, and Eli's house in particular. In a battle between the Philistines and Israel, the Israelites presumptuously, and without taking counsel of the Lord, bring the ark of God into the camp. The Philistines are again conquerors; they take the ark of God: the two sons of Eli, according to the Lord's declaration, are both slain. Tidings coming to Eli of those events, the old man falls from his seat, and dies; and his daughter-in-law, Phinehas's wife, in the premature labor of child-bed, dies also. Such are the woeful contents of this chapter.

AND the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Eben-ezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.

By the word of Samuel coming to all Israel, is meant, no doubt, to shew that the Lord had commissioned him, as his servant, that whether the people would hear, or whether they would forbear, they should know that there was a prophet of the Lord among them. Ezek. ii. 5.

2 And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.

This spot of Ebenezer, where the Philistines pitched their army, was made memorable in the after battles of Israel. About twenty years after, here it was that Samuel set up the stone of help, and called it *Ebenezer*. And doth not our God now sometimes, and not unfrequently, make that very spot memorable where afflictions and soul-searching visitations first begin? The heavy slaughter in this battle of the army of Israel, by the uncircumcised Philistines, loudly testified the Lord's displeasure at the sin of his people. The Lord had said, that if they despised his statutes, and abhorred his judgments, he would set his face against them, and they should be slain of their enemies; and here we see it, Levit. xxvi. 15. 17.

3 And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.

What an awful character is man, void of the teachings of divine grace! Had Israel been humbled under the mighty hand of God, and had the

elders of Israel, with prayer and supplication, consulted the ark of God, instead of presumptuously bringing the ark out of the sacred spot where God had appointed it to be placed, all might have been well. But by this daring act, unauthorized of God, and as it should almost seem, in defiance, (from the expression, *wherefore hath the Lord smitten us?*) they evidently manifested that punishment, instead of humbling, had hardened their minds. Reader! if under divine visitations, instead of flying to Jesus, we take up with the mere profession of the religion of Jesus, and trust in the form of godliness, void of the power of it; wherein do we differ from them?

4 So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth *between* the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, *were* there with the ark of the covenant of God.

One might reasonably have thought that after the message of the man of God to Eli's house, no Israelite would any more have put confidence in the ministry of his two sons, much less expect a blessing from God, when such profane hands were employed in bringing up the ark of God. But *evil men, and seducers* (saith an apostle) *shall wax worse, and worse, deceiving and being deceived.* 2 Tim. iii. 13. Reader! pause with me over this passage, to remark, that when God ceaseth to punish, depend upon it destruction is at hand. If Ephraim is let alone, it is because he is joined to his idols. Hosea iv. 17. Reader! I charge it both upon your heart and my own, to keep in view with the most solemn remembrance, that in all our troubles and visitations, we look out for the hand that smites, and watch over the heart that is smitten, for improvement under it. Doth the affliction, be it what it may, make me more prayerful? Am I more humble? more submissive? Is Jesus more precious? Put it down as a never failing maxim, that no affliction is truly sanctified, until these effects are induced. Precious Jesus! do thou, in all our visitations, graciously make this the issue.

5 And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.

How different this carnal joy from joy in the Holy Ghost?

6 And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What *meaneth* the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? and they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp.

7 And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.

8 Woe unto us ! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods ? these *are* the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

9 Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you : quit yourselves like men, and fight.

The view here given of the enemies of God, may serve to teach us how exceedingly, even in carnal minds, the awful dread of danger is incorporated in their very nature. Reader ! be assured of this one thing, ungodly men feel conviction at times of their being wrong, and are compelled to give their evidence of it, though they are not brought over to the interests of God and of Christ. Sweet thought of encouragement to the believer, in the midst of all the prosperity of sinners. See Asaph's conclusion on this point. Psalm lxxiii. 1—20.

10 ¶ And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent : and there was a very great slaughter ; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen.

11 And the ark of God was taken ; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

The awful event of the captivity of the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts which dwelleth between the cherubim, furnisheth for solemn contemplation such an interesting subject as must not be hastily passed over. The Psalmist hath recorded this sad history in the after ages of the church, and assigned at the same time the causes of it. *Israel provoked God to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. Wherefore the Lord greatly abhorred Israel, and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies hand.* Psm. lxxviii. 58—64. This passage throws a light upon our present subject. No wonder the Lord forsook *Shiloh*, when the ark in *Shiloh* was profaned, and both priests and people had forsaken the Lord in *Shiloh*. No wonder that the Lord in the correction of his people should suffer the enemy to triumph so far, when his love could not triumph in the recovering of them. Is it not time when mercies cannot reclaim, that severities shall be used ? Reader ! let you and I pause over this history. Doth not the Lord speak in it and by it, to all his backsliding children in the language of his prophet : *Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel.* Jeremiah vii. 12. But while we awfully attend to this dark side of the subject, let us not forget to view the bright side also. Though God did remove or cause to be removed, the ark which was a symbol of his divine presence, he did not remove himself which that ark represented. Though the church in that age or any other age of corruption like it, may lose the ordinances of Jesus ; blessed be his holy name, his church

cannot lose him. If Shiloh be without the ark, the church of the Lord of Shiloh shall never be without its Lord. *Lo! I am with you always, (saith our Jesus) even unto the end of the world.* This is a refreshing thought to my soul, Reader, in the present moment of writing. God in mercy grant, if it be his holy will, that the golden candlestick of the gospel may never be taken out of its place. But if his wisdom hath so appointed, the candlestick is but a moveable in his house, the house itself like mount Zion standeth fast for ever. The church of our Jesus shall remain; where his name shall be known, and where his praise shall be sung, *as long as the sun and moon endureth, from one generation to another.* Psm. lxxii. 5—17.

12 ¶ And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.

13 And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told *it*, all the city cried out.

14 And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What *meaneth* the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli.

15 Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim that he could not see.

16 And the man said unto Eli, *I am* he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son?

17 And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

18 And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

I bring all these verses into one and the same point of view, not only for shortness sake, but also from their connection. This messenger of evil tidings is marked by the Holy Ghost as a Benjamite; for though all Israel were deeply involved in this ruin, yet the Benjamites which possessed Shiloh were, if possible, more so than any. For now they had lost the ark for ever, after a possession of nearly 350 years. For though

the ark itself was indeed soon after brought back to Israel from the land of the Philistines, yet it never after rested in Shiloh. Zion now became the hallowed spot, in the tribe of Judah. No doubt in allusion to him, and as typical of him who was the sum and substance of the ark, and who was to spring out of Judah. So is this event celebrated in Psalm lxxviii. 67—69. The character of *Eli* in this account next claims our attention. What a sad close to a long life, after a period of nearly an hundred years, and forty in his government. Whether he died in the faith I do not venture to judge, as the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to be silent on this head concerning him. If he did *not* how doubly awful is the thought, that after ministering in holy things so long, he himself should be a cast away. One of the most solemn passages in God's word, as it respects the ministers of the sanctuary, and enough to make the ears of every one of the sacred order that heareth it to tingle is, that sentence of the Lord Jesus: *Many (not a few) shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye workers of iniquity.* Matt. vii. 22, 23. And if *Eli* did die in the faith, (which from the several circumstances of his greater anxiety for the safety of the ark, than the life of his children, one might charitably be led to hope he did), yet in what a trembling manner did he go out of life, and as a child put to bed in the dark. Oh precious Jesus! keep thy redeemed ones from darkening their prospects of thee, by leaning to creatures of any kind. Make us always to remember the rod is in the covenant. Let an eye be plucked out or a right arm cut off, if either would tend to rob thee of thy glory, and our souls of their comfort. Psalm lxxxix. 30—35.

19 And his daughter in law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, *near* to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father in law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her.

20 And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard *it*.

21 And she named the child I-chabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband.

22 And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

The affliction of *Eli's* house did not end with *Eli's* death. His daughter-in-law *Phinehas's* wife, is added on this occasion to the list of

the dead. I should hope from the relation given of this woman, though her name be not mentioned, that she was a partaker of grace. Her chief sorrow was the loss of the ark of God. This is evident from calling her child *I-chabod*, that is, the glory is departed. Surely had she not loved God's glory, the departure of it would not have been so sensibly felt, to have induced such eventful consequences.

REFLECTIONS.

THOUGH I have incorporated several suitable thoughts as they seemed to arise from the several verses in the Chapter opening before me; yet I have not said all that might be said by way of devout reflections in the perusal of it, nor superseded the necessity of adding more. Various are the improvements this chapter affords, and under the blessed Spirit's teaching, many are the precious practical observations which ought to result from it.

Who is there that beholds the ark of God as the symbol and token of the divine presence, and of the covenant engagements of our God in the person of his dear Son, but while reading in this chapter the just judgments of God upon his people in the loss of the ark, must feel deep concern for the transgressions of the people in all ages, and especially in the present day of infidelity, and the many crying abominations of the land. Did the Lord give up Israel of old for their sins into the hands of their enemies; and are his people Israel now more secure from his judgments? Was there just cause for this awful dispensation then, and is there no cause for a similar visitation now?

You that are the people of God! do you not feel yourselves deeply affected in the contemplation of the spiritual miseries that seem to be hanging over his church? Doth not our Jesus speak, as he did once to the church of *Ephesus*; *Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place.* Oh! should our eyes be brought to see the gospel taken from us: the sun going down upon our ordinances, and all our precious sabbaths and gospel feasts cut short: might we not, like the daughter-in-law of Eli, write, *I-chabod* upon all that would then remain, when the glory was departed.

Ye parents of tenderness, and masters of houses and families, mark in Eli's mistaken indulgence the dreadful consequence of honouring our sons or our households before God, and by a sinful compliance with the corrupt desires and irreligious dispositions of those about us, make shipwreck of the faith and of a good conscience. If we set not up religion in our houses; if we neglect both by precept and example to lead our little ones to the ark of God's presence in his house of prayer; if our servants or our children make themselves vile and we restrain them not? Oh! think of Eli, behold the melancholy close of his life, and be assured that God will not pass over the iniquities even of his people.

But chiefly, ye ministers of my God, be very jealous for his honour who hath so honoured you, as to appoint you for watchmen on the walls of Zion. *Cry aloud! spare not! lift up your voices like trumpets, and shew the people their transgressions, and the house of Israel their sins.* Be very jealous for the ark of God's sake. And oh, thou dear Redeemer! do thou, for to thou alone the glorious work belongs, do thou ever dear, ever precious Jesus, continue to us thy presence, thy

love, thy pardoning, renewing, reviving, quickening, strengthening, and confirming grace. We would say in the language of thine own most holy word, to the holy undivided Three which bear record in Heaven, *Arise, O Lord, into thy rest: thou and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints shout for joy.*

CHAP. V.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter relates to us the history of the ark of God while in captivity. The Philistines for a short space rejoice over their spoil. But this joy is turned into sorrow. God visits the Philistines with plagues, till at length they are constrained to call a council in order to deliver them from what at the first they considered a great triumph.

AND the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod.

2 When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

What the Philistines design was in bringing the ark into the house of their idolatrous God, is not so easy to determine. Whether it might be to give honor to Dagon, as they did in the case of their conquering Samson, or whether it might be that they intended to unite the ark of God with Dagon as the joint object of adoration, it is impossible to say. Strange, that the human mind should have sunk so low by the fall, as ever to give into the idea of worshipping the dunghill deities of a man's own making. But the Holy Ghost by his servant the apostle, gives us the satisfactory reason of it. Rom. i. 22—25.

3 ¶ And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon *was* fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

Had the men of Ashdod only considered this as a supernatural work, instantly they must have seen in it the finger of God.

4 And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon *was* fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands *were* cut off upon the threshold; only *the stump of* Dagon was left to him.

5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor

any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.

The repetition of this judgment, and with yet more decided marks of a supernatural power, ought to have arrested their minds. Alas! we see so far from this, that they now proceeded to the consecration of the very floor, because that Dagon had fallen upon it. Reader! we sadly overlook the gracious design of the Holy Ghost, in causing these records to have been made and transmitted to us, if it doth not lead both you and me to the conviction of the universal condition of all men by the fall, in gross blindness and ignorance; and that it is the grace of God which makes all the difference between them and us. 1 Cor. iv. 7.

6 ¶ But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, *even* Ashdod and the coasts thereof.

7 And when the men of Ashdod saw that *it was* so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our God.

It is not very easy to say, what this disease which is called Emerods was. The Psalmist in referring to this history, saith, that the Lord smote his enemies in the hinder parts, and put them to a perpetual reproach. Psm. lxxviii. 66. But be the disease what it might, certain it is, that it was very heavy upon them, and that they considered it as a judgment on account of the ark.

8 They sent therefore, and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? and they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about *thither*.

9 ¶ And it was *so*, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts.

10 Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people.

11 So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.

12 ¶ And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

Is it not strange that men's minds should be so far convinced by God's judgments, as to see God's hand in their afflictions: and yet should not be led further humbly to enquire the cause and seek relief. Alas, Reader! the history of this disease of the mind in the blindness and ignorance induced by the fall, is not confined to the Philistines. Elihu tells us in the book of Job, that *by reason of the multitude of oppressions the oppressed are made to cry: but none saith, Where is God my Maker?* Groans and cries even to Heaven, shall go forth and go up, but not to the God of Heaven. Blindness still reigns and ever must reign, until God who commands the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in the heart. The world by wisdom knew not God. See Job xxxv. 9. 2 Cor. iv. 6. 1 Cor. i. 21.

REFLECTIONS.

How very precious it is to observe, the attention which God hath over his own cause. Though Israel is sunk so low as to be supine and inattentive to the attempt of recovering the ark, yet God will be jealous of his own honor. Reader! do you not see a sweet instruction veiled under this? When the poor sinner bound in Satan's chain is fallen asleep, and is unconscious of his impending ruin; neither sends forth a cry for help; nor is aware that he needeth that help; then it is that the eye of Jesus is upon him, undertakes himself his cause, and goeth forth to his deliverance. Oh! blessed Jesus, how very precious is it to my soul to observe that thy grace, like the dew of Heaven, *waiteth not for men, neither tarrieth for the sons of men.*

And here also while poor dispirited sinners are thus taught that our God will maintain his own cause and deliver his people out of captivity; woe unto the oppressor, when our God ariseth to judgment! Secret punishments will be their lot in this life, and an open display of his anger in that which is to come. *The wrath of man shall praise him, the remainder of wrath will he restrain.*

CHAP. VI.

CONTENTS.

As it was impossible not to take interest in whatever concerned the ark of God, the contents of this Chapter becomes very pleasing, in that it relates to us the conduct of the Philistines in sending away the ark.

of God. The great joy of the men of Bethshemesh in beholding the return of the ark. The presumption of the Bethshemites in looking into the ark, is punished by the Lord: they send to the men of Kirjath-jearim to fetch the Ark. These are the contents of this Chapter.

AND the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.

We ought to pause over this verse, and reflect on the state of Israel, deprived of the ark of the covenant of the Lord of Hosts, for no less a period than seven months. No doubt many a pious Israelite felt it, and lamented it in secret. And many of those who went up to Shiloh to worship God in public, openly deplored the vacancy in the tabernacle. Ah! how precious are our gospel mercies, in that we have not simply the outer tokens of God's presence, but the spiritual manifestations of him whom the ark prefigured, always present, *wherever two or three are gathered together in his name*, Matt. xviii. 20.

2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.

That which was a blessing to Israel became a snare to the Philistines, and the very ark which the Lord's people longed to possess again, the Lord's enemies longed to be freed from. So is the gospel, a savor of life unto some, and of death unto others. 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

3 And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.

4 Then said they, What *shall be* the trespass offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, *according to* the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague *was* on you all, and on your lords.

5 Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land.

6 Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts,

as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?

7 Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them:

8 And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him *for* a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go.

9 And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, *then* he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that *it* is not his hand *that* smote us; it *was* a chance *that* happened to us.

There is somewhat very remarkable in this account. It is plain from what is here said, that the Philistines were well acquainted with Israel's history, in the Egyptian bondage and overthrow of Pharaoh. And it is as plain also that they had ideas, (and which they must have gathered from the law of Moses) of the doctrine of trespass-offerings. Alas! how many are there in the present hour, that possess an head knowledge of the glorious truths of the gospel, but who, like both the Egyptians and Philistines, remain for ever strangers to the heartfelt influence of them. The experiment they made, by way of ascertaining the certainty that their affliction was from God, for taking and detaining the ark, was suited to the genius of the day, and bears an apt correspondence to carnal minds in all ages. But we must not confine such things to the mere carnal world of unbelievers only; God's people have been found to seek signs, by way of gaining conviction. Such for instance, as Abraham's servant, and Gideon the son of Joash. Gen. xxiv. 12, &c. Judges vi. 36, &c.

10 ¶ And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home:

11 And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods.

12 And the kine took the straight way to the

way of Beth-shemesh, *and* went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside *to* the right hand or *to* the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh.

Behold! when God works, how wonderful are his works. He ruleth over the minds of men. Here are God's enemies, and the enemies of his church and people, obliged to send home his ark *without money and without price*: nay, with gold and costly offerings of their own, to beg the acceptance of the very ark again, which seven months before they brought away in triumph, and no doubt concluded that Israel would give half their kingdom for its ransom. But this is not all. God ruleth over the instinct of beasts also. For here are the milch kine going away from their young, unaccustomed to the yoke, without guide, or driver, or direction, and yet instinctively, as it were, travelling on with their burden to the distance of eight miles at least, neither once missing their way, nor seeking food: and though *lowing* as they went, by which they intimated their wish for their young, yet never once growing restive, or attempting to turn back to their own home, until that they had accomplished the service to which they were yoked. What but God himself, could have caused such influence? Well might the Prophet exclaim: *This also cometh from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.* Isaiah xxviii. 29.

13 And *they of* Beth-shemesh *were* reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see *it*.

Is there not a similarity here to that of the Jewish shepherds in the field of Bethlehem, to whom the first tidings were brought of the incarnation of our Jesus? Luke ii. 8—14.

14 And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite, and stood there, where *there was* a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the LORD.

Whether the overruling providence of God directed the ark to this spot out of respect to Joshua, whose name corresponds to Jesus, or whether it was because of this great stone typical also of Jesus, I do not presume to say; but from the promptness of the sacrifice instantly offered by the Bethshemites, and the joy beyond *the joy of harvest*, in leaving their reaping to engage in this holy service, it may serve to teach us how much pious men of Israel longed for the return of the ark. Oh! Reader! if you have ever known the preciousness of our Jesus; and if you have ever known the absence of your beloved; you will better conceive, than I can possibly express, what kind of joy of

the soul that is, when after a long night of Jesus's absence, you have heard his voice, and beheld him again *leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills*, Song ii. 8.

15 And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that *was* with it, wherein the jewels of gold *were*, and put *them* on the great stone: and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD.

Probably some Levites were in the neighbourhood, and were therefore instantly sent for, as it was their office to minister to the ark of the Lord. It is somewhat singular, that the over-ruling providence of God should have directed the ark to Bethshemesh. For though Bethshemesh, strictly speaking, was in the portion of Dan, yet was it belonging to Judah. And ever after this period the ark rested in Judah. This event is celebrated in the Song. The Lord refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: but chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. And he built his sanctuary like high places, like the earth which he hath established for ever. Psalm lxxviii. 67—69.

16 And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen *it*, they returned to Ekron the same day.

17 And these *are* the golden emerods which the Philistines returned *for* a trespass offering unto the LORD; for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one;

Is the Reader astonished to see such over-ruling events of the God of Israel's power, so exactly corresponding to the Philistines proposal, verse the 9th, (in which they had said, they should know thereby, that it was Israel's God that had done them so great evils): and yet no greater or better conviction wrought upon their minds? Doth the Reader wonder at this? Alas! doth not every day's experience demonstrate the same in the world at large? Is not the world frequently overawed, and frequently compelled to confess, from what is going on around them, that this hath God wrought: and yet how indisposed their minds are truly to honour him.

18 And the golden mice, *according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great stone of Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the LORD: which stone remaineth unto this day in the field of Joshua, the Beth-shemite.*

This stone of memorial was made similar to others of God's people; Jacob's Bethel and Gideon's Ophrah. But were not all these considered, yet more particularly in faith, with an eye to Jesus? that stone which God had laid in Zion. Isaiah xxviii. 16.

19 ¶ And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten *many* of the people with a great slaughter.

In order to have a right apprehension of the sense of this verse, we must consider in the first place, the sin of the Bethshemites in looking into the ark. If the Reader will consult the scriptures of God upon this point, he will see that the ark was made as a token of a meeting place between Jehovah and his people. See Exod. xxv. 8, 9. That Aaron never was permitted to approach within the vail but once in a year, on the great day of atonement, and this not without blood: evidently teaching thereby the sanctity to be observed towards the ark. See Levit. xvi. 2, 3, 4—13, &c. And we have authority from the apostle Paul to explain all this, in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ; the Holy Ghost (he tells us) thus signifying: See Heb. ix. 1—13. From this view of the subject, we immediately learn in what the sin of the men of Bethshemesh consisted; namely, presumptuously drawing nigh to God without an eye by faith to a Mediator. See the awfulness of such an approach, represented in another place. Exod. xix. 16 to the end. Concerning the numbers stated in this verse, that God smote of the people, fifty thousand and threescore and ten men; if it be read, (and which without violence to the original it might be read), he smote of the fifty thousand of the people, threescore and ten men; then it will follow, that only seventy persons perished for this presumption of looking into the ark, out of the fifty thousand of the men of Bethshemesh, *Josephus* is of this opinion.

20 And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us?

If this question of the men of Bethshemesh be the humble enquiry of souls under divine visitation, the question is gracious indeed: and in a gospel sense it may be thus answered. None but souls who approach this Holy Lord God in the holiness and sin-cleansing blood of the Mediator. But in him and his all-sufficient righteousness, the poorest sinner hath boldness to enter within the vail by his blood. See Heb. x. 19—22. But if the question was the language of displeasure, perhaps it was like that of David upon a similar occasion, in the instance of Uzzah. 2 Sam. vi. 6—9.

21 And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, saying, The Philistines

have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, *and* fetch it up to you.

Kirjath-jearim means the city of woods: and it belonged to Judah. It was one of the cities of the Gibeonites originally, see Joshua ix. 17. Alas! for the men of Bethshemesh, had they known the preciousness of the presence of him whom the ark represented, how reluctantly would they have parted with the ark. We meet with a yet more striking instance of ignorance and blindness in the *Gergesenes* in the days of our Lord, who having given such a decided demonstration of his power and godhead in the dispossessing of devils, the whole city besought him to depart out of their coasts. Matt. viii. 34. Precious Jesus! how sweet the thought! that neither my ingratitude for all thy mercies, nor all my neglect of thee, which seemed to wish thy departure from me, hath provoked thee to leave me. No, dear Lord! thou wilt never leave me nor forsake me.

REFLECTIONS.

THINK my soul, how awful the state of Israel was during the seven months God was pleased to punish them for their transgressions, in depriving them of the ark. Truly awful indeed, is the condition of all men who live without God, and without Christ in the world. But chiefly ye people of God, whose backslidings make barren your ordinances and leave them but as the mere shell and carcase of religion. Let such determine what it is to visit ordinances, and find not the God of ordinances. To have the *form*, but not the power of godliness. Oh! for the unceasing presence of God in Christ, in the assemblies of his people.

But behold my soul in what is here represented of the bringing back the ark, how the Lord works when as he saith himself, *I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies*. It is all of divine grace. Not our merit, not our exertions, not our prayers, not our labours; but thy right hand and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, O Lord, are the sole cause for which thou savest and redeemest thy people, for thy name's sake.

Precious Jesus! thou everlasting ark of thy church and people, thou art eternally fixed in Zion. And oh! how divinely reared for the security of my soul. Never, like the men of *Beth-shemesh*, would I presumptuously look into the secret things which belong unto the Lord our God. But with an eye unto thee and all thy suitableness, and all-sufficiency for the sinner's security, would I come unto thee in the way appointed. Surely, blessed Jesus, thou art thyself the very throne of grace, the very ark and mercy-seat, from whence all tokens of salvation come, and in whom Jehovah is accessible to all the humble requests of my soul. In thy blood and righteousness I find the removal of guilt, and the confidence of justification. In thy dear person I have all I need, both for security and comfort. Thou art my dwelling place whereunto I may always resort. Lord Jesus! cause me never to lose sight of thee in all my approaches. *In thy name would I rejoice all*

the day, and in thy righteousness make my boast; for thou art both the ark and the glory of our strength, and in thy favor our horn shall be exalted.

CHAP. VII.

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The events recorded in this Chapter are much more pleasing than what hath been said of Israel a long time before. Here is an account of the men of Kirjath-jearim fetching the ark and placing it in an house. The Israelites are represented as mourning after the Lord. The history of Samuel is renewed, his government, and victory over the Philistines. He set up the stone of help between Mizpeh and Shen, and called it Ebenezer in token of God's help and his blessing again of Israel.

AND the men of Kirjath-jearim came and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.

This verse leads us to remark the different conduct of the men of *Kirjath-jearim*, to that of the men of *Beth-shemesh*. Jesus is a sweet savor to his people, and a precious chief corner-stone to them that believe. But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to them that stumble at the word, being disobedient. 1 Pet. ii. 6—8. Reader! may it be your happiness and mine, as Eleazar the son of Abinadab received the ark into his house, to receive Jesus whom the ark typified, into our hearts, and that He may be formed there, *the hope of glory*.

2 And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

It is difficult to explain this verse, or to account for what we read in it. Was it possible for Israel to remain so long satisfied with the want of the ark, that it should continue in the private house of Eleazar without altar and without sacrifice? Where was Samuel all this while, and how could his gracious soul brook all this? I beg the Reader however not to overlook what is said from this long absence of the ark; all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. No doubt the Lord poured out of his Holy Spirit upon Israel, and then Israel felt the sweet influences of grace. As it is said that *all* Israel lamented after the Lord, some have thought that the blessed effects from this outpouring of the Spirit, was not unsimilar, though not in an open display of it, to that of Pentecost. Reader! it is a precious token of God's favour for good, when after the want of ordinances, the Spirit of grace is given to lead sinners to lament after them.

3 ¶ And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, *then* put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

The Reader must rejoice in the introduction of Samuel again in this place, as from his appearance there is great reason to hope good. Probably, though Samuel had continued his ministry, yet it was so little regarded, that we find from his now persuading them yet more earnestly than ever to put away their idols, they had set up the general practice of idolatry in the land. Alas! what is the history of faithful ministers when their ministry falls to the ground, in the unfaithfulness of the people.

4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.

Baalim is plural, meaning several gods. Ashtaroth is singular and feminine, and therefore means but one, and that a she goddess. Is this Israel the beloved people of God who are thus led away to these filthy and dumb idols?

5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured *it* out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

There is somewhat very interesting in this account, because here we see Samuel as the type of Jesus in his mediatorial character as the intercessor. Oh! how sweet and refreshing it is to view even the most distant shadows of him whose glorious office as the advocate and intercessor, is the sure hope and confidence of his people in all ages! Psm. cx. 4. The ceremony of pouring out water before the Lord, probably carried with it the idea of real sorrow and weeping of the soul by reason of transgression.

7 And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard *it*, they were afraid of the Philistines.

8 And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

9 ¶ And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered *it* for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.

It should seem from this relation, that while Israel was unarmed and engaged in their devout services, the Philistines came upon them; and that Samuel in consequence thereof, was determined to trust to sacrifice and prayer more than to the sword. He engaged the Lord of hosts on his side, and the Lord as in several instances before fought for Israel, while Israel held their peace. But Reader! do not fail to remark how the prophet did it. By sacrifice and prayer! was not this with an eye to Jesus? Was not the sucking lamb typical of the lamb slain from the foundation of the world? And was not the unceasing prayer of Samuel a representation of his eternal priesthood, who ever liveth to make intercession for sinners? Precious Jesus! how satisfying the thought, how refreshing the consideration, that every sacrifice, every offering under the law, and all the prayers of thy servants, derive their efficacy wholly from thy one all-sufficient sacrifice, by which thou hast *for ever perfected them that are sanctified*: and by thy all prevailing mediation, by which alone all our persons and all our prayers find acceptance in the beloved!

10 And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until *they came* under Beth-car.

There is a sweet promise of our covenant God, and here, as in a thousand other instances, it was instantly fulfilled. *Before my people call* (saith God) *I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear.* Isaiah lxxv. 24.

12 Then Samuel took a stone, and set *it* between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

This spot between *Mizpeh* and *Shen*, was rendered the more memorable because this was the very spot where 20 years before the Philistines had defeated Israel. See chap. iv. 1, 2. Reader! how many *Eben-ezers* have you and I erected of deliverances and mercies? Alas! if we cannot point to very, very many, it is not because our gracious God hath afforded no remarkable occasions for them; but because they have passed by unnoticed and disregarded from our ungrateful and unworthy minds. *How much owest thou unto my Lord?* is a question, I would pray for grace to put to my soul in the close of every day and night.

