
SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

SEVERAL of the observations which were proposed in the opening of the *first* book of Samuel, will meet the Reader at the commencement of this *second*. As was remarked concerning the supposed author of it, whose name it bears, Samuel, though he might be the writer of the first book in part, that is, as far as took place in point of history prior to his death; yet common sense must know that the events recorded after that period could never have been handed to the church by him. And therefore it will necessarily follow that the whole of this *second* book must have owed its existence to some other penman. And perhaps it was on this account that the *seventy* who formed the scriptures into the present order in which they are placed in our Bibles, judged it more proper to distinguish both this and the former under the title of the *first and second books of Samuel; otherwise called the first and second books of the Kings*.

I think it hardly necessary to detain the Reader from immediately entering on the perusal of this *second* book of Samuel, with desiring him to look out very diligently for the signatures of divine inspiration through all the parts of it. If the writer of this Commentary, and the Reader of it, are both brought under the teachings of the Spirit, and by his unerring hand are led to trace, through the whole of its departments, his well known characters; these will refresh the mind and carry the truest and indeed the only infallible testimonies to the understanding, of authenticity. And the importance of such a discovery is I hope by this time so thoroughly understood by the Reader, who hath kindly accompanied me through the several preceding books of this Commentary, that I presume it can no longer be needful to insist upon it.

With respect to the annals of mankind, in which, as an history, the second book of Samuel is placed, we find the period to be somewhat about 1060 years before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The book itself includes the whole reign of David, which continued nearly forty years.

There are a great many sweet and spiritual subjects opened to our contemplation in the several parts of this book; and especially considered as leading the mind to the Person, and Offices, and Characters of the Lord JESUS.

David, whose history it contains, was in many instances so emi-

ment a type of the ever blessed Jesus, that it may well be supposed the Holy Ghost, (whose office and whose pleasure it is, to be *taking of the things of Jesus to shew unto the people*), would not suffer the life of this man to be marked out for the instruction and comfort of the church, without very frequently causing the mind of the Reader to be directed from David's history, to David's Lord. On this feature of the book itself, I would, above all things, earnestly request the Reader to let his eye be fixed. And I pray the Holy Spirit to bless, in a very eminent degree to his view, this most precious part of it. I only take occasion, before I enter upon the commentary of this book (as in former instances) to make a request of the Reader (and in which his own happiness is too highly interested to refuse me); that he will pray over it, and pause over it, in the poor *human* observations presented to his view, for *divine* teachings. Beg of God, my brother, to give you *the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him*; that, in the seeing eye, and the hearing ear, and the understanding heart, (all which are of the Lord) these sacred books of God may come home to the mind, not only *in word, but in power, and in much assurance of faith, and of the Holy Ghost.*

CHAP. I.

CONTENTS.

The event of the battle between Israel and the Philistines, in the overthrow of Israel and the death of Saul, and his three sons, this chapter opens with the relation of, as reported to David, by an Amalekite. The sacred historian, gives the account of the distress of David upon the occasion: his anger against the informer, who, thinking to have ingratiated himself with David, boasted of his having slain Saul, and is slain for it. David breaks out into a bitter lamentation on the event, and especially mourns over the death of his beloved Jonathan.

NOW it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag;

David no doubt was busily engaged in repairing the injury the Amalekites had done to Ziklag while the Philistines' battle with Saul was going on. Though, no doubt, his anxiety concerning the event frequently made him send forth enquiries, David could not but be waiting the Lord's fulfilment of his promise concerning the kingdom. It was now several years since his being anointed, (seven at least, if not more) and therefore it was impossible but for his expectation to have been continually excited. Reader! In spiritual things God's people are continually anxious, though they know the promises of God in Christ Jesus to be yea and amen. The Lord hath said; *Fear not little flock; it is your heavenly Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* Yet it

is also said, that *it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.* Luke xii. 32. Lament. iii. 26.

2 It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance.

It should seem, if we compare the corresponding history of David in the book of the Chronicles, (See 1 Chron. xii. 1—22.) with what is related of David in this place, that about this time David's army was increasing daily. And hence, as this man came out of the camp, and had seen the end of Saul, he considered David now as king. Hence he made obeisance.

3 And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped.

4 And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.

5 And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead?

6 And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him.

7 And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me, and I answered, Here *am* I.

8 And he said unto me, Who *art* thou; and I answered him, I *am* an Amalekite.

9 He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life *is* yet whole in me.

10 So I stood upon him and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that *was* upon his

head, and the bracelet that *was* on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.

This relation is truly interesting. The anxiety, distress, and the various conflicts of natural and gracious feelings on the part of David, and the artfulness of address on the part of the man, are beautifully implied. We may easily conceive, from the well known character of David, what a conflict must have passed in his mind during this relation. And no doubt as the man knew David's history, he knew how to effect David's mind, in working upon his feelings in the relation of the death of Saul and Jonathan. Whether the relation he gave was altogether true is not certain; and there is some reason to question it, as there is no account of it in the relation given of Saul's death in the preceding chapter. See 1 Sam. xxxi. 4, 5. And indeed it differs from it. I stay not however to enquire, as it is not very material. One thing is certain, that as this man brought the crown and bracelet of Saul to David, he must have been with Saul at his death. But I pass over these circumstances, which are not of the first importance, to advert to what appears to be more so in the thing itself. Let the Reader then remark with me, that, as the first instance of Saul's rebellion against God began in the affair of sparing *Amalek*, (See 1 Sam. xv. 1—3, 9, 10, &c.) so the Lord causeth the spared Amalekites to rise up to the last act of Saul's ruin. Oh! Reader, how certain is it, that the Lord never relaxeth one moment in the distribution of righteous judgment. Rather than one sin shall go unpunished, Jesus, his dear Son, shall die. See that solemn scripture: Zech xiii. 7.

11 Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that *were* with him:

12 And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.

There can be no question but that this lamentation of David was real and sincere. And I take occasion herefrom to remark, and it is in my esteem a remark of no small importance, that what we meet with in David's Psalms, where he many times expresses himself harshly against his enemies, (as particularly Psm. 109th, which see) these expressions are to be considered, for the most part, as levelled against the enemies of God and of his church; and not the private foes of David. Very frequently he spake as under the Spirit of prophecy; and the Reader will do well upon all occasions of this sort, to make a proper distinction between the private feelings of the man, and the public Spirit of the Prophet. See cxxxix. 19—22.

13 And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence *art* thou? And he answered, I *am* the son of a stranger, an Amalekite.

14 And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?

15 And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, *and* fall upon him. And he smote him that he died.

16 And David said unto him, Thy blood *be* upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD's anointed.

Think Reader! (for I pass over all the lesser considerations connected with the event of this Amalekite's death) think if David considered this act so atrocious, because it was levelled against the Lord's anointed, what unparalleled impiety must that have been in the crucifiers of the Lord Jesus, the only begotten and anointed Son of God! And yet, dearest Jesus! such was thy matchless love and pity, that on some of these very men, whose hands were embrued in thy blood, thou didst send down the gift of thine Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, that by pricking them to the heart they might cry out for redemption and obtain it. Oh! heavenly Lord! Oh Son of David, and David's Lord, what a precious view of thy mercy doth this afford! See Acts ii. 22, 23. 37, &c.

17 ¶ And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son:

18 (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah *the use of* the bow: behold, it *is* written in the book of Jasher.)

Probably David, in the first paroxysms of his grief, expressed himself in a strain like those pathetic parts of the elegy which follow. What this book of *Jasher* means is not generally understood. It hath never been handed down to the Church. And whether the Bow which he commanded to be taught, means the bow of the battle, or of music, I cannot say. The use of the bow was known long before David's time. Jacob, in his dying moments, spake of the bow of Joseph his son. No doubt in his instance it meant the spiritual armory in Jesus's salvation. But whether David meant it so I know not. See Gen. xlix. 24.

19 The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

20 Tell *it* not in Gath, publish *it* not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

21 Ye mountains of Gilboa, *let there be* no dew,

neither *let there be* rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, *as though he had not been* anointed with oil.

22 From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

23 Saul and Jonathan *were* lovely, and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

24 Ye daughters of Israel weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with *other* delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

25 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, *thou wast* slain in thine high places.

26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

27 How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

To offer a comment upon the beauties of this elegy, would be to disgrace it. It is too highly finished in point of language, beauty, simplicity, and the expressions of all the finer feelings of the heart, to receive the smallest addition. But after paying all possible respect to it, as a poem which surpasses every thing of the kind to be met with among profane writers, I must still remind the Reader that it falls far short of the other writings of David, and hath no claim to be classed among them. And I hope, indeed, that the *pious* Reader will discover the vast inferiority in it to every one of those Psalms, composed under divine inspiration by this sweet Singer in Israel. For what is the subject itself compared to what they contain? The love of Jonathan or the death of Saul, how infinitely doth it shrink to nothing when brought in competition with his love which passeth knowledge, or his death which is the life of the world. Yes, thou blessed Jesus! one thought of thee, and of thy matchless excellency, surpasseth all other meditations as the light of the sun the faint taper of the night. And, if David called upon the daughters of Jerusalem to weep over Saul with tears of love because he clothed them with scarlet, and put on ornaments of gold on their apparel; with what love and tears of holy joy shall we look up to thee, thou precious Redeemer, who hast clothed us with the robe made

scarlet in thy blood, and put on the everlasting ornaments of thy salvation, and righteousness, more precious than the gold of ophir, on our apparel, in which we shall appear before thee, and the Father, in thy courts of bliss for evermore!

REFLECTIONS.

SEE Reader! in the beautiful conduct of David at Saul's death, how grace enables the believer to stay all enmity, and even to requite good for evil. Depend upon it, nothing but this can accomplish such a purpose; for it is the sole work of God the Holy Ghost.

But let us, in the view of this chapter, go further and remark, that as nothing but grace can throw down all the jealousies of life in our competition with others, so nothing but the same divine principle can reconcile us to our death. Until we know Jesus truly and savingly, we can neither think of death with comfort nor meet it with fortitude. Yes, dearest Jesus! it is thy death, which hath overcome death; and thy blood which hath taken out its sting. Oh! grant me grace ever to be keeping thy triumphs for thy people in view, and never to look at death but with a steady eye also to thee. Thy victory over death, hell, and the grave, is the everlasting consolation of thy people; and death, no more than life, or principalities, or powers, shall be able to separate from thee. *Through death thou hast destroyed him that had the power of death, and hast delivered them who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage.* Oh! thou dearest Lord! give me to see the full privilege of thy triumphs; that my iniquity is pardoned, and my sin covered; that death hath no terrors, nor the grave any alarm; let me hear that blessed voice of thine, and my soul will rejoice in full assurance of faith: *Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and death.* Amen.

CHAP. II.

CONTENTS.

This chapter contains the relation of David's accession to the throne of Hebron. A party however is formed by Abner the Captain of Saul's host, in favour of Ish-bosheth, Saul's son; which became the source of a long contention between the house of David and the house of Saul. David reigns in Hebron, and Ish-bosheth in Mahanaim.

AND it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? and the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.

If the Reader will again, in this chapter, consult the 12th chapter of the first book of the Chronicles, from the 23rd verse to the end, he will there discover the means, under God, by which David's kingdom

became established. David consulted God after the death of Saul, what steps he should take, as this verse relates. Oh! how sweet and profitable it is to do so in every thing. Reader! do turn to those two precious verses, and endeavour to keep them in your memory, for the mind to turn upon all occasions of your life: I mean, Isaiah xlii. 16. and Prov. iii. 6.

2 So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite.

3 And his men that *were* with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.

Observe how a prudent man, not only attends to his own personal concerns, but to the concerns of his family. There is nothing said of his children, neither can we learn from the word of God whether David had any at this time. Indeed as his first born was born in Hebron, it should seem that this event took place *after* he came to the kingdom. See Chap. iii. 2.

4 And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, *That* the men of Jabesh-gilead *were they* that buried Saul.

Our Lord sprang out of Judah. Is it not worthy remark, that this should be the first of all the tribes to acknowledge David as their king? *Hebron* was appointed by the Lord for David's court: perhaps it might be more considerable than any other in point of bulk, as a province at that time; for it should seem that it had *many* cities for David's household to dwell in.

5 And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed *be* ye of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, *even* unto Saul, and have buried him.

6 And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.

7 Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

There was certainly a great affection of the mind in the person of David, and which manifested itself upon various occasions. This remembrance of the men of Jabesh Gilead perhaps more particularly, for

the love they bore Saul and Jonathan is an instance of it. And there is another mentioned, 1 Chron. xii. 16, 17.

8 ¶ But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim;

9 And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel.

The opposition made to David for the crown was in fact made against the government of God; for all Israel could not but know, that David had been long before both appointed and anointed as the successor of Saul in the kingdom. And one might have thought, that the success of David against the Philistines, and the awful end of Saul, would have prompted all Israel as one man to have fled to David, the moment Saul was dead, to have called him to the government. But alas! what punishment, or what distresses are heavy enough, unsanctified by the Lord, to bring home the heart to him? But Reader! let us not stop here in our improvements on this view of things in Israel. Was not David, in this instance, as in many others, a lively type of the ever blessed Jesus? When the Lord Jehovah set Christ as his king in Zion, did not *the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing, against the Lord, and against his anointed?* Psm. ii. 1. Precious Jesus! make me one of thy happy subjects, with holy joy and thankfulness to bend my knee before thee, and with the heart confess, that *Jesus Christ is Lord and king to the glory of God the Father!*

10 Ish-bosheth Saul's son *was* forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David.

11 And the time that David was king in Hebron, over the house of Judah, was seven years and six months,

There is no very easy method of ascertaining from whence these dates commenced, or how to reconcile the seven years and half of David with the two years of Ishbosheth. But it may serve to teach us that during this opposition many grievous events to persons, and families, and tribes, must have taken place. While the confederate powers of sin, the world, and Satan join in opposition to the reign of grace in the soul; the believer finds many sharp conflicts, which make him groan and go heavily.

12 And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

13 And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out and met together by the

pool of Gibeon; and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool.

14 And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise.

15 Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which *pertained* to Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

16 And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and *thrust* his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which *is* in Gibeon.

17 And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

This Abner was uncle to Saul, and no doubt covered his pretence under a sense of duty: but what a flimsy covering in opposition to the sovereignty of God. The first meeting of the two armies appears to have been by way of challenge. Similar perhaps to that of more modern duels, in which men to avoid the sneer of fools, venture to brave Omnipotency, and plunge unsent and uncalled before their time into everlasting misery; of every one of which it may be said, as was in after days said of this very Abner; *Died Abner as a fool dieth!* 2 Sam. iii. 33. The sinful *play*, as it is here called, soon became serious work, and terminated in a bloody battle, so that the place of the slain was called Helkath-hazzurim; that is, the field of hardy men.

18 ¶ And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and Asahel *was* as light of foot as a wild roe.

19 And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner.

20 Then Abner looked behind him and said, *Art thou* Asahel? And he answered, *I am*.

21 And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him.

22 And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?

23 Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth *rib*, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, *that* as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died, stood still.

This event of the flight of Abner and his army, and the pursuit of Joab's army after him, is very properly introduced here by way of relating the death of *Asahel*. Perhaps a youth of more courage than prudence against so expert an old soldier as Abner. The circumstance of every one that came to the spot where he died, stopping, seems to have been from the gracious goodness of God, because it thereby retarded the pursuers, and afforded time to Abner's army to escape. I believe there are a thousand, and perhaps ten thousand, such events in every man's life, which we call casual; but which, by a kind of preventing providence, minister to the Lord's design, in bringing about other events with which themselves apparently have nothing to do.

24 Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that *lieth* before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

25 And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of an hill.

26 Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?

27 And Joab said, *As* God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother.

28 So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more.

The ground which Abner gained, and the blessing of the sun going down, gave time for each party to consider. Pauses in life, and on numberless occasions, are precious things. Abner's address is well ordered, though not founded in truth. He had began the quarrel. He had proposed first the play by which the after battle was brought on. Joab's answer is a noble one, and most generous towards a falling enemy, though he takes care to lay the blame wholly where it was due. If he had not first spoken, there would have been no battle; and if he had not *now* spoken, Joab's forbearance would have been manifested in the morning the same. But Reader, in praising Joab, do not fail to discover the hand of a gracious God in the event. Here would I ever keep a fixed eye.

29 And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim.

30 And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel.

31 But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, *so that* three hundred and threescore men died.

32 And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which *was in* Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at brake of day.

The separation of the two armies, and their return to their respective places, for the present put a stop to the war. But Reader! there is no truce, no respite, no cessation in that war, which sin and Satan make against the holy army of our spiritual David. When once the christian soldier hath buckled on his armour he never puts it off till he is undressed by death. Dearest Jesus! do thou arm me for the fight, that *I may endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* 2 Tim. ii. 3.

REFLECTIONS.

BEHOLD Reader! in the instance of David in this chapter, that the death of one enemy only makes way for the appearance of another. If Saul be dead, Saul hath a son still to persecute and harrass the life of David. If the Lord in mercy delivers his people from this or that trial; others shall succeed. *They that will live godly in Christ Jesus must, and shall, suffer persecution.* It is, as our adored Redeemer told his disciples, and all have found it, *through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom.* Though David was elected by God himself to the king-

dom, yet long conflicts he must go through before he gets even a prospect of obtaining it: and when all opposition in the death of Saul seemed for the time to have died away: yet new *Sauls* arose to oppose. Yes! depend upon it, Reader, the chosen of God will never in this world be without the opposition and malice of the enemy. It is and must be so. Nay indeed, it forms one of the very evidences of their character. Let you and I therefore mark this down in large letters, for our every day's memorandum; and let those sweet words of Christ not only reconcile our hearts, but cause them to rejoice in the blessed testimony. *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen ye out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* Blessed Jesus! May I have these sweet marks, and carry about with me these precious assurances of thy love, to help my mind on to a continually rejoicing in thee and thy great salvation.

But let me not dismiss this Chapter before that I have taken from it another delightful lesson. Did David bring up with him, when the Lord appointed him to go up to Hebron to his kingdom, did he bring up with him all that appertained to him, and leave nothing behind? And shall not my soul rejoice in the blessed certainty, that my David, even the Lord Jesus Christ, my king and my God, will bring up to that kingdom he is gone to take possession of in eternal glory, all his followers? Is Jesus now in the Hebron of Hebrons, in the heaven of heavens; and will he be satisfied there, while any of his household are left below? Shall there indeed an hoof be left behind in the spiritual Egypt, in the *Ziklag* country of the Philistines! No, thou dear Redeemer, thou saidst thyself before thy departure, that thou didst only go before to take possession of it in thy people's name. Thou art gone to *receive a kingdom, and wilt return.* Oh! for faith in lively exercise to believe *the record which God hath given of his dear Son.* Shortly thou wilt come to take me home to thyself, that where thou art there may I be also. Never, never my soul, lose sight of these sweet words of my Jesus; but let their animating assurance have a living influence upon all thy words, and thoughts, and actions. *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me. That they all may be one as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us. I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in me, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.*

CHAP. III.

CONTENTS.

The account of the struggle on the part of Saul's family for the kingdom with David, is continued in this Chapter. A quarrel takes place between Ishbosheth and Abner. The latter makes overtures to David. David's treaty with him. Abner, while attempting to bring over Israel to David's interest, is slain by Joab. David's distress at this event. These are the principal points related in this Chapter.

NOW there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.

The event as here related, of the decline of Saul's interest, and the increase of David's, is just as might have been expected. But I pass over the historical part of the relation, to call the Reader's attention to an infinitely more important object veiled under the history, and to direct him to the very precious instruction, spiritually considered, contained in it.

The long war which subsisted between the house of Saul and the house of David, may serve to teach us both the length and strength of the battle which is carried on in the heart of the awakened believer, in the different dispositions of nature and grace. There is indeed long war, and dreadfully hot re-encounters, by reason of these contending powers. Speak, ye long tried, long exercised souls, who feel their force, and say what it is, for I have no ability to describe it. But what a relief to the soul is the consideration, (and I would charge it upon the mind of every one groaning under it,) the issue of this war, is not doubtful. Your exercises are not for trial, as to the event; but for trial as to the proving the graces given you. Jesus, your spiritual David, hath already conquered for you, and in your name: and you must shortly be made more than conquerors through him and his victory. And in the mean time it is a precious thought, and ever to be cherished with the most grateful affection in the heart of the believer; though you see so little increase in the life of faith and grace, compared to what you wish; nay, as it seems to appear to you, matters sometimes grow worse and worse; yet in the strength that is in Christ Jesus, and your views of him, nature, like the house of Saul, is giving way; and grace, like the house of David, becoming every day more triumphant. That promise is absolute, *The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.* Job xvii. 9.

2 And unto David were sons born in Hebron; and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;

3 And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maachah, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur;

4 And the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital;

5 And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron.

The sacred historian hath given a list of six of David's children. Strange that David should have multiplied wives, contrary to the law of

his God; (see that strong precept, Deut. xvii. 17.) What a source of vexation did it open in his family!

6 ¶ And it came pass while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul.

7 And Saul had a concubine, whose name *was* Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and *Ish-bosheth* said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine?

8 ¶ Then was Abner very wroth for the words of *Ish-bosheth*, and said, *Am* I a dog's head, which against Judah do shew kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me to day with a fault concerning this woman?

9 So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him;

10 To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beer-sheba.

11 And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him.

I only detain the Reader to Remark, in a view of the contents of these verses, what a poor sinful, time-serving creature Abner must have been. He here confesses David's right to the kingdom, as appointed by the Lord: so that he acted contrary to his conscience. It is not said whether the crime *Ishbosheth* charged him with was true or false. But his resentment was unbounded. Having taken up *Ishbosheth's* cause, without regard to God's laws, he as easily drops it, without an eye to the Lord's approbation.

12 ¶ And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose *is* the land? saying *also*, Make thy league with me, and, behold my hand *shall be* with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee.