13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

The ministry of Samuel was so much blessed, that the Philistines dared not invade Israel all his days. We learn that the passover was observed during the government of Samuel, though the ark was not with them. See 2 Chron. xxxv. 18.

14 And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

Whether *Ekron* and *Gath* were included in this recovery of the lands to Israel, is not said; but it may serve to shew us the influence and power of Israel at this time, for even the Amorites dared not disturb the peace of Israel; *When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.* Prov. xvi. 7.

15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

16 And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

17 And his return *was* to Ramah; for there *was* his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.

This account of Samuel's administration is but short, but it is highly honorable. His annual circuit for the looking into things himself, shews his great vigilance; and the altar he built unto the Lord, proves his gracious intercourse with Heaven. No doubt, as Samuel was a child of prayer, his manhood was eminently distinguished by a life of prayer, and that his great influence and authority arose from the intimate communion and fellowship he had with God. The Holy Ghost

hath ranked him among the worthies of faith, and given us thereby authority to say, that it was *through faith that he subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and obtained promises.* Heb. xi. 32, 33.

REFLECTIONS.

REMARK, my soul, in the perusal of this Chapter, the first renewings of grace in the blessed fruits and effects of it; all hearts, like those of Israel, then will go forth in lamentations after the Lord. There will be no real enquiries, no heart-searching sorrow, though ordinances may be restrained, and even the ark of the divine presence be away, even to twenty years continuance, as in Israel, until the Lord pours out the renewings of his Spirit. But when this precious gift is dispensed, then the soul looks unto him whom it hath pierced, and will mourn. Oh! most holy Father! of thine infinite mercy bestow this blessing, this covenant promise on my soul: lead me by thy gracious influence unto the precious Jesus, that the goings forth of my desires may be unceasingly after him and to him, who is indeed the ark and the mercy-seat, the offering and propitiation for sin.

In beholding Samuel as praying for the people, offering the sucking-lamb, and crying for Israel, unto the Lord, I would pass over the servant, to view in him the shadow of his master; and would behold in him the typical representation of thee, thou blessed Jesus, for thou art the sum and substance of all the shadows of thy ministering servants. They offered all by faith, and had an eye in all their offerings to thee, who art, in all the ages of thy church, both the sacrifice and High Priest, the golden altar and the ark, on which all offerings are made. However veiled in covering under the darker dispensation of those ages before thy coming, yet so much of gospel every rite contained, that the holy men of old could, and did, see enough in those sacrifices made under the law, to behold by faith thy person and righteousness, with all the glorious circumstances of redemption secretly and mysteriously included. Yes! dearest Jesus! in all ages thy faithful ones knew thee, loved thee, lived to thee, were strong in thee, and in the power of thy might! Be thou to me, therefore, holy Saviour, all and in all, in every word of thy sacred scripture. Oh! give me to see and unceasingly to live in the same blessed privileges. In thy dear person, righteousness, love, grace, and power, may I know myself to be eternally secure: so that no Philistines may any more come into the coasts of thine Israel. Like Samuel, on Jesus the rock of ages, would I build an altar of earth to Jehovah. *In* him would I offer all my offerings. *Through* him would I make all my poor presentations. *From* him and his all-perfect sacrifice would I seek acceptance; and *to* him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, would I ascribe all the praise.

CHAP. VIII.

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This Chapter contains rather the dark side of Israel from the former. Samuel growing old, and his sons not closely copying after the example of their father, discontent broke out among the people. They ask for a

king in imitation of the nations around them.' The thing displeaseth the Lord. Samuel remonstrates with the people. They are obstinate. Samuel promiseth their request shall be complied with. These are the principal things contained in this Chapter.

AND it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

It should seem from calculation, that Samuel could not at this time be above sixty years of age. But it is probable he had worn fast, and brought on premature old age in the service and zeal of God's government. It forms a sweet reflection in the close of life, if when strength is consumed, that *that* strength has not been spent in the service of sin. But here, Reader, as in every other instance so in this, what a lovely view doth our Jesus afford, whose day of life ended at a little more than thirty-three! *I must work* (said that lovely one) *the works of him that sent me while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work.* John ix. 4.

2 Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: *they were judges in Beer-sheba.*

3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

Behold, Reader, in these instances, that grace is not hereditary. The most pious of men cannot convey the least portion of the Holy Ghost to their children. Oh! thou dear Redeemer! how hast thou hereby taught us the infinite importance of an union with thee! Holy Father! remember thy promise to our Jesus, and be it according to thy words: *pour thy Spirit upon his seed, and thy blessing upon his offspring.* Isaiah xlv. 3.

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

If my views of this scripture be right and just the request of the elders of Israel for a king did not arise from the age of Samuel, or the unworthiness of his sons; for in this case, they would humbly have prayed that Samuel would dismiss his sons and appoint other Judges. But desiring a king was a wicked encroachment upon the sovereignty of the LORD. God was their king: Samuel and his sons were only deputies.

6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

I beg the Reader to remark with me, the resource of Samuel in prayer. Here, Reader, let you and I lodge all our concerns. A throne

of grace is always open to us, and Jesus ever liveth to make intercession. Where should distressed souls go with their complaints but there? Heb. iv. 14—16.

7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods; so do they also unto thee.

9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

Those verses throw a great light on the scripture-history concerning Saul. The reign of Saul between the government of Samuel and David, plainly shews that what the Lord said by the prophet *Hosea* concerning this man, was in judgment: *I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.* And this was added to the Lord's declaration, in which he had said, *I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities?* *Hosea* xiii. 10, 11.

10 ¶ And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.

11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint *them* for himself, for his chariots, and *to be* his horsemen; and *some* shall run before his chariots.

12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and *will set them to* ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

13 And he will take your daughters *to be* concubines, and *to be* cooks, and *to be* bakers.

14 And he will take your fields, and your vine-

yards, and your oliveyards, *even* the best of *them*, and give *them* to his servants.

15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his work.

17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.

18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

Reader! may not you and I spiritualize this passage? What are all our lusts and corruptions arising from the body of sin and death we carry about with us, but like the galling authority which is here described? I know not what your feelings are: but I know in my own, that these corrupt passions of my unrenewed part, (for such is the body after all the work of grace upon the soul) are continually dragging down the soul, and like the chariots and horsemen here spoken of, made me cry out continually, as holy Paul did being burthened. Rom. vii. 24.

19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;

20 That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

That this spirit of rebellion was not against Samuel and his sons, but (as I said before) against God, is here somewhat more plain. For they speak of their king fighting their battles. Had not God fought their battles all the way along from Egypt to Canaan? Nay, in the preceding chapter is it not related, that the Lord thundered from heaven upon their enemies? Chap. vii. 10, 11. Besides, God had promised them a king in his own time and way, and one whom he should choose. And no doubt David was that one, and therefore in allusion to this, is called *the man after God's own heart*; that is, as the shepherd and king of his people. But both God's choice and God's time are to be waited for. See Deut. xvii. 14, 15.

21 And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.

22 And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken

unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

I beg the Reader to remark with me this striking feature in the character of Samuel; his constant intercourse and communion with God. Samuel was a *child* of prayer; for his mother called him Samuel, being *asked of God* what the word Samuel signifies; but Samuel was a *man* of prayer also. And why should not you and I? Did Enoch; did holy men of old walk with God? Had they clearer views of God the Father then than we have now? Did they know more of the gracious way to the throne than we? Oh! thou dearest Jesus! did thy servants of old know thee more by faith, before that thou hadst finished redemption-work, than thy people know thee now? Be pleased, dearest Lord, to quicken our souls to the more earnest, to the more frequent drawing nigh to thee: and let these holy men of old shame our cold hearts, if thy love cannot warm them, to blush, that patriarchs and prophets should so far exceed thy disciples now, when we know that we have a throne of grace always open: a Father of mercies and of great consolation always to fly to, and one to trust in, whom the Father heareth alway, and who is the propitiation of his people!

REFLECTIONS.

AMIDST the growing age and infirmities of all God's faithful servants, though we see Samuel and all the holy men and prophets going the way of all flesh, what a sweet and soul-reviving thought is it, that our Jesus liveth for ever! Yes! thou precious Holy One of Israel, thou ever livest; and because thou livest, we shall live also. Triumph my soul in this well-founded confidence!

And here, Lord, let me learn, from the rebellion of Israel in desiring a king, when thou thyself wast the gracious king of thy people, let me learn how prone the heart, even of thy people, is to rebel against thee. Oh! ye wretched, misguided, unhappy sons of men, who by deeds, if not by words, are continually saying: *We will not have this man to reign over us.* Think, I charge you, ere it be too late, whether he hath not a right to govern, who, as one with the Father is God; and as Mediator, hath all power in heaven and in earth. Is not every creature his, both by creation and redemption? And shall not every knee *bend before him, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father?* Oh! kiss the Son lest he be angry, and so ye perish from the right way. Acknowledge him now for your lawful king and sovereign, before he comes in the clouds as your just Judge. *If his wrath be kindled, yea but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

As for my soul, let angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, let all heaven and earth bear witness for me, that I desire no other king, neither will I know any other but he that is a *Priest upon his throne.* Do thou holy, blessed, royal Lord Jesus, reign in me, and over me, and establish, and preserve, and maintain thy rightful kingdom in my soul, against all thine enemies, my lusts and corruptions, as well as the world,

and the powers of darkness. Oh! do thou bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of our Christ! Do thou manifest thyself to my soul, in all thy sovereignty, grace, and goodness, in thy kingdom, both temporal and spiritual. Do thou pardon my sins as a king; do thou rule over my affections as a king; do thou bestow all needed grace as a king; do thou bless, protect, restrain, subdue, regulate and dispose of all things concerning me as a king, the glorious, gracious king which our God hath set in Zion. And by thus living under thine own kingly influences here below, mine eyes continually beholding the king in his beauty; in that tremendous day, when thou shalt come to take away all things that offend out of thy kingdom, my soul will find a growing confidence in thy salvation. For sure I am, since none but Jesus is king, he who hath borne my sins will not plead against me in judgment. The language of my heart, will be like the church of old; *the Lord is our Judge; the Lord is our Lawgiver: the Lord is our King; he will save us.*

CHAP. IX.

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In this Chapter the sacred historian first brings us acquainted with Saul, whom God had previously determined to appoint king of Israel. By an overruling providence, Saul, who was in pursuit of his father's asses which were lost, is led to Samuel. And Samuel, privately admonished of God, gives Saul the first intimation of the Lord's design concerning him.

NOW there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.

2 And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and *there was* not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he; from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

The pedigree of Saul is first set down, and afterwards the portrait of his person is pencilled out. It is worthy the Reader's observation in the very first outlines of Saul, that while his person is thus set off to the greatest advantage, not a word is said of the qualities of the mind. Dearest Jesus! in the days of thy flesh it is said of thee, that *thy visage was marred more than any man, and thy form more than the sons of men.* Lord teach me from hence not to judge by outward appearance. *The king's daughter is all-glorious within.* Isaiah lii. 15. Psalm xlv. 13.

3 And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now

one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses.

4 And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found *them* not; then they passed through the land of Shalim, and *there they were* not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found *them* not.

5 And when they were come to the land of Ziph, Saul said to his servant that *was* with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave *caring* for the asses, and take thought for us.

It is truly instructive to remark, how the Lord in his Providence overrules and accomplishes the greatest designs from the slenderest means. The wandering of the asses laid the foundation for Saul's seeking them; and his not finding them, again paved the way for bringing him near Samuel. Thus the Lord sometimes worketh without means, and sometimes with means; but it is sweet, in the after stages, to look back and see how the Lord is carrying on, in all we seem to be contriving and ordering, one settled plan of goodness and mercy concerning us. Hence the church makes a beautiful conclusion from God's love to his people, after giving a long account of his dealings with them: *whoso is wise will ponder these things, and they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.* Psalm cvii. 43.

6 ¶ And he said unto him, Behold, now, *there is* in this city a man of God, and *he is* an honorable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go.

7 Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, *if* we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and *there is* not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?

8 And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: *that* will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way.

9 (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us

go to the seer: for *he that is now called* a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer).

Observe, though neither Saul nor his servants had ever seen Samuel, his reputation as the Lord's prophet was known to them. But Reader! do not fail to observe further, that in the proposed enquiry they meant to make, there is not a word concerning God, or how to obtain his favor. Alas! is it not so now? Are not the whole world sending forth the enquiry, *who will shew us any good?* But how few the cry, *Lord lift up the light of thy countenance upon us!* Psalm iv. 6.

10 Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God *was*.

11 ¶ And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here?

12 And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, *he is* before you: make haste now, for he came to day to the city; for *there is* a sacrifice of the people to day in the high place:

13 As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat that be bidden. Now therefore get you up; for about this time ye shall find him.

It is worthy observation, that those young women were no strangers to what was going on in religious services. It is highly proper that servants as well as masters, the drawers of water as well as those that sit at the table with wine, should be savingly acquainted with all the grand principles of religion. I do not take upon me to say, whether this sacrifice of the people in the high place, was a feast upon the sacrifice, or a service with the sacrifice. But be it either, it is delightful to observe, that as it was the sacrifice of the people it must have been with an eye to Christ. Oh! how precious must that one all-sufficient offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all, be considered in the eye of God our Father, when every thing in the services and feasts of his people referred to it. Heb. ix. 6—11.

14 And they went up into the city: and when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place.

15 ¶ Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying,

16 To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him *to be* captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.

17 And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people.

I hope the Reader will not overlook how the Lord is working while we are unconscious. Saul is in quest of his asses, the servant hath no anxiety but this, whereas all the great events which were to follow in Saul's life were folded up in the result of this interview with Samuel. Of all the subjects upon earth, what can be so sweet and interesting to the review of a gracious mind, as the first dawnings of grace. Reader! if you are the happy partaker of it, I shall find no difficulty in getting you to pause in this place and remark, how that grace first manifested itself to you notwithstanding all your undeservings, how surprising, how unexpected, how unlooked for, when Jesus first looked upon you in your blood, and *bade you live*. Your care, like Saul and his servant's for the asses, was about nothing else than fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and the pursuits of the world; and then it was, the eye of Jesus was marking you out for his grace as the eye was upon Saul, when the Lord had told Samuel in his hearing concerning him for a kingdom.

18 ¶ Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is.

Now the Lord in his providence had brought Saul to Samuel, and all the great events those two persons had to transact together, as the sequel of their history shews, began in this way. I would have the Reader remark with me, that though Saul was so handsome in his person, yet the great prophet Samuel was so poor and plain that Saul had no consciousness who it was when he accosted him. Such, depend upon it, are God's people in a thousand and ten thousand instances as to any outward attraction. Like their great head, *there is no beauty* in external appearances, *that we should desire them*.

19 ¶ And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I *am* the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to day, and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that *is* in thine heart.

20 And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom *is* all the desire of Israel? *is it* not on thee, and on all thy father's house?

Here Samuel gives the first intimation of Saul's future greatness, and his own present ability as a prophet of the Lord. By telling him of the safety of his asses, he gave him to understand that he knew his errand before he communicated it; and by the promise of telling him all that was in his heart on the morrow, he prepared his mind for what he had to communicate. But what I would particularly desire the Reader to remark, in this first interview between Samuel and Saul, is, how the prophet passed by every thing until he had called the king elect to the sacrifice. Though all the grand objects of the intended kingdom were in the prophet's mind, and all in full prospect before him, yet prayer and praise must precede every other consideration. How sweet is it to see this gracious conformity in every truly awakened soul in all his actions. These things will be spontaneous, and, like the lips of the spouse, will drop freely as the honeycomb; not by constraint, nor by pressure, but of themselves, and continually. Song iv. 11.

21 And Saul answered and said, *Am* not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

No doubt Saul had heard that Israel was to have a king, for *Gibeah* of Saul the residence of *Kish*, was not above twenty miles from Samuel's house at *Ramah*. But though he had heard of this intended thing, he could not have had the most distant idea of being the person, unless by divine intimation as Samuel had it. And the whole life of Saul manifests, that this communion with God he was a stranger to. Benjamin was the youngest of the tribes of Israel, and by the event of that unhappy war recorded in Judges, (chap. xx. 48.) the whole tribe was much reduced.

22 And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which *were* about thirty persons.

23 And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee.

24 And the cook took up the shoulder, and *that* which *was* upon it, and set *it* before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! set *it* before thee, and eat: for unto this time hath

it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.

The respect shewn Saul by the prophet, plainly intimated somewhat very important. We cannot but admire Samuel's conduct upon this occasion. Though the making Saul king tended to the lessening Samuel's sons, yet in obedience to the command of God, the prophet did it with the greatest cheerfulness.

25 And when they were come down from the high place into the city, *Samuel* communed with Saul upon the top of the house.

26 And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad.

27 And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on), but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.

What passed at this interview is not recorded, but no doubt the conversation was preparatory to the great event about to follow in Saul's life. Probably the man of God opened to his view the Lord's designs in the thing itself, and shewed him that it was of the Lord. How astonished must have been the son of *Kish*! And what a train of thoughts must have occupied his mind.

REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! I charge it upon thee while reading this chapter of the Lord's providence concerning Saul, that thou search diligently into the records of thine own life, for the testimonies of the Lord's dealings with thee, both in his world of providence and grace.

Pause and see whether the same gracious God, while thou hast been searching out the things of time and sense, hath not been going before thee, anticipating thy requests, blessing thee with things unasked, and infinitely exceeding all thy thoughts and expectations, with preventing and restraining mercy and grace? In things *temporal*, how hath he supplied all thy wants, *thy bread hath been given, and thy water hath been sure*, and God himself hath been thy defence *as the munition of rocks*. And in things *spiritual* how hath he outrun all thy desires! Nay, while thou wast standing out against him, and causing him to serve with thy sins, and wearying his patience with thine iniquities, then it was the Lord had mercy upon thee, even before thou wert conscious

of the want of mercy; and saved thee though he *knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, and wast a transgressor from the womb.* My soul! keep this ever in view, to make thee humble, to endear Jesus, to hide pride from thine eyes, and to make the redemption work of thy God more and more sweet and important. And oh! for grace, continual grace, to make suitable returns of love and praise and obedience, where mercy and favor are so freely given. Thou art called to a kingdom that cannot be moved. Jesus hath made all his children kings and priests to God and the Father. Whatever trials beset us in the way to the possession of future glory, there is no state can be truly called comfortless while Jesus is our portion. Neither can one of his children esteem his mercies small who is saved from hell, and brought into the sure path of Heaven.

CHAP. X.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter opens with presenting us by a view of the prophet's anointing Saul king. This is followed with tokens Samuel told Saul, should immediately take place, on his departure from him to return home to his father's house, and which accordingly came to pass. After this Samuel convenes Israel at Mizpeh; at which convocation, he proceeds to the election of a king. Saul is elected. With which event some are displeased, but Saul holds his peace. These are the principal things contained in this chapter.

THEN Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, *Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?*

The ceremony of pouring oil on the head, was the method appointed by way of inauguration into office. And this was used both in the anointing Priests and Kings. No doubt the ceremony itself was instituted with an eye to Jesus, who was anointed by the Holy Ghost into all his precious offices, as prophet, priest, and king. The holy anointing oil was made according to the Lord's own direction. See Exod. xxx. 22—33. Hence the church speaking of her beloved, saith, *because of the savor of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth.* Song i. 3. Whether the vial of oil was of this kind is not said. But the signification was the same. And to shew the good will of Samuel on this occasion, he accompanied the ceremony with a kiss. Precious Jesus! do thou grant me the anointings of thy blessed Spirit.

2 ¶ When thou art departed from me to day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou

wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath let the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son?

3 Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Beth-el, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine:

4 And they will salute thee, and give thee two *loaves* of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hands.

5 After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where *is* the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy:

6 And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

7 And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, *that* thou do as occasion serve thee; for God *is* with thee.

8 And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, *and* to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shall thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.

All these signs were intended to convince Saul, that in all Samuel did, he had acted under the authority of God. And no doubt they had their effect by way of confirmation.

9 And it was *so*, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

¹In this verse it is said, that God gave him *another heart*. And Samuel had foretold him in the 6th verse, that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon him to prompt him to prophecy, and he should be

turned into *another man*. And no doubt this change was wrought upon him. He had from this time another heart as to his dispositions, for no longer seeking asses he is now seeking a kingdom. And instead of being employed in his father's service, he is now another man in prosecuting his own grandeur. But I beg the Reader to remark with me, that these changes are from what are called the ordinary gifts of the Spirit, not his special work on the heart. Saul may be, and Saul is among the prophets; but Saul is not renewed in the spirit of his mind for all that. Reader! do not fail to make this observation as you go, it will not only help you to make a right conclusion of this man's history, but many a man's history; and what is yet more interesting than every other, of your own. There is not a word of the regeneration of the mind of Saul in what is here said. He was turned into *another man*, from a poor man to a rich one, and from a peasant to a prince. And the Lord made him *another heart* to prefer a court to the country. But the new creature which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, is totally different from all this. It is a new heart, not a new form; a work of grace, not of nature. *If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.* 2 Cor. v. 17.

10 And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.

It should seem that this gift of prophecy was considered as a prelude to an advance of rank. We have a similar instance: Numb. xi. 16, 17.

11 And it came to pass, when all that knew him before time saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What *is* this man *that* is come unto the son of Kish? *Is* Saul also among the prophets?

12 And one of the same place answered and said, But who *is* their father? Therefore it became a proverb, *Is* Saul also among the prophets?

13 And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place.

14 And Saul's uncle said unto him and to his servant, Whither went ye? And he said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that *they were* no where, we came to Samuel.

15 And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you.

16 And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us

plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not.

The secrecy which Saul observed respecting the kingdom is remarkable. Perhaps Samuel had ordered it. If not, it certainly was either from great modesty or great prudence. Believers in Jesus are very shy of communicating the secrets of the Lord in their first days of conversion.

17 And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh ;

18 And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, *and* of them that oppressed you :

19 And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations ; and ye have said unto him, *Nay*, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands.

The day of election being arrived, Samuel convenes the people together. He again sets before them the folly as well as baseness of their conduct, in rejecting God for their king ; and insisting upon being like other nations, in having a king taken from among themselves. Was not this typical of the gospel state—in the Jewish nation rejecting Christ ; and which our Lord represented under the similitude of a parable ? Mark xii. 1—12.

20 And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken.

21 When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken : and when they sought him, he could not be found.

No doubt the Lord had appointed this mode of election though it is not so said. But it became a further proof that Saul was chosen of God, by the event. *The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.* Prov. xvi. 33.

22 Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And

the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff.

This secreting himself, and the people enquiring of the Lord concerning Saul, is not so plain to apprehend. Whether Saul shrunk from the honor, or waited to be the more invited to it, I will not determine. However the Lord's direction where to find him seems to have over-ruled the business.

23 And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.

24 And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that *there is* none like him among all the people? and all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.

25 Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid *it* up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.

26 And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched.

The people seem to have been struck with his majestic appearance, and therefore hailed him as king. And some so much regarded him as to attend his person home. By God touching their hearts, I apprehend is meant as God touched his, that is, inclined them to respect him. No saving change of grace is meant. Not the regeneration of the heart by grace. The subject refers only to things of a temporal nature.

27 But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? and they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.

Though it appeared that the general voice was with Saul, yet there were others who rejected him. Alas! is not this human nature in all ages the same? So our adored Redeemer, while those precious souls whose hearts the Lord hath regenerated, follow Jesus wheresoever he goeth; bend the knee, bow the heart, and bring presents of all their poor offerings can shew to testify their love and attachment, there are men of Belial who slight redemption, and do in effect, if not in word, virtually say, *we will not have this man to reign over us.*

REFLECTIONS.

READER! while you and I behold the aged prophet pouring the vial of oil over Saul's head, let our meditation take flight, and by faith

behold the Holy Ghost anointing Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and installing him into all these offices by which our souls live under his precious exercise of them through all the departments of grace. Yes, blessed Jesus! we would hail thee king of Zion! We behold thee consecrated our great high priest for evermore. And we accept thee as the anointed prophet of our God, to preach good tidings to the meek, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. We view thee as the Christ of God, the glorious God-man set up and anointed as the Mediator before all worlds. And oh! that thy *name*, in the sweet savor of it, may be as the fragrance of the *holy ointment poured forth! therefore do the virgins love thee.*

And dearest Jesus! as it hath pleased God, even thy God, to anoint thee, as Mediator, with the oil of gladness for, and above thy fellows; oh for a portion of that sacred anointing of the Holy Spirit, which was poured out upon thee without measure, to descend upon us like the precious ointment upon Aaron's head, which ran down to the skirts of his garments! Yes! we would pray for the largest, fullest portion of that rich anointing, which teacheth all things. We would covet the same holy unction, which, flowing from thee, makes all thy people priests, and kings to God, and the Father. And we would desire, to be made such partakers of thy grace, that by the exercises of it, our souls might be enabled to lay hold of thee, by lively faith, so as to live upon thy Person, to hang upon thy righteousness, and to walk evermore with thee, in all the departments of our pilgrimage here, till we come to dwell with thee for ever, as men whose hearts thou hast indeed touched, and who cannot cease from following thee. And grant, blessed, dearest Jesus, that in the gifts of thy Holy Spirit, thou wilt not merely give us *another* heart, but a *new* heart, even the *renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Lord:* so shall we be, indeed, kings, and priests to the Father, and fellow-heirs of that *kingdom, which cannot be moved.*

CHAP. XI.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter opens with an account of Israel's distress, by reason of the Ammonites' daring encampment against Jabesh-Gilead. The Gileadites are disposed to submit to the Ammonites, but their terms are both insolent and cruel. Saul being made acquainted with the circumstances of the case, commands all Israel to assemble for the relief of the Gileadites. He routs the Ammonites in battle, and makes a very great slaughter of them. All Israel rejoice, in consequence thereof, and are full of praises of their new king.

THEN Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.

These *Ammonites* were relations to Israel, being the descendants of Lot. And if the Reader will consult Deut. ii. 19, he will find how graciously the Lord dealt with them on that account. This was but a poor

requital to *Gilead*. But when sin weakens, every enemy takes advantage.

2 And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this *condition* will I make a *covenant* with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it *for* a reproach upon all Israel.

Observe, what fear must have taken possession of the minds of Israel, when the people are ready to submit to the yoke of Gentile nations, and to be tributaries to them. But reader, depend upon it, the same is in every instance. Guilt breeds fear.

3 And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if *there be* no man to save us, we will come out to thee.

4 ¶ Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices, and wept.

We do not hear of prayer, or supplication to the Lord, put up. No fast. No day of public humiliation. The people lifted up their voices, and wept indeed, but it is not said, that they cried unto the Lord. Oh! how sweet is it to recollect, in the distresses of the soul, that the Lord waits to be gracious. See those promises, Isaiah xxx. 18. lxy. 24.

5 And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What *aileth* the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh.

6 And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly.

7 And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent *them* throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.

We here see the effect of what was said in a former chapter, concerning Saul, that he should be turned into another man. Though he had retired, after his election to be king, to his father's house, yet he only

waited an opportunity to testify that he was changed. But I beg the reader to observe, both what is said of Saul in these verses, and what is said of the people, that the whole is ascribed to the Lord. It was *the Spirit of the Lord* that stirred him up; and it was from the same source, that put *his fear in the people*. Precious in all instances, to trace our mercies to the fountain head!

8 And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

9 And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, To morrow, by *that time* the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed *it* to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad.

10 Therefore the men of Jabesh said, Tomorrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you.

11 And it was *so* on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.

The reader will have a better idea of Saul's enterprising spirit, when he is informed, that from *Bezek*, to the scene of action, was near 60 miles, and the army had to cross *Jordan* also, in the accomplishment of it. Therefore he must not only have levied this army by day, but marched by night, in order to have done what he did. But principally let us behold the hand of the Lord in it. *If God be for us, who can be against us?* And my brother, amidst all the threats, and besiegings of the enemy, never forget how soon the Captain of our salvation can hasten to our rescue. Day and night he is at hand, and no distance, no *Jordan*, no fire, or water, can separate us from his love, and his powerful assistance. What a blessed recollection, amidst all the hosts of the believer's foes?

12 ¶ And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death.

The zeal of the Israelites for Saul, after so complete a victory, is not to be wondered at. They would have sacrificed, no doubt, any thing at the moment, to shew their loyalty. But we do not hear a word of ascribing the work to the Lord. Alas! what an everlasting backwardness there is in our nature, to do this!

13 And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel.

This conduct in Saul, was both generous, and becoming. David felt similar affections towards *Shimei*, his sworn enemy. 2 Sam. xix. 21—23.

14 Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there.

15 And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

How beautiful Samuel appears in this. He directs the minds of the people to be looking unto the Lord, and where to ascribe the praise. But oh! what rejoicings are in the soul, when Jesus is crowned King, and our sacrifices, and peace-offerings, are all found in him.

REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! in those *Ammorites* behold the sworn foes, not of Israel of old only, but of the Israel of God, in all ages. How alive are they to harrass, and afflict believers. The reproach of Israel is their delight. To put out their right eyes would be their highest joy. And how hast thou, my soul, been ready to serve them, like the men of *Jabesh-Gilead*, and to make any covenant with them, if they would but be easy in their government. Dearest Jesus! be thou everlastingly praised, that thou wouldst not let me rest in this yoke of sin, but didst come to my rescue, and hast gotten thyself the victory, and brought down thine, and my enemies under thy feet. Oh! grant, heavenly Lord, that I may never more, after so complete a deliverance, be brought under the dominion of the enemy, nor meanly seek peace with thine, and my sworn foes. Give me grace and strength, openly, and boldly in thy great name, to wage war with sin, Satan, and the world. And in all my spiritual warfare, do thou as the great Captain of thy little army, go on before me, and make me more than conqueror, through thee, who hast loved me! Let this be my every day song; *the Lord is my light, and my salvation, whom then shall I fear: the Lord is my strength, and my song, and he is become my salvation.*

CHAP. XII.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter contains the address to Samuel, on the resignation of his government, now Saul is king. He appeals to him concerning his own integrity, in the administration of justice; brings the people to the acknowledgment of it: points out, yet once again, their sin and folly in the insisting upon a King: at the call of Samuel the Lord an-

swers, in confirmation of what he had said of their sin and his rectitude, in sending thunder; and the chapter concludes with Samuel's assurances, that if the people obeyed the Lord, both they and their king should be preserved.

AND Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.

2 And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and greyheaded; and, behold, my sons *are* with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.

There is somewhat wonderfully affecting in the last address of departing persons, even in the commonest circumstances of life. But eminently more so in faithful ministers. Farewell discourses are generally very striking. Samuel had been called of God, from a very child, to minister unto the Lord's people; and now he was grown old among them. It is as if he had said, by this preface, I pray to be heard, before that I take my leave of you for ever.

3 Behold, here I *am*: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed; whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received *any* bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

His discourse is not by way of self-justification, to meet their applause. But to take off all possible censure. What a beautiful example, in a yet higher point of view, doth the apostle Paul give of himself before the church of *Ephesus*, in the close of his ministry, when he saith, *I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.* Acts xx. 26, 27. Reader! if you consider the vast, and arduous charge of the ministry, you will enter with a proper earnestness and warmth, into a suitable apprehension of these things. And then the appeal of Samuel, will strike your mind with its full importance.

4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand.

The answer of Israel is highly gratifying, in testimony to the character of Samuel, though it be only of the negative kind; not in giving him applause, but in doing him justice.

5 And he said unto them, The LORD *is* witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, *He is witness.*

It was well that the people could not condemn him, but Samuel was more highly gratified, that he had a record on high. Reader! it is blessed, when in spiritual concerns we can appeal, like Paul, and say, *God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit, in the gospel of his Son.* Rom. i. 9.

6 ¶ And Samuel said unto the people, *It is the LORD* that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt.

7 Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers.

We may consider this discourse of the prophet, as a beautiful example of antient preaching. He takes up the subject from its beginning, and points out the divine hand, as the Founder of every blessing. Nothing can be more sweet in our holy gospel, than when we trace the whole plan of redemption, with all its eventual happy consequences, back to its source in the everlasting love of God; and discover free grace, in its rise out of the spring of infinite mercy. It is sweet and precious on many accounts. Sweet and precious, in that it manifests the unchangeable purposes of God in Christ Jesus. Sweet also, in the assurance, that a dispensation so founded in infinite wisdom and mercy, must have made every suitable provision for it, in all its consequences. And sweet, and precious also, in that, all the future events of it are equally, and securely provided for. Think of this, reader, whenever doubts or misgivings arise in your mind.

8 When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.

9 And when they forgot the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

10 And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee.

11 And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out

of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe.

12 And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God *was* your king.

13 Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, *and* whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you.

14 If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God:

15 But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as *it was* against your fathers.

These verses form the great outlines of Israel's history, from the deliverance out of Egypt, to the hour of Samuel's address on this occasion. The design of this discourse was, to shew God's unceasing goodness, and Israel's continual disobedience. I detain the reader just to remark, that the *Bedan* here noticed in Samuel's discourse, is not mentioned before in the history of Israel. It should seem from his being placed, in the relation, between *Jerubbual* and *Jephthah*, that it must have been some one of Israel's deliverers, who lived between the periods of these men. Some have thought it was *Jair*. See Judges x. 3. But we may, at least, derive this instruction from the silence, which the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to observe, respecting this man, that many precious servants of the Lord, no doubt, will be found at the last day, whose memories have not been recorded with public notice. Many a sweet flower blooms, and sheds its fragrance on the mountain, unnoticed by every eye, but His, by whom it is formed.

16 ¶ Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes.

17 *Is it* not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness *is* great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king.

18 So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the

LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

19 And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins *this* evil, to ask us a king.

We ought to remark the great power of prayer, in this instance of Samuel. What an astonishing degree of faith had the Lord bestowed upon this man! And what cannot faith do, when the eye of the soul is looking stedfastly unto Jesus? Remember, what Christ himself saith of it: *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* John. xv. 7.

20 ¶ And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart;

21 And turn ye not aside: for *then should ye go* after vain *things*, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they *are* vain.

22 For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

23 Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:

24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great *things* he hath done for you.

25 But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

How encouraging the sermon ends. Amidst all the unworthiness of the people, the Lord's grace still reigns; *for his mercy endureth for ever.* But is not Samuel here, a type of Jesus? In all the intercessions of the priests, or prophets of God, do we not view him, whom they shadow forth? Blessed Jesus! here I behold, as in numberless other instances, how thy Priesthood is an everlasting priesthood, and how the efficacy of it hath been, and still is, always prevailing. Though like Israel, I have sinned against thee, and slighted thy government, and too often made to myself a king of my own, to reign over me; yet dearest Lord! cease not to exercise that most precious, and glorious office of thine, for my soul. Oh! save me to the uttermost, seeing thou ever livest to make intercession for sinners!

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us not too hastily pass over this chapter, without taking with us the several very interesting instructions it affords.

In this address of the prophet, dismissed, as he evidently was, by the people, we behold how pleasant a thing it is, in the close of any labours, to be able to make an appeal to God, for the rectitude of our proceedings. And while we are enabled to challenge the tongue of calumny, to be yet more refreshed, in the consciousness, that *our record is on high*.

In the beautiful recapitulation, which the man of God makes in his sermon of Israel's history, by way of calling up the remembrance of the people, both to divine mercies, and their unworthiness, we ought to learn the preciousness of faith, in referring all our blessings, while we review them, into the grace, and mercy, and loving kindness of our God. Faith finds great strength in such reviews, for future occasions. And I would desire the reader, not to overlook this instruction from it, while I pray, that my own mind may be refreshed in the thought; that the best method to seek strength for confidence in Jesus, for future blessings, is to make remembrance at the throne of what are past. Looking up to the great Author, and Finisher of faith, for suited strength for our day, we certainly take the most effectual means to trust him for what is to come, when we tell him of what he hath done before. And by giving him the glory of what we have received, to rely upon him for what we need.

But principally, as an improvement from the perusal of this chapter, in the call of Samuel to the Lord, and the Lord's answer, in a way contrary to the usual manner of things; let the Reader behold in the Prophet the type of his Master. Yes! blessed Jesus! I would desire grace, upon the humblest and slightest occasions, as well as the highest and the greatest, to discover somewhat of Thee. Do I not know, dearest Lord, that all intercourse with heaven can only be opened by Thee? No prophet, no patriarch, no apostle, no angel of light, could have procured for our fallen nature, this blessing. Heaven must have been for ever inaccessible, hadst thou not opened that new, and that living way, by thy blood! Convinced therefore, of this most precious, and soul-reviving truth, oh! let me learn to prize the unspeakable mercy; delight myself in seeking constant communion, and intercourse with my God and Father, in Christ Jesus; and like Samuel, learn to be looking out for such manifestations of thy grace, and glory, as may be contrary to the usual plan of ordinary events; that at an *evening time*, if needful, *it may be light*.

CHAP. XIII.

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter the history of Saul's reign opens, and a sad opening of it is recorded. He is invaded by foes from abroad, and disorders at home. His subjects desert him, and the enemy advances upon him. In this distress he offers sacrifice, and thereby breaks the divine commands. The Lord rejects him from being king; and though the sen-

tence is not immediately executed, yet he is told of the event, and consequently waits its execution. Such is the state of things as recorded in this chapter.

SAUL reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,

The expression in the original, which we render *Saul reigned one year*, is, Saul was *the son of one year*; meaning, perhaps, that as the child of one year, it was an infancy of government, and nothing in it worth recording.

2 Saul chose him three thousand *men* of Israel; *whereof* two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

This choice of some, and disbanding others, was without taking counsel of God, it should seem, for we hear nothing of the Lord's direction in it. Reader! depend upon it, in the smallest, as well as the highest concerns, nothing should be undertaken without God. In *all* thy ways, is the precept, *acknowledge him*; and then the promise is absolute, *he will direct thy paths*. Prov. iii. 6. For my own part I desire to eye Jesus in every thing; for well assured I am, that he is in every thing that concerns his people.

3 And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that *was* in Geba, and the Philistines heard *of it*. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.

4 And all Israel heard say *that* Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and *that* Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.

Here is an act of presumption in Saul, unadvised of God, and as it should seem, treacherous to men. The Philistines throughout the land soon heard of the treachery done by the Israelites to one of their garrisons, and as is common among men, the whole nation took indignation at it. Let the Reader fail not to trace the hand of God in it. For as there is no intercourse between Saul and the Lord by prayer, there is no communion by way of counsel to direct him.

5 ¶ And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which *is* on the sea shore in multitude;

and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven.

6 ¶ When the men of Israel saw that they were in a straight, (for the people were distressed), then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits.

7 And *some of* the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he *was* yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

In all this relation here is nothing said of the Lord of Hosts, nothing of the ministry of his servants. Where is Samuel, where are the priests of the Lord? How strikingly do we behold in this what the Lord hath said in another part of scripture, when God's people neglect him, and seek confidence in human strength, *one thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one, at the rebuke of five shall ye flee; till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill.* Isaiah xxx. 17.

8 ¶ And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel *had appointed*: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

9 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.

Samuel had promised (see chap. x. 8.) to visit Saul at the end of seven days; not to lead him to war, but to offer peace-offerings; and then to instruct him further into the mind and will of God, concerning the government of his people Israel. Saul could not but know this. But resolving to do somewhat of his own, in the mean time, perhaps to make his name great among the nations, an army is chosen, others of the soldiers are dismissed, the Philistines are smitten, and he rushes into the sacred office. What a daring spirit must this man have possessed, and how full of impiety. Though the Lord had made him king, yet he had not made the Lord his God. Reader! what will not the carnal mind attempt, when human glory, and not divine praise, is made the object of pursuit.

10 And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

11 ¶ And Samuel said, What hast thou done? and Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* thou camest not within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

Observe, under what specious pretences Saul covered the motives of his conduct; like the first sinners in the garden of Eden: self-justification, even to the last, we find in their apology. Gen. iii. 10—13. But Reader! do not in the conduct of Saul overlook the picture it affords of the human heart. How doth every man attempt to justify himself in his actions under the false covering of some supposed good, until the film of self-deception is taken from off his eyes by the Holy Ghost; and never until he is convinced of sin doth he seek justification in the righteousness of Christ.

13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him *to be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the LORD commanded thee.

The reproof of the prophet corresponded to Saul's transgression. *Uzzah*, in the succeeding age, was struck dead for touching the ark. And another of the same name was smitten with the leprosy, for invading the Priest's office. Saul therefore had room given him for repentance, had he sought it. See 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7. 2 Chron. xxvi. 16—21.

15 And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people *that were* present with him, about six hundred men.

16 And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people *that were* present with them, abode in Gi-

beah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.

The departure of Samuel from Saul, was a sad presage of ruin. Yet we read of no compunction on the part of Saul. Alas! when men are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, what awful examples do they afford, of indifferency under the sorest judgments!

17 And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way *that leadeth to Ophrah*, unto the land of Shual:

18 And another company turned the way to Beth-horon: and another company turned to the way of the border that looketh to the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

19 Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make *them* swords or spears.

20 But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his ax, and his mattock.

21 Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads.

22 So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that *were* with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.

23 And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.

Nothing can demonstrate more fully the low and impoverished state of Israel, than what is here said of the ravages of the enemy, and their being destitute of even the common weapons of defence. It should seem, from their having no smith in all the territories of Israel, that the policy of the Philistines in times past, (probably in the wars when they had been victorious over Israel) had compelled them not to exercise this art among them. And, as while they were at peace, the Israelites found the Philistines not unwilling to sharpen or repair their instruments of husbandry, the Israelites did not trouble themselves to keep in order their weapons of war. Indeed, while the Lord was their King, and humbled the nations before them, they needed none. But now, when they have by sin, made God their enemy, to what a humbled state are

they reduced, before their foes! *No weapon* (God saith) *formed against his people, shall prosper.* But when his people transgress against him, he can make our very blessings become weapons of evil, and convert our comforts into the artillery of his displeasure. See Isa. liv. 17. Compared with Deut. xxviii. 1—25.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! mark with me, the very awful state of an unrenewed mind, in the conduct of Saul. No situation, no providences, however prosperous, in themselves; no elevation in rank, or power, can produce real comfort, or happiness, while the heart remains carnal, and unrenewed by grace. The Lord had given Saul a kingdom: and the Lord had turned him from the pursuit of his father's asses, to the pursuit of government; but Saul, though *another* man, as the scripture terms it, in outward things, remained the *same* man, as to vital godliness. Learn Reader herefrom, that it is not a change of place, or rank, or circumstances, that availeth any thing; but *the putting off the old man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and the being renewed in the spirit of the mind: and the putting on the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness, and true holiness.*

Precious Jesus! grant me grace to learn once more from hence, in the view of Saul's profanation of thy Priestly office, how infinitely important must be the view of thy alone offering, and priesthood, in the sight of Jehovah; and how rejoiced my soul ought to be, in taking shelter under thy holy censor! Yes! dearest Lord! thou, and thou alone, art a Priest for ever, by oath, and the solemn inauguration of thy God and Father. Taken from among men, as it concerned thy manhood, thou wast called to this office from all eternity. And as it relates to thine eternal power and God-head, thine own glorious perfections, and attributes, become the golden altar, on which, and from whence, the saving efficacy of the whole priesthood, derive their importance. From both, may my soul find continual comfort, and confidence. Never, like Saul, may I bring my poor offerings, or fancied peace offerings, without an eye to thy precious, and all-sufficient sacrifice: for it is thou only, dearest Lord, that canst make, or hast made, *our peace in the blood of the cross.* To seek acceptance another way, though with the most costly rites, as Saul did, is to shew contempt to thy person, thy blood, and thy finished righteousness; and to call down the vengeance of heaven. But while, through the influence of the Holy Ghost, my soul is enabled to look stedfastly to thee, and to rely on thy precious, all atoning blood, and sacrifice, for acceptance with God, and the Father; let me, blessed Jesus, every day, and all the day, be continually coming in thy name, and righteousness, *boldly to the throne of grace, that I may find mercy, and grace to help, in all times of need.*

CHAP. VIII.

CONTENTS.

The history of Israel under the reign of Saul, brightens up a little in this Chapter. Jonathan, the son of Saul, prompted, it should seem,

by a divine impulse, goes forth with his armour-bearer only, to a garrison of the Philistines. He is made successful:—the host of Israel, when informed of it, follows after; and a great slaughter is obtained over the Philistines. In the close of this Chapter, we have a short relation of Saul's family.

NOW it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistine's garrison, that *is* on the other side. But he told not his father.

There appears so much of God's mercy, manifested in what we read in this chapter, that I beg the Reader, more particularly to regard it. When the Lord works without means, and sometimes contrary to means, this becomes a more striking display of his Almighty hand. Let the Reader, before he enters upon the events recorded in this chapter, observe the dangerous state of Israel. There were with Saul, but six hundred men, and they trembling with fear: whereas, the host of the Philistines consisted of thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand of the sea shore for multitude. How was it, that this great host had not swallowed up the handful of Saul's army? Was it not, because the Lord restrained them? Can it be referred unto any other cause? Though Israel merited nothing from God, but his displeasure, yet the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great Name's sake. This Samuel had said, and this the Church had found, in all ages. Compare chap. xii. 22, with Psalm cvi. 7, 8. And cannot the Reader find similar proofs in his own history? Oh! it is sweet, it is precious, when we discover the aboundings of grace, over the aboundings of sin. There is a blessed *nevertheless*, in all the histories of God's people.

2 And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which *is* in Migron: and the people that *were* with him *were* about six hundred men;

3 And Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, I-chabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone.

Though Saul was thus reduced to the lowest state, and his fears were now visible, in taking shelter under a tree, instead of facing the enemy, yet we find no humblings of soul. He doth not send for Samuel, but Ahiah. He will not indeed again invade the priest's office, but calls for the priest of the Lord, and the Ark: but alas! there is no saving change made upon him. Though he hath the Ark of the divine presence with him, yet he finds no strength nor confidence in the presence of the Lord. Alas! outward services of worship without inward grace, only tend to keep the heart *from* God, and do not lead *to* God.

4 And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, *there was* a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one *was* Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh.

5 The forefront of the one *was* situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah.

6 And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for *there is* no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.

This is the first introduction we have, in the sacred history of Jonathan, the son of Saul; and a most pleasing one it is. There can be no doubt, but that his mind was under gracious influences, from the strong confidence he expressed in the sovereignty of the Lord. He knew enough of Jehovah, and that in a covenant way it appears, from the line he draws between Israel and the uncircumcised Philistines, to know that few or many, are of no avail with him. Reader! what a lesson is this, to you and me? Had Jonathan such confidence in God, and shall our faith be less? I beg the Reader to remark with me, the grounds of this well formed faith of Jonathan's, namely, the divine glory. He had heard, no doubt, of the Lord's former interferences, in Israel's distresses. Now, saith Jonathan, this is the time for God to work. The glory must be wholly his, if he save us. Oh! Reader! may the Holy Ghost give you and me to profit from this view of faith, in one who never possessed the advantages for the exercise of it, which you and I do. We have seen Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, accomplishing redemption: and his promise, like himself, is unchangeable. He saith; *If we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, we might say to the sycamore tree, be thou plucked up by the root, and it should obey you.* Luke xvii. 6. Lord I would say, increase our faith!

7 And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that *is* in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I *am* with thee according to thy heart.

8 Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto *these* men, and we will discover ourselves unto them.

9 If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come

to you: then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them.

10 But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this *shall be* a sign unto us.

It should seem to have been pretty much the custom, in the early ages, to ascertain the reality of being commissioned by the Lord, by some sign. Thus Abraham's servant; (Gen. xxiv. 12—21) and Gideon respecting the Midianites: Judges vi. 36—40. And Reader, I know not, what your own experience may furnish of such things, but I confess, that in the circumstances of my life, I do feel a growing confidence in divine assurances, when they are opened to my view by divine instructions. I consider that mercy, be it what it may, as good as possessed, which the Lord leads me to ask in the faith of Jesus. Oh! it is a sweet and self-rewarding employment, to watch the Lord Jesus in all things: for sure I am, that then, in all things, we shall find him watching over his people for good. What a very very precious scripture is that of the Lord by the prophet to this purpose: *Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul.* Jerem. xxxii. 41.

11 And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves.

12 And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.

13 And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him.

To what source, but the sovereignty of the Lord, can we ascribe it, that when these two poor solitary soldiers of the army of Israel, were climbing up, and were so exposed to danger, that the Philistines did not at once destroy them? How evidently did the Lord overrule the minds of the Philistines? And depend upon it, Reader, so it is in a thousand instances in life. The Lord God promised his people, to send the hornet among their enemies. And what is this, but the restraining power of his Almighty hand upon their minds? Deut. vii. 20.

14 And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, *which a yoke of oxen might plow.*

15 ¶ And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked; so it was a very great trembling.

It should seem, that a similar effect, like that which the Lord wrought in the host of Midian, must have been induced, to cause this great consternation, and trembling. The thing was of the Lord. Judges vii. 22.

16 And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down *one another.*

17 Then said Saul unto the people that *were* with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armourbearer *were* not *there.*

Probably, the watchmen upon the walls were enabled by somewhat more than mere outward discovery, to discern the hand of the Lord in this. The history of Israel furnished out instances of divine interposition, for the delivery of his people. Watchmen upon the walls of Zion, like the ministers of the gospel of Jesus, are supposed, by prayer, to keep up communication with heaven. Isaiah lxii. 6, 7.

18 And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God. For the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel.

19 And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that *was* in the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand.

I cannot omit remarking to the Reader, in the history of Saul, how alike, unmoved by affliction or prosperity, this man's heart appears to have been towards the Lord. He set up indeed an enquiry, in commanding the priest to bring the ark; but receiving further conviction that the army of the Philistines were in distress, whatever the cause was which induced it, he waits not for direction from the Lord. Alas! to what a sad degree of degeneracy is the heart capable of ripening void of grace!

20 And Saul and all the people that *were* with

him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, *and there was* a very great discomfiture.

21 Moreover the Hebrews *that* were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp *from the country* round about, even they also *turned* to be with the Israelites that *were* with Saul and Jonathan.

22 Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, *when* they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle.

23 So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven.

The close of this account of the battle, left no room to question, but that this salvation was of the Lord. How sweet is it to remark in all the spiritual victories of the Lord's people, that the Lord's arm alone bringeth salvation!

24 ¶ And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had abjured the people, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted *any* food.

25 And all *they of* the land came to a wood: and there was honey upon the ground.

26 And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath.

27 But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that *was* in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.

28 Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an

oath, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food this day, And the people were faint.

29 Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.

30 How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?

31 And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint.

32 And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew *them* on the ground: and the people did eat *them* with the blood.

33 Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day.

34 And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay *them* here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew *them* there.

35 And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD.

36 And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God.

37 And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? but he answered him not that day.

38 And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day.

39 For, *as* the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But *there was* not a man among all the people *that* answered him.

40 Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee.

41 Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect *lot*. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped.

42 And Saul said, Cast *lots* between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken.

43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that *was* in mine hand, *and*, lo, I must die.

44 And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.

45 And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: *as* the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.

46 Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place.

There is, no doubt, somewhat of obscurity in this passage. Saul's whole conduct was wrong. In a false mistaken zeal for Israel, he

brings the people under an heavy curse, if they partook of any food, until the battle was over. In this, we hear of no consultation with the Lord, no direction from him: and yet the Lord gives a decided answer, in pointing out the offender, in the person of Jonathan. And yet on the other hand, the eyes of Jonathan were so enlightened in eating of the honey, that from this refreshment, his ability to pursue the victory was certainly increased. Perhaps the sense of the passage is, that the most highly favored servants of the Lord, may be brought into trouble; and, like Jonathan, though evidently raised up of the Lord, for the deliverance of his people, may suffer persecution from those on whom they have the highest claims of favor. And probably, as Saul in his carnal state, was every day more and more departing from God, he was permitted to fall under the dreadful oath he had taken for another, so as ultimately to become the victim of it himself. The sequel of Saul's history, too plainly shews this. And the sin, which by his rashness, he led the people into, when in their extreme hunger, they eat the blood with their food, seems to have been one of those things which aggravated his transgressions. See Gen. ix. 4. and the note in the Commentary on the 9th chapter of Genesis, verse 4.

47 So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed *them*.

48 And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.

49 Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchi-shua: and the names of his two daughters *were these*; the name of the first-born Merab, and the name of the younger Michal:

50 And the name of Saul's wife *was* Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host *was* Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle.

51 And Kish *was* the father of Saul; and Ner the father of Abner *was* the son of Abiel.

52 And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him.

The victory, which begun from such small and inconsiderable means, as Jonathan and his armour bearer, was prosecuted to great exploits. It should seem, as if the Lord meant that Israel should learn from it, how much his mercy was with his people, notwithstanding their undeservings. If we spiritualize the subject, as it concerns God's people, the same gracious lesson is exhibited to us now. We may, without going far in the enquiry of our lives, see enough to discover that our success is wholly in God's favor, not man's desert; that grace is not bestowed for our merit, nor withheld for our transgressions. The rich and full salvation by Jesus, founded as it is in free and sovereign love, like the dew of heaven, *waiteth not for man, neither tarrieth for the sons of men*; but comes to us of the Lord's own bounty, and hath for its beginning God's love, and for its end God's glory. *For of him and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory, for ever, and ever. Amen.*

REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE over this chapter, my soul, and mark, in the history of Saul, the sure consequences of rebellion against God. The word of the Lord assures us, that, *when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him*. But, when sinners neglect and despise the Lord, he can convert their very comforts into crosses. And Saul, though at the head of a kingdom, shall be afflicted, and his crown be filled with thorns.

But, my soul, while remarking, as in this man's history, the sure consequences of sin, remark no less in his history, and in thine own, how gracious the Lord is, notwithstanding all our multiplied transgressions. *The Lord will not retain his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy*. By some slender instrument, like that of Jonathan, he will work out deliverance for his people. Oh! my soul, learn to impress upon thy mind those precious things of God's grace. And in all thy manifold undeservings, never lose sight of divine love. And when at any time trials and difficulties occur for the exercise of faith, keep a steady eye unto Jesus, that it may be enlightened with the droppings of his grace, as the honey did unto him. And depend upon it, in the strength of the Lord Jesus, it will be found that all difficulties are as nothing. He can, and will make thee more than conqueror, through the sovereignty of his power. All obstacles, in the way to the accomplishment of his holy purpose, will be as nothing, for *there is no restraint to the Lord, he saveth by many or by few*.

CHAP. XV.

CONTENTS.

The sacred historian is prosecuting the account of Saul's reign, in this chapter. Every part of his government seems to be with a view to aggrandize himself, and to shew his disregard to the Lord. We have here, the relation of a commission the Lord sent him upon, to destroy the Amalekites: his partial obedience to that commission: the Lord's

displeasure upon the occasion, and his rejection of Saul from being king, communicated to him by Samuel. The zealous prophet, in his warmth for God's glory, doth that which Saul had neglected, and heweth Agag, the king of the Amalekites, in pieces before the Lord, in Gilgal. The chapter closeth with an account of Samuel's final departure from Saul, and visiting him no more until his death.

SAMUEL also said unto Saul, The **LORD** sent me to anoint thee *to be* king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the **LORD**.

In the opening of this message, we should remark, how Samuel prefaceth it. I do not command thee, saith the prophet, but the Lord, who sent me to anoint thee king. Receiving, therefore, thy commission from him, see thou obey this precept faithfully. Reader! it doth not behove creatures, and sinful ignorant creatures too, such as we are, to reason about the fitness of such things as God commands. When we have to do with men, it may be proper to pause, and to reason on right and wrong: but when we have to do with God, it doth not become us to argue on his appointments. This doctrine is very sweet and precious, if considered as it refers to our faith in Jesus. Salvation in him, and through him, is the Lord's appointed way. As such, let you and I heartily, and cordially accept it, without presuming to be wiser than God: and this will be our wisdom. So Moses told Israel: Deut. iv. 6.

2 Thus saith the **LORD** of hosts, I remember *that* which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid *wait* for him in the way, when he came np from Egypt.

3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

The observation made on the preceding verse meets us with full force in these. When the Lord commands any service, the justice and propriety of the measure, is not to be arraigned at the bar of man's tribunal. The Lord had sworn to have war with *Amalek*, from generation to generation. See Exod. xvii. 8—16. And now the year of the Lord's vengeance was come, and the iniquity of Amalek is full. Reader! if you are a child of God, do not overlook in this scripture, what is read to you in it: namely, the Lord will subdue all your foes before your face. He hath engaged in covenant promises to do this. And, Reader, do not envy therefore the short-lived triumphs of the ungodly, the Lord hath seen that his day is coming. Every injury done to one of God's afflicted ones, must sooner or later be accounted for. Psm. xxxvii. 13.

4 And Saul gathered the people together, and

numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

5 And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.

6 And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

It is profitable to mark, and admire distinguishing mercies of any kind. The salvation of the *Kenites*, was certainly a marked blessing. And is it not yet more sweet and refreshing, to contemplate the distinguishing blessings of grace. When the Lord was about to bring a flood upon the world, for the destruction of the ungodly, Noah had an ark provided for his safety. Dearest Jesus! how precious art thou in this point of view, to thy people!

7 And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah *until* thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt.

8 ¶ And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

9 But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all *that was* good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing *that was* vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

Is there not a spiritual sense in this, for the Reader to gather improvement from? Do we not, my brother, in that war, which admits of no neutrality, too often spare, what we think the best of our good deeds, and think favorably of ourselves, while sacrificing the more flagrant corruptions of our nature?

10 Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying,

11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul *to be* king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.