Who should have thought at the onset of *Ishbosheth's* being set up as king against David, that the very man who set him up would become the very instrument to put him down. Reader! do not fail to observe

how the Lord can make the minds of bad men minister to the very opposite to what they propose. The *wrath of man shall*, whether it wishes or not, *praise him*. Psm. lxxvi. 10.

13 And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face.

14 And David sent messengers to Ishbosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver *me* my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines.

Is not this a sweet feature in David's character, his love to Michal. She was his first wife—his lawful wife—his purchased wife, dearly bought; and most evident it was, he loved her. And why should not this remind me of *thy* love, thou dearest Husband of thy people? Though I have wandered from thee, and left my first love, and have had other lovers, and have gone after them, yet shall David send for his Michal, and will not Jesus demand his spouse, which he hath betrothed to himself for ever, and which he hath purchased with a price no less dear than his own most precious blood? Be comforted, my soul, amidst all thine unworthiness, Jesus still loves; *he hateth putting away*; he will send for thee, and bring thee home, now he is king over all in heaven and in earth.

15 And Ish-bosheth sent, and took her from *her* husband, *even* from Phaltiel the son of Laish.

16 And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned.

There is somewhat affecting in this relation. *Michal* must have been dear to *Phaltiel*; and yet, from her conduct to David afterwards, she doth not appear to have been very amiable. See chap. vi. 16, 20.

17 And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past *to be* king over you:

18 Now then do *it*: for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.

19 And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin; and Abner went also to speak in the ears

of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin.

The earnestness with which Abner had entered into the interest of Ishbosheth, is now manifestly as violently against him. But in all this, though he makes use of an argument to prove that it was of the Lord's designs, to make David king, yet the conduct of Abner was not directed to the divine glory.

20 So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. And David made Abner and the men that *were* with him a feast.

21 And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

Whether David considered Abner in the light of an instrument in the Lord's hand, I know not; but we hear nothing in this affair of seeking counsel from God. See, Reader! what a poor thing in itself the heart of man is; and that grace is no self-acting principle.

22 ¶ And, behold, the servants of David and Joab came from *pursuing* a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them; but Abner *was* not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.

23 When Joab and all the host that *was* with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace.

24 Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why *is* it *that* thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone?

25 Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee; and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest.

Though perhaps Joab's displeasure was expressed rather too violently, yet certainly it was blameable in David to countenance a traitor, such as

Abner had proved himself to Ishbosheth. David felt the ill effects of such a conduct in *Doeg* the Edomite, upon a former occasion. 1 Sam. xxii. 9.

26 And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew *it* not.

27 And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth *rib*, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

It may be said of Joab as of Abner, bloody men were they both. What an awful picture, in all eyes, do such characters afford of the dreadful fall of man!

28 ¶ And afterward when David heard *it*, he said, I and my kingdom *are* guiltless before the LORD for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner:

29 Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread.

Very proper as it was, and becoming in David, to make an appeal to his own innocency respecting the death of Abner, lest the world should have been tempted to suspect that David sent for Abner only but to murder him; yet the imprecations which he made use of were highly reprehensible, because they were not sanctioned, as we learn, from divine authority. Dearest Jesus! how doth thy bright example of mercy strike our view, in that on the cross thou didst pray for pardon, even for thy murderers!

30 So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.

It should seem that *Abishai* was privy to the deed of Joab. Paul considered himself as guilty of Stephen's death, because he was standing by, and consenting to it. Acts xxii. 20.

31 ¶ And David said to Joab, and to all the people that *were* with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David *himself* followed the bier.

32 And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept.

33 And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?

34 Thy hands *were* not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him.

35 And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down.

36 And all the people took notice *of it*, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people.

37 For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner.

Perhaps there was a great propriety in this attention of David, respecting the death of Abner. He did all he could to testify his total disapprobation of the deed of Joab, and at the same time to inculcate an humbling lesson of the frailty and uncertainty of life among his people. But if David lamented over the death of such a man as Abner, judge how suited the pious lamentations of the people are over the deaths of the Lord's faithful servants and ministers. Whenever a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus is called home, the Church below sustains a loss, because thereby so much grace is withdrawn from the public stock, as the Lord had blessed that servant with. It may be truly said, that in the funeral of such men we bury part of Christ's body. The Lord then takes back the boon he had lent. Oh! how ought we to improve, and mark down in our mind, the precious truths they teach, that when they themselves cease to be, their labours and gracious words may survive them, that so *being dead, they may yet speak.* Heb. xi. 4.

38 And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?

39 And I *am* this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah *be* too hard for me: the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

What David meant by this expression, that the sons of Zeruiah were too hard for him, I know not, unless it was that they were too mighty in themselves and important to his interest at present, to punish, as he wished, this sin. But, in either sense, it was no compliment to David's love of justice or his faithfulness. And we find that this event was so deeply impressed upon his mind, that on his death bed he gave charge to Solomon to punish it. See 1 Kings ii. 5, 6.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS whole chapter, except what the first verse of it teacheth, serves to shew the Reader and Writer what a mass of treachery, deceit, and evil, the human heart is made up of. Alas! alas! what a state is man reduced to by the fall. Oh! blessed Jesus, how is thy glorious redemption-work raised to our adoration and delight, in the contemplation of it; since but for thy gracious undertaking, all mankind must for ever have remained under this mass of guilt and ruin. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

Before we dismiss our review of this chapter, methinks I would have the Reader, as well as myself, pause once more over the consideration of the serious thought induced in the contemplation of the long war between the house of David and of Saul: and let each for himself enquire to which, spiritually viewed, we belong. Then when this point is ascertained, if happily through grace we are of the house and lineage of our Almighty David, let us advance one step further, and examine whether, in the long contests between grace and corruption, nature is waxing more and more feeble, and our better part is renewed day by day?

Reader! depend upon it a real follower of Jesus Christ dreads above all things, lest in the end, he should be found mistaken concerning himself in his estimate of an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Are you really, truly, heartily, willing to know? Go before the throne—present yourself now just as you are for judgment.—Are you resting upon any presumptive evidence of what you suppose yourself to have experienced in times past, of awakening, convincing, converting grace; or are your sole hopes founded upon the blessed assurances of Jehovah's covenant love and faithfulness solely secured to poor sinners, in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ? If the *latter* be your *experience*, and not the *former*; if self, with all its feelings, supposed enlargements, joys, and the uncertain ups and downs of the soul, be out of the account; and Jesus, the Lord alone, be exalted in the day you present yourself for judgment; this will confirm, in the long war between grace and corruption, that the house of David is getting stronger and stronger; and that of Saul is waxing weaker and weaker! Lord Jesus! I would say both for myself and Reader, *Search us, O God, and know our hearts; try us, and know our thoughts; And see if there be any wicked way in our souls, and lead us in the way everlasting.*

CHAP. IV.

CONTENTS.

A melancholy relation this chapter hath of the murder of Ish-bosheth by two captains in his band. After they had perpetrated the deed they

hastened with the head of Ish-bosheth to David, who so far from approving of what they had done, ordered their execution. These are the principal points here related.

AND when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled.

We hardly know what to make of the character of this son of Saul; certainly there could be but little regard to the law of the Lord in his heart; for had he revered God's ordination, he would not have suffered Abner to have opposed the succession of David to the kingdom.

2 ¶ And Saul's son had two men *that were* captains of bands: the name of the one *was* Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin: (for Béeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin:

3 And the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day.)

4 And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son *that was* lame of *his* feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name *was* Mephibosheth.

5 And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth, who lay on a bed at noon.

6 And they came thither into the midst of the house, *as though* they would have fetched wheat; and they smote him under the fifth *rib*: and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped.

7 For when they came into the house, he lay on his bed in his bedchamber, and they smote him, and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night.

But, whatever the real character of Ish-bosheth might be, the conduct of those brothers we cannot be at a loss to gather. Wherefore the account of the city to which they belonged is inserted here, by way of a

parenthesis, is not certain, unless it be to mark their atrocity still more in that being *Benjamites*, they ought to have had more love to the house of Saul, who was of that tribe. The account of *Mephibosheth*, which is given here, though short, is interesting. The lameness, induced by the event of the battle on the day of Saul's death, and Jonathan being the father of Mephibosheth, may serve to shew how the sin of the parent involves the children in the consequent punishment. Alas! how evident is it that the whole nature is fallen, when the whole nature groans from being universally implicated in the fall.

8 And they brought the head of Ish-bosheth unto David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold the head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the LORD hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.

9 ¶ And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, As the LORD liveth who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity,

10 When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who *thought* that I would have given him a reward for his tidings:

11 How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?

Observe; with what faith and assurance David speaks of redemption. Not as a thing *to be* done; but as a work *already* accomplished. Sweet thought this! So concluded holy men of old. "Blessed, (said Zacharias) be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited, and redeemed his people. Let thy servant, (said Simeon) depart in peace according to thy word! for mine eyes *have seen* thy salvation." Luke i. 68. ii. 29, 30. The just detestation of David at this horribly cruel and unprovoked deed of Rechab and Baanah, could not have been expressed in a stronger manner.

12 And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged *them* up over the pool in Hebron.

But they took the head of Ish-bosheth, and buried *it* in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

Doth not David's just decision and judgment on those murderers, serve to remind us of the awful sentence which Jesus, we are assured, shall one day pass on the wicked, when *they shall be driven from his presence with everlasting destruction*. It is an awful thought, but ought to be kept alive in the remembrance, that the very gracious name of God as Jehovah Alehim; that is, Jehovah in Covenant with his people by Christ, is as solemnly engaged as the denouncer of *wrath*, as in the covenant *promises* of redemption. Jehovah at the right hand of Adonai (the believer's Lord and stay) *shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath*. Psalm cx. 5.

REFLECTIONS.

THE sudden and unexpected death of Saul's son, while dreaming of an earthly kingdom, may serve to furnish out, both to the Reader and Writer, an important reflection on the sure, but uncertain, coming of our latter end. There is but one security against the evil of that day; and that is, an interest in his blood and righteousness, who by his death hath overcome death, and by his resurrection hath secured the resurrection of his people. That precious, precious scripture, is a motto to be worn in the bosom of the faithful, and to be fixed in the largest characters over the couches of believers; *Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation*. Thus to be found in Christ, is to be found in peace before him. And in this case, sudden death is sudden glory.

Reader! if Jesus be your hope, your trust, your confidence, your rock, you can never be moved. For how can the soul be naked which hath Christ himself for his covering? *I know* (says Paul) *whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*. What day that might be Paul knew not; but every day he was looking out for it. *I protest* (says he) *by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily*. Blessed Paul! what a happy reckoning did he make of it. And what assurance was founded in it. Reader! let you and I keep Jesus always in view; let us set this precious Redeemer always before us; and depend upon it, living *upon* him, and trusting wholly *in* him, for his atoning blood and justifying righteousness, our departure will be in peace, though the signal be given for our removal without a moment's warning. It is but to close the eyes of the body to this world, and the soul will open them in glory. *Blessed* (says Jesus) *is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing*.

CHAP. V.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter opens with a brighter prospect to David's life and reign than any before. All the tribes of Israel now come to him, claiming

relationship, and offering him the whole kingdom. David is anointed. He goeth forth to war; builds a city; receives from the king of Tyre both materials for building and builders; is established in his kingdom; takes to himself more concubines and wives; his children are increased; fights with the Philistines, and is encouraged by the Lord. These things are related in this Chapter.

THEN came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh.

2 Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel.

3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel.

The time was now arrived when all Israel, as one man, should set their eyes towards David as their king. Though David had been so long exercised with difficulties, yet there is a set time to favor every son and daughter of Zion. No doubt it seemed a long time to David to wait the fulfillment of the Lord's promises concerning him. Reader! it appears thus to all the spiritual seed of David! How long, how long? is the fervent cry of the awakened soul amidst his sharp exercises! But depend upon it, in your instance, as well as David's, the Lord's time is the best time. Sooner than the Lord appoints, would neither answer your purpose, nor his glory. But is there not beside this, a beautiful representation of the advancement of our Jesus to his spiritual crown over all Israel, and indeed over every son and daughter of his Israel? From the first moment that he manifests his grace in the heart, and that promise, to make his people kings and priests to God and the Father, is revealed to the soul, is it not, like David, a long and tedious expectation before Jesus gains the entire sovereignty? Even like David, after being brought to Hebron, many of the provinces stood out, and set up their Ish-bosheth; so our hearts too long and too frequently rebel, set up rivals, and attempt to divide the empire with the Lord. But, blessed Jesus, grant that like all the tribes of Israel, thy people may at length all come to thee, to be under thy full government. And we would claim thy dominion over us by the same endearing argument as they did David's; surely we are thy bone and thy flesh; thou hast taken our nature, and married us to thyself; thou hast fought our battles also; thou hast conquered sin, death, hell and the grave; and thou hast done all these things for us and our salvation; condescend then, dearest Jesus, to be our king and our God. For in thee we behold the precept given to Moses can only be fulfilled; thou

art the king, which the Lord our God and Father did choose; thou art from among thy brethren, and not a stranger, therefore thou, and thou alone, are suited both by law and gospel to be our king. See Deut. xvii. 15.

4 David *was* thirty years old when he began to reign, *and* he reigned forty years.

5 In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.

Was there not somewhat similar to our spiritual David in all this? Jesus entered on his public ministry at about the age of thirty. See Luke iii. 23. And as Hebron was the city of the priests, and Jerusalem the city of the kings, were not these shadowy representations of the gospel state? Joshua xiv. 14, 15. Rev. xxi. 10.

6 ¶ And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither; thinking, David cannot come in hither.

7 Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same *is* the city of David.

8 And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, *that are* hated of David's soul, *he shall be chief and captain*. Wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.

9 So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward.

Israel had suffered the Jebusites to remain among them contrary to the Lord's command, and therefore they became a snare to them as the Lord had said. See Judges i. 21. Deut. vii. 16—18, &c. It should seem that the *Jebusites* had so fortified Jerusalem, that even blind men and lame (speaking after the manner of men), might defend it. But some have thought by the blind and lame here spoken of, is meant the images and figures on the walls. But I conceive that an higher and more interesting illustration may, without violence, be given to the passage, considered spiritually, and with an eye to Jesus, of whom David was, in many points, an eminent type. Till Jesus takes away the blindness of our eyes, and cures the palsied faculties of our mind, there is no entrance for him in the strong holds of the heart, while the strong men

armed keepeth the palace. But, when he comes, and opens both the blind eye, and heals the crippled state of our souls, the strong holds of sin and Satan are thrown open, and thrown down. Come, then, Lord Jesus, come to thy lawful dominion; take possession of the city of thy people, both as the gift of thy Father, the purchase of thy blood, and the conquest of thy Spirit; and do thou dwell in us, and call it, as it rightly is, thine own, *the city of the living God*; build both inward, and outward, and round about; and *upon all the glory let there be thy defence*. Isaiah iv. 3—6. 1 Cor. vi. 19, &c.

10 And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts *was* with him.

11 And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house.

12 And David perceived that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.

How delightful it is to read of David's greatness, when we learn at the same time, that David's Lord made him so. It was the same grace towards David, which inclined the heart of *Hiram*, king of Tyre, to minister to David's accommodation. Sweet is that promise, and abundantly sure; *when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him*. Prov. xvi. 7. And still more in a spiritual sense, the Lord hath promised his dear Son, concerning his people, that *the sons of strangers shall build up the walls of his Zion, and their kings shall minister unto him; they shall bring the forces of the Gentiles, and their kings shall be brought*. Isaiah lx. 10, 11. But what I beg the Reader particularly to notice in this account of David, is that David perceived the Lord's hand in all his advancement. Oh! Reader, what a mercy was this! It was this distinguishing mercy which crowned and sweetened all. Thousands there are upon earth, surrounded with blessings, but who live unconscious of the Lord's hand in the gifts. And tens of thousands who live only to abuse them. Nay, Reader, many among the Lord's people lose much of the sweetness of his precious gifts, from forgetting to eye his hand in them. Lord! I would say, both for myself and Reader, open thou our eyes to see thy gracious goings forth, and as gracious comings in with thy blessings; that we may enjoy Jesus *in* his blessings, and all blessings *for* his sake. But, Reader! we must not stop here in our improvement on this view of David. Was not David, very eminently here, a type of his Almighty Saviour? Was David exalted for his people's sake, and was his throne established over Israel; and shall not my faith take wing, and fly up to the contemplation of thee, thou risen and exalted Jesus, who art purposely exalted *as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins*? Yes! blessed Lord! thou art indeed exalted, *far above all principalities and powers, and might, and dominion*! God our Father hath highly exalted thee, and given thee *a name above every*

name. And dearest, blessed Jesus, if thou art thus exalted, and thus lifted up, do I not know (for thou hast thyself spoken the words) that it is to *draw all thy people unto thee.* Not for thyself, but for Israel's sake; for thy glory as God, one with the Father, could receive no exaltation, no increase; but, as King of thy people, and their Mediator, the Lord our God hath made thee his first-born, *higher than the kings of the earth.* Psm. lxxxix. 27. John xii. 32.

13 And David took *him* more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David.

14 And these *be* the names of those that were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shammuah, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon,

15 Ibhair also, and Elishua, and Nepheg, and Japhia.

16 And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphalet.

We may well blush in the perusal of what is here said of David. Alas! what is man in his highest exaltation, and wherein doth he differ, considered in himself, from others. Reader! recollect, that though grace refines the spiritual part, it doth not not renew the bodily. David's many wives and concubines producing many children, must produce trouble. Every fruit from the root of sin must be bitter. The sequel of David's history manifests this in an eminent degree. If the reader wishes to anticipate this subject, and see how those sins brought forth trouble, he may consult 2 Sam. xv. 10—16. xvi. 21, 22.

17 But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of *it*, and went down to the hold.

18 The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

19 And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

It is beautiful to trace David's steps, when he acts like himself, in consulting the Lord. Reader! depend upon it, the more the believing soul keeps up communion with Jesus by prayer, the more he will be conformed to the lovely similitude of Jesus, in life and conversation. Reader! do observe, though David knew that his kingdom was esta-

blished by the Lord, and, that the Lord had guided him all his life long, yet, now he is established, he doth not remit seeking counsel from the Lord. Our security and interest in Jesus, so far from relaxing our need of him, renders him increasingly necessary, and increasingly precious. Oh! thou dear Lord! is it not, that the more I know of thee, the more I may see my need of thee, and the more I desire my whole heart and soul to be drawn unto thee? Be it so with me, dearest Jesus! But, reader, observe how ready the Philistines are, the moment David is crowned in Jerusalem, to come up against him. Here again, we see David a type of the ever blessed Jesus. No sooner doth the poor sinner crown Jesus for his King, but the enemy comes forth against him, And was it not so by the church at large? When Jehovah set his King upon his holy hill of Zion, *the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed.* Psm. ii. 2, 6.

20 And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-perazim.

21 And there they left ther images, and David and his men burned them.

Here is the issue of the battle. David conquers in the name of the Lord, and to the Lord gives all the glory. *Baal-perazim* signifies *the Lord of the breaches*. The leaving their dunghill gods behind them, and the burning of them by David, shews very plainly what they were. It is worthy remark, that when in the awful war, in which the Lord delivered Israel into the hands of their enemies for their sins, and even suffered the ark of God to be taken, the presence of the ark consumed the Philistines. In this, their contemptible gods falling into the hands of Israel, were themselves consumed. David's burning of them was in obedience to the divine command. See Deut. vii. 5.

22 And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim,

23. And when David enquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up; *but* fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees.

24 And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shall bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.

25 And David did so, as the LORD had com-

manded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer.

Observe how variously God works. And observe also, how the Lord's servants keep up their intercourse with heaven, by prayer. David still seeks to God: and God still answers him. Is there not somewhat which leads the mind to the contemplation of the Spirit's work upon the heart, in this direction concerning the sound of a going in the mulberry trees? The Holy Ghost, in his descent upon the minds of the apostles, came down in the sound of *a mighty rushing wind*. And what is it now? The *taking of the things of Jesus and shewing them to the people*. Depend upon it, reader! it is the work of the Holy Ghost, when at any time your heart is led to see and feel your need of Jesus; his fulness, and all-sufficiency to supply; and you are secretly inclined to come unto him. *Draw me*, (saith the Church) *and we shall run after thee*. Song i. 4.

REFLECTIONS.

BEFORE we quit this very instructive Chapter, let us, my christian friend, look at it once more; and while we view the zeal of all the tribes of Israel in anointing David king, let you and I see whether we have manifested an equal readiness to bend the knee to the sceptre of grace before our Jesus, and crown him Lord of all. It is God the Father that hath constituted him in his mediatorial glory, King in Zion; while, in the fullness of his Godhead he is one with the Father, Universal Lord over all, God blessed for evermore. And in his Almighty hands are the issues of life and death, spiritual, temporal, and eternal. Yes! blessed Jesus, thy kingdom is thy church; thy body, thy fair one, thy spouse: thou art of our kindred, and we of thine, *thy bone and thy flesh*. Thou hast fought, and art still fighting for us all our battles. Thou hast led us out, and brought us in. Thou feedest thy people with thyself, for thou art both the bread of life, and the water of life. And surely the love, the service, the voluntary homage of thy people, when thou hast made them willing in the day of thy power, is thy lawful, just, and proper right. And when thou hast taken away the blind, and the lame, and entered by thine own Almighty arm and power, into the strong holds of Zion; oh! Lord Jesus, do thou dwell there, and make our souls and bodies thy temple of abode. Reader! have you and I thus bent the knee to Jesus? Have we crowned him with the crown of free grace, in ascribing all salvation to him? Is he dear, is he precious, is he the altogether lovely, is he the Lord our righteousness? Dearest Jesus! give both him that writes, and him that reads, grace to say amen: and let every high thing that would exalt itself against his sovereignty be brought down, and every thought *brought into captivity to the obedience and love of Christ*.

CHAP. VI.

CONTENTS.