Let not the Reader imagine, that from these expressions, there is any change in the mind of God, as if that God was liable to alter. The repentance here spoken of, is in accommodation to our language, speaking after the manner of men, and not in reference to him, *with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He is in one mind* (saith Job) *and who can turn him?* Job xxiii. 13. But what a precious thought is it, concerning salvation, that *the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.* Rom. xi. 29: What a beautiful view is given, in the close of this verse of Samuel. Dear man! the dismissal of himself and his sons from the government, called forth no such concern. But we behold him in tears a whole night, crying to the Lord for Saul. But Reader! turn your views from Samuel, and behold him, of whom Samuel is but a faint resemblance, who spent whole nights in prayers to God: and in that unequalled agony he sustained in the garden, poured out his very soul, until the sweat of his face was, as it were, *great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* Neither is this all. Samuel's intercession falls infinitely short of our Jesus. Though both prayed for their enemies, and the enemies of our God; yet though Samuel succeeded not, Jesus always prevails. Yes! dearest Lord! thou must ever prosper; neither can one, for whom thou prayest, perish, or come short of thy salvation.

12 And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.

It should seem, from this account, that Saul was so flushed with his victory, he was regardless of the divine favor, and in the pride of his heart had set up a place, perhaps a pillar of triumph, by way of publishing and perpetuating his conquest. Alas! what blindness, and presumption, and sin, is there in the human heart.

13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

14 And Samuel said, What *meaneth* then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto me, Say on.

17 And Samuel said, When thou *wast* little in thine own sight, *wast* thou not *made* the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?

18 And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?

20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.

We have here the solemn conference between Samuel and Saul, on the subject of Saul's disobedience, and the awful consequence of it, in the Lord's determining to dethrone him. We behold, in the pointed language of the prophet, the unalterable purpose, and fixed displeasure of God against sin. And we behold in Saul, what every man's heart is void of grace, full of excuses and justifying pretences, like the first sinners in Eden, to soften their transgressions. Alas! there is not a man alive but covers himself under this covering. And until God the Holy Ghost convinces of sin, none of Adam's posterity are ever convinced of it, so as to see the absolute necessity of a Saviour. Precious Spirit of truth! do thou fulfil that blessed office which the Son of God pro-

mised thou shouldst perform in the minds of his people, and convince me of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Make Jesus precious to my view, for he is only so to them that believe. John xvi. 8—11. 1 Pet. ii. 7.

24 And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned : for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words : because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

What it was that brought down the proud spirit of Saul to this confession, I know not, unless it was the dread of being dethroned. But certain it is, from all that followed in his life, though he acknowledged he had sinned ; yet he never felt godly sorrow for sin, not to be repented of. 2 Cor. vii. 10.

25 Now therefore I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.

What a folly to ask Samuel to pardon his sin. But to preserve still his dignity with the people, Samuel's turning with him to worship the Lord, seemed to carry with it an idea that all was made up again. Thus sinners under the gospel are mightily well pleased, if they can carry on an outward appearance with men : little considering how to make peace with Him that readeth the heart.

26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee : for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

27 And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

28 And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, *that is* better than thou.

29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent : for he *is* not a man, that he should repent.

30 Then he said, I have sinned : *yet* honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God.

31 So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD.

Though Samuel at first refused to join in worship with Saul; yet perhaps in reflection he judged it to be right, Where shall gracious souls lead sinners but to a throne of grace? The rent of Saul's skirt was an apt allusion to the renting of the kingdom from him, and as Samuel made application of it to this event, so it is remarkable, that in the after history of Saul's life, when David cut off a portion of Saul's skirt, Saul, as if recollecting this circumstance, applied it to David. *I know well* (said he) *that thou shalt surely be king.* 1 Sam. xxiv. 20.

32 ¶ Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.

33 And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

This view of *Agag* is truly awful. So must all sinners be accounted with at the last. Reader! remember the bitterness of death is never past, until the sting of death, which is sin, is taken out by the blood of Christ. Then, blessed be God, we have the victory through him, *who through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, that he might deliver them who through fear of death, are all their life time subject to bondage.* Heb. ii. 14, 15.

34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul.

35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death; nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

What is here said of Samuel's coming no more to see Saul, means no more to visit and advise him, or with a message from the Lord. That they met together afterwards, and perhaps more than once, is evident from chap. xix. 24. But it means he came no more to him from the Lord. Saul was rejected in the Lord's will, and his servant had, therefore, no more message for him. Yet Samuel's heart mourned for Saul, and lamented, as every good man doth, when the wicked *reject the counsel of God, against their own souls.*

REFLECTIONS.

READER! pause with me over the perusal of this chapter, and mark, in the progress of Saul's history, the certain truth of that awful sentence of the apostle, *that evil men and seducers wax worse and*

worse, *deceiving and being deceived*. And while we look at the king of Israel under this melancholy character, let us not forget, to gather from the history of the Lord's everlasting war with the *Amalekites*, that there can be no truce in this battle. Grace and corruption can no more join issue, than the iron and the clay in the image which the prophet saw. Put it down, Reader, in the maxims of your life, and see to it that your own experience corresponds to this most certain and unquestionable truth: *the Spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh against the Spirit*. Lord, grant that neither the writer of this Commentary, nor the Reader of it, may be *debtor to the flesh to live after the flesh: for if we live after the flesh we shall die: but, if we through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live*.

Oh! most gracious God! give me to see, and awfully to feel the impression of it on my heart, in the history of the utter destruction of the *Amalekites*: that though the Lord long bears with the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction; yet the day, the dreadful day, the tremendous day of judgment, surely cometh as a thief in the night. Oh! precious Jesus, be thou my refuge, my covert, my strong hold, in that day of wrath!

One sweet improvement more would I gather from the perusal of this chapter, before I take my leave of it, and in the sorrow the man of God felt for the Lord's rejection of Saul, I would see how suited it is for the ministers of Jesus, *to weep between the porch and the Altar*, and lift up their cries and prayers over the sad ruin of our fallen nature? Did Samuel weep for Saul because the Lord had determined to take from him his earthly kingdom: and shall not my soul weep over the thousands of ungodly sinners, against whom the Lord hath sworn they shall not enter into his heavenly kingdom? Did the events of this short life, as they related to Saul, call forth the affection of the prophet: and shall not the grand concerns of eternity, as they attach themselves to sinners in the present hour, call forth my sympathy and prayer, that the Lord in the midst of judgment may remember mercy? Oh! most gracious Saviour! from whose distinguishing favor it is, that *by the grace of God, I am what I am*: teach me, Lord, *to rejoice with trembling*; and in the deepest sense of those awful judgments which I most righteously have deserved, but which thy mercy hath saved me from; give me a suitable frame of mind to come before thee. Like the prophet *Ezekiel*, I would fall to the dust, crying out; *Ah! Lord God! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in this pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem!*

CHAP. XVI.

CONTENTS.

This chapter is the first in the history of David. And as this man forms so distinguishing a character in the word of God, in every point of view, as a patriarch, prophet, writer, warrior, king, and above all, as a type of the Lord Jesus, every thing respecting him becomes interesting and important. The history doth not open with the birth of David, but takes up the relation with his anointing by Samuel, as

king of Israel, and the successor to Saul. Here is related in this chapter, the Lord's sending Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse. All the sons of Jesse are made to pass before Samuel. David is chosen. Samuel pours the horn of oil upon him: Samuel returns to Ramah. An evil spirit from the Lord troubles Saul. David is sent for, as one that played well upon an instrument, to divert him.

AND the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

If we compare what was said of Samuel in the close of the foregoing chapter, with what is said of Samuel (in the 19th chap. 20 ver.) presiding over the younger prophets, it should seem that the man of God had retired from court, and all public services, excepting the sanctuary, to attend to the instruction of the college. But the Lord now calls him to another commission, and this seems to have been the last, and which was to go in quest of Saul's successor among the sons of Jesse. I detain the Reader to mark in this verse, the expression *fill thine horn with oil*: and then beg him to remember the opening of the hymn of *Zecharias*, in allusion to the Lord Jesus when under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, he declared that glorious event of the coming Saviour, to be, that *he had raised up an horn of salvation for his people in the house of his servant David*. See Luke i. 67—69.

2 And Samuel said, How can I go? If Saul hear *it*, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.

3 And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me *him* whom I name unto thee.

This expression of fear on the part of Samuel, and the encouragement given on the part of the Lord, serves to throw a light upon the history, and to shew us that affairs were become very desperate with Saul. Probably his anger and hatred against Samuel was grown to a great height. Alas! the progress of iniquity must be so.

4 And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Beth-lehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

5 And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and

come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

The observation made upon the foregoing verses, is more confirmed in these. Wherefore should the men of Bethlehem tremble at the appearance of Samuel, had it not been that they feared the jealousy of Saul. I beg the Reader not to lose sight of the most interesting part in this history, I mean, its reference to the Lord Jesus; but remember that *Bethlehem-Judah* was the very spot, where in after ages, the glorious *David*, of whom this David was but a type, was born. And doth not the Reader recollect, that in the first appearance of Jesus, at his birth at *Bethlehem*, Herod, and *all Jerusalem with him was troubled*. Matt. ii. 1—3. It is hardly necessary for me to detain the Reader with observing, that to sanctify the household or persons of a family, was among the offices of God's servants. Our dear Lord was pleased to sanctify himself for his people. John xvii. 19.

6 ¶ And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD's anointed is before him.

7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

There is somewhat very interesting in this account of the review of Jesse's sons. The prophet is not acquainted on whom the Lord's lot will fall, but they are all to be brought before him. So is it in the ministry of the word. The commission of the gospel is; *Go out to every creature*. But, we are told, while *many are called few are chosen*. The minister, like Samuel, knows not when he goes forth, to whom it will prove *the savor of life unto life, or of death unto death*. 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. In the conclusion Samuel made in favor of *Eliab*, we see how apt men are, and even the wisest of men, to be taken with things outward. He had been deceived in this once before, in the case of Saul. And though indeed this was by God's appointment, yet the Reader should remember that the appointment of Saul was to gratify the people; not to please the Lord; whereas the choice to be made now, was to please himself. Dearest Jesus! do thou choose for me, and guide me in my all supposed choice of things, that I may behold thee in every thing!

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

9 Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

10 Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these.

The whole seven of Jesse's sons, are brought before the prophet in the order of their birth-right. But Samuel discovered, perhaps by the Spirit's guidance, which operated upon his mind in his holy seasons of prophecy, that none of these were, in the Lord's mind, appointed for the kingdom.

11 ¶ And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all *thy* children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he *was* ruddy, *and* withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this *is* he.

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

How wonderful are the ways and works of the Lord! I pass over several otherwise very interesting circumstances in this account, which might be largely dwelt upon, both in respect to the mind of the prophet, and of Jesse the father, to attend wholly to him, whom the Lord singled out from the rest. And as every thing in the life of David is memorable, from the very many views of him, in which he stands forth as a type of our glorious David; it is here chiefly in the opening of his history, I would beg the Reader's more awakened attention. First then, when we are told concerning him, that he was ruddy and of a beautiful countenance; doth it not suggest to the Reader somewhat of his features, of whom the Church sings so sweetly, when she saith; *my beloved is white, and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.* Song v. 10. And doth not the very name of David, which means *beloved*, instantly, when known, direct our hearts to him, who is by way of eminency, called the only begotten and beloved of the Father, in whom his soul is well pleased. Matt. xii. 18. Moreover, when we see all the sons of Jesse passed by, and the youngest who was so little regarded, as to be sent to the humblest employment in the family, chosen of God and approved; how is it possible to overlook the Lord Jesus, *that stone*

(as the apostle calls him) *which was set at nought by the builders, and which is become the head of the corner.* Acts iv. 11. And when we see the poor, overlooked, and forgotten sort of Jesse thus gathered out from among his brethren; surely we cannot but call to mind Jesus, who is introduced in that humble, low, and despised state when entering on his ministry, that even his brethren *did not believe on him.* John vii. 5. Yes! dearest Lord! I would desire to trace even the minutest points of the signalized characters in thy word, which represent thee, somewhat to lead to thee. And as I know, from thine own authority, that thy *goings forth have been from of old from everlasting, when thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people:* so I behold the outlines of thy sweet features of character, as the Mediator and Redeemer of thy people, in these and numberless other instances marked in thy types and servants. As the Lord designed David to the kingdom; so from everlasting the Lord Jehovah set up our Jesus as the King in Zion. And as David was anointed with the holy oil; so Jesus had the Spirit poured out *without measure.* John iii. 34.

14 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

We turn to a very awful contrast in this account of Saul. Reader! what can equal that distress of soul which ariseth from the Lord's withdrawing his Holy Spirit. Man is then open and exposed to all the fiery darts of the enemy. Lord I would pray both for myself and reader; *Take not, oh! take not thine Holy Spirit from us.*

15 And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.

16 Let our lord now command thy servants, *which are* before thee, to seek out a man, *who is* a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

Alas! though the servants, it should seem, knew their lord's malady, yet instead of recommending a cure, they recommended somewhat to palliate the disease. Similar to those men who make religion a form, and desire not the power of godliness.

17 And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring *him* to me.

18 Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, *that is* cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and pru-

dent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him.

It is somewhat singular that David should have been so well known at court by Saul's servants, for it appears by the after history of David, (chap. xvii. 55, &c.) that Saul did not know him. But probably, the account of Jesse's son having killed a lion, and a bear which took a lamb from his flock (see chap. xvii. 34, 35), might have been related in Saul's palace among the servants. And if so, this accounts also, for the servants speaking of him as a mighty valiant man: for David at this time could not have been more than from 20 to 25 years of age. And as David began to reign when he was thirty years old, Saul's reign continued *five* years at least after this event: or if David was but 20 when he was anointed, it must have been *ten* years. See 2 Sam. v. 4.

19 Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which *is* with the sheep.

20 And Jesse took an ass *laden* with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent *them* by David his son unto Saul.

21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly: and he became his armourbearer.

22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight.

23 And it came to pass, when the *evil* spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

I think it more than probable, that Saul had no knowledge at this time, of Samuel's having anointed David as his successor in the kingdom. Neither do I conceive that the family of Jesse understood thoroughly the purport of Samuel's visit. It is said indeed, that Samuel anointed him *in the midst of his brethren*. But might it not be supposed (as the words will well bear) *from among his brethren*: that is perhaps, took him into another apartment privately; by which neither Jesse nor his sons knew any more at present, than that Samuel had particularly noticed David. I do not presume to say that this was the case. But as Samuel's fears, on account of Saul, were overruled by the Lord allowing him to cover over the main design of his visit to Jesse, by telling him that he was come to sacrifice: and as *Eliab*, as it appears in the next chapter, (see verse 28) when David came to visit his brethren in the camp, did not advert to it, but on the contrary reproved

David for his supposed pride: and as Saul received David so kindly, and loved him so greatly: these circumstances taken altogether, I am led to think that David's anointing (or at least the purport of it) was known only to Samuel and himself. He indeed, could not but know it, because from that time, we are told, *the Spirit of the Lord came upon him*. Reader! it is precious to trace the Spirit's season of regeneration, from his gracious work upon the heart. This sweet earnest of the Spirit, is what Paul calls, *the seal of the promised inheritance*. Ephes. i. 13, 14.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE my soul, in the view of Samuel's commission to anoint David king of Israel, do thou learn the infinite importance of singling out thy Almighty David, as thy king and chosen from among his brethren. Fear not all the Sauls which would oppose thee, but boldly put the sacred crown of thy redemption upon his holy Head; and let the world know that him, whom thy God and Father hath chosen as thy Sovereign, is thy chosen also. The Lord's Christ, is thy Christ; and his anointed, thine anointed from among ten thousand.

And as for thee, thou blessed, holy, Anointed One; to thee it belongs, both by thy natural right, as one with the Father, over all God blessed for ever, and by thy appointed and acquired right, as Mediator, to reign over thy church and people. Do thou take to thee thy great power, and rule in my heart, and over my whole soul and body for ever. Though like David, thou art taken from the lowest state of poverty, so that when on earth thou hadst not where to lay thine head; yet art thou placed above all thy brethren. Thou art he, whom all shall praise: and all thy Father's children shall bend before thee. The Father hath solemnly put all things into thine hand, and declared that *men shall be blessed in thee, and all nations shall call thee blessed*. Before thee, therefore, would I bow the knee and join with every creature to confess, that *Jesus Christ is Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father*.

CHAP. XVII.

CONTENTS.

The Chapter we are now about entering upon, relates to us the insolence of the Philistines towards Israel, and the challenge made by their champion Goliath of Gath, daring any man in Israel's army to single combat. The consequence of which, we are told, was, that Saul and all his army were dismayed. David coming from his father, on a message to his brethren into the camp of Israel, hears the challenge of Goliath, and accepts it. Going forth, not armed with the common weapons of slaughter, but in the confidence of God, he prevails over the Philistine, and kills him. In consequence thereof the Philistines are put to the rout, and Israel pursues them with a great slaughter. These are the principal matters contained in this chapter.

NOW the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which *belongeth* to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah in Ephesdammin.

The last accounts we had of the Philistines, their history left them perfectly subdued and overcome; and Israel, under Saul, was victorious every where. See chap. xiv. 47. Perhaps the miserable state of Saul, gave occasion to the Philistines to renew their former insolence. *When a man's ways please the Lord (we are told) he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.* But when men slight the Lord, he can raise up enemies from every quarter. Prov. xvi. 7.

2 And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines.

It should seem, that this commotion in the army of the Philistines roused Saul, for the present, from his distressed state of mind. Chap. xvi. 14.

3 And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and *there was* a valley between them.

4 ¶ And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath of Gath, whose height *was* six cubits and a span.

5 And *he had* an helmet of brass upon his head, and he *was* armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat *was* five thousand shekels of brass.

6 And *he had* greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders.

7 And the staff of his spear *was* like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head *weighed* six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him.

There is somewhat very striking in the account given, both of this giant and his armour. We were told in the book of Joshua, of the great size of the children of *Anak*; and as in *Gaza* of *Gath*, which belonged to the Philistines, there were the remains of this race of men, it is probable that *Goliath* was of this stock. See Joshua xi. 22. His

height must have been wonderful indeed, if the scripture cubit be, as is thought to be, 21 inches; and a span half a cubit: both added together and brought into our English measure, makes him to have been somewhat more than 11 feet high. And his whole armory seems to correspond to this account. The weight of his coat 5000 shekels, every one of which was at least half an ounce. And the spear 600 shekels; both added together, made the weight (besides all that is spoken of concerning his greaves and target of brass) 350 pounds. Such was the monster and his armory, which came forth to the defiance of Israel. Reader! Was he not, think you, a formidable enemy? And can the imagination figure to itself any thing more striking, to resemble the great enemy, who stands to defy the Lord's Israel, in all ages.

8 And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set *your* battle in array? *am* not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me.

9 If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us.

10 And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.

11 When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.

See how guilt breeds fear: else wherefore did Saul and all Israel tremble? There was a time, when at the threats of the Ammonites, Saul hastened to the deliverance of the people, though only then coming from the herd of the field, and obtained a glorious victory. And now, though a king at the head of an army, he trembles. What made the difference? It is easily answered. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, in the former instance, and inspired him with courage. But now, the Spirit of the Lord is departed from him, and all his confidence is fled. Oh! how sweet is it, Reader, to be under his blessed influence, whose *strength is made perfect in the weakness of his people*. What cannot a soul accomplish, when God leads that soul on? See chap. xi. 6, compared with xvi. 14, Zech. iv. 6, 7.

12 ¶ Now David *was* the son of that Ephraimite of Beth-lehem-judah, whose name *was* Jesse; and he had eight sons: and the man went among men *for* an old man in the days of Saul.

13 And the three eldest sons of Jesse went *and*

followed Saul to the battle: and the names of his three sons that went to the battle *were* Eliab the firstborn, and next unto him Abinadab, and the third Shammah.

14 And David *was* the youngest: and the three eldest followed Saul.

15 But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

The sacred historian here revives again the history of David and his family. *Jesse* the father, is honorably spoken of: and the three eldest sons, who are in Saul's army, are mentioned by name. But the whole of this is with a view to introduce the great hero of the family, David. If Saul and all his army trembled at the approach of Goliath, Jesse's eldest sons were among the number that feared. But do we not see here, somewhat leading to David's Lord. Jesus feeds his sheep at Bethlehem, amidst all the wars and hostilities of camps. Oh! for grace to seek after him like the church, and to find him beside the shepherds' tents. Song i. 7, 8.

16 And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days.

Surely the Lord overruled the desire of this giant, and somehow or other overawed his mind, to restrain him from attacking Israel: otherwise he, and his army at his heels, would not have rested satisfied with this parade of mere threats, for forty days together. Reader! remark this, as you go on in your spiritual warfare. Have you never found the enemy advancing, threatening, and as the Psalmist saith, being ready to swallow you up: and yet deliverance hath come, unexpected, and unthought of? Psm. lvi. 1, 2.

17 And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched *corn*, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren;

18 And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of *their* thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge.

There is somewhat very sweet, to the gracious parent, in his view of this. How unconscious was the mind of the father, of the great events which the Lord in his providence had foreordained, to arise from this errand of his son to the camp. While he only wanted to know how his elder children were, the Lord had it in commission for his younger child to become the deliverer of his country. Ye watchful parents, of a gracious God, learn from hence, to be continually looking out for the merciful superintendence of a covenant God in Christ, over your children. Commit them with all their concerns to him, and watch the gracious manifestations of his love in all their arrangements. But Reader!

do not overlook the sweet spiritual lesson held forth to the brethren of Jesus. Let our Almighty David take our poor pledge how we fare, and bear it to our Father. And may he bring to us, from our Father, all spiritual food and sustenance we need in our camp, where we are engaged with the enemies of our salvation in warfare, as the pledge of his everlasting, unchanging love in Jesus.

19 Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, *were* in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.

The fighting here spoken of means, I should suppose, the preparation only, for battle: for had the battle been opened, the single combat Goliath proposed, would have been unnecessary.

20 And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle.

21 For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army.

22 And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren.

There is somewhat very interesting in this account of David's affection to his brethren. Though he had risen early and come a long journey, yet it is said, he ran to salute his brethren. Precious Jesus! methinks I see thee here. Didst not thou come from thy Father, and our Father, and leave thy sheep above, when thou camest at his command, to see how thy brethren fared below. Thou didst run indeed, blessed Jesus, when thou camest among us for the purpose of salvation, for thy zeal even consumed thee, and thou was straitened, until the baptism of thy sufferings was accomplished. Luke xii. 50. The Reader will not overlook I hope, nor forget to connect the history of Joseph, sent on a similar errand by Jacob, with this of David. Surely we do not strain the subject in the idea of somewhat typical in both. See Gen. xxxvii. 13, 14.

23 And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard *them*.

24 And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid.

25 And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen

this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, *that* the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.

26 And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who *is* this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

27 And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him.

The subject is beautifully introduced to the knowledge of David, as well by Goliath drawing nigh and trumpeting forth his own challenge, as by the answers given by those that stood by to David's enquiries. But what I would wish the Reader particularly to notice is, the observation of David on the conduct and character of Goliath. A Philistine braving the armies of Israel, and one thus daring, who was uncircumcised. Observe, Reader, in this, what stress David laid upon the blessedness of being within the Covenant. Is it not, as if he had said, where can be the blessedness of Israel, or the high privilege of God's covenant; if his people, even in the lowest circumstances, are thus to be insulted by their uncircumcised enemies? Oh! what a lift would it give to the faith of God's people, if at the worst of times they took shelter under God's covenant engagements. Shall I despond, shall I despair, when I know that my God in Christ is absolutely under covenant obligations to be my God, and to acknowledge me as one of his people? See that one promise to this effect, which is in itself a volume: Jeremiah xxxii. 38.

28 And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

29 And David said, What have I now done? *Is there not a cause?*

The character of *Eliab* is here shewn to the full, in this short relation of him. He is a portrait of every natural man, in his envy of what is gracious. It is very galling to flesh and blood, that *the elder should serve the younger*. Our dear Lord felt no small opposition in his blessed work, from the envy and unbelief of his brethren. See John vii. 3—5.

30 And he turned from him toward another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner.

31 And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed *them* before Saul: and he sent for him.

32 And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

We may read this passage sweetly indeed, if we behold in it some faint outlines of Jesus, who in his gracious undertaking for our deliverance is represented by the prophet, who, *when he saw that there was none to help* in all the armies of Israel, and when all hearts gathered blackness, *his own arm brought salvation, and of the people, there was none with him*. Isaiah lxiii. 3—5.

33 And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for thou *art but* a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered *it* out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught *him* by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the

hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.

The offer of David, no doubt, gave courage to the whole army of Israel. For it should be observed, that Israel had been long accustomed, when at any time the Lord was about to deliver his people, to expect that deliverance in some unthought of way. And frequently the deliverer was altogether such as no human foresight could have provided. See in the case of *Deborah*, in the Book of Judges, chap. iv. 1—9. And Samuel had taught the people to recollect other cases. See 1 Sam. xii. 6—11. But in the fears and apprehensions of Saul concerning David's youth, opposed to Goliath's strength and experience in war, we see how much his carnal heart was looking to an arm of flesh. The argument upon which David laid the greatest stress, in assuring him of victory, was not so much his former conquests over the lion and the bear, but because this Philistine had no interest in the covenant of God with his people, but had openly defied God himself. It is very encouraging in all our conflicts, when we see that we are not only on the Lord's side; but that in reality the battle is the Lord's and not ours. David told the Philistine so, before he engaged him. (See verse 47.) We have a beautiful example of the same kind, 2 Chron. xx. 5—15. But how much sweeter still, is it to eye Jesus in all these things, as going forth in the deliverance of his tried ones, from *the mountains of leopards, and from the lions dens*. Song iv. 8.

38 ¶ And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail.

39 And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved *it*. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved *them*. And David put them off him.

40 And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling *was* in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.

41 And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield *went* before him.

There is somewhat very interesting in this equipping David for the battle; in the putting on, and putting off the unsuited armour, and at length, choosing only a few stones from the brook. Surely without much enquiry, we may see the gracious lesson it teaches us, under this similitude. In going forth against the cursed enemy of our souls,

no human armour, though burnished, and sharpened with the keenest edge, will answer our purpose. The enemy, as is said of the Leviathan, *laugheth at the shaking of a spear. The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold.* Job xli. 28, 29. David went forth, as he saith himself in another place, in the strength of the Lord God: Psalm lxxi. 16. He that prompted him to undertake the battle, armed him with strength suitable to it. The smooth stone of the brook, which was of God's own creating, and which no human heart had polished or worked upon, was a sweet type, that both the Lord's armour and the Lord's strength should nerve his arm to give it the full commission intended. And how didst thou come, blessed Jesus, and of what was thy armour composed, when, in thy victory for us, and for our deliverance, thou didst enter the lists alone, to vanquish Satan, and sin, and death, and hell, and the grave. Surely *thine own arm brought salvation unto thee; and thy fury it upheld thee.* Isaiah lxiii. 5.

42 And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was *but* a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.

43 And the Philistine said unto David, *Am I* a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

44 And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

46 This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,

47 And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.

The address of the Philistine to David, and David's answer to the Philistine, previous to the battle, is exactly suited to their different cha-

racters. How confident are all carnal men, like this Philistine. And what a contemptuous view do they take of the Lord's people. On the other hand, how humble and unassuming is the language of grace, like that of David. Here is not a word of himself, or of his own merit, or strength, or might, for the war. It is the Lord's cause in which I am engaged, saith the gracious soul, and the Lord shall have all the glory. Reader! do not overlook this, as among the sweetest improvements of the history. And recollect, that even our dear Redeemer did not make application of his victories to himself, but to his Father. *Therefore (saith Jesus) doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.* John x. 17, 18.

48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone and slang *it*, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but *there was* no sword in the hand of David.

51 Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.

Here we have the termination of the battle, in the fall of Goliath, and a tremendous one it was. So simple means as a stone, for the weapon of destruction, and slung by so youthful an hand, serve at once to shew the arm of the God of Israel engaged in it. Blind indeed, must be that eye that doth not recognize such a visible display. One of the Jewish Rabbins hath observed upon it, but by what authority I know not, that *Goliath* in his rage and contempt of David, when he said *Come, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air*, threw up the upper part of his helmet, and thereby left his forehead bare for the stone of David to have the easier entrance. Whether this were so or not, no doubt the Lord who presided over the battle and ordered all, so disposed of every thing in it, as to facilitate the event he had or-

daigned. But is it not delightful to see, that the very weapons of the Philistine's own pride and ostentation, are made subservient to his own destruction. Reader! do not fail to connect with this view of Goliath, his total destruction whom Goliath represented, and by the conversion of his own weapons to his own overthrow. When the devil tempted Adam to transgress, little did he think, that this very transgression should lay the foundation for all the blessed things contained in our redemption by Jesus. And when in after ages, the Jews led on by his temptations, nailed Jesus to the cross, little did he then consider, that that very cross would become the glorious cause of his people's salvation, and their everlasting joy through all eternity. I would desire grace from the Holy Ghost, ever to keep such evidences of the Lord's overruling all the church's enemies, to his own glory and his people's good, in view. It would serve to prove in many lesser instances, where perhaps things are not so plainly manifested, the truth of that precious scripture, that *the very wrath of man* (and may we not add devils) *shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath the Lord will restrain.* Psalm lxxvi. 10.