This is an interesting Chapter, and considered as typically, in some points, referring to Jesus, demands our attention the more. We are

here informed of David's intention of bringing up the ark from where it had long been in obscurity, during the troubles of Saul's reign, to David's new city. In the accomplishment of this purpose, David meets with an humbling, and most distressing providence.—His behaviour upon it,—the attempt afterwards renewed, and succeeds,—the joy of David and the people on the occasion,—the behaviour of Michal, David's wife,—his displeasure. These are the principal things contained in this Chapter.

A GAIN, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.

2 And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubims.

It is remarkable that we have met with nothing in relation to the Ark, from the time of its return out of the Philistines' territories, (as recorded 1 Sam. vi. 1 to the end) excepting, that Saul is once said to have called for it, until this which is now mentioned. See 1 Sam. xiv. 10. Twenty years it was lodged in *Kirjath-jearim*. 1 Sam. vii. 1, 2. But do observe, with what honourable terms it is spoken of; *the Ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubims*. Was not this most clearly typical of Christ? Is not Jesus both the Mercy-seat, the Propitiatory, the Propitiation, and the sole manifestation of the divine presence? Do not all petitions go up on him? And are not all communications made from him? How sweetly doth one pray to this effect; *Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou and the ark of thy strength*. Psm. cxxxii. 8. I refer the reader, on this most interesting subject, to what hath been already advanced upon it in the commentary on these passages; Exod. xl. Deut. x. Joshua iii. The design of David in fetching the ark, is more particularly mentioned, 1 Chron. xiii. where a whole chapter is filled in relating it, how David conferred with the leading men of his nation on the subject; to which I refer the Reader.

3 And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.

4 And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.

I always feel concern, when David undertakes any thing without first consulting the Lord. We read of his conferring with his captains on the removal of the ark, but nothing is said of his communion with the Lord of hosts. Here seems also another error in the first commencement of this weighty business. If the Reader will turn back to Numb.

iv. 15, with Numb. vii. 9, and compare both with Exod. xxv. 14, he will then discover how sacred the removal of the ark was to be considered, and only to be borne on the shoulders of the priests. How then could they dare to put the ark of God upon a cart?

5 And David, and all the house of Israel, played before the LORD on all manner of *instruments made of fir wood*, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

Some have thought that David composed the 68th Psalm for this occasion. If so, there is much of Christ in it, which plainly proves how well informed the mind of David must have been concerning Jesus. It is remarkable that David opens the subject in words similar to those of Moses upon the like occasion. See Numb. x. 35, 36. And from hence, it is as evident, the mind of Moses had the same views. I cannot stay in this place to particularize: but, if the Reader will turn to the 68th Psm. and to notice no more, will compare only the 18th verse with the triumphal ascension of Jesus, and call to mind what those ascension gifts of our Jesus are, and how they have been bestowed, and still are bestowing; I think his mind will be led to admire the faith of the patriarchs, equal to that of the highest modern christians. See Heb. xi. 24—28.

6 ¶ And when they came to Nachon's threshing-floor, Uzzah put forth *his* hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook *it*.

7 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah: and God smote him there for *his* error; and there he died by the ark of God.

It is not very easy to account for this awful judgment, any further than that *Uzzah's* touching the ark had been expressly forbidden by the Lord, and the punishment was said to be death. See Numb. iv. 15. The sons of *Kohath* were to bear it, but not to touch any holy thing. Whereas Uzzah did not bear it; but touched it; thus reversing the commandment. But, it will be said, perhaps, in extenuation of his sin: was not the ark in danger of falling, had he not done as he did? To this it must be answered, that is nothing to the softening Uzzah's positive disobedience of the Lord's command. The ark of God needs not an arm of flesh to keep it from falling. But, Reader, let the offence beside be what it may, Uzzah dies for his presumption. And let it teach us this solemn lesson: how awful the Lord is, and how dreadful to offend. Oh! thou blessed Jesus! what eternal thanks are due to thee for thy gracious interposing in salvation work, that thy people die not everlastingly.

8 And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day.

Is not this an awful account of David? Was he displeased with God? *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* How different was

Aaron's behaviour at the death of his two sons, *Aaron held his peace*. Levit. x. 3. David had other thoughts under the humbling providence afterwards, when driven from his throne by his ungodly son. *Here I am* (said David) *let the Lord do to me as seemeth good unto him*, chap. xv. 26. But poor man, like another Jonah, when grace was not in exercise, he ventured to arraign God's proceedings. But how gently did the Lord deal with David; and how graciously did he expostulate with Jonah! See Jonah iv. 9. *Perez-uzzah*, means the breach of Uzzah

9 And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?

10 So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.

11 And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.

David's humbleness and holy fear was proper on this occasion; but his want of faith was again reprehensible. This is but a short character given of *Obed-edom*, but it is a sweet one. Reader! the ark evidently typified Christ. Whoever presumes to think, like Uzzah, that the Ark of God is in danger; that this poor arm of flesh can help Jesus; like Uzzah, presumes, and like Uzzah, will die. But, whoever like Obed-edom, receives a whole Christ into his house, into his heart; the Lord Jehovah will bless that man, that house, that family, for Jesus's sake. Oh! precious Redeemer! come thou and make thy abode in my house, my heart, and all that belong to me.

12 ¶ And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that *pertaineth* unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness.

13 And it was *so*, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.

No doubt the blessing of Obed-edom's house and family led David to conclude that the Lord's displeasure was removed. If the Reader will compare what is here said with the 15th chapter of the first book of Chronicles he will discover the sense David had of the cause of God's

displeasure concerning Uzzah: *we sought him not in due order.* David, it should seem, had not asked counsel of God about the removal; and that removal was done, not only lightly and indifferently, but presumptuously; observe how the solemn service now commenced, with sacrifices. Yes! dearest Jesus! thy one all-sufficient sacrifice is the grand restorer of peace and reconciliation. Thou! *Thou hast made our peace in the blood of thy cross.* And David's, and the people's eye, were to thee in those sacrifices, as *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

14 And David danced before the LORD with all *his* might; and David *was* girded with a linen ephod.

15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

I hope the Reader will have grace to distinguish the holy joy and fervour of David's mind which gave birth to this action of his body in *dancing before the Lord*; from *modern dancing*, which is frivolous, sinful, and has a tendency to provoke lustful affections. It is impossible, I should conceive, that any one who beholds David engaged in so sacred a solemnity as this; and, especially, after the awful event of *Uzzah's* death, can for a moment be led to suppose that the dancing of David before the Lord hath the smallest affinity to the Stage, or Assembly-dancing of poor, sinful, unawakened, vain, and frivolous creatures, that consume their precious time, and dance away their immortal souls, too frequently, from the card-room, and the midnight assembly, to the awful silence of the grave. The dancing of David in this place formed a part of sacred worship. It was the gesture of the body, and the manifestation of rapture which filled the whole soul, by way of testifying praise and thankfulness to God. Reader! should it be your case to meet with any idle or disorderly person, that from this account of David's dancing before the Lord presumes to bring it forward as an apology for dancing: state this circumstance, I beseech you, in its proper light, give them to see the mighty difference here shewn. And let them learn that nothing upon earth differs more than what is here mentioned of the holy joy of a devout soul, which, like the heavenly bodies, move round in their several orbits with harmony to the praise of the Great Maker; from that sensual folly of a corrupt mind, which moves only to the sound of unmeaning music, dissipating every thing that is serious in themselves or others, at once reproachful to man and sinful before God.

16 And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

17 And they brought in the ark of the LORD,

and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

18 And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts.

19 And he dealt among all the people, *even* among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of *flesh*, and a flagon of *wine*. So all the people departed every one to his house.

It should seem that the Ark of the Lord at this time had no fixed spot for its abode. Moses had, in his days, prepared a tabernacle at *Gibeon* for it. But so many years had passed since that period, and moreover, the Ark was so long in *Kirjath-jearim*, that as the Ark itself seems to have been overlooked (except, no doubt, by the faithful few) it is not to be wondered at the place was lost. David therefore pitched upon a spot for it, and no doubt hallowed it; for those burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings, imply as much, as well as thanksgiving. And some have thought that it was at this time David composed that beautiful Psalm the 132d. Though others ascribe it to Solomon, who is said to have written it at the dedication of the Temple, because he closes his prayer on that occasion with some of the words of this Psalm. Compare 2 Chron. vi. 41, 42. with Psalm cxxxii. 8, 9, 10. But this is no certain conclusion. For this might be accounted for by supposing that the son quoted the words of his father. Be this however as it may, the Psalm itself is so precious, and contains in it so much in allusion to the Lord Jesus Christ, which the Ark typified, that I beg to refer the Reader to a diligent review of it upon the present occasion. The feasting with, and the presents David made to the people upon this service, serve to shew us what ground there is for holy joy in all our religious ordinances. Paul beautifully observes, upon this subject, *the kingdom of God*, that is, the kingdom of grace in this life, leading to the kingdom of glory in another, *is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. Rom. xiv. 17. And Reader! if it was so in the days of David in their holy solemnities and sacrifices, which at the best were but a shadow of good things to come; with what holy joy ought believers in Christ, who is the whole sum and substance of all the offerings under the law, to rejoice before God; and especially, in the celebration of the supper, that glorious soul-reviving, soul-strengthening, soul-comforting *feast, which is a feast upon the sacrifice* the Son of God once offered, and by which *he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*. Heb. x. 14.

20 ¶ Then David returned to bless his household.

And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!

21 And David said unto Michal, *It was* before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD.

22 And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in my own sight: and of the maid servants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour.

23 Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

I did not notice, in its place, the conduct of Saul's daughter, because the subject is again reviewed and enlarged upon in these verses. The Reader of discernment, who is a partaker of grace, will not fail to observe, I hope, in this conduct of *Michal*, the real cause from whence it sprung. It certainly was from the same sad stock of the enmity in the seed of the serpent to the seed of the woman, which gave rise at the first, and hath run through the whole race ever since, to all the conflicts between grace and corruption. Hence Cain was wroth and his countenance fell. Gen. iv. 5. Hence Esau hated Jacob, because of the blessing. Gen. xxvii. 41. Hence Michal disliked the Ark, and her husband's love to it was hateful. In the conduct of David towards his wife, on this occasion, we see how his natural temper got the better of grace. Surely it was neither generous nor becoming to upbraid a daughter with the gracelessness of her father; much less to vaunt himself upon the Lord's predilection of him to her father. But we see in this instance a renewed example of human infirmity. Where shall we turn our eyes to see a perfect pattern of unsinning obedience, holiness, and grace, but to thee, thou blessed Jesus, who in all the revilings thou didst receive, reviledst not again, See Isaiah liii. 7. 1 Pet. ii. 23.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! think how wretched and low must have been the state of Israel all the while they were without the Ark, the symbol of God's presence. No doubt many a pious Israelite sighed in secret on the occasion. Oh! my Brother! think what a sorrowful heart-breaking event would it be to this happy land of ours, if for the sins of the people the

Lord should be pleased to remove the golden candlestick out of its place! Even in the bare prospect of it, the heart trembles! Our sweet sabbaths, our solemn feasts, our gospel privileges, and ordinances, once over! And yet, is not the sin of the land enough to call for these tokens of divine displeasure? Who can consider the God of all grace, and the Father of all mercies, so continually affronted as he is, but must tremble for the consequences. If the soul of Lot was vexed from day to day by the filthy conversation of the wicked; well may rivers of water run down the eyes of the faithful, because men keep not God's law.