52 And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou come to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaarim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron.

53 And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they spoiled their tents.

54 And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent.

The event of this victory over Goliath, was, as might have been expected. The Philistines fled, and Israel pursued. But this was not fair as was agreed upon. Goliath had promised for his countrymen, that if any man could be found to conquer him, the Philistines would then be the servants of Israel. But now this is done, they flee. In the Lord Jesus's victory, however, which this typified, the conquest will be altogether final and complete. The Devil, that deceived the world, will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and the torment will be for ever and ever. See Rev. xx. 10, &c.

55 And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, *As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.*

56 And the king said, Enquire thou whose son the stripling is.

57 And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

58 And Saul said to him, Whose son *art* thou, *thou* young man? And David answered, I *am* the son of thy servant Jesse the Beth-lehemite.

It should seem that Saul had forgotten the person of David, so as not to know him again, which would appear rather strange if it were not considered that his disease at that time had left him but little recollection; and his anxiety for his kingdom and his life, also now preyed, no doubt, much upon him. But when David made himself known to him, the matter must have been brought to his recollection.

REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE, my soul, over the perusal of this chapter, and behold in the character of Goliath of Gath, and his bold and open defiance of Israel, a lively resemblance of that implacable, proud, and haughty foe, the accursed enemy of God and man, the Devil, who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. How often hath he stood tremendous to thy view, defying God and his Redeemer, to save thee! How fierce and blasphemous have been his insinuations, in tempting thee to fear that his threatenings were but too well founded. And how often, like the whole army of Saul at his approach, again and again, not only for forty days together, but for years, in apprehension, hast thou fled from him, and been sore afraid! And indeed, had a deliverance from his power been left to the accomplishment of an arm of flesh, how sure would have been thy everlasting ruin!

Oh, precious Jesus! thou Almighty David of thy people! Blessed be our Father's mercy, that sent thee to see how thy brethren fared, and to take their pledge! And blessed be thy love, which prompted thy divine mind to come to our rescue, from all the powers of sin and hell! And thrice blessed be the hour when in thine own blood and righteousness thou didst conquer for us all the enemies of our salvation! And now, Almighty Lord, we behold thee as returning from the slaughter of the Philistines, *having spoiled principalities, and powers, making a shew of them openly, and triumphing over them in it.* Now, Lord, we behold thee seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and all power thine in heaven and in earth. Go on, Almighty Conqueror, in thine holy war, until all hearts are subdued to the sovereignty of thy grace. And having wrought out such a glorious deliverance for us, work a still more powerful victory in us. And O lead us on, as the *Israelites* pursued the *Philistines*, to all the conquests which thy redemption hath procured, until at length, having under thy banners manfully opposed and subdued all the enemies of our salvation, we fol-

low thee to the seat of the conqueror, where, in an unceasing security which thy complete victory hath purchased, of everlasting joy, we obtain that kingdom which cannot be moved, and where thou hast made us kings and priests to God and the Father.

CHAP. XVIII.

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This forms an interesting Chapter, because it opens that account of the loves of David and Jonathan, which in the after history of David forms so very interesting a subject. Jonathan's heart is won by David. Saul at first seemed to be much pleased with David, but because the women in their songs and dances praised David's victories more than Saul's, from that day forth Saul envied David. This Chapter relates some of the evidences by which Saul manifested this malice towards him, in casting his javelin at him twice to slay him; then proposing to give him his eldest daughter to wife, but afterwards giving her to another; then offering his younger daughter, but with the hope of proving his ruin. Notwithstanding these things David prospers.

AND it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

There is somewhat very sweet and engaging in this account of Jonathan. Among carnal men such a success as David's would have called forth the greatest dislike. But in the breast of Jonathan we find love. And was it not grace that made all the difference? But how doth Jonathan's love sink to nothing, compared to thine, thou blessed Jesus, which thou hast manifested towards our poor nature? Of thee is it not the prophet speaks, when in allusion to thine unequalled love to thy people, he saith, *I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart and with my whole soul?* Jerem. xxxii. 41.

2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that *was* upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

5 ¶ And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, *and* behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted

in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

Whatever this covenant between Jonathan and David might mean, yet it may serve to suggest to us that *better covenant established upon better security*, and better *promises*, which the Lord hath made *for* his people and *with* his people. The covenant *for* his people stands everlastingly and eternally secure, being founded between all the persons of the Godhead. See the outlines of it, Isaiah lix. 21. and the covenant made *with* his people, see two sweet transcripts of it, Jeremiah xxxi. 31—34. and xxxii. 40. But there is another beautiful thought suggested to us in these verses, David was clothed with Jonathan's raiment. And did not our Jesus put on our garments, when he clothed himself in our nature? Jesus indeed stript himself of his robes of glory, when he put on the garment of mortality, and as the apostle beautifully speaks, *for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might be made rich*. Precious Redeemer! what love of Jonathan is to be named with thine? 2 Cor. viii. 9.

6 And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music.

7 And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

8 And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more but the kingdom?

9 And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

Here we behold the sad consequences of jealousy and envy. David's victory now began to cost him dear. In all ages this hath been the case. And no sooner doth grace manifest itself in any man's heart, but the enmity of the carnal mind breaks out. How did the victories of our Jesus over diseases, the possession of evil spirits, and the like, subject him to the reproaches of bad men? *He hath a devil and is mad*, said some. *He casteth out devils*, said others, *through Beelzebub the prince of the devils*. And Herod sought to kill him. Yes! dearest Lord! in all things it behoved thee to have the pre-eminency, though it be in suffering, and in persecution.

10 ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that

the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house; and David played with his hand, as at other times: and *there was* a javelin in Saul's hand.

11 And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall *with it*. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

What an awful account doth the scripture give of this unhappy man. No mercy from God, no deliverance from enemies, no services of friends, can work upon Saul's mind. *The last state of that man*, on whom Satan hath power, *is worse than the first*. Oh! Lord! whatever mercies thou art pleased to withhold, take not thine Holy Spirit from us. But while we mark the malice of Saul, led on by the devil, let us not overlook the safety of David, protected by the Lord. Oh! how eternally safe and secure are they kept, who are under the divine keeping!

12 ¶ And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.

13 Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

14 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD *was* with him.

15 Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.

16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.

It is worthy the Reader's remark, what is here said twice within a few verses of each other, of Saul's fear of David. Yes! there is a servile, pitiful, cowardly fear of the righteous, in the minds of the ungodly. And though the wicked hate the godly, and seek every occasion to slay them; yet in the midst of all, their minds are overawed at their presence. How did the Governor Felix tremble at the poor prisoner Paul's preaching, Acts xxiv. 25. And though it be in an infinitely higher instance, yet it ought not to be forgotten, how did the band of men and officers, who went to apprehend Christ, fall to the ground before him overawed, and trembling at his presence! John xviii. 3—6.

17 ¶ And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD's battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.

18 And David said unto Saul, Who *am* I? and what *is* my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king?

19 But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife.

This, in fact, was the original promise made by Saul to any man that should be found to kill Goliath. It was a breach of that promise it had not been done before. But it should seem that David's modesty had never demanded it. The giving his eldest daughter to another, was no doubt intended by Saul to displease David. But we find no resentment on David's part. Here, surely, David leads us to consider His unequalled patience, *who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.*

20 And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.

21 And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son in law in *the one of* the twain.

22 And Saul commanded his servants, *saying*, Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king's son in law.

23 And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you *a light thing* to be a king's son in law, seeing that I *am* a poor man, and lightly esteemed?

24 And the servants of Saul told him, *saying*, On this manner spake David.

25 And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

26 And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son in law: and the days were not expired.

27 Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son in law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife.

28 And Saul saw and knew that the LORD *was* with David, and *that* Michal Saul's daughter loved him.

29 And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.

30 Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, *that* David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

I class all these together, for the sake of shortness, and because one or two general observations will suit all. Saul's design is altogether evil, whether he withholds one daughter or promiseth another; it is but with a view to ruin David. But the humbleness of David's mind, under the gracious power of God, defeats all his stratagems. I cannot suffer those verses to pass away from our view without remarking to the Reader, that if David thus thought so highly of being made son-in-law to an earthly prince, what views ought the people of God to entertain of their adoption-character who are made *sons and daughters to the Lord God Almighty!* Behold (saith an Apostle) *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called sons of God!* Well might the Prophet, in the contemplation of gospel mercies exclaim, *O! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* See 2 Cor. vi. 18. 1 John iii. 1. Rom. xi. 33.

REFLECTIONS.

I WOULD call upon the Reader, while calling upon my own soul, in the contemplation of this chapter, to pass by all other considerations, to pause over the view of the love of Jonathan to David; to remark its wonderful properties, to stand amazed at the extensiveness of creature love in this man; and then to ask my heart, whether there is not cause to blush in the view of it, when I compare his love to David to my love to Him, who is David's Lord? Was Jonathan's soul so instantly captivated, so strongly rivetted, and so engaged by covenant to David, as to love him as his own soul; to strip himself of his garments and of his princely robe, in order to cloath David; while I who have so long known the Lord Jesus; have been so often fed, so constantly cloathed, so everlastingly protected, so graciously loved by him, feel such coldness, such deadness, and such little drawings of my heart towards him!

Oh! precious Jesus! *thy love indeed is better than wine, thy favour than life itself.* Thou hast shewn it by ways infinitely surpassing the love of Jonathan to David. Thou hast not only clothed the souls of thy people, with thy robe and garment of salvation, but thou hast made over thine whole soul to their welfare. All the blessings of grace flow from thy boundless, matchless love. And the various ways by which thou hast made the rich discoveries of thy love, all shew its wonderful properties. The covenant thou didst make for them in the everlasting counsel of peace, makes known thy love, for thou art thyself the whole of the Covenant. Yes! dearest Lord! thou hast proved it by all thy suretyship engagements; by all thy gracious undertakings; by all thy great accomplishments; by all thou hast done, and art doing, and wilt do for thy people. Oh! dearest, blessed Jesus! add this one mercy to all thou hast wrought, as great a miracle as any; melt my cold icy heart into a love for thee, who hast so loved me, and knit my whole soul unto thee, that I may fear and love thy name. Then will my song correspond with that of David, and I shall say as he did; *I will love thee, O Lord my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my Deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, the horn also of my salvation, and my high tower.*

CHAP. XIX.

CONTENTS.

The history of David, and Saul's enmity against him, is prosecuted in this chapter. Saul throws off the mask, and openly commands his son and servants to kill David. Jonathan expostulates with his father on the subject, and for a time obtains a promise, that David shall not be hurt. But his malice breaks out afresh, and he is obliged to flee for his life. Saul pursues him; but his design is overruled, and David again escapes. These are the principal things contained in this chapter.

AND Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.

We should again remark in the character of Saul, the progress of sin. In his example indeed, it is most awful. Having not been able to accomplish his bloody design upon David by private stratagem, he now proceeds by open command. So Herod, in his intention to crush the Lord Jesus, desired the wise men, when they had found Christ, to tell him where he was, that he might go and worship him also; but when he found that scheme failed, he sent out an order to kill all children under two years old, concluding that that must subject the Lord Jesus to the power of the sword. Matt. ii. 8, 9, 16.

2 But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret *place*, and hide thyself:

3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou *art*, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee.

4 ¶ And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works *have been* to thee-ward very good:

5 For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest *it*, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?

6 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, *As* the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain.

7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as at times past.

While we behold the friendship of Jonathan to his beloved David, let us not overlook His friendship, concerning whom it may truly be said, as it relates to us and our rescue from everlasting destruction, a greater than Jonathan is here. Jonathan was made useful to David, in communicating to him his unkind father's designs concerning him; and he pleaded for David with his unnatural father. But our Jesus's friendship to us and our fallen nature, was, and is, manifested in communicating to us the blessed intentions of our most merciful and kind Father, in redemption work. He lay in the bosom of the Father, and was intimately acquainted with all his gracious designs towards us from everlasting, and hath communicated them: *I have called you friends, (saith Jesus) for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you.* John xv. 15. Yes! thou dear Lord, thou art a Friend indeed, *a Brother born for adversity, that lovest at all times, and one that sticketh closer than a brother.* Prov. xvii. 17.

8 ¶ And there was war again: and David went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him.

How lovely David appears in the field against the common enemy of Israel! How infinitely surpassing all loveliness, doth Jesus the Captain

of our salvation appear, when he goeth forth to the renewed assaults of sin and Satan!

9 And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with *his* hand.

10 And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with his javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.

What sad breaks in the history, are those melancholy instances of the evil spirit's dominion over Saul. And such, Reader, would be his dominion over you and me, did not sovereign grace restrain. It is Jesus that binds up his power, restrains the malice of the foe, and subdues by his grace, the influences of his malignant venom upon our corrupt and lustful nature.

11 Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, to morrow thou shalt be slain.

12 ¶ So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped.

13 And Michal took an image, and laid *it* in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' *hair* for his bolster, and covered *it* with a cloth.

14 And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He *is* sick.

15 And Saul sent the messengers *again* to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him.

16 And when the messengers were come in, behold, *there was* an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' *hair* for his bolster.

17 And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?

These several narrow escapes of David are soon related, and we rest satisfied in the account, seeing he is safe. But they were very trying

moments with him, as appears by his writings. The 59th Psalm, we are told by the title of it, was written by David, upon this very occasion. And if the Reader would wish to enter deeper into the view of what David's feelings were upon this occasion, he will there behold, in the fervent breathings of his soul, his fears, and how the Lord strengthened him with faith. But while we look at David, let us not overlook David's Lord. Few of the holy men of old were more lively types of Jesus, in his unequalled persecutions, than David. And therefore, we should never read of the one in his seasons of trial, without having our minds directed to the other. Many of the most earnest expressions we meet with in David's Psalms, certainly had no reference to his own personal sufferings, for they could not be applied to him. And in many others, they are abundantly heightened and made interesting in their application to Jesus. See particularly the 16th and 22nd Psalms.

18 So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth.

It is pleasing to hear again of Samuel, who had long retired from the bustling scenes of government, to the college of the prophets, and presided over them. David's retreat to Samuel was, no doubt, with a view to ask counsel from God, how to act in the present juncture. Reader! doth not Jesus sometimes, and perhaps not unfrequently, unsettle our rests, and stir up matters to shake the earthly props of his people, on purpose to drive our hearts to him? But beside this retreat of David to Samuel at *Naioth*, to seek counsel from God, it should seem that he fled there as a place of safety. For there is reason to conclude, from what is related both in this place and in a former chapter, that the general opinion concerning the schools of the prophets was, that the spot was sanctified: and that those who came within its region were under particular impressions. Oh! that it could be said so now! See chapter x. 10—13.

19 And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David *is* at Naioth in Ramah.

20 And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing *as* appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.

21 And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also.

22 Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that *is* in Sechu: and he asked and

said, Where *are* Samuel and David? And *one* said, Behold, *they be* at Naioth in Ramah.

23 And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

24 And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, *Is* Saul also among the prophets?

Those effects wrought upon the mind of Saul and his messengers, seem to confirm what was said before, that certain impressions were wrought upon the minds of men according to the pleasure of the Lord, from the exercises of the prophets in their schools. In this instance, at least, it was made the means, in the Lord's hands, to deliver David from the power of Saul. The Lord hath a thousand methods, in the stores of omnipotency, to answer the purposes of his grace. And *he knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation*. And let not the Reader be surprized that the Lord should cause the same influence to work upon the mind of Saul. In all ages, bad men have been sometimes made the unwilling instruments of his pleasure. We read of New Testament Prophets, who shall be commissioned to much good to others, but in the end be found unrenewed in themselves, and rejected of God. Matt. xii. 22, 23.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT an awful contrast marks the characters of Saul and Jonathan his son! While the Father manifests the malignity of an evil spirit, breathing out nothing but hatred, malice, and death, against a faithful servant, who had gone with his life in his hand, to deliver him and his kingdom from ruin; see how the son's heart is influenced with all the kinder feelings of love, and brotherly affection towards him, so as to love him as his own soul! Reader! remark with me, the precious, blessed properties of distinguishing grace.

But while we admire and praise the friendship of Jonathan towards David, let my soul take wing, and fly to the contemplation of the unequalled friendship of Him, whose love as far exceeds the love of Jonathan, as the light transcends the darkness. In the loves of Jonathan and David there was a congeniality of soul, of manners, of age, and of mind. But in thy love and friendship towards our fallen nature, O blessed Jesus, thou wast *a Brother born for adversity*. Thy love to us was when our persons were not only totally opposite to thy pure nature, but loathsome; and no congeniality, no one thing to form a likeness, prompted thine infinite mind to such stupendous acts of mercy. Never forget, my soul, that it was while we were enemies, *Christ died for us*. And when we come to estimate the acts of Jesus' friendship, how doth

all human friendship fall to the ground before it. Thy friendship not only led thee to engage as our surety, to pay all our debts, to supply all our wants, to answer all our demands, to purchase by thy blood and righteousness an inheritance for us; but thou didst give thyself a ransom to deliver us from captivity: didst place thyself in the very state of vassalage in which thou didst find us, and though unconscious of sin in thyself, didst become *sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in thee*. Oh! matchless love, unparalleled friendship! Oh! be thou, blessed Jesus, to me ever dear, ever precious; and cause my soul to love thee, who hast so loved me, that *neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, may be able to separate my soul from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus the Lord*.

CHAP. XX.

CONTENTS.

The subject of David's distresses, on account of Saul's seeking his life, is continued through this Chapter. David leaveth Naioth, and flees to Jonathan for counsel. They confer on the best means for David to adopt. A plan is suggested for this purpose, but it fails. They meet by appointment, and it becoming necessary for David to escape for his life, Jonathan and David part with tears.

AND David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?

In those frequent flights of David from one place to another, is not the Reader reminded how Jesus was frequently compelled to make his escape from the fury of his enemies. From his birth, he was constrained to flee into Egypt. And in the Synagogue, when they thrust him out, and led him to the brow of the hill to cast him down headlong, he was obliged to seek his safety in hastening to *Capernaum*: and again, to avoid being stoned, to conceal himself from their knowledge by passing through the croud. See Matt. ii. 13. Luke iv. 28—30. John viii. 59.

2 And he said unto him, God forbid: thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so.

3 And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.

4 Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do *it* for thee.

It is somewhat astonishing, that as David had been anointed for the succession to the kingdom, and as such, was sure of the Lord's design, that his faith had not got the better of his fears. But we see in him, that mingled frame of mind which distinguishes, more or less, all God's people. Sometimes believing, and acting according to that belief. At others doubting, and then calling in question all God's promises. *Fear not, little flock*, (saith Jesus to his people) *it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*. But in the midst of this, how often do we find the people of God complaining lest they should fail of the grace of God. Luke xii. 32. Heb. xii. 15.

5 And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow *is* the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third *day* at even.

6 If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked *leave* of me that he might run to Beth-lehem his city: for *there is* a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.

7 If he say thus, *It is* well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, *then* be sure that evil is determined by him.

The feast of the new moon was a solemn ordinance in the church, and observed in Israel with great solemnity. In pious families, it should seem by what is said of Jesse's household, these services were much attended to. Job's was of this kind. And was it not with an eye to Jesus, as a feast upon a sacrifice? The sacrifice was to be once offered. But the precious effects of it were to be continually eyed in solemn remembrance. Such is the ordinance of the Lord's supper now. See Job i. 5.

8 Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the LORD with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father?

The reference to this covenant is very interesting, because the covenant of the Lord, as it is called; included the engagements which are in Christ, the promised seed in the Covenant.

9 And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by

my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee?

10 Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what *if* thy father answer thee roughly?

11 ¶ And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.

12 And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to morrow any time, *or* the third day, and, behold, *if there be* good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee;

13 The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father *to do* thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father.

14 And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not:

15 But *also* thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.

16 So Jonathan made *a covenant* with the house of David, *saying*, Let the LORD even require *it* at the hand of David's enemies.

17 And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

Nothing can be more engaging, to interest the Reader in behalf of Jonathan, than what is here related of him. Though it should seem, he knew that David would be his father's successor in the kingdom; yet there is no jealousy on his part. His love for David threw all other considerations to the ground. He only desired that David would shew kindness to his house. And amidst all the unpromising circumstances about David, his faith seemed now to be getting up again. But here, my soul, let Jonathan teach thee another lesson. Did he look forward to the period of David's exaltation, amidst all the obstacles which seemed

at this time to quench the hopes of it, and cause David to promise mercy to his family, when things were so discouraging; and wilt thou not depend upon the promises of thy Jesus, who is purposely exalted at the right hand of power, to prepare sure happiness for all his people? Shall Jonathan's faith in David's prospects of preferment, be so sanguine as to take an oath from him, for a blessing in it; and wilt thou doubt the word, the promise, the oath of thy God and Father in Christ Jesus? Oh! for faith *to believe the record which God hath given of his dear Son.* 1 John v. 11.

18 Then Jonathan said to David, To morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.

19 And *when* thou hast stayed three days, *then* thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was *in hand*, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel.

20 And I will shoot three arrows on the side *thereof*, as though I shot at a mark.

21 And, behold, I will send a lad, *saying*, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows *are* on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for *there is* peace to thee, and no hurt; *as* the LORD liveth.

22 But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows *are* beyond thee; go thy way: for the LORD hath sent thee away.

23 And *as touching* the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD *be* between thee and me for ever.

24 ¶ So David hid himself in the field, and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat.

If the Reader recollects, our dear Lord did not go up publicly to the feast, but after his brethren were gone, he then made a private visit there. John vii. 1—10.

25 And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, *even* upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty.

26 Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that

day: for he thought, Some thing had befallen him, he *is* not clean; surely he *is* not clean.

27 And it came to pass on the morrow, *which was* the second *day* of the month, that David's place *was* empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?

28 And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked *leave* of me *to go* to Beth-lehem:

29 And he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me *to be there*: and now, if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table.

30 Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious *woman*, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?

31 For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.

32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?

33 And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him; whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

It should seem, that the plan between David and Jonathan for the discovery of the real intention of Saul, was of the Lord. For, humanly speaking, had David sat in his usual place, before Saul, he could not have escaped with his life, when Jonathan's life became so endangered,

only from Saul's disappointment. How profitable is it to remark the watchful eye of the Lord over his people! Reader! depend upon it, there are a thousand escapes of this kind, more or less, in the lives of God's children, and of which they are altogether unconscious. When we come to look over the battlements of heaven, and see all the way which the Lord our God hath led us through the wilderness, what songs of praise will burst forth in the view of deliverances? See that sweet promise: Isaiah xlii. 16.

35 And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him.

36 And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. *And* as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.

37 And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, *Is* not the arrow beyond thee?

38 And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.

39 But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter.

40 And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry *them* to the city.

I cannot help remarking on these verses, how many times the Lord makes men, like this lad, the unconscious instruments of working after the counsel of his will. What a glorious instance of this kind, is that of the Jews crucifying the Lord Jesus. *Him* (saith Peter in his inspired Sermon) *being delivered, by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands, have crucified and slain.* Acts ii. 23.

41 *And* as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a *place* toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.

42 And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between

me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

The sweetest instruction from this parting interview, (for they knew not that they should ever see one another again) is the recollection of that everlasting covenant, in which all the people of God are included. That precious promise made by Jehovah to the person of the Lord Jesus, the great Head of his people, is of everlasting efficacy: *As for me, saith the Lord, this is my covenant with them: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.* Isaiah lix. 21. This became the security in the parting of Jonathan and David. And the same is the everlasting security of the faithful, in all the separations made in life, or death, among the Lord's heritage. Children may die; friends may forsake us, we may be bereaved of all earthly things we hold dear; but, the Lord is the Rock of ages, and his mercy endureth for ever.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! there is so much loveliness in the character of Jonathan, according as the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to present him before the church, in his conduct towards David, that I think it is our duty, as well as our privilege, to look at him with proper attention: and while we adore the gracious God that made him so lovely, we should implore grace to imitate his bright example. How beautiful he appears in this chapter, in his wisdom of discovering the real state of his father's mind towards David, and in his contrivance of communicating the same, unobserved, to the mind of David! How very engaging he appears also, in his sympathizing with David on the occasion, and mingling his tears with his, in the prospect of separation! How lovely in his piety towards the Lord, in so cheerfully looking forward to the sure succession of David to the kingdom, though to the exclusion of himself and his own family, because the thing was of the Lord!

But, my soul, when thou hast taken the fullest, and most leisurely survey of the loveliness, and wisdom, and generosity of Jonathan, turn thy thoughts to the contemplation of thy Jesus, in whom are hid all the treasures of loveliness, wisdom, and knowledge; and behold that matchless superiority in him to every thing excellent. Jesus is, indeed, *the altogether lovely, and the chiefest among ten thousand.* He is the wonderful Counsellor, for guiding and instructing his people in wisdom and knowledge. And he is not only the noblest of all possible examples of mercy, but mercy itself; even *the mercy promised.* Yes! blessed Jesus, it is thy sweet and friendly office to give us counsel in all seasons of perplexity; to impart to us the secrets of thy Father's will, both in a way of providence, and of grace: and thou dost indeed sooth us in all our troubles. When on earth thou didst mingle thy tears with the sorrows of thy distressed family. And now in glory, thou still retainest the feelings of our human nature: and when we are driven out and forsaken of all men, thou dost never leave us, nor forsake us. Oh! precious

Lord God! when I think of thy matchless love, how infinite, how inexhaustible; that even my ingratitude and forgetfulness of thee cannot wear out. Shall I not in all seasons when viewing any thing lovely in the creature, like this of Jonathan, shall I not call to mind thy surpassing loveliness, in mercy, grace, and favour to me, and to thy people? And shall I not, under the impression of the vast superiority, point to Jesus, as the church of old, and say, *this is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

CHAP. XXI.

CONTENTS.

The troubles of David are prosecuted in history through this chapter. Being driven from home, and like one banished the land, he visits Nob; receives from Ahimelech, the priest, hallowed bread: and the sword of Goliath, which was there. David hastens to Achish, at Gath; is but poorly received, and full of fears lest the men of Gath should betray him, he feigns himself mad. These are the principal points in this chapter.

THEN came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, *Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?*

Poor David, though the conqueror of Goliath, and the deliverer of his country, yet being proscribed by the king, and wandering about in the preservation of his life, excites fear in all that he approacheth. If what *Doeg*, the Edomite, told Saul be true, as is related in the succeeding chapter, (see chap. xxii. 9, 10), the priest *Ahimelech*, enquired of the Lord about him; that is David came to the tabernacle to seek counsel from the Lord. And what more proper for a tried, exercised soul? Reader! it is sweet when our afflictions lead us *to* the Lord; and do not keep us *from* the Lord. Beloved Jesus! in his unequalled agonies, cried unto his Father; and in proportion as his sorrows increased, the more vehement was his prayer. Luke xxii. 44. It is not meant by Ahimelech's saying, *Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?* that he had no company; for our blessed Lord in referring to this history of David, speaks of him and those that were with him, as *eating of the shew-bread*. See Mark ii. 26. But it means that David had no suitable companions, so that he looked as if he were in haste for his life, and which was really the case.

2 And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed *my* servants to such and such a place.

Let the Reader observe, and observe with concern, not like the carnal triumph of the ungodly over the frailties of good men, whose hearts rejoice in the view, saying, *Aha! Aha! So would we have it*: but let the Reader observe, how the want of faith and confidence in the Lord, leads men, even true believers, into sin. Had David trusted in Him and his support, who anointed him Saul's successor, he needed not to have run up and down in such apprehensions for his life. David could, and did, say upon another occasion, *my times are in thine hands*. Psm. xxxi. 15: and in that assurance he then found strength. But now, he loseth for the moment, sight of this confidence, he falls into sin, and forgets the Rock of his salvation. Reader! learn to make this improvement from it. The best of men are but men, and frail sinful men too; when left to themselves. Grace is no self-acting principle. Sweetly doth Paul speak on this point, and his experience corresponds to that of the faithful in all ages: *I know nothing by myself*. 1 Cor. iv. 4. *I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me*. Philip. iv. 13.

3 Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present.

David wanted bread: he felt the force of hunger, and therefore scrupled not to take of what the priest would give him in his distress. Do I not see Jesus's hunger here pointed out, when he was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil? But oh! how vast the superiority? Though that holy, harmless, undefiled High Priest, felt all the pressure of hunger; *for he was in points tempted like as we are, sin only excepted*, yet Jesus permitted not a miracle to supply his own wants, though he graciously wrought many to supply the wants of others.

4 And the priest answered David, and said, *There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread*; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.

5 And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women *have been* kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and *the bread is* in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel.