But Reader! amidst the awful contemplation of such an event may it be your comfort and mine, that should the Lord lay *judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet*; though we lose the Ark, God's people cannot lose him whose symbol the Ark was. Oh! let you and I fetch up the Ark of God, even Jesus, to our hearts and to our houses. It is his presence alone which gives a real blessing to ordinances; and without his presence the best of ordinances are nothing. And, O Lord God, grant, that neither of us, like *Uzzah*, may presumptuously give a wrong touch unto the Ark, nor vainly think that the Ark of God needs our feeble hand to its support. Do thou, Lord God, direct all our approaches unto thee, and direct them that they may be after the due order which thou hast enjoined. And then, if the Michals of the present hour despise our joy, and condemn our raptures, let them; it will only serve to manifest yet more whose we are, by the persecutions of the ungodly. And oh! for grace in full exercise, not like David, on this occasion to return *railing for railing, but contrarywise blessing*. May we pass on through *evil report as well as good report*; and in all our lesser trials, seek, dearest Jesus, a portion of thy Spirit, that we may *go forth unto thee, without the camp, bearing thy reproach*; rejoicing that *we are counted worthy to suffer shame for thy name*.

CHAP. VII.

CONTENTS.

This chapter affords a pleasing view of David's mind. His zeal for God's honour and glory, prompts him to the desire of building an house for the Lord. He confers with Nathan the prophet on the subject. The Lord at night reveals his will on this occasion, and commands him to communicate the same to David. Upon receiving this message, David goeth in before the Lord, and offers a most delightful prayer.

AND it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies;

2 That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.

How much the soul of David longed to glorify the God of his mer-

cies, is very evident from what is here related of him. Here he was a type of the ever-blessed Jesus, whose zeal for the honour of his Father's house is said to *have eaten him up*. See Psalm lxi. 9. compared with John ii. 17. Reader! I venture to believe that it is no small testimony of our being of the house and lineage of our glorious spiritual David, when from a love to his cause and to his person, we feel somewhat as David here felt, a certain painful concern in eating our morsel alone, and would wish that Jesus's poorest members were all partakers with us of his bounties.

3 And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee.

Had the prophet first made it a subject of prayer, his directions would have been better. The Lord being with his people, as indeed he always is, doth not supersede the necessity of asking continually his wisdom to guide us. Paul's advice, under the command of God the Holy Ghost, is express to this point; *in all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, our requests are to be made known unto God*. Observe, Reader! the advantages we derive on this point, as well as all others, in the blessed dispensation of our Jesus. Phil. iv. 6, 7.

4 And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying,

5 Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?

6 Whereas I have not dwelt in *any* house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle.

7 In all *the places* wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?

How beautiful a view do these verses afford, of the Lord's watching over his people. No doubt, the Lord inclined the heart of David to this intention, for *the preparations of the heart are from the Lord*. And by thus awakening in David's heart this desire, it tended to open this gracious communication from God to him. The Lord was pleased with the intention, as we find it is recorded, 1 Kings viii. 18, but would not allow the deed. The Lord had other work for his servant; he would permit him to make preparations for the temple, and the temple-service, in laying up gold and silver for the expences of the building, and in composing psalms and hymns for the service; but his son Solomon, as a type of Jesus, was to be the builder. See Heb. iii. 4. Observe, with what wonderful grace and condescension the Lord speaks of himself, in

that the Ark, the symbol of his presence, had been within a poor tent and tabernacle. Reader! do not overlook the sweet and precious spiritual sense of this blessed truth. Our nature is indeed a poor and wretched tent and tabernacle; and yet Jesus made it his dwelling, when he came to tabernacle among us. Precious Lord! thou hast dwelt in no other; thou dost now dwell in no other; but in the heart of every poor sinner whom thou hast brought out of the spiritual Egypt of our fallen state. Levit. xxvi. 11, 12. compared with 2 Cor. vi. 16.

8 Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel:

9 And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great *men* that *are* in the earth.

10 Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime,

11 And as since the time that I commanded judges *to be* over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house.

12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:

15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I put away before thee.

16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

This is a most gracious message from God to his servant, both in leading him back to the general review of the mercies the Lord had already shewn him, and in leading him forward to the view of the blessings yet to come. Reader! I stop you in the account of them just to observe, that one of the sweetest and most precious offices of the Holy Ghost in glorifying the Lord Jesus, by taking of the things of Jesus, and shewing to his people, is when he kindly acts as *the Remembrancer of Jesus*, in bringing again to the recollection what our ungrateful and forgetful hearts so easily suffer to slip out of our minds. And do be frequently looking out for testimonies of his gracious work in this precious office, in *your own* experience. David is here properly reminded of the great things the Lord had done for him. His history is traced back to the shepcores, from whence the Lord took him: his victories over all his enemies; the high dignity to which the Lord had brought him; the blessings he now enjoyed; the blessings opening before him; the blessings in his family, in his people, in his kingdom; the recompense the Lord would make him for the intentions he had of erecting an house to the Lord; that the Lord would build him a sure house, and establish his kingdom to his children for ever, and bring him down in quietness and serenity to his grave, when the number of his days was filled. These were such gracious acts of love and mercy as could only flow from the free, sovereign grace, and loving-kindness of the Lord; and therefore he could find no cause for them in the merit of man. But, when we have paid all due attention to what is here said, as it refers to David, in his own person and household, I hope the Reader will find yet an infinitely richer subject in looking at the whole spiritually, as it referred to the person, and kingdom, and seed, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the spiritual David, of whom here most eminently this king of Israel could be no other than a type. For never could it be said in reference to David the son of Jesse, that *his throne should be established for ever*. Here then, Reader, let us in this point of view regard the subject, and behold, in the person of the Lord Jesus, (who according to the flesh was of the seed of David) the Lord of that kingdom, which, as Daniel prophesied in after ages, *the God of heaven would set up, which should never be destroyed, but endure for ever*. Dan. ii. 44. Of Jesus, and no other, could this be said, and of him it is literally and strictly true; for so the angel in his salutation to Mary declared, that *he should be great, and be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God hath given unto him the throne of his Father David. He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end*. Luke i. 32, 33. It is true indeed, that what the Lord ordered Nathan to tell David, in the latter part of this message

concerning *his committing iniquity*, cannot be applied *personally* to Jesus; for *he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners: he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* But yet, *he was made sin for his people*, though he knew no sin himself: and as such, suffered in our stead and law room, *the stripes of men.* And as to his mystical body, his spiritual seed, they do feel the awful effects of sin by the fall. So that in this sense the passage may be accommodated to him also. Blessed Jesus! how sweet and refreshing to my soul, amidst all the dying circumstances of kingdoms, and men around, is the thought, *that of the increase of thy government and peace there shall be no end; upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it for ever.* Isaiah ix. 7.

17 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

How delightful it is to faithful servants, ministers, and prophets, when they have gracious tidings to communicate to the people!

18 ¶ Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who *am I*, O LORD God? and what *is* my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

19 And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O LORD God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And *is* this the manner of man, O LORD God?

20 And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, LORD God, knowest thy servant.

21 For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know *them*.

22 Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for *there is* none like thee, neither *is there any* God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

23 And what one nation in the earth *is* like thy people, *even* like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, *from* the nations and their gods?

24 For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel *to be* a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God.

25 And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish *it* for ever, and do as thou hast said.

26 And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts *is* the God over Israel; and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee.

27 For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.

28 And now, O LORD God, thou *art* that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant:

29 Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O LORD God, hast spoken *it*: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.

I admire the conduct of David upon this occasion. He doth not answer the prophet. He sends not back his grateful thanks by the hand, or mouth, of Nathan. His business was with the Lord himself. It would have been robbing God of his honour, and David's own soul of his joy, to have conveyed what he had to say by him, or by any man. Reader! you and I have a man, the man Christ Jesus, our precious Mediator, by whom we may offer up the sacrifice of praise to God continually. Heb. xiii. 15. But then this man is God also; *one with the Father, over all God blessed for ever*. In whom, through whom, and with whom, all prayers and praises are presented and centre. But in the days of David this glorious High Priest was not so fully known, nor so clearly revealed. Observe David's words and manner in this delightful prayer. It seems as if his whole heart was turned upward, and going forth in all the affections of gratitude, love, and praise. Every part and portion in this conduct of David is interesting. He went in, it is said, before the Lord; perhaps, in before the ark. He sat down before the Lord. Like the Church, when sitting under the shadow of the tree. See Song ii. 2. The posture of solemn meditation. His whole soul occupied in the thought, in whose presence he then was. After due deliberation, not rushing at once, as the unthinking horse

rusheth into the battie. David opens his mouth in prayer. How humble and lowly his beginning. What can he say? what ought he to say, by way of expressing the humblest views of himself, the highest thoughts of God? He then begins to advert to the Lord's favours; but, as if it were impossible to enumerate them, he breaks out into the admiration, that the Lord had not done with blessing him, but hath spoken of a great while to come. Swallowed up in the contemplation, he leaves the subject of the gifts to admire and adore the giver; and after praising God's glory, and expressing his veneration for the Lord God of Israel, he concludes with expressing his entire confidence in God's covenant promises, and in the assurance that the Lord will do as he hath said. Whether David saw as much as you and I do, Reader, in the prospect of the Lord Jesus, and his spiritual and eternal kingdom, I cannot take upon me to say. But to us, who are enabled to read those promises of God to his Old Testament saints, now explained in the New Testament dispensation; nothing can more fully manifest the faithfulness of Jehovah in these gracious promises; nor any thing more highly calculated to confirm our faith in God's mercy through Christ, in whom *all the promises are yea and Amen.* 2 Cor. i. 20.

REFLECTIONS.

I WOULD pause over the perusal of this chapter to admire the blessed properties of grace, in disposing the heart of David to such a frame of thankfulness, and grateful affection to God. It is sweet to see the mind brought into this suitable frame, to discern from what source all our mercies flow, to give the author of them all the glory, that while we receive all the benefit, God may have all the praise.

But I would pause yet more, to admire the blessed tokens of distinguishing grace, and above all, the Great Author of that grace, whose infinite benignity and condescension shines yet more and more bright (like the heavenly bodies in the darker nights) from being manifested, notwithstanding all the unworthiness of the objects of his clemency. Yes! Great Source and Fountain of all the sure mercies of David! it is from the covenant love, and faithfulness, and grace, given us in Christ Jesus, thy ever dear, and ever blessed Son before the world began, that this kingdom promised to David and his seed, is made sure, permanent, and eternal. Even thee, thou blessed Jesus, in thy glorious mediatorial fullness, and finished salvation, art the gift of God our Father. And no less, the Holy Ghost, with all his saving gifts and graces, and influences, cometh forth to thy people as the Sent, both of the Father and the Son. Lord God! make this sure house thou didst promise to David and his seed, sure to my soul. And amidst all the unworthiness of my heart, let thy promise, like thyself, be my constant comfort and support. Though thou hast said, if the children of the Lord Jesus commit iniquity, and break thy statutes; though they break thy laws; yet thou wilt not break thy promised mercy. Though thou visit our sins with the stripes of men; yet thy covenant wilt thou not break, nor alter the thing which is gone out of thy lips. *Thou hast once sworn by thy holiness thou wilt not lie unto David.* Oh! precious promise of a more precious promising God in Christ! *Be it unto me according to thy word!*

CHAP. VIII.

CONTENTS

We have a very different view of David in this chapter, from the view we had of him in the former. There we looked at him in his communion with God; and here, in his conflicts with men. Here are his conquests over the Philistines, the Moabites, Zobah, the Syrians, and the Edomites. Here is also, the account of the rich gifts made to David: his courts of justice, and his officers. So that altogether we see David here in a state of prosperity.

AND after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines.

It should seem, that this victory of David's was fought by him. He did not, as in former battles, defend himself against the Philistines, but he went in quest of conquest. Thus, in spiritual warfares, when the Lord hath given us rest, as David had, from the enemies around, the same Lord gives us strength to wage war with the remaining *Canaanites* that are in the land. Let the reader remember God's promise to Israel, that he would by little and little drive out all their enemies before them; and here he will see the fulfilling of that blessed promise. Dent. vii. 22. *Metheg-ammah*, was probably so called, from having been a frontier garrison to the Philistines, and an awe upon Israel in the times of their humblings. The word *Metheg*, signifies a curb or bridle. Some have thought that this *Metheg-ammah* was *Gath*. Here it was, most probably, that Jonathan smote the garrison. See 1 Sam. xiii. 3.

2 And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts.

This conquest over Moab, seems to have been the fulfilment of Balaam's prophecy. See Numb. xxiv. 17.

3 ¶ David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates.

4 And David took from him a thousand *chariots*, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot *horses*, but reserved of them *for* an hundred chariots.

Here is another fulfilment, if not of prophecy, yet at least of promise. The extent of these kingdoms reached towards Euphrates, and the Lord's promise to Abraham and his seed, was to extend from the river Egypt to Euphrates. See Gen. xv. 18. David appears to have composed a song of praise on this occasion, as appears by the title of the 60th Psalm. It is one of David's *nichtams*; that is, his golden Psalms. *Aram-naharaim*, signifies the city of rivers, perhaps so called, from its being well supplied with rivers. Damascus was the metropolis of Syria. Hence the haughty Syrian disdained the sacred river Jordan, while extolling *Abana* and *Pharpar* beyond it. See 2 Kings v. 12. The destruction of the chariot horses, seems to have been done in conformity to that law of God, which forbad the Israelites from increasing their cavalry, lest they should thereby be tempted to put their trust in horses and chariots. See Deut. xvii. 16. Psalm xx. 7.

5 And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men.

6 Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

7 And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem.

8 And from Betah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass.

The victories of David in those instances, and the treasures of gold and brass, pleasing as they are in the account, are abundantly heightened in that principal circumstance here spoken of, that the Lord Jehovah preserved David *whithersoever he went*. Reader! what a sweet thought is it, to be always under the eye, upheld by the arm, directed by the hand, and beloved in the heart of our blessed and all powerful Jesus! And yet it is no more than what is really the case. *Such honor have all his saints*. For, if I am God's property, I shall be God's care. Surely if Jesus hath purchased me with his blood, it must imply, that from so dear a price, the object of his purchase must be dear to him also; and he will preserve it whithersoever it goeth.

9 When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer,

10 Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. And Joram

brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass :

11 Which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued ;

12 Of Syria, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

Here is another sweet and interesting relation of David's zeal for the Lord, in his dedicating the spoils of his enemies to the service of his best of friends. It was the Lord that made David victorious; and therefore, David thankfully consecrates the whole of his gain to the Lord's service. And if I do not mistake, in all this he was a type of the Lord Jesus, of whom it is said, in allusion to the gospel church, that *the multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah: that gold and incense shall be brought; for brass, gold; and for iron, silver; and for wood, brass; and for stones, iron:* meaning, no doubt, that such revenues of praise should pour in upon the church of the Lord Jesus, that *in every place incense should be offered unto his name, and a pure offering.* See Isaiah lx. 5, 6, 16, 17. Malachi i. 11.

13 And David gat *him* a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, *being* eighteen thousand *men*.

The high reputation of David is again noticed in this battle with the Syrians, in the valley of Salt. And whoever reads with attention, David's holy triumph upon the occasion, which he wrote upon it, will be enabled to form suitable ideas of the well-founded reason. *Who will lead me (says he) into the strong city? Who will bring me into Edom? David in this song asks the question, and answers it himself. God will. It is thou which goeth forth with our armies. And hence, in the confidence of this, David considers himself, even before the battle, as already in possession of the territories of the enemy. God hath spoken in his holiness; (saith he) I will rejoice: I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of my head; Judah is my lawgiver. Moab is my wash pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me.* See Psalm lx. 6—8. How beautiful it is to behold the triumphs of faith realizing the promises, and absolutely entering upon the enjoyment of blessings by anticipation before they come. Reader! may not all true believers in Christ do the same? If we heartily believe the record that God hath given of his Son, may we not exultingly cry out; Jesus is mine; God the Father is mine; the Holy Ghost is mine; all blessings in providence and grace, in heaven and earth are mine; for I am Christ's, and Christ is God's. † Cor. iii. 22, 23.

14 And he put garrisons in Edom ; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

May we not spiritualize this passage, and truly say, in allusion to the holy war, when the Lord hath subdued the corruptions of our nature by the conquests of his grace, doth not the Holy Spirit garrison our souls with his divine presence, and convert the very weapons, our time and talents, which in a state of nature, we brought forward as the artillery against heaven ; doth not the Lord convert these very things to his own glory and service ?

15 ¶ And David reigned over all Israel ; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people.

How delightful to see, and again to have it marked to our notice, to whom David owed all his blessings. And his reign so prosperous, so ordered, so conducted ! Surely the Lord was with him. But, Reader, again behold in it, the peaceable kingdom of Jesus strikingly represented ; and all David's victories types of the triumphs of David's Lord in the conquests of his cross. It is Jesus who *spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.* Coloss. ii. 15. Yes ! dearest Lord, we now sing the glories of thy reign of grace ; and by and by we shall sing that song of thy reign of glory in heaven. *Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.* Rev. xii. 10.

16 ¶ And Joab the son of Zeruiah *was* over the host ; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud *was* recorder ;

17 And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, *were* the priests ; and Seraiah *was* the scribe ;

18 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites ; and David's sons were chief rulers.

The officers and servants in David's court, are here made honourable mention of. But oh ! how infinitely more honourable are the followers in the court of Jesus, *whose names are written in the book of life.* There, Lord, be it my portion to be found, when *thou comest to make up thy jewels.* Phil. iv. 3. Rev. xx. 15. Malachi iii. 17.

REFLECTIONS.

WHILE I behold the victories of David, upheld by the arm of Omnipotence, and the Lord his God preserving him whithersoever he went, oh ! for grace to look unto the same covenant God in Christ, that I

may go forth against all the spiritual enemies of my salvation, conquering and to conquer; upheld by his Almighty arm, and kept by his gracious power from all danger, through the faith which is in Christ Jesus. And, Lord! do thou endue my soul with the same spirit as thy servant David, to consecrate all gifts, and all attainments to thee, the bountiful Source and Giver of all; that both gain and substance may be cheerfully offered unto thee, *the Lord of the whole earth.*

But chiefly, while I read those victories of David, oh! let my soul pass over the review of David king of Israel, and behold Jesus the King of heaven and earth, going forth thus against all the powers of darkness, the confederacies of earth and hell, in the salvation of his people. Yes! dearest Jesus, I do behold thee as the Great Captain of salvation, boldly waging war with sin, with Satan, and the host of foes in our corrupt and carnal hearts. But thy weapons are all spiritual; and thy victories all eternal. *Thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; yea, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them.* And now, Lord, having slain thine enemies thyself; it is thou which leadest on thy people to the same victory over them, by the sovereignty of thy power. Do thou, blessed Jesus, lead me on, and bring me through, and make me more than conqueror; and in all my spiritual warfare, let me set thee, *the Lord, continually before me, for if thou art on my right hand, I shall not be moved.*

CHAP. IX.

CONTENTS.

This chapter continues the history of David, and is directed to that part of his character which represents the amiableness of his mind, in his kindness towards the house of Saul. Finding, on enquiry, that Jonathan had left a son behind him, David searcheth him out, makes suitable provision for him, and sets him at his own table.

AND David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?

It should seem by the expression, *Is there yet any left of the house of Saul?* that he had before this been shewing kindness to his family. Indeed, it would otherwise imply inattention in David, instead of kindness; for many years must have now passed since his accession to the throne. No doubt, he was not established in the kingdom for many years after the death of Saul, in consequence of Ish-bosheth's pretensions to the kingdom: but, after all Israel anointed David king at Jerusalem, and he had gone forth in the destruction of Israel's enemies, as related in the preceding chapter, David seems to have paid an early attention to the wants of Saul's house.

2 And *there was* of the house of Saul a servant whose name *was* Ziba. And when they had called

him unto David, the king said unto him, *Art thou Ziba?* and he said, Thy servant *is he*.

3 And the king said, *Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him?* and Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, *which is lame on his feet*.

4 And the king said unto him, *Where is he?* And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he *is* in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar.

5 Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar.

6 Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!

7 ¶ And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.

This is an interesting account of David's friendship to Jonathan, in the remembrance of his son. There is great kindness, great generosity, and the noblest way in the conferring it. Not content with taking him into favour, giving him a princely allowance, equipage and servants, he brings him to his table. But, Reader, doth not your heart run away in the contemplation of an infinitely higher prospect of generosity, in which you yourself bear a part? Yes, I am sure you do, if so be you know any thing of Jesus, and are yourself the well-known object of his kindness and favour. Need I remind you to look back to the ruined circumstances of your family, in order to bring to your recollection what David's Lord hath done for you. Did not Jesus first seek you out? Did he not himself fetch you out of the house of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, poverty and ruin? and hath he not shewn the utmost kindness in redemption; brought you to his table, to his banquetting house, and placed his banner over you, of love? Doth he not, even now, again and again, say to you, *Fear not, for I will surely shew you kindness*; or, to use his own most precious words; *Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine*. Isaiah xliii. 1. Precious! precious! Jesus! never let me read the kindness of one poor sinner to another, without calling to my remembrance, the love of the

Saviour to my own soul; for surely all generosity, all mercy and compassion, falls to the ground as nothing, compared to thine unequalled love to our poor nature!

8 And he bowed himself, and said, What *is* thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I *am*?

This conduct of Mephibosheth bespeaks a very humble soul. David had expressed much the same language when he began to be first noticed by Saul. See 1 Sam. xviii. 18. But it is still more beautiful and becoming when expressed as the language of grace, from a poor sinner brought into favour with the Lord Jesus.

9 Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house.

10 Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in *the fruits*, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

11 Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, *said the king*, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.

12 And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name *was* Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba *were* servants unto Mephibosheth.