6 So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.

The Reader, if he consults Levit. xxiv. 5—9, will understand what this hallowed bread was. Being set apart to God's service, it could not

be used in common. Abstinence from even lawful things, at certain times, and upon certain occasions, was enjoined by the law. See Exod. xix. 15. And this is what is meant here, by the young men being kept from women: namely their wives. As to the bread, the observation which our blessed Lord makes on this passage, in his discourse with the Pharisees, (see Matt. xii. 1—4,) throws the best light upon it. The *shew-bread* was peculiarly for the priest's use, having been sanctified. See Levit. xxiv. 5—9. But David's necessity pleaded for the dispensing with this law; and *Ahimelech* judged it right. But is there not much of gospel in it? Did it not mean to shew, that in the dispensation by the Lord Jesus, the bodies of his people were the temples of the Holy Ghost, and were holy, being sanctified by the Spirit? And as Jesus himself, which this shew-bread represented, is the bread of life to his people; so his people are made kings and priests to God, and the Father; and consequently, are privileged to eat that bread of life, and live for ever. *Lord, evermore give us this bread.* John vi. 32—34.

7 Now a certain man of the servants of Saul *was* there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name *was* Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that *belonged* to Saul.

The character of this man is somewhat singular. He was an *Edomite*; that is, one of the stock of Esau. How came he in the house of the Lord, or employed in the service of Saul? Perhaps from being skilful as an *herdsman*. And observe the expression; he was *detained* before the Lord; that is, his attendance in the sanctuary was constrained, not willingly. So that take him altogether, he was an enemy to God and his people. His presence, when David came to the sanctuary, foreboded no good. When the sons of God present themselves before the Lord, *Satan comes also with them.* Job i. 6.

8 ¶ And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.

9 And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it *is here* wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take *it*: for *there is* no other save that here. And David said, *There is* none like that; give it me.

Poor David in his flight came unarmed. It is good to furnish our armoury from the sanctuary. *The sword of the Spirit is the word of God.* The sword of Goliath was a sword of remembrance, and no doubt peculiarly valuable, to David. It was hardly possible for him to

look upon it without giving a new edge to his faith. There is great sweetness in all our past experiences of God's mercy.

10 ¶ And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.

It is astonishing to see how the Lord's most eminent servants have been obliged to seek shelter from their foes. *Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab,* (saith the Lord) *be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler.* Though they are *outcasts*, yet are they *God's outcasts*. And Moab, a sworn foe to God, shall protect them, if the Lord finds it necessary. Isaiah xvi. 4.

11 And the servants of Achish said unto him, *Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?*

Certainly the idea of David's succession to the kingdom of Israel must have been by this time generally understood, for the report of it had reached and gained belief in Gath.

12 And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

13 And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrambled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.

14 Then said Achish unto his servants, *Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me?*

15 Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this *fellow* to play the mad man in my presence? shall this *fellow* come into my house?

The fears and distresses of David were very great, no doubt, when he feigned madness, in order to escape the danger which threatened him. Certainly there was enough to alarm him, had he not had resource in the Lord. For he was now in the very spot which Goliath came from. He had the very sword of Goliath on him. He was now surrounded with an host of foes. But, amidst all these dangers, and the feigning himself mad, never perhaps in any period of his life was his mind more composed and settled upon God. It was to this state of mind that we are indebted, under the Holy Ghost, for those most beautiful Psalms which he then wrote, and which have refreshed, and will continue to refresh, the church of the Lord in the afflictions of his people in all ages. I mean the 34th and the 56th, to which I refer the Reader. The latter is called *Michtam* of David; meaning a golden precious Psalm of David. The title also, *upon Jonath-elem-rechokim*,

some have thought intimates himself, because it means, *the silent dove that is afar off*, alluding perhaps to his distance from home, and in the midst of his enemies. How beautiful is it to see, in this man's experience, how faith works when the Lord gives grace. When his natural fears had prompted him to throw himself into the very bosom of his enemies, his spiritual faith, which the Lord had given him, led him to throw himself into the very bosom of his God. There, blessed Jesus, it is I would be found living and dying; in my best and in my weakest frames. *For thou art my hiding place: thou shalt preserve me from trouble: thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.* Selah. Psalm xxxii. 7.

REFLECTIONS.

BLESSED Redeemer! I cannot behold the shew-bread which David craved for himself and followers, from the hand of the Priest, without having my soul led to contemplate thee, thou bread of life, thou shew-bread on the Golden Altar, before thy Father, as the everlasting food of all thy people. *Thy flesh is meat indeed, and thy blood is drink indeed.* Thou hast been the shew-bread of thy Father before all worlds. As the corn is bruised, and broken, and prepared for nourishment to the body, so, precious Jesus! hast thou been bruised and broken for our sins, and prepared for the durable substance of thy people, from and to everlasting. And oh! the heavenly, the divinely prepared sustenance in thee! Thou art shewn forth by our God and Father as the infinitely satisfying fulness on which thy people may live for ever. Without thee all is empty and unsatisfying. In thee every want is answered. Thy Priests (for all thy people are a nation of kings and priests) enjoy thy fulness. The carnal world neither know thee nor enjoy thee. Oh! precious Lord God, enable me by true faith, with all the royal priesthood, to make a special appropriation of thy person and righteousness, with all thy saving benefits, to my soul. I would live upon thee, rejoice in thee, walk with thee, and make use of thee, as David did the shew-bread of the sanctuary, upon every occasion. Be thou my God, and acknowledge me for one of thy people. Never like *Doeg*, to be detained before thee; but, as a free-will offering, may I present myself by the mercies of my God a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is my reasonable service. And do thou, dearest Jesus, give me of the bread which is in secret, which the world knoweth not, because it knew thee not, that *I may eat and live for ever.*

CHAP. XXII.

CONTENTS.

David's distresses are still continued, and form the subject of this Chapter. He is constrained to leave Achish, and gets to the cave of Adullam. His relations now seek to him: many persons in desperate circumstances join him: Saul's rage against him breaks out with more and more violence: Doeg the Edomite, having informed Saul of Ahimelech the priest's kindness to David, Saul causeth the priests of

Nob to be slain, and the city of Nob is destroyed by him. Abiathar, one of the sons of Ahimelech, escapes, and flees to David. These are the principal matters contained in this Chapter.

DAVID therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard *it*, they went down thither to him.

It is an observation that meets us at every part of David's history, and ought to be marked down by the Reader with a particular mark, that but for the many and multiplied troubles of David, the Church of the Lord would have wanted those precious things which his book of Psalms contains. It is indeed a Book of rich experiences. And the Holy Ghost hath furnished for the Church, from this man's history, a great variety to suit most cases of his people. The title of the 142d Psalm marks this as the period, in David's life, when it was written. And a most precious Psalm it is. I beg the Reader to turn to it, in order to behold the workings of David's mind. But, while I do this, in order that the Reader may have the more lively idea of David's history, I beseech him to be always looking beyond David to behold him whom David so strikingly typified. One example in proof will be sufficient to justify this request, and may serve to throw light upon many others. In that Psalm David saith, *I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me.* Now the Reader cannot fail, I should hope, to recollect that Jesus was precisely in this state, when all the disciples forsook him and fled; when one denied him and another betrayed him.

2 And every one *that was* in distress, and every one that *was* in debt, and every one *that was* discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.

Here surely, if any where, we may see the Lord Jesus strongly typified. Yes! thou dearest Lord! thy little army is composed of distressed souls; for none will make thee their Captain whose spiritual circumstances are not desperate. Until I found myself totally insolvent, and unable to satisfy the debt of God's law; until my soul felt distress from the sense of sin, the alarms of conscience, and the accusations of Satan; until discontent under a load of guilt, and the fear of the wrath to come, compelled me to seek redemption; never wast thou dear to me, nor did I desire to come under thy banner! But now, oh! thou chiefest among ten thousand; now art thou to me the altogether lovely, and the Captain of my salvation. *They shall come, it is said, that are ready to perish:* and I am convinced that without thee I must perish for ever. Isa. xxvii. 13.

3 And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my fa-

ther and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, *and be* with you, till I know what God will do for me.

4 And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold.

I pass over the consideration of David's filial regard to his parents, sweet and profitable as the review of his affection to them would be, in the improvement it holds forth, in order to attend to a point in these verses infinitely more important; I mean, that patient waiting, and dependence upon God, until he knew what the Lord's will concerning him was; and how he should be disposed of. The highest marks of faith are those which eye God in every thing, and cause the soul humbly to wait the Lord's pleasure. When we can pray over the dispensation, leave that dispensation with Him that ordereth all things in wisdom; and cheerfully abide by the result. This is faith in its best principles. Reader! may you and I thus love Christ, and then we shall truly glorify him. See another beautiful example of this kind in David's conduct on a similar occasion. 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.

5 And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth.

I admire the conduct of David in thus taking counsel from the Prophet, and following his advice. He considered it as coming from the Lord. The prophet *Malachi* had it in commission in after ages to tell the Church, that God's servants are his messengers to give information to his people. Mal. ii. 7.

6 When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that *were* with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants *were* standing about him);

7 Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, *and* make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds;

8 That all of you have conspired against me, and *there is* none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and *there is* none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth

unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

Reader! remark the progress of iniquity in this unhappy man. Not able to bring his son Jonathan over to his own persuasion, he now implicates him in the supposed treachery of David; and thus seeks a pretence in the counsel of the wicked for David's destruction. Doth not the Reader call to mind an higher instance of this turpitude, in the conduct of the High Priest towards the person of our adorable Redeemer. *Answerest thou nothing?* (said this pretended upright and conscientious High Priest) *behold how many things they witness against thee.* And when our dear Lord, agreeable to what had been predicted of him, standing, *as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, and opened not his mouth*, still remained silent. "I adjure thee (says he) by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God?" And when to this solemn demand, the Son of God, who came to bear witness to the truth, openly professed who he was: the High Priest rent his clothes, and pronounced it to be blasphemy. See Matt. xxvi. 62—65.

9 ¶ Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.

10 And he enquired of the LORD for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.

Uniformly in all ages of the church the children of the bond-woman are enemies to the children of the free. Esau's race, the Edomites, and Jacob's seed, the true Israelites, are in different covenants. Reader! put it down as a certain truth, every one belonging to Christ must and will suffer persecution. Gal. iv. 29.

11 ¶ Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that *were* in Nob: and they came all of them to the king.

12 And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I *am*, my lord.

13 And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast enquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

14 Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who *is so* faithful among all thy ser-

vants as David, which is the king's son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house?

15 Did I then begin to enquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute *any* thing unto his servant, *nor* to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more.

I never read the process of an unjust tribunal like this of Saul's, but I desire to have my thoughts directed by the Holy Ghost to contemplate thy matchless humbleness and purity of soul, dearest Jesus, when, before Pontius Pilate, *thou didst witness a good confession*. The conscious rectitude of *Ahimelech* in the instance before us, lovely as it is, sinks to nothing in the comparison. Who is faithful among all the Lord's servants, as the servant whom Jehovah had chosen? And yet was not he accused of blasphemy? Oh! thou Lamb of God, who didst endure such a contradiction of sinners against thyself. Heb. xii. 3.

16 And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house.

17 And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD; because their hand also *is* with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not shew it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD.

18 And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod.

19 And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.

Observe, the awful height in iniquity to which Saul is now arrived! he calls Ahimelech and his companions Priests of the Lord: and yet dares to lay hands upon them. And observe, the awful character of Doeg: and in him mark the decided hatred in the hearts of all men, by nature, to the children of grace. This man is a lively type of it. But

Reader! do not fail to remark, the fulfilment of God's threatened judgment upon the house of Eli, here visited on the children. See chap. iii. 11—14. I do not know any thing more awful, than the consideration that the threatenings of the Lord, as well as his promises, must be fulfilled. Jehovah is as truly engaged to the performance of the one, as he is to the other. And what an alarming consideration is the thought, that the days shall come when the wicked shall be driven from the presence of the Lord, with everlasting destruction. 2 Thess. i. 9.

20 ¶ And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David.

The flight of Abiathar to David, should serve to teach every persecuted soul that Jesus, the Son of David, must be fled to in all seasons of distress. It is he which receiveth the sinner under the threatened pursuit of law and justice, and affords shelter in his righteousness against all their claims.

21 And Abiathar shewed David that Saul had slain the LORD's priests.

22 And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite *was* there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned *the death* of all the persons of thy father's house.

23 Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou *shalt be* in safeguard.

Though David held forth such consolation to Abiathar, yet it appears, from his history, and the contents of the *Fifty-second Psalm*, which he wrote upon this occasion, that his mind was sharply exercised, though with steady faith. But do we not see a greater than David here? Is not our Almighty David shadowed forth, as brought into distresses, and bringing his followers, to similar situations like Ahimelech? But how sweet the relief to the mind, that our Almighty David hath anticipated the sure judgment, which must follow the persecutors of his people. Yes! the Lord will destroy, all the enemies of our salvation, and that for ever. David hath marked *Selah* to this observation, when he prophesied that they should be rooted out of the land of the living. By which he meant that the Reader should mark it down as a thing so sure to be done as if it were done already. See Psm. lii.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE, dearest Jesus, in the flight of David to the cave of Adullam, I would pause to contemplate thee. Thou art ever precious, ever lovely, ever endearing, in every possible point of view, in which my soul beholds thee; but when I see thee, as David is here represented,

as becoming the Captain of every poor distressed, discontented, and wretched debtor: oh! how doth my soul long to come for ever under thy banner, and hail thee the Captain of my salvation!

And in this glorious character, as the Leader and Commander of thy people, do I not behold thee as the gift of thy Father to this blessed purpose, to the fugitive, distressed band of poor, ruined, and undone sinners? Do I not view thee as becoming Captain *over* them, as well as Captain *to* them! For surely, when thou receivest them in the wilderness of their state by nature, thou regeneratest them by thy power, convertest them from the error of their way, and dost not only cancel the debt of the insolvent, and soften and remove the distress of the afflicted; but take away the very cause of discontent in those who have found but too much reason to be dissatisfied with the ruined state of their nature, and have fled to thee for peace and content, in thy finished righteousness, and blood-shedding atonement. Yes! thou blessed Jesus! thou Almighty Captain of our salvation! it is thine, with the sword of the Spirit, both to conquer *for* them, and conquer *in* them. Oh! let thy precious word bring with it convictions of our sin, and convictions of thy all-sufficient righteousness; that thy little army may become more than conquerors through thy grace leading them on; until all the Sauls of persecution and opposition, which hunt for their life, are destroyed; and thou shalt bring them into thy holy mountain, thy kingdom, where thou wilt make them kings and Priests to God and the Father, for evermore. Amen.

CHAP. XXIII.

CONTENTS.

This is an interesting Chapter, and it contains some sweet practical instructions to the exercised believer, in his views of what is here recorded in the life of David. Saul is still pursuing him for slaughter; the Lord works deliverance by David for the men of Keilah; notwithstanding which the men of Keilah intended to deliver David into Saul's hand. David retreats to the wilderness of Ziph, and there has an interview with Jonathan; but upon the Ziphites treachery, in inviting Saul to come and take him, David escapes from thence, and retreats to the strong holds of En-gedi.

THEN they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshing floors.

2 Therefore David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said unto David, Go and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah.

3 And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if

we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?

4 Then David enquired of the LORD yet again. And the LORD answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

If the Reader will consult the preceding chapter, at the fifth verse, where Gad the prophet bids David go into the land of Judah, he will then discover both the cause in this rescue the Lord intended him for Keilah, and that he might have a servant of the Lord in the person of Gad for his instructor in all doubtful cases. It is sweet in providences to trace the Lord's hand, and to connect one event with another, in order to observe the Lord's dealings with his people. But it is sweeter still to behold, in the outlines of the Lord's people's exercises, some resemblance, however faint they are, to Jesus. Amidst all David's own private distresses, the love of Israel was uppermost in his heart. But oh! how shrunk to nothing is this view of David compared to David's Lord, who, in all his agonies in the garden, and the path to the cross, would have restrained the tears of the daughters of Jerusalem, which they were shedding for him, to shed them over the beloved Jerusalem. Luke xxiii. 28.

5 So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

What a blessed testimony was this victory that the Lord was with David. Surely, Reader, the Lord doth give tokens, many love tokens by the way, amidst our sorrowful paths, did we but notice them, of his presence and favour.

6 And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, *that* he came down *with* an ephod in his hand.

It was no inconsiderable token this neither of the same favour, in that the priest brought with him the ephod into the wilderness: for, as David was cut off from the house of the Lord, it was pleasing, and especially in those days, to have the symbols of his worship. The *urim* and the *thummim* were in the ephod: and David, no doubt, considered them as *lights* and *perfections* to instruct him. But, Reader, do not overlook our superior privileges. We need no more the urim, nor the thummim, the ephod, nor the altar. In Christ we have all: he is the sum and substance, of which those symbols were the shadow and figure. Oh! precious Jesus! be thou my High Priest, my Ephod, my Urim and Thummim, both Altar and Sacrifice. On thee would I offer up all my poor offerings; and *from* thee receive all I need.

7 ¶ And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered

him into mine hand ; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars.

I beg the Reader, through the whole history of Saul, to mark with me the progress of sin. He is arrived to that degree of ripeness in iniquity, that now he hath not only thrown off the mask in openly persecuting David, but he dares to join God himself with him as engaged in his cause. Thus, Reader, the apostle tells us, that *evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.* 2 Tim. iii. 13.

8 And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.

9 And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him ; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hitlier the ephod.

This furnisheth an interesting view of David. In his distress, what doth he do? He doth not take counsel of his friends: he doth not engage any thing upon his own strength; but he flies to the Lord: *bring hitlier the ephod.* Reader, let us, in all our lesser trials, adopt the same. Whither shall the exercised go with their troubles, but to the Lord? Bring hither, I would say, God's word, and let me seek counsel there! Oh! it is a very high privilege to have a God in Christ to go to, who is engaged in covenant to deliver his people; and when more likely than when they call upon him?

10 Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake.

11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down.

12 Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the LORD said, They will deliver thee up.

13 Then David and his men, *which were* about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbare to go forth.

The enquiry of David, and the Lord's answers, were suited to his present circumstances. It was not that Saul would come down, but that

it was his *intention* to come down; and, therefore, it implied the necessity of David's departure. The Lord is graciously pleased to furnish out suitable providences, when such things will answer his blessed purpose, without stepping out of the ordinary way, to deliver his servants.

14 ¶ And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day; but God delivered him not into his hand.

15 And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David *was* in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.

Every day Saul sought to accomplish his purposes, and every day, the Lord as often delivered his servant. Such are the Lord's deliverances to all his people. Oh! how precious would it be to the souls of the faithful, if they every day lived, kept house, and feasted upon this; for the truth is certain; the Lord himself saith, *I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.* Isaiah' xxvii. 3.

16 And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.

17 And he said unto him, Fear not; for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.

18 And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

It must have been a very refreshing thing to the heart of David, this interview with Jonathan. And, no doubt, the Lord graciously brought it to pass for a relief to poor David, to bear him up under his trouble. But, Reader, I hope you will not need from me to be reminded, that if the visit of Jonathan was so sweet and seasonable to David, what must *his* visits be to his poor ones in distress, who is *a Friend at all times, and a Brother born for adversity?* Surely, dearest Jesus, if the kindness, and friendship, and love of Jonathan was so constant, well may I depend upon thee, whose love is from everlasting, and whose friendship is like thyself, *the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.* Do I see Jonathan, a poor creature like myself, and whose friendship, at the highest, could be but creature friendship, thus faithful to his David; and shall I ever more doubt thy love, thy friendship, dearest Jesus, when both are the result of Creator and Redeemer affections. Oh! for grace to behold thy frequent visits in the woods of this world, and the wilderness state, and as frequently to renew the covenant engagements

before Jehovah, in which thou hast promised to be my portion, and I to be the purchase of thy blood for evermore.

19 Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hichilah, which *is* on the south of Jeshimon?

20 Now, therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part *shall be* to deliver him into the king's hand.

21 And Saul said, Blessed *be* ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me.

22 Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, *and* who hath seen him there; for it is told me *that* he dealeth very subtilly.

23 See, therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah.

24 And they rose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men *were* in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon.

25 ¶ Saul also and his men went to seek *him*. And they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard *that*, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon.

26 And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them.

We have reason to bless God for these continued exercises of David, however painful to him, they prove profitable to us. Those two precious Psalms, the 54th and 63d, were written by him upon those occasions;

as the Reader will perceive by consulting them in the title page. And, Reader, depend upon it, that life in grace will be peculiarly honoured by the Lord, that is, peculiarly marked with situations for the exercise of grace and faith, and the display of God's faithfulness in carrying the believer through them. If the Lord hath promised his presence to his people in affliction, must they not be brought into trouble, in order to have that precious promise realized?

27 But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land.

28 Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Sela-hammahle-koth.

29 And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at En-gedi.

The Hebrew word *Sela-hammah-lekoth*, means the *rock of divisions*. And is there not an everlasting division between the Sauls and Davids in all ages of the church? Reader, remark how, in the very moment of inevitable destruction, as it should appear to us, the Lord calls off the enemy from the pursuit: thus is the case of Saul from David. And in a yet more remarkable case, in the instance of another Saul, in gospel times, when he was threatening, and breathing out nothing but death and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. It is sweet to trace the Lord's hand in our deliverances. See those scriptures, Acts ix. 1, and Isaiah xxxvii. 28, 29.

REFLECTIONS.

READER, let us pause over the perusal of this chapter, if it be for no other purpose than to remark the gracious care of a covenant God over his people; and to observe, that though *many be the afflictions of the righteous, yet the Lord delivereth out of them all*. But let us further learn from the view of it, how graciously the same merciful Lord supports the trials of his people, and makes their back suited to their burden; that *as their day is, so their strength shall be*. Surely nothing but the Lord's grace could have been found sufficient to have borne up David's mind under such heavy afflictions. And who, thus supported, but must have been constrained to say as he did; *It is good for me to have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes?* If trouble, and the malice and persecution of our enemies, be made the means, in the hand of our most wise and gracious God, to bring our hearts to live on him; and if, (as is most probable) without these exercises, our hearts would not be found so closely cleaving to the Lord; oh! who would not wish to be driven out from all creature comfort, that we might experience such sweet and holy enjoyment as David did, in communion with God.

But chiefly, from the perusal of this chapter, let us, Reader, eye Jesus.

Was not that precious Lamb of God represented in all David's troubles? Did Saul hunt David from city to city, and from one place to another; and can we forget, how *strong bulls of Bashan beset him around, until his strength was poured out like water; and his heart, like wax, was melted in his bowels!* Yes! thou dearest Jesus, David's Lord and Son! thou wast exposed to the wrath, both of devils and of wicked men, in the day of thy calamity. Thou didst endure *such a contradiction of sinners against thyself*, and wast brought under oppression and suffering, until that thy life was made an offering, and a sacrifice for sin. But here, blessed Jesus, in the view of thine unequalled sufferings, may I always connect with it the cause. All this was not for thyself, but thy people. In the midst of all, thou wast *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.* And when I see thee in these situations of trial and suffering, and behold thee personating thy people, *the heir of all things*, and yet *not where to lay thine head; the brightness of thy Father's glory*, and yet *thy visage marred more than any man*: the wonder, the praise, the adoration of angels, and yet, as thou saidst thyself, *a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and the outcast of the people!* Oh! precious, precious Jesus, what love must have enflamed thy heart, that thou shouldest become all this, and infinitely more than this, even *sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in thee.* Hail! holy Saviour! gracious Lord God, Emmanuel! add one blessing more, and incline every heart to love thee, that *every knee may bow before thee, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* Amen.

CHAP. XXIV.

CONTENTS.

The history of Saul's pursuit of David, is continued in the opening of this chapter. But, in this pursuit, the Lord brought Saul into David's hand: his followers advise David to avail himself of the advantage; but David refuses. He takes occasion, however, to remonstrate with Saul, by bidding him take notice what he might have done, and how he forbore. Saul seems pricked to the heart, in the relation: confesses his sin to David, and obtains from David, a promise of kindness to his house. They part.

AND it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of En-gedi.

2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

What an awful view doth the character of Saul afford, of the desperately wicked state of the heart of man by nature, void of grace. With what unremitting, unabated fury, doth Saul hunt after the life of David. Reader! recollect the instance of the Jews hunting after the life of Jesus, of whom, in this point no doubt David was a type.

3 And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where *was* a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

Covering his feet, in these hot countries, most probably means sleep, (though some have thought another relief of nature). No doubt a sleep from the Lord, in order to deliver his servant from his hand. If the Reader, while he reads this chapter, will consult the 57th Psalm, he will perceive what a very precious moment in the life of David this was. David wrote that Psalm, concerning this very period. I do not say that he in the same moment did it. But what then passed in his mind, at that period, was what he afterwards committed to writing. So that he might be said to have *composed* it when he had enough to have *discomposed* his mind, and no doubt but for God's presence and grace, would have been discomposed indeed. It was very properly called *Michtam* of David, meaning *golden, precious* words of David, for nothing can be more so. But I refer the Reader to it. And he will there discover how a full and an entire confidence in the Lord, bore him up to do as he did. This Engedi was in the wilderness, a barren rocky place. Yet even here, Saul's jealousy and rage could not allow David to live peaceably.

4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

6 And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD.

7 So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on *his* way.

The Lord had given David many precious promises, that he would be with him to deliver him at all times. And the Lord had done so. Indeed the anointing him to the throne, implied all this. But there was no one promise of a particular day when the Lord would deliver Saul

into his hand. Therefore this was a temptation of the enemy. And it is plain that afterwards David saw it in this point of view, when his heart smote him for only having cut off the skirt of Saul's robe. But Reader, when you have paid all due attention to this example of David, in the forbearance of resentment for injuries received, (for it is a very sweet one, and may serve to shew us that true believers in Christ cannot take the government even of their own wrongs into their own hand, for they are themselves the Lord's property, and the Lord's care;) when I say, you have paid all due respect to this view of the subject, turn your thoughts to one infinitely higher, and in the person of David's Lord on the cross, see how Jesus, in his unequalled forbearance, prayed for mercy on his murderers; and no doubt, from these prayers of Jesus, several of those who crucified the Lord of life and glory, were afterwards made the happy partakers of redemption in his blood. Think, Reader, of the manifold wisdom of God in this, and behold how that prayer was literally fulfilled, though in a way the very reverse in which it was uttered; when they said, *his blood be upon us and upon our children*. Compare Matt. xxvii. 25, with Acts ii. 23, 37—41.

8 ¶ David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

9 And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and *some bade me* kill thee: but *mine eye* spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he *is* the LORD's anointed.

11 Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that *there is* neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.

12 The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

13 As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wick-

edness proceedeth from the wicked : but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

14 After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea?

15 The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

Reader! I do request you will remark with me, how all the finer feelings of the christian, and the man, are blended in this address of David. What could he have said; what ought he to have said more? He first calls upon him as his sovereign; next as his father; so as to plead the double claim that he had upon him to kindness. He then, in a most graceful manner, would have set up an apology for Saul's unkindness, in taking for granted that he had ill-advisers. It could not be Saul; whom I have served; whom I have loved; whose battles I have fought; whose subject, nay, whose son-in-law I am. It must be some base adviser. And after this, as if to bid defiance to every barefaced insinuation which might have been made against him, he holds up the skirt of Saul's robe, and says, See! what greater evidence would my lord and father desire, that I value and wish to preserve his life, when in the same moment I cut off thy skirt, I might have cut off thine head. He then points out the degradation of a king to pursue such a poor fugitive as himself, as if the death of a flea, or a dog, could give comfort to a character so high and exalted as a king. But, as if to shew Saul the awfulness of such a conduct, twice in his speech, he dwells upon the certainty of the decision from a righteous God, to whom he makes appeal. As much as to say; if nothing can prevail upon one from whom I have a right to expect love, to soften his resentment so unjustly bestowed upon me; the Lord will do me justice, and the event will be most tremendous to mine enemy. Reader! do not fail to remark with me, the happiness of such a frame of mind, which is its own reward: for the conversion of our natural passions into gracious deeds, is bringing a very heaven into the soul. But while you and I look at the *effects*, never let us overlook the *cause*. It is Jesus which inspires the whole; and not only makes one man differ from another, but makes a man differ even from himself. In proof of this, compare David's conduct here, with his heart smitten for only cutting off Saul's robe; and look at him in the case of his conduct to *Uriah*, where after murder and adultery, his heart never smote him for *nine whole months* together. And would not have smitten him then, if the Lord in mercy had not sent grace to awaken him by the ministry of the Prophet. If the Reader be not able to mark the difference, and to know where, and to whom to ascribe all the praise, I can but pity him. But if, happily, the Lord be his Teacher, I know his heart will rejoice with me, to behold all the pride of man laid low, and let God have what is his just due, the whole glory. See 2 Sam. xii. 5—9.

16 ¶ And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul,

that Saul said, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.

17 And he said to David, 'Thou *art* more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

18 And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.

19 For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.

20 And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.

21 Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.