13 So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.

If we spiritualize those words of David to Ziba, in reference to the poor exiled sinner brought home, and fed, and sustained, and nourished by the Lord Jesus, the language is sweet; but not more sweet than true. See! saith the Lord Jesus, I have supplied all thy need; washed thee from thy sins, clothed thee with my robe of righteousness; all that pertained to thy first father, Adam, in a state of innocency, I have restored to thee; thou shalt have food enough to eat; and above all, thou shalt eat at my table. Blessed Jesus! give us grace to believe in thee, and to depend upon thee; for surely the kindness of David to Mephibosheth is but a faint resemblance of thy love to us, who not only didst love us to

give us of thy bounty, but so loved us as to give thyself for us, *an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet swelling savor!* Ephes. v. 2.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! In the view here presented of David's generosity to the family of Saul, do not fail to remark the sweet and sure properties of grace. Depend upon it, *if a man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.* And how shall you and I testify that the Spirit of Christ dwelleth in us, but by a conformity to the actions of the Son of God? If David, therefore, sought out the ruined family of Saul, and took them into favour, shall not you and I seek out the scattered sheep of Jesus, and bring them home to his fold? Can I behold one of those precious souls for whom Christ died, in circumstances of distress, and feel nothing like what actuated the Son of God, in commiserating and relieving the sorrows of our common nature? Surely, I behold in every one of them thine image, blessed Jesus; and methinks I hear thee say, *Inasmuch as ye have shewn kindness to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have shewn it unto me.* But oh! thou David's Lord, from whom David received the very grace which prompted him, and enabled him, to shew grace unto others; do thou regard me as the Mephibosheth of the fallen house of our first father. I am, by nature, lame in both my feet, a cripple from my mother's womb: I bow myself before thee, overpowered with astonishment that thou shouldest look upon such an unworthy creature as I am. And wilt thou indeed, dearest Jesus, take me home to thy table? Wilt thou cause me to eat bread in thy presence? Oh! for grace to live *upon* thee, as well as *with* thee; to entrust in thine hands, with full assurance of faith, all the concerns of my salvation. And, while I eat at thy table below, to live in the glorious expectation and confidence of the arrival of that blessed day of God, when thou wilt come and take me home to thy table above to be eternally supplied at those *fountains of living waters, where God hath wiped away all tears from all eyes.*

CHAP. X.

CONTENTS.

In following David's history, we are here again presented with the relation of war. David sent a friendly message to the king of the Ammonites; but he receiving it unfriendly, and treating the ambassadors of David ill, David enters upon a war with him, and entirely defeats the king of Ammon, and the Syrians, whom he had called to succour him.

AND it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead.

2 Then said David, I will shew kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father shewed

kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon.

What kindness David had received from *Nahash*, is not easy to say, for he had been a bitter enemy to Israel, as we read 1 Sam. xi. 1—4; but perhaps it might be upon some occasion when David was fleeing from place to place to avoid Saul. His motive, however, was good, in sending his servants to comfort his son. But what motive, excepting pure grace and mercy, prompted the infinite mind of our God to send his servants as ambassadors to us? We have shewn no kindness, but rebellion all our days. And yet the Lord hath sent, and is continually sending the ministers of his gospel, praying us in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. Wonderous mercy! 2 Cor. v. 20.

3 And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David *rather* sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?

4 Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, *even* to their buttocks, and sent them away.

Alas! do we not see, in this vile reception of the servants of David, a representation of the faithful servants of the Son of David, in the preaching of his word in all ages? What Paul said of himself and his companions, may, more or less, be said of all that preach the pure gospel of Jesus; *we are made a spectacle unto the world; being defamed, and as the filth and the offscouring of all things.* 1 Cor. iv. 9, 13.

5 When they told *it* unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and *then* return.

And how doth Jesus graciously deal by his despised servants, but in the same tender way? Tarry till I come. *Be patient, brethren,* (says an apostle) *unto the coming of the Lord.* See James v. 6—8. Luke xxi. 19.

6 ¶ And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth-rehob, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and

of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ish-tob twelve thousand men.

Spiritualizing still the subject, we may in this verse behold the folly, as well as sin, of men, in setting up resistance against the Lord. *Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?* Job. ix. 4.

7 And when David heard of *it*, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men.

8 And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate: and the Syrians of Zoba, and of Rehob, and Ish-tob, and Maacah, *were* by themselves in the field.

9 When Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice *men* of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians:

10 And the rest of the people he delivered into the hand of Abishai his brother, that he might put *them* in array against the children of Ammon.

11 And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee.

12 Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good.

13 And Joab drew nigh, and the people that *were* with him, unto the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him.

14 And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city. So Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem.

In like manner, the servants of our Almighty David, when sent forth by him, and his divine presence accompanying them, are sure of victory. It is a precious thought, and never to be forgotten by the christian warrior, the issue of his warfare is not doubtful, but sure. What Jesus hath purchased by his blood, and God our Father hath engaged for in his covenant, can never subject the event of redemption in his people to uncertainty. Tried, Christ's soldiers may be, and tried they will be:

but they *must* finally overcome. Jesus hath made the conquest; and they overcome not in themselves, but in *the blood of the Lamb*. Rev. xii. 11.

15 ¶ And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel, they gathered themselves together.

16 And Hadarezer sent, and brought out the Syrians that *were* beyond the river: and they came to Helam; and Shoback the captain of the host of Hadarezer *went* before them.

17 And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and passed over Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him.

18 And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew *the men of* seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shoback the captain of their host, who died there.

19 And when all the kings *that were* servants to Hadarezer saw that they were smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

Here is a second battle, and the issue of it the same. Yes! The nations of the earth may join and wage war against the Lord, and against his Anointed; but they must all submit, and bow down to the cross. Here was that remarkable promise to Abraham now fulfilled: Gen. xv. 18, &c. And as this was all typical of the complete salvation by the Lord Jesus, we look forward with the most firm, unshaken assurance, that the hour will come, when *the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever*. Rev. xi. 15. Amen. Even so, Lord Jesus.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! What a correspondence do we find, in all ages, in the circumstances of the people of God. The Lord said at the fall, that he would put enmity between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent; and how evidently do the effects of it appear. In civil, as well as in religious life, what false constructions are frequently put upon the best intentioned actions. And what unjust, and base foundations do men of the world sometimes make, like the children of Ammon against David, to cover over their hatred to the people of God.

But principally, against thy gospel, blessed Jesus! how do the minds of all the carnal unite to treat thy gracious offers with contempt, and to abuse thy precious salvation. Is it because thy offers are of no value; or because men need them not? Alas! What but the most consummate blindness, can suggest the one; or the most horrid deception of the mind, could give rise to the other. But oh! thou blessed Redeemer, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, do thou graciously hold forth the sceptre of mercy to my soul! Break down all the strong holds of Satan; give me to see, to feel, to embrace, to rejoice in the fulness, preciousness, and everlasting value of thy rich, free, and finished redemption. And in all the gracious offers thou art making, of peace and friendship (as David did to the king of Ammon) to the souls of poor, ruined, and undone sinners; oh! Lord, accompany thine offers with thy saving power, and make them willing to be saved in thine own way and purpose. This, Lord, I know will be the case of all whom the Father hath given unto thee, and whose salvation thou hast purchased with thy blood and righteousness; but, blessed Jesus! cut short this work in righteousness: *Make haste, my Beloved, and be thou as the roe, or the young hart upon the mountains of Bether.*

CHAP. XI.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter, which is still the prosecution of David's history, exhibits him in so painful a light, that for the honour of human nature, to say nothing of the honour of a child of God, we feel distress to add such a page to David's history. But the Holy Ghost, for the edification and comfort of the church, hath caused it to be written; and we dare not, we wish not indeed, to extenuate, or to soften, a tittle of the whole transaction. Here is shewn us David committing adultery and murder; endeavouring to pass off the fruit of his baseful commerce with another man's wife upon the unsuspecting husband; involving his army in the participation of his guilt, and after all, feeling no remorse nor compunction of heart for his crimes.

AND it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

The chapter opens well. The Lord had said, that an Ammonite or Moabite should not enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to his tenth generation. Deut. xxiii. 3. And therefore in the prosecution of the war, David was following up God's will and precept. Deut. vii. 16.

2 ¶ And it came to pass in an evening-tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the

roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman *was* very beautiful to look upon.

3 And David sent and enquired after the woman. And *one* said, *Is* not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

4 And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

5 And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, *I am* with child.

This sin of David had every thing in it that was aggravating. He had wives in abundance, for so in those days, the law, though not commanding, yet winked at it, or allowed it. He was getting in years at this time, not being less, at least, than fifty: The woman he lusted after, was not only the wife of another man, but of one of his faithful servants; and at the very hour when he was injuring him in the tenderest point, this servant was jeoparding his life for David in the high places of the field. He was, moreover, base, in the highest degree, to the woman whose chastity he violated; for certainly the rank and power of David became the great motive with her in prevailing over her honour. And, lastly, to mention no more, as a king, whose office it was to set a good example; as a servant of the Lord; as one who had himself felt, in the case of his own wife, *Michal*, Saul's daughter, the very painful condition of a conduct so detestable in others; all these, and several more considerations, tended to give the most finished aggravation of David's transgression. Well may we exclaim with Job, *Lord! what is man, that thou shouldst magnify him, and that thou shouldst set thine heart upon him?* Job vii. 17.

6 ¶ And David sent to Joab, *saying*, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.

7 And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded *of him* how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered.

8 And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess *of meat* from the king.

Observe the progress of iniquity. This calling home Uriah was to hide David's infamy, as well as Bath-sheba's; contriving that Uriah's sleeping at home should conceal his crime by leading every one to believe that Uriah was the father of the child. And observe,

with what a plausible pretence, under colour of a regard for the success of his arms, David called the poor husband to answer this object. And to accomplish it yet more, as well as to shew the high regard he had for Uriah, he sent after him a feast for his refreshment.

9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.

Whether Uriah had any apprehensions about him, concerning his wife's fidelity; or whether, as a soldier, he did not choose to separate from the rest of the king's guards; or whether the Lord overruled this business, so that David's guilt might be more palpable and glaring, I take not upon me to say. But so it was, that Uriah did not go home to his house that night.

10 And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from *thy* journey? why *then* didst thou not go down unto thine house?

11 And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? *as* thou livest, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.

12 And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to-day also, and to-morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow.

13 And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

By the servants telling David of Uriah's not going to his house, it seems they were in the plot; and, no doubt, some one, at least, must have been privy to David's vileness with Bath-sheba. But David, still going on in a progression of evil, now reasons with Uriah on the subject. And, had not sin exceedingly, for the time, hardened his heart, the speech of Uriah was enough to have stung him to the soul. Still, however, bent on this dreadful business, David contrives a more effectual method, as he thought. For this purpose he brings him to his table, makes him drunk, that he might be the more unconscious what he did, hoping that

this would effectually answer the design. But here again, no doubt the Lord's hand overruling, Uriah went not down to his house.

14 And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah.

15 And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.

Baffled in both attempts, David now proceeds to an act, at the very mention of which, nature shudders