22 And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

Is it not matter of astonishment, that after such a palpable act of mercy as David had shewn Saul, that his mind should still retain hatred to the person of David, as we find in the sequel of the history it did? And is it not yet more astonishing that Saul should even weep, confess his baseness, and yet soon dry up the tears and hate more than ever. Reader! I beg it of you as a favour, though your welfare, not mine, is concerned in the request, look inward, search that depth of corruption lodged in your own heart! depend upon it, the Lord did not ask that question by the prophet, without full cause, when pronouncing the heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, he added *who* can know it? meaning no doubt that none can thoroughly know it, but the Lord. See Jeremiah xvii. 9, 10. No man hath ever yet penetrated to the bottom of the wickedness and deceit of his own heart; neither have all the foldings in which foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, been laid open to any man's view. Prov. xxii. 15. But wherefore have I adverted to this subject; or requested the Reader to look so narrowly within? Believe me, it is not that any pleasure can be derived to him that writes, more than to him that reads, from ripping open the bosom of either, when both are alike unclean. But it is to endear Jesus; it is to render him yet more sweet and more precious. It is, to convince, by an evidence so decided, and palpable as a man's own bosom, that *there is salvation in no other*. The tears of Saul, the tears of Esau; nay, all

the tears which have been shed from the days of Adam to this hour, have no efficacy to change the heart, or wash away sin. And though I make a wide difference between these tears of Saul, in the same unregenerated state, and the tears of Peter, when the Lord had renewed him to repentance; yet the tears of Peter, were only precious evidences of his being renewed, and his heart changed; not the means of his acceptance. Neither those tears, nor that repentance, became the cause of his recovery, or of the Lord's favour. This mercy wholly sprung from the fountain of mercy, God's grace in Jesus Christ. Oh! for testimonies in my soul that I am become a new creature in Christ Jesus, by the sweet fruits of faith, repentance, and a new life. But with all these precious gifts in full exercise in my soul, I pray God that I may lay no stress upon either, but wholly seek to be accepted in the person and complete redemption-work of Jesus Christ. As Paul counted *all things but dross to win Christ, and be found in him*; so would I pray to be found, living and dying to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made poor sinners accepted in the Beloved. See Phil. iii. 7—9. Ephes. i. 6, 7.

REFLECTIONS.

READ, my soul, in the character of this deluded, wretched, and unwise king of Israel, the sad history of every unrenewed man, by nature. Blind to all his own real interest and happiness; and giving himself up to work all malice with greediness. And is not every man in this state, that goes forth to the pursuit of persecution, and regardless of his own happiness. He sees not the light of life. He knows nothing of Jesus and his righteousness, but is full of envy, hatred, and every evil work. Alas! what shall open his eyes, or awaken his mind to the proper apprehension of good and evil?

Read, my soul, in the unwearied persecutions of poor David, the happy state, notwithstanding all outward circumstances, of the godly in Christ Jesus. Though cast out, and fugitives, and vagabonds, too frequently, in the sight of men, or, as David speaks, like a flea, or a dead dog, of no value; yet chosen of God, and precious. They are crucified with Christ; exposed to the rage and violence of Satan and bad men; and worse than all, to the remains of indwelling corruption in their own nature. But, O dearest Lord, how sweet and refreshing is the thought, *more is He that is with us, than all that are against us*. All the Sauls, which now persecute us, know as he did concerning David, that the Lord hath established his kingdom in the hearts of his people. Let this, O my God, be my everlasting comfort under every trial. Poor, wretched, persecuted, and deeply tried, as I may be in myself, yet Jesus will plead my cause, and bear me out through every difficulty. Lord! do thou carry me through all the caves of *En-gedi*, and the mountains, and wilderness state of my warfare; support me under every burden; lighten every care; bear me up under every trial; lead me through every opposition; bring me constantly near thy throne of grace, and finally bring me home to thy throne of glory.

CHAP. XXV.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter contains a great variety of contents, in its relation. Here is an account of the death of Samuel; the character and behaviour of Nabal towards David; the sin-preventing providence of God, in causing Nabal's wife, by her prudence, to avert the intended destruction of Nabal and his house, by David; the death of Nabal, and the wife of Nabal becoming afterwards, the wife of David.

AND Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

It is not said *how* Samuel died. The Holy Ghost hath thought it enough to record his death, without subjoining any thing more. No doubt, he died in faith. In another scripture, the Holy Ghost hath said so. See Heb. xi. 13 with 32. So died all the faithful! As they lived;^a so they died, *waiting for the consolation of Israel*. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the patriarchs, prophets, all looking with an eye of faith to Him, and speaking of him, *to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem*. Luke ii. 38. Precious faith! so may it be my portion to live, and so to die; clasping Jesus in my arms, and dropping this tabernacle, in the moment while his name is the last word quivering on my lips, and he himself in my heart. See, Reader! how the memory of the faithful is blessed, in the lamentation over his remains. *Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints*; and precious in the sight of saints, is the death of each other. Psalm cxvi. 15.

2 And *there was* a man in Maon, whose possessions *were* in Carmel; and the man *was* very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.

Probably *Maon*, was near the wilderness of *Paran*, in its borders. This is the wilderness which David refers to, when he said, *Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar*. Psalm cxx. 5. Gracious souls! dwell often with ungracious companions, by necessity. A state of nature, is frequently spoken of under the similitude of *Kedar*. Song i. 5.

3 Now the name of the man *was* Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and *she was* a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man *was* churlish and evil in his doings; and he *was* of the house of Caleb.

The Holy Ghost hath been pleased to give the names of this married

couple. Perhaps, to point out thereby more strikingly, their character. *Nabal*, signifies in its original, *a fool*. And *Abigail*, the *joy of her father*. *Caleb*, the progenitor of Nabal, was of a different spirit, of whom such honourable testimony is given in the holy word. Numb. xiv. 24.

4 And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep.

5 And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name:

6 And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast.

7 And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel.

8 Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David.

Let the Reader observe, how poor David, though king elect, and long since anointed as such, was put to hard shifts and difficulties to live, for the common accommodations of this life. When the Reader hath duly pondered over this, let him not be surprized that kings elect in grace, should be exercised with difficulties also, in their way. Though Jesus hath made them *kings and priests to God, and the Father*; yet according to their high rank, they are proportionably exercised. *I think* (says Paul) *that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.* 1 Cor. iv. 9. Highly dignified followers of the Lord! Count it, I charge you, honour, *to be thought worthy to suffer shame for his name.* Acts v. 41.

9 And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased.

10 ¶ And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of

Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master.

11 Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give *it* unto men, whom I know not whence they *be*?

It is evident, that Nabal was no stranger to David's history, by this answer; or he could not have called him the son of Jesse, nor Saul's servant. But observe, in order to cover over his inhumanity under fair pretences, instead of speaking of David, the deliverer of his country, from the Philistines, and as one oppressed for his faithfulness, he calls him a runaway servant, and only the poor son of a poor father. It is astonishing to observe how the worst of men will find excuses, by way of justifying their conduct.

12 So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings.

13 And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword; and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff.

The principal feature I would beg the Reader to remark in this part of David's conduct, is the evidence it carries with it, of the remains of indwelling corruption in the best of men. It is like a wound lurking under a covered skin: let it be touched beneath the surface, and out the matter comes. It was truly unkind in Nabal so to treat David's modest request. But this became no apology for David's unjust resentment. Oh, Reader! let you and I learn from it, that nature, even when renewed by grace, is renewed but in part. The body of sin and death still tends to corruption; though *the inward man be renewed day by day*.

14 ¶ But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them.

15 But the men *were* very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields:

16 They were a wall unto us both by night and

day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.

17 Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he *is such a son of Belial* that *a man* cannot speak to him.

We should overlook the servant in this happy and seasonable advice, to remark the hand of God in it. How sweetly doth Joseph look beyond second causes, in the instance of himself and brethren, when the overruling providences of God had so arranged the events in his wonderful life, that their inhuman conduct in selling him for a slave was made the very foundation of his becoming their preserver. It was not *you* that sent me hither (said Joseph) but God. Gen. xlv. 8. Reader! depend upon it, you lose a thousand of the most precious enjoyments of life, if you do not continually take into your view the gracious overruling hand of God in all that concerns you. Every blessing is made doubly sweet, by thus beholding the Lord arranging and appointing all.

18 Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched *corn*, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid *them* on asses.

19 And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.

20 And it was *so*, *as* she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them.

21 Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this *fellow* hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that *pertained* unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good.

22 So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that *pertain* to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.

23 And when Abigail saw David, she hasted,

and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground.

24 And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, *upon me let this iniquity be*: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.

25 Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, *even* Nabal: for as his name *is*, so *is* he; Nabal *is* his name, and folly *is* with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.

26 Now therefore, my lord, *as* the LORD liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath witholden thee from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.

27 And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord.

28 I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee *all* thy days.

29 Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, *as out* of the middle of a sling.

30 And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel;

31 That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath

avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.

I need not offer any comment, by way of explaining what is already so very plain; or of recommending what is so very beautiful in itself, in this conduct and address of *Abigail*, to the Reader's notice. But, while I would leave the Reader to his own reflections on this most interesting passage in the chapter, I cannot suffer him to pass on, without calling on him to remark with me, how very evident the wisdom and grace of God must have been working upon Abigail's mind, to induce this conduct. Oh, Sir! it is sweet, very sweet, to observe how a gracious God arrangerh and disposeth of a thousand things to bring about the purposes and counsels of his own will. Whether Abigail knew the Lord, or whether she did not, at this time, yet God was pleased to make her an instrument to save the shedding of blood, to protect and shelter the innocent from being included in the common calamity with the wicked, and to keep back his servant David from sin. Perhaps David referred to this instance when he expressed himself in that Psalm, of being *kept from presumptuous sins*. Psalm xix. 13.

32 And David said to Abigail, Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me:

33 And blessed *be* thy advice, and blessed *be* thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.

34 For in very deed, *as* the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.

I have often admired, and every renewed opportunity of reading these delightful words of David again makes me to admire, still more and more, the pious sentiments which David utters in contemplating the mercies he then was receiving. I desire the Reader to remark with me, how precious a strain of the most devout affections they breathe, while he revered the gracious hand of God in this sin-preventing providence. He *first*, as is most suitable and proper, looks up and acknowledges the hand of God. *Blessed* (says he) *be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me*. Having blessed God as the *Author*, he *next* looks with gratitude to the *means*: *Blessed* (says he) *be thy advice*. And *lastly* he looks to Abigail as the honoured *instrument* in the Lord's hand to restrain, *blessed be thou*. Here's blessing upon blessing, in that he had been kept from sin, and his cor-

rupt nature had not been suffered to embroe his hands in blood. I know not what the Reader's feelings are upon this occasion, while beholding the restraining grace and mercy of God towards his servant; but for my own part I desire to look up and ascribe the whole of my preservation and safety from the commission of all evil to the same source, the over-ruling and restraining grace of God in Christ Jesus. See 1 Pet. i. 5. Sweet is that prayer of Jesus: John xvii. 11.

35 So David received of her hand *that* which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

How delightful the issue of an affair which appeared at first so alarming.

36 ¶ And Abigail came to Nabal; and behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart *was* merry within him, for he *was* very drunken; wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light.

37 But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became *as* a stone.

38 And it came to pass about ten days *after*, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died.

The awful departure of Nabal, is enough in itself to strike terror to every unawakened, unregenerated soul. The *Lord smote Nabal*, it is said. The Holy Ghost hath not recorded any thing more of this man. This is indeed more than enough to shew the folly and madness of sin. How awful a death! Like another rich man we read of, whose last account is, that *he died and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes in torments*. From such an end good Lord deliver us! Luke xvi. 22, 23.

39 ¶ And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed *be* the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail to take her to him to wife.

What must have been the thoughts of David when these tidings were brought him. Reader! it is a blessed thing when God's people can

leave all their affairs with their God. The apostle's advice is founded on this; Romans xii. 19—21.

40 And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife.

41 And she arose, and bowed herself on *her* face to the earth, and said, Behold, *let* thine handmaid *be* a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.

42 And Abigail hasted, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of her's that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife.

43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives.

44 But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which *was* of Gallim.

These historical relations are thrown in at the close of this Chapter, because though not immediately interesting, yet they form a part in the after circumstances of David's history.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us not dismiss our review of this chapter, nor close the book which records the death of Samuel, without first paying due tribute to a memory so truly valuable. I would for once methinks pass over the consideration of many other beauties contained in this Chapter, in order to gather suitable reflections from the tomb of the prophet. It pleased the Lord to call Samuel to be his servant in a day of great departure from the Lord. And the Lord was pleased to call him home at a season when corruption abounded. Surely it was a time when such a man was most needed. Saints and servants of the Lord who are eminent in their day and generation, are the salt, the light, and pillars of the earth. When they are gone, their vacancies form sad gaps in the church. How different a death from that of *Nabal*! while the one dies unlamented, unpitied, disregarded: the name of *Samuel* ever lives in remembrance, and his memory is blessed.

But let us not stop here. Do I not see in Samuel a type of the ever blessed Jesus! Not only as a prophet, but as a priest, a ruler, a judge, a deliverer in Israel? Was Samuel *promised* of the Lord as his very name *Samuel* implied? and was not our Jesus the very *promised seed*, in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed? Was Samuel coveted by his mother, and as instantly lent or returned unto the Lord from the

womb; and do we not feel our minds in this view, directed to the contemplation of him, who in all ages was the earnestly sought and longed for, *the desire of all nations*, and who was given as a covenant of the people, dedicated to God, and consecrated in the service of redemption, from his miraculous birth. Yes, blessed Jesus! the outlines of thy unequalled character thou wert pleased to have marked out in the several servants of thine, which ministered in thy church before thy coming. The early call of Samuel, and his being appointed to the prophetic office; his ministry, his unkind treatment, and rejection by the people; his benevolent labours, prayers, and intercessions for Israel; these, and many other circumstances which marked his life, became typical of thee, and thy divine mission, when for the government, instruction, and redemption of thy people, thou camest on earth as the almighty prophet of thy church, and as the faithful priest whom God the Father promised to raise up, that should *build him a sure house, and become his anointed for ever*. Oh, blessed Jesus! the gift of our God and Father *unasked*; and here as in a thousand other instances, infinitely surpassing all the Samuel's thy servants, be thou to me both prophet, priest, and king! Do thou now by the rich anointing of thy blessed Spirit, graciously teach me of thyself and of thy Father: guide me and lead me into all truth, and when thou hast accomplished all thine holy will and pleasure concerning me in this my day and generation; Lord, take me home to thyself to behold thy glory, that *where thou art there may I be also*.

CHAP. XXVI.

CONTENTS.

The history of David's persecution by Saul is again opened, and continued through this Chapter. The Ziphites inform Saul against David. Saul goes in quest of him. David is favoured with another opportunity of slaying Saul, but will not avail himself of it. A similar interview takes place to what happened before between David and Saul; after which they depart one from the other.

AND the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, *which is before Jeshimon*?

This is the second instance of the treachery of the *Ziphites*. (See chap. xxiii. 19.) And what had David done to deserve it at their hands?

2 Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.

3 And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, *which is before Jeshimon*, by the way. But Da-

vid abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness.

Observe, how little effect the pretended contrition of Saul had left upon his mind. Alas! until grace makes a saving change upon the heart, there is neither real sorrow, nor true repentance, wrought in the soul.

4 David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed.

It should seem that David could not be immediately brought to believe that Saul, after his former profession, would have pursued him any more. But the fact proved it to be so. Reader! learn from hence, what a deceitfulness there is in the heart of man?

5 ¶ And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him.

6 Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee,

7 So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him.

This bold attempt probably was from some secret influence imparted to David's mind. The sequel of the history of it proves, how sweet a lesson he gathered from it, and therefore it seems not improbable, that the Lord inclined his heart to the undertaking. Reader! it is very profitable at times to observe, how graciously the Lord leads on the minds of his people to do what they themselves would otherwise have never been competent to perform.

8 Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not *smite* him the second time.

9 And David said to Abishai, Destroy him

not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?

Observe the different principles of nature and grace in the minds of Abishai and David. How lovely doth David appear in this instance. But for a more delightful instance look at the cross of Jesus. Luke xxiii. 34.

10 David said furthermore, *As* the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish.

Was there not somewhat of a spirit of prophecy in those expressions of David, when we consider the close of Saul's life? Chap. xxxi. 4. See also Psalm lxiii. 9, 10.

11 The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

12 So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw *it*, nor knew *it*, neither awaked: for they *were* all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.

This last verse becomes a clue for explaining this wonderful transaction, *a sleep from the Lord* had sealed up their senses. Oh! what a volume of comfort ariseth out of this view, in the Lord's watchfulness over his people. How can the Lord seal, or how can the Lord open the faculties of our enemies, when either operation shall best promote the purposes of his glory and his people's welfare. See a sweet promise to this effect: Isaiah liv. 16, 17.

13 Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off; a great pace *being* between them:

14 And David cried to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who *art* thou *that* criest to the king?

15 And David said to Abner, *Art* not thou a *valiant* man? and who *is* like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord.

16 This thing *is* not good that thou hast done. *As* the LORD liveth, ye *are* worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD's anointed. And now see where the king's spear *is*, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster.

17 And Saul knew David's voice, and said, *is* this thy voice, my son David? And David said, *It is* my voice, my lord, O king.

18 And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done: or what evil *is* in mine hand?

19 Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if *they be* the children of men, cursed *be they* before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods.

20 Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD; for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

Here is a similar interview to what passed, chap. xxiv. 8. but here, David first calls to the servant of Saul, and afterwards to the master. The argument David makes use of in this conference is also stronger than in the former, he complains of being driven out of his inheritance, from the inheritance of the Lord; and as such, being tempted to mingle with the heathen and learn their works. But how beautiful is it to observe, that there is no railing against Saul, no accusation brought against him for a breach of his word and honor. When our Lord Jesus Christ was struck by one of the officers in the palace of the high priest, we find no answer of wrath, no charge, no crimination made by the Lamb of God; but only a justification of himself and a meek question, *Why smitest thou me?* John xviii. 22, 23.

21 Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

We have here once more the king of Israel's honest confession of the injury he had done David, and his promise that he would do so no

more. But not a word of his sorrow for his sin against God. That repentance which begins not in God's grace, is never to be depended upon in man's mercy. Alas! Saul knew not his own heart! He was compelled from the moment to say as he said, but his heart remained the same.

22 And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it.

23 The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness, for the LORD delivered thee into *my* hand to day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed.

24 And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation.

25 Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

David points out in this account one grand motive why he had been so favourable to Saul, in that he considered him as the Lord's anointed. And had Saul considered David in the same light, his life ought to have been set by as equally sacred. It doth not appear by what follows in the history of Saul and David, that they ever conferred with one another, or saw the face of each other after this any more. *David went on his way*, it is said, the way of grace and salvation; for Jesus was then as he was afterwards, and is now and ever will be, *the way, the truth, and the life*. *Saul returned to his place*. An awful account though short: for where is the place of the wicked, *where* in this life, and *where* in that which is to come? *Judas*, when he fell, went to his own place. Acts i. 25.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! again the Holy Ghost calleth us to behold the implacable and unmerciful malice of Saul, and the gracious exercises of the mind of David, in a renewed instance of the evil designs of the one, and the deliverance God wrought for the other. Let us obey the sacred call, and pause over what we have read, in order to mark the different dispositions, of these men; and yet more especially to behold the gracious interposition of God, in defeating the evil schemes of Saul and prospering the hand of David.

But may we not without violence to the subject, behold in the unremitting persecution of David by Saul, somewhat more than the mere jealousies of nature in the envy of Saul to David, respecting his succes-

sion in the kingdom? Are there not traces to be seen of the still greater envy arising in the mind of the unregenerate, in the view of the Lord's favour towards his people in a spiritual kingdom. Alas! what bitterness do the children of the wicked one manifest to the children of the kingdom? Like the corrupt stock from which they shoot, their very vine is *of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah*. In this spiritual warfare what goings forth of the enemy, like Saul in the pursuit of David, are there every day to surprize by ambush, or to take by subtilty? And what *Ziphites* are there every where to join in the confederacy, to deliver the godly into the snare of the wicked. Ye soldiers of Jesus Christ, *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God*. Remember *your enemies* are the enemies of our God and of his Christ. He will fight your battles. *Stand still* and you shall shortly *see the salvation of God*. He hath delivered you hitherto, and doth deliver, and therefore trust in him, and he will yet deliver. Ere long the battle will be finished. That promise is absolute. *The God of peace shall bruise satan under your feet shortly*.

CHAP. XXVII.

CONTENTS.

The Holy Ghost in holding forth to the church the history of David, hath in this Chapter given us a view of this great man in the infirmities of his character. Here are his fears respecting Saul, and his want of faith in God recorded: his flight to Gath in consequence thereof: Achish the king of Gath, his kind reception of David: gives him Ziklag for a dwelling place. During his residence in the country of the Philistines, David maketh excursions upon the neighbouring states and conquers them, but deceives Achish in the account. These are the principal contents of this Chapter.

AND David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: *there is* nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand.

Surely the Holy Ghost had a most gracious design in giving the church the true portrait of David in this verse. Was it possible for David after two such remarkable interpositions, as the 24th chapter relates at the cave of *Engedi*, and as the 26th chapter relates of the event in the wilderness of *Zeph*: was it possible for David ever to question the Lord's care of him, even if he had not also been anointed for the succession to the kingdom? But Reader! in David we behold what all human nature affords evidence of, to demonstrate what a man's faith is when supported by God, and what the same man is when left to himself. Put it down, my brother, as a maxim of everlasting truth and certainty, if the Lord leaves our faith alone to act of itself, that act

will be weak indeed. It is but for the great author and finisher of faith to withdraw the arm of his power, and then the poor believer falls into fears and doubts, as David did. Reader! if you know any thing of precious faith, I would charge it upon you as one of the grand lessons of the soul: learn to make Jesus the *finisher* as well as the *author* of your faith and salvation. There are many souls who know Christ as the *author*, but very few are so highly taught as to make him the *finisher*.

2 And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath.

Besides David's want of faith, here was a breach of obedience. The prophet Gad had been commissioned to tell David to abide in Judah, how then could he think himself either justified, or in safety, in fleeing to Gath? See chap. xxii. 5.

3 And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, *even* David with his two wives, Ahinoam, the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife.

4 And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no more again for him.

Saul's giving over the pursuit of David seems to be so related, not as if he did it from choice, but from necessity. There was no opportunity of going after David into an enemy's country. It is not unfrequently so by men in various transgressions. When men have no longer power to prosecute their lusts, they relinquish what they can no longer enjoy. The heart remains the same, but the ability is no more. An awful picture this of a state of unregeneracy.

5 ¶ And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?

6 Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day.

7 And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months.

The removal of David to Ziklag, seems to have been from an higher direction than either David or Achish. From its being nearer to the borders of Judah, the return thither would be more easily effected.

And as Ziklag originally belonged to Judah, it was literally no other than giving back again what belonged to Judah. See Joshua xv. 31.

8 And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those *nations were* of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt.

9 And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish.

10 And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to day? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerameelites, and against the south of the Kenites.

11 And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring *tidings* to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so *will be* his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines.

12 And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.

No doubt a zeal for the honour of God, with an eye to what the Lord had determined concerning the utter destruction of the Amalekites, was the leading object David had in view in this excursion. See Exod. xvii. 14. It is astonishing to see, in the dissimulation of David with Achish in this business, what littleness, mixed with much greatness, the mind of man is made up of. Alas! what is any man, the best of men, but a mass of sin and unworthiness in himself. Oh! how precious is the Lord Jesus endeared to the heart, in every review of what he is to us, and what we are without him. 1 Cor. i. 30.

REFLECTIONS.

Do not, my soul, pass over the review which the Holy Ghost gives thee of David's want of faith, in the opening of this chapter, without taking home with thee the important instruction it affords, to teach thee where thy strength is, and where is all thy stay. Oh, blessed Spirit! I thank thee for the view. Yes, gracious God, I see the need of it. If David failed after such distinguishing evidences of favor; if he, *the man after God's own heart*, was led away from his stedfastness;

Oh! how shall I be supported in a trying hour? There is a way indeed by which I shall be more than conqueror; and that is in thee, O blessed Jesus. Thy servant hath from his own experience assured the church, that *they which are kept, are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*. Lord, I take occasion from the weakness of David's faith, the Holy Ghost hath here shewn me, I take occasion to bespeak thy grace for every trying hour, and that thy strength may be made perfect in my weakness. To thy precious bloodshedding power would I look; in its divine efficacy would I trust to resist all temptations; and under its sprinkling would my soul come; this, this dearest Jesus, will secure me, and like the holy army in heaven, who overcame by the blood of the Lamb, I shall then be enabled to *quench all the fiery darts of the wicked*.

CHAP. XXVIII.

CONTENTS.

We are hastening to the close of the reign and life of Saul. The Philistines are preparing for a battle fatal to Saul. He is dispirited and dismayed; and instead of looking to the Lord, he betakes himself to familiar spirits; the sad consequence which follows, and the alarms of Saul, are rehearsed in the close of this chapter.

AND it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men.

See Reader, in this preparation of the Philistines for battle against Israel, the sad effects of Israel departing from the Lord. The Lord had promised when he settled his people in their kingdom, to drive out all nations from before them, and that there should not be a man to stand before them. But, when Israel deserted the Lord, the Lord raised up enemies to Israel, as his instruments to correct them. See Joshua i. 3—5. But Reader! when you have duly pondered this subject, as it concerns Israel of old, look at it again, as it concerns Israel now. Are not our unsubdued corruptions, our unhumbled lusts, and the remains of inbred sin in our mortal bodies, like those Philistines waging war with the soul? Did you and I live wholly to Jesus, would those enemies dare rise up against us? How important is that exhortation of Peter, when he said, *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.* 1 Pet. ii. 11.

2 And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever.

The situation of David was critical. How could he fight against his own people? And on the other hand, how could he continue in safety with Achish?

3 ¶ Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land.

The reminding the Reader of the death of Samuel is very interesting in this place. Samuel was dead, and now the Philistines became bold. No doubt before his death, he had lamented in secret the sad conduct of Saul, and the corruptions of the people. Every true lover of God must mourn in secret for the sins of Zion. Reader! it is a sad proof of sad times, when the righteous die, and are taken away from the evil to come. But, *blessed are the dead that die in the Lord*. They enter into rest. They cease from their labours. They are in better company. Happy souls!

4 And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.

5 And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.

6 And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

It is more than probable, that Saul in his haste to destroy David, had neglected even the common means of safety respecting his kingdom. His army perhaps dwindled and scattered abroad; so that when the Philistines came forward with so formidable an host, and even advanced as far as Shunem, which lay in the tribe of Issachar, and in the borders of Israel itself, there was great cause for dismay. But all this would have been nothing, if Saul had made God his friend. Israel had found, upon all occasions, while the Lord of hosts fought their battles, that one would chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. But when *the Lord is turned to be their enemy, and to fight against them*, this sums up the full heaped measure of human misery.

7 ¶ Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, *there is* a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor.

Observe, that Saul, in his distress, enquired of the Lord, but the Lord answered him not. But how did he enquire? Samuel was dead. The Priest, the faithful Priests of the Lord, Saul had killed. See chap. xxii. 17—19. By whom, then did he enquire? Perhaps presumptuously, without either Prophet or Priest. But if not; it is evident

that Saul's enquiry was not in the way God had appointed, neither was his heart prepared to enquire, as appears by the sequel. For when the Lord did not immediately answer; from God, Saul turned to the devil. Alas! what answer can men expect, when like Saul, they seek not God in faith, but are in league with the unfruitful works of darkness?

8 And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me *him* up, whom I shall name unto thee.

9 ¶ And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?

10 And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, *As the LORD liveth*, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

11 Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel.

12 And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou *art* Saul.

13 And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

14 And he said unto her, What form *is* he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he *is* covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it *was* Samuel, and he stooped with *his* face to the ground, and bowed himself.

15 ¶ And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called

thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.

16 Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?

17 And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, *even* to David:

18 Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.

19 Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow *shalt* thou and thy sons *be* with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

20 Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.

In order to have a right apprehension of this part of Saul's history, it will be needful to take into the account the several circumstances connected with it. Let it be then first observed by the Reader, that what is here called having a *familiar spirit*, refers to those who, imposing upon the credulity and ignorance of mankind, pretended to divine, and foretell events. Thus Balaam was a noted impostor of this kind, whom Balak called out of the East, to use his enchantments against Israel. And God was pleased to overrule this man's devices, so as absolutely to make him the instrument of blessing the very people he hired himself out to curse. See Numb. xxii. 23, 24; and the Commentary upon those Chapters. Hence we read also in Isaiah, that there were wizards who did peep, and mutter, and spake as whispering out of the dust. See Isaiah viii. 19; and chap. xxix. 4. There have been such characters in all ages. And men forsaken of God, in desperate circumstances like Saul, have had recourse to them. Let us next consider how far the Lord is said to have permitted such things. Paul tells us, that *it is no marvel that there should be false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.* 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14. And in another part of his writings he seems to admit the possibility that one putting on the

appearance of *an angel from heaven* might be suffered, by way of exercise to the faith of God's children, *to preach another gospel* from the true one. Gal. i. 8. From these views of the subject, we cannot be at a loss to have a proper conception of this *supposed* apparition of Samuel to Saul, by the witch at *Endor*. The great enemy of souls might be permitted to personate the departed Prophet. As such he appears to Saul's view like Samuel. . He is permitted to speak of the events shortly to happen; the rout of Israel, and the death of Saul and of his sons. And thus, through this means, Saul is awfully apprized of what is about to follow. That it could not be Samuel himself is, I think, evident from other considerations. Neither Satan nor his instruments, can have power over the souls of glorified saints. Neither was it probable that Saul, at his death, should in his spirit associate with Samuel. Neither could the soul of Samuel be said to *come up out of the earth*, when we know that the spirits of just men made perfect are with the Lord. Neither, had it been really Samuel, would he have told him of the awful events about to take place, without following it up with advice to repent, instead of driving him to despair, and thereby forming a temptation to self-murder. From all these considerations, it seems to me very evident that there was a permission for the appearance of Samuel's form by *the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that both then and now still worketh in the children of disobedience*; the Lord overruling in this instance, as in that of Balaam, and in the case of another spirit, permitted to foretell the fall of Ahab at Ramoth Gilead. See 1 Kings xxii. 20—22.

But, while I have said so much, by way of helping the ordinary Reader to what appears to me to be the safest plan of forming a right conception of this part of Saul's history, I beg that he will allow me to suggest to him one thought upon it which is more important; and which may not only serve to guide his mind, under grace, to a becoming humbleness on this, but other parts of scripture which are not so interesting for us to be over anxious about the clear apprehension of. Depend upon it, my Brother, had it been an object of moment to the peace or comfort of the church, the Holy Ghost would have been more explicit. But wherever we meet with any thing of obscurity, the reason is obvious: *Secret things belong to the Lord our God*. Enough is revealed for us and our children to know. And here let our chief enquiry be directed. One passage in the supposed conference between Saul and Samuel, opens to our minds a subject of infinite improvement; and to this I would desire to direct the Reader's principal attention: I mean where Saul saith, *I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me*. Oh! Reader! what state out of hell can exceed this in misery? When a child of God is in trouble the Lord is with him. If sorrow, sickness, nay even sin oppress him, Jesus is the support and burden-bearer of all: and he both bears his people, and all their burdens with him. But to be at once forsaken both of heaven, and earth, where shall the wretched run for deliverance then? What a dolorous case like that of Saul's, doth the prophet describe when he saith; *Woe is me for my hurt; my wound is grievous: truly this is a grief, and I must bear it*. Jerem. x. 19.

21 And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Be-

hold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me,

22 Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way.

23 But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed.

24 And the woman had a fat calf in the house; and she hasted, and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded *it*, and did bake unleavened bread thereof:

25 And she brought *it* before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

The sequel of this story is just as might be expected. Had this message, awful as it was, come from heaven in answer to prayer, a door of hope might have still been open to repentance. But, when the poor misguided wretch had knocked at the gates of hell, and received such an answer, nothing *but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation remained*, to finish the misery. See that awful scripture, Heb. x. 26—31.

REFLECTIONS.

IF ever the contemplation of the wicked, in his progress from sin to sin can become profitable to deter from the commission of sin, and to keep back the soul, under grace, from presumption; surely there is not a character in scripture which teaches this more loudly, than that of Saul. Behold him from the moment of Samuel's anointing him king, to the hour in which the Holy Ghost hath here sketched his history, and what doth it afford but the very melancholy account of a desperately wicked heart. That heart of Saul was never changed by grace; for though he is said to have had *another* heart from what he had when seeking his Father's asses, when he came to the kingdom; yet not a *new heart created in righteousness and true holiness*. With this deceitful heart of nature, the acquired purple of a kingdom, and the power of a Prince, only furnished means of manifesting what that heart originally

was by nature, and what it ever remained untouched by grace. It only was uniformly making a greater progression and ripeness in evil. Reader! behold in his history how he proposed to himself pleasure in offending God; fighting against the gracious hand that had given him a throne; and as one determined to sacrifice every thing rather than that God should appoint a successor in his kingdom, who had, unasked, and unthought of, given a kingdom to him. Think herefrom what an awful thing it must be in the wicked to be found fighting against God.

From the view of Saul, let us turn our thoughts to Jesus, whose redemption work becomes the only remedy for all sin, even in his children, who are by nature open and justly exposed to wrath even as others. We read the history of Saul to very little purpose if the sequel of it and indeed every part of it, doth not lead to this conclusion of the apostles; *Are we then better than they?* Are we in ourselves, and in our fallen state, by nature, less exposed to the same commission of sin? No, in no wise. For the scripture hath before proved all under sin. And God hath concluded all in unbelief as well as sin. Well may every truly awakened soul cry out, under the heart-felt conviction of the truth; *Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.* Here then, Reader! let you and I join issue and rejoice. Jesus is set forth as a propitiation for sin through faith in his blood. He is the salvation and the righteousness of God to every sinner that believeth. Oh! Lord, grant us the fullness of grace to believe the record which God the Father hath given of his dear Son. And may that precious scripture be ever sounding in our ears, and ever living in its divine and saving influence in our hearts; *God having raised up his Son Jesus hath sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*

CHAP. XXIX.

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This Chapter makes a digression from the prosecution of Saul's history, to relate an event in the life of David. While Saul was distressed in the approach of the Philistines, and Achish was proposing to take David with him to the battle; the lords of the Philistines objecting to it, David is dismissed with kind marks of respect by Achish.

NOW the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel.

2 And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rereward with Achish.

It is to be supposed, though it be not said so in the history, that David must have felt himself most awkwardly situated in the army of the Philistines. To have declined going to the battle would have betrayed him to the Philistines: and to have been found fighting against his country, how was this possible to a generous patriot like David? Had David's want of faith been less, and he had remained in Judah, this

could not have happened. See Reader! how even good men when going out of the path of duty, expose themselves to temptation. Now if the Lord doth not interpose for him, we cannot see any way by which he may escape. Blessed be God! there is a promise to this purport, and though we deserve it not, yet not our merit but divine grace, becomes the source of our deliverance. See the promise, 1 Cor. x. 13.

3 ¶ Then said the princes of the Philistines, What *do* these Hebrews *here*? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, *Is* not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell *unto me* unto this day?

4 And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? *should* it not *be* with the heads of these men?

5 *Is* not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

Reader! do not fail to observe, how God opened a door of escape for David. Surely it was God's superintendence over him; that prompted the minds of the Philistine princes thus to reason, and thus to insist upon his departure. The Lord hath the hearts of all men at his disposal, and like rivers of waters, turneth them whithersoever he pleaseth, Prov. xxi. 1. It is very sweet and precious to eye God's hand in all our concerns.

6 ¶ Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, *as* the LORD liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host *is* good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless the lords favor thee not.

7 Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines.

The Reader may perhaps be rather surprized, that Achish should

have so little weight in his kingdom as not to be able to retain David in his service. But he should be told, that the Philistines were governed by *five* lords, and Gath was but one of their kingdoms. *Ekron, Gaza, Ashdod, and Askelon*, were the other four parts which these lords of the Philistines governed.

8 And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king?

9 And Achish answered and said to David, I know that thou *art* good in my sight, as an angel of God: notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle.

10 Wherefore now rise up early in the morning with thy master's servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart.

11 So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

Beside the motives here assigned for removing David from the army of the Philistines, it appears by the following chapter, that the Lord had services for him at that time elsewhere. Thus the Lord ordereth all our ways, and the whole disposing of his people is of the Lord. Though David seemed hurt at the not being permitted to go up to the battle, yet no doubt, as he had no direction for this purpose from the Lord, he could not be very forward to it. Indeed David was conscious that he was out of the path of duty. And perhaps this had made a shyness in his visits to a throne of grace. Reader! what is related in this chapter, and indeed the whole of David's conduct, from the moment he took up the unbecoming thought, that he should one day perish by the hand of Saul, is not to David's credit. We see in him what we feel in ourselves, and what the best of men do but too fully manifest, that there is a great deal of the old stock of nature, as well as the new springs of grace in God's faithful servants. Much corruption mingled with much faith. Oh! how needful then is it, that the great author of faith should keep up his precious communications, to keep alive his grace in the soul! Sweetly David sung to this point, when he said: *Hold thou me up and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.* Psm. cxix. 117.

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I HOPE the Reader will feel his soul drawn out with mine, both to admire and adore the faithfulness of God, in his deliverance of poor David from the snare into which his want of faithfulness in his God had brought him. Surely none but a wise God could have found the means to have brought him out of the double danger into which his folly and sin had brought him. Apparently there was no way to escape, but either he must have proved a traitor to his country, or a traitor to his friend. And surely none but a faithful God would have given grace to have brought him out, when his own unfaithfulness had so justly forfeited the Lord's favour. But oh, thou dearest Lord! how plainly are we taught by this and every other instance, of thy passing by the worthlessness of thy people, that thou dost this not for our own sake, but for thine own great name's sake and thy glory. Hence, blessed Lord, thou dost manifest thy faithfulness in sending the trial upon the heels of our unfaithfulness. And thou dost manifest thy faithfulness in guiding us through the trial. And thou displayest the riches of thy grace and faithfulness, in making the termination of it minister to thy glory and our welfare. Oh precious Jesus! in every instance of my poor wanderings and unbelief, and fear, and the like, do thou so mercifully and so tenderly deal by me. And while thou dost compassionate my unworthiness, let thy grace be sufficient for me, and let thy strength be made perfect in my weakness. I lament, dearest Lord, that like David, I have too often thought and feared, that notwithstanding all thy past mercies and manifestations, I should one day be left to perish by the hand of the enemy. But in thy after grace in sending difficulties and hedging up my way with thorns, I have proved thy mercy. I can and do therefore set up my *Ebenezer* in all the proofs of thy love, and find cause to say with David, *I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled.*

CHAP. XXX.

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This Chapter becomes very interesting in its contents, for it relates to a period in the life of David, both important, as it proved to him, and instructive to God's people. During the absence of David from Ziklag to attend the army of the Philistines, the Amalekites whom David had before scourged, made an incursion upon the city, and had not only set fire to it but carried away the women and children captives. The distress of David's little army was so great upon this occasion, that they talked of stoning him.—David sought the Lord—the Lord answered him—David by God's direction pursued the spoilers, overtook them, recovered all his loss, and made distribution among his soldiers of the plunder.

AND it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;

2 And had taken the women captives, that *were* therein: they slew not any either great or small, but carried *them* away, and went on their way.

3 So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, *it was* burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives.

I beg the Reader to remark with me concerning this event, how evidently the hand of the Lord was in it. No doubt it was intended to correct David for his past faithlessness. What business had David in an enemies' country? It was the want of faith in his God which first led him there. And moreover I beg to intimate, that it appears to me by the late conduct of David, that since this breach of trust in God, there was a remissness on the part of David, in his communion with the Lord. Hence we read of no counsel being asked of God all the time he had been in Gath. Conscious of his ill conduct, he was shy at the heavenly court, and did not except perhaps in form, frequently go there. I do not say that this was really the case. But from the silence of the Holy Ghost upon the subject, after recording his faithlessness and fear, (chap. xxvii. 1.) I think it more than probable. How then is the Lord's servant to be brought back? What method in all the stores of grace will the Lord adopt to make him sensible of his sin? What so suited as affliction. Hence David could and did say, not only upon this, but perhaps many other occasions: *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word.* Psm. cxix. 67. Dearest Jesus! have I not found cause to adopt the same language? I desire the Reader to make one remark more with me upon the occasion of this distress of David and his men, in proof that the Lord's hand was in it; and that is, that the Lord over-ruled the minds of the *Amalekites*, so that they slew not any of the people, only took them captive. Had not the Lord restrained, surely it is more than probable, that they would have done by David as he did by them, as we are told in the 27th chapter, and have saved none alive.

4 Then David and the people that *were* with him, lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.

5 And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.

It is more than likely, that David was returning home with great delight to the enjoyment of himself and family, since he had been delivered from the painful situation in which he found himself respecting the going to war with the Philistines: so that his trouble must have been the greater. Reader! let this disappointment of David and his army teach you and me, the necessity of being always prepared for sudden and unexpected events of sorrow, in such a dying sorrowful world as this is which we are passing through. When we leave our family

in the morning, who shall say in what state we may find them at our return at night. And if, through mercy, those we left in health and peace we find the same, and they receive us so, learn from this example, to whom the glory is due.

6 And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

The affliction now was grown to its height. David, for whom, like another *Jonah*, the storm is induced, is to be the greatest sufferer: else wherefore stone him more than the rest. Reader! I know not what your views of this history are. But to me, I confess, that I think the whole was so arranged and ordered by the Lord to bring back the heart of David again, (which I fear had for a long time been cold towards the God of his mercies), to a sense of his sin, and a longing to be restored once more to the Lord. And if I am right in my conjecture, what a blessed issue did the Lord bring this affair to? *David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.* Yes! the Lord his God, properly so called. For notwithstanding all David's unworthiness and undeservings, God was still his God in covenant. Reader! do not overlook this whatever else you lose sight of in this sweet scripture. There may be, and no doubt there is, much unworthiness, much undeserving, in the best of saints. There will be changes in God's people, like the ebbings and flowings of the tide. But there is no change in the covenant security of God's love. The efficacy of this is eternally and everlastingly the same. God in Christ is an ocean that never dries, never lessens, never abates. *He is a rock, his work is perfect.* Lord! give me grace, that whatever leanness or barrenness there may be in me, I may, like David, encourage myself in the Lord my God.

7 ¶ And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David.

8 And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? and he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake *them*, and without fail recover *all*.

Here we see David returned to the Lord in a way of duty. And the Lord returned unto David in a way of grace. Indeed had not the Lord first given grace to David, never would he have returned to the Lord in duty. He saith himself, and his own experience taught him the precious truth: *none can keep alive his own soul.* Psalm xxii. 29. His enquiry by the high priest was in the appointed way. See Num. xxvii. 21. But wherefore did not David enquire by him at the Lord's

hand, in the case of his going to war with Achish? Alas! David's mind was certainly cold towards the Lord at that season. See Reader what man is, void of grace. Oh precious, precious Jesus! that waiteth not the return of thy sheep, but goeth after the wanderers into the mountains. Oh! seek my soul in all its manifold departures, when going astray, *like a sheep that is lost*. Psm. cxix. 176. Ezek. xxxiv. 11—13.

9 So David went, he and the six hundred men that *were* with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed.

10 But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.

No doubt after this gracious answer from the Lord, the minds of the people were stayed from any further anger against David. It was no small mercy from the Lord, that he endued the mind of David with meekness, so as not to return railing for railing to the people. But here in the very view of David's meekness, how is my soul constrained to contemplate thine unequalled meekness, oh thou Lamb of God, when thou wast led to the slaughter, and amidst all the taunts and reproaches of the ungodly, thou wast *like a deaf man and heard not, and as one that was dumb who did not open his mouth*. Psm. xxxviii. 13. We must not overlook in the case of the third part of his army being faint, the new trial which arose from it to exercise his faith and patience. No doubt the *four hundred* as well as himself, were not far from the same languor, for they had had a long march when they returned from the camp of Achish. What a state then must the pursuers be in, when they came up to fight with the Amalekites. But Reader! remember, David was now encouraging himself in the Lord his God. It was this that made him in times past victorious, in the case of Goliath, the lion, and the bear. Oh it is sweet to see what a soul can do, who goes forth in the strength of the Lord God. But is there not a spiritual instruction to be gathered here, from the march of David and his faint soldiers? Is not all the army of our Almighty David like the four hundred of David, *faint yet pursuing*? And doth not our Jesus lead us on, and bear with all our weaknesses, and faintings, and infirmities? Yes, dearest Lord! thou knowest what we are, and whereof we are made, and art leading us on in thy great strength, made perfect in our weakness.

11 ¶ And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water?

12 And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no

bread, nor drunk *any* water, three days and three nights.

13 And David said unto him, To whom *belongest* thou? and whence *art* thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick.

14 We made *an* invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the *coast* which *belongeth* to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire.

15 And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company.

Surely it was not accidental, that this poor Egyptian fell in their way. *This cometh forth*, saith the prophet upon another occasion, (and which will suit most occasions of his people) *from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working*. Isaiah xxviii. 29. Reader! when you have duly pondered the gracious hand of God in making this poor cast away servant, the Egyptian, instrumental in aiding David and his army; next turn your thoughts to the justice of God manifested thereby, in punishing the iniquity of his master the Amalekite, who left him to perish. And when your mind hath fully revolved this lesson also, let your thoughts be directed to another, if possible more important than either, and remark with me, how the Lord worketh sometimes by weak and despised and cast away instruments, to accomplish the purposes of his holy will. Think in what an eminent degree the Lord hath done it, in the publishing salvation and the recovery of our lost nature, which the great enemy of souls, like those Amalekites, made upon us in the person of our first father, in the garden of Eden. Is not the blessed gospel of the ever-blessed God, even now proclaimed by poor perishing Gentile sinners like this Egyptian; and unless our Almighty David had given us of his figs and his clusters, his bread of life and his water of life, our spirit never would have revived, nor should we have known any thing of the salvation we now publish! Oh, precious Jesus! here again let our souls adore the riches of thy clemency, that thou hast condescended to visit us and *to remember us in our low estate, for thy mercy endureth for ever*. Psm. cxxxvi. 23.

16 And when he had brought him down, behold, *they were* spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great

spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah.

17 And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled.

18 And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives.

19 And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any *thing* that they had taken to them: David recovered all.

20 And David took all the flocks and the herds, *which* they drave before those *other* cattle, and said, This *is* David's spoil.

The event, in the recovery not only of all they had lost but much more, serves to shew how confident they ought to be of success who trust in God's promises, who can and will in his own time accomplish all his holy will. But beside the providential instruction this part of David's history affords, there is a spiritual lesson to be gathered from it yet more sweet and precious. As David came upon the spoil in a moment they thought themselves secure, and were triumphing over their poor captives: so a greater than David, even David's Lord, came upon the great enemy of souls when he stood triumphing over our fall, and rescued us from the hand of him that was stronger than we. Beautifully it is said of Jesus that he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; yea even for the rebellious: for we were all rebellious and undeserving of his favour, when he came to save us from the prey of the mighty. And as the soldiers in David's army called the victory *David's spoil*, so we shout aloud, Salvation alone to God and the Lamb! It was thine own arm, dearest Jesus, which brought salvation, for of the people; in the way of victory, there was none with thee. Isaiah lxiii. 5.

21 And David came to the two hundred men which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that *were* with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them.

22 Then answered all the wicked men, and *men*.

of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them *ought* of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead *them* away, and depart.

23 Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand.

24 For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part *is* that goeth down to the battle, so *shall* his part *be* that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.

25 And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.

I would have the Reader remark with me on this passage, that David's army, though but small, yet had wicked men in the party. It was so from the beginning, and will be so during the continuance of the world. *Noah* had an *Ham* in the ark, and the Lord Jesus a *Judas* among his disciples. The Lord hath shewn us that there will be tares among the wheat, and both must grow together until the harvest. Lord, keep thy church, and watch over it continually. Lord keep my heart, and suffer not corruptions to break out. The equity of David's conduct in the division of the spoil, and the ordinance framed upon this principle, may serve to teach us, that in the church of Jesus, as all the gifts and usefulness of his people are from the Lord; all are equally the objects of his love, and come in for a suitable proportion of his favour, the Holy Ghost giveth to every man severally as he will. 1 Cor. xii. 11.

26 And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, *even* to his friends, saying, Behold, a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD;

27 To *them* which *were* in Bethel, and to *them* which *were* in south Ramoth, and to *them* which *were* in Jattir,

28 And to *them* which *were* in Aroer, and to *them* which *were* in Siphmoth, and to *them* which *were* in Eshtemoa,

29 And to *them* which *were* in Rachal, and to *them* which *were* in the cities of the Jerahmeelites,

and to *them* which *were* in the cities of the Kenites,

30 And to *them* which *were* in Hormah, and to *them* which *were* in Chor-ashan, and to *them* which *were* in Athach,

31 And to *them* which *were* in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt.

We have here an instance of David's gratitude. No doubt, but that during his long wanderings, and flights from place to place to avoid Saul, he had pretty well exercised the generosity of his friends, for he and his army of 600 men, could not be supplied, and fed upon a trifle. Hence he availed himself of the first moment the Lord had enabled him, to recompense those who had been kind to him. But from David's generosity to his friends, let you and I, Reader, turn our eyes to the view of David's Lord, whose generosity was manifested to his enemies. After our dear Lord returned to glory, having spoiled principalities and powers, he gave gifts to his enemies, even to the rebellious, saith the Holy Ghost, even to *you* and *me*. Yes, dearest Jesus! thy love is commended to us, in that *while we were enemies, Christ died for us*. Oh! matchless generosity! Oh, unequalled love! Lord be thou the first and best, and the unrivalled object of my love, as thine swallows up every other: and may *I love thee for that thou hast first loved me*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE Holy Ghost hath evidently much instruction to convey to his Church, in what is here related of David's calamity; and I would charge it upon the Reader's soul, and my own, to enquire very humbly, what the will and mind of the Lord is.

My Brother! when like David, our want of faith, and the slenderness of our trust in God, tempts us to go out of the path of duty, and a shyness takes place between the Lord and our hearts; is it not a blessed mark of grace, that the Lord doth not leave us to ourselves, and to eat the fruit of our own devices? Doth he not mean every thing gracious, when he hedgeth up our way with thorns on purpose that *we shall not find our lovers*; but that our minds, being prepared by his secret workings, may be constrained to say; *I will return again to my first love, my first husband; for then was it better with me than now?*

If then, my Brother, after going out at any time full, we are made to return empty: if our house, which we left in peace, we find disordered, as David and his men did *Ziklag*, at our coming home: if the Lord takes away the desire of our eyes with a stroke; removes our creature comforts; breaks down our creature confidences; makes a sorrow to grow out of the very root which we had planted for ourselves, and promised the sure fruit of enjoyment: what shall I say? If nothing but some severe dispensation will bring us back, when all the milder

methods of his love have failed: will you not count that love, nay infinite love, and wisdom too, which administereth the medicine, however nauseous to our proud, and too much pampered stomachs, because nothing but physic will reach our case?

Oh! gracious, long suffering, long forgotten Saviour, in every view, and at every direction, how doth thy tenderness meet our ingratitude! How oft, like David, have I said; *I shall one day perish* by the hand of one or another! And even in the midst of deliverances have feared the issue? And how oft like him, have I ran to Philistine confederacies, and an arm of flesh, have *forgotten the Lord my Maker, and feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy; and where is the fury of the oppressor?* And hadst thou, dearest Lord! justly, as thou mightest have done, given me up to the pursuit of my own ways, and to the fruit of my own devices; where would have been my portion? But, oh! thou most gracious Jesus! precious Saviour, how thou hast called me home; allured me, and brought me into some *wilderness* dispensation; and there hast caused *the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad; and even the desert to rejoice, and to blossom as the rose.* Go on, heavenly Teacher, graciously go on, nor spare the rod of affliction, when the wayward conduct of thy poor, ignorant, and ungrateful child makes it necessary. Only, dearest Lord, come thyself with, and in the affliction, that it may be fully blessed, and sanctified, in bringing back my heart to thee; that when, like David, *I have wept till I can weep no more;* and sorrows, like a flood, poured over me from within and without, and every thing like the threatened stoning of the people, oppress me on every side, like him, *I may still find grace and faith to encourage myself in the Lord my God.*

CHAP. XXXI.

CONTENTS.

This is a melancholy Chapter, which relates to us the sequel of Saul's history; the sad termination of a sinful life. The battle between the Philistines, and Israel, in mount Gilboa, in which the Philistines are conquerors, and Saul, Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, his sons, are slain.—Israel possessed by the Philistines; the camp of Saul plundered, his dead body, and those of his sons, carried away to Bethshan: but afterwards rescued by the men of Jabesh-gilead. These are the principal contents rehearsed in this Chapter, which ends the Book.

NOW the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.

2 And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchi-shua, Saul's sons.

David had prophesied, (chap. xxvi. 10) that either the Lord should smite Saul; or, his day should come to die; or, he should descend into battle, and perish; and now the day was arrived. The preludes to his death were most distressing. He beholds his army routed, his faithful soldiers slain, and his three sons killed by his side.—Even Jonathan, the lovely, and beloved Jonathan, is slain also. Perhaps the Reader may be inclined to wish that this affectionate friend of David, had been spared. But not so. God's thoughts are not our thoughts; nor our ways the Lord's ways. Yet Reader! do not forget, that though in this solemn visitation, that is common to all men, *there is one event in this scene, to the righteous, and to the wicked; yet the righteous hath hope in his death: merciful men are taken away from the evil to come, and enter into peace.* See Prov. xiv. 32. Isaiah lvii. 1, 2.

3 And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers.

Saul's death, and the approach of it, were tremblingly awful. He is sore wounded; perhaps deadly wounded by the archers; more darts than one, it should seem.

4 Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell upon it.

But though death would have soon come from the hands of the Philistines, yet impatient of misery, like a man desperate to plunge into everlasting woe before the time, he becomes his own executioner. Poor wretched, awful character! He is anxious that his *body* should not be abused by the Philistines; but feels no anxiety for his *soul*! But even that, after all his caution, as appears by the sequel of the history, is denied him. Reader! think, if it be possible, what a state of mind must he have been in, when, to avoid the racking torments in his own breast, he dares to make experiment of the more immediate torments of the miserable in eternity!

5 And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.

There is a tradition, that this armour-bearer was *Doeg*, the *Edomite*: and that Saul advanced him to this honour, for his killing the priests of the Lord. But this is not certain. The Reader would do well to recollect, what David prophesied concerning this man in the 52d Psalm.

6 So Saul died, and his three sons, and his

armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together.

7 And when the men of Israel that *were* on the other side of the valley, and *they* that *were* on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled; and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

See the folly, sin, and ingratitude of Israel, in the rejection of the Lord for their king, as Samuel had pointed out. See chap. xii. And doth not the Lord, by his servant the prophet, refer to this in the after ages, when he said; *I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.* Hosea xiii. 11.

8 ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa.

9 And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish *it in* the house of their idols, and among the people.

10 And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

No doubt, so complete a victory, and so great a triumph inflamed the minds of the Philistines exceedingly. But had they seen the hand of the Lord in it, they would not have been tempted to ascribe the victory to their idols.

11 ¶ And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul;

12 All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there.

13 And they took their bones, and buried *them* under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

The Holy Ghost hath been pleased to record the bravery of the men of *Jabesh-gilead*, not, perhaps, out of regard to Saul's memory, but to

testify the proper conduct of those men. Saul had been blessed of God, as an instrument in rescuing *Jabesh-gilead* from *Nahash*, the king of the Ammorites, and therefore, gratitude made them alive to rescue their deliverer's body, and those of his sons, from such an ignominious exposure. And this the men of *Jabesh* could very easily accomplish, because *Beth-shan* was only separated by a branch of *Jordan* from *Jabesh-gilead*. And thus the history of *Saul* terminates in the finishing of the first Book, as it is called, of *Samuel*, containing a period of about *eighty years*. Alas! what is the sum and substance of every thing short of *Jesus*, but *vanity and vexation of spirit*. At the close of every relation, and of every man's history, we may write this down, and exclaim with the prophet: *Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?* But, blessed *Jesus*, amidst all the scenes of departing men; amidst the dying, and the dead, Oh! what a relief is that sweet thought to the soul of thy people; *Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail*. Zech. i. 5. Heb. i. 12.

REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE, Reader! once more over the sad view of *Saul's* history, and as thou hast been called upon to mark his progress in sin, and the ripening of his mind in iniquity; here behold, in self-murder, the awful close of a life so evil. Oh! how dreadful to die out of *Christ*, uninterested in him; void of all covenant promises; unregenerated in heart, unwashed in the blood of the Lamb, and without the clothing of the Redeemer's righteousness. Better to die in a ditch, than to die out of *Christ*. The manner of death is nothing: to die any how, any where, by any means; only to die in *Jesus*. Lord! give to him that reads, and him that writes, the blessed hope in our death, that *living or dying, we are the Lord's*. Oh! for a part in *the first resurrection, and then the second death hath no power*.

Dearest *Jesus*! thou art the resurrection, and the life. Thou blessed *Jesus*, by thy death, hast overcome death, so that death now, by thee, is among the inventory of the believer's treasure. To die in thee is gain. Lord, give grace, both to writer and reader, that we may so live, as to add death to our sure account of profit; that *whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all may be ours; for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's*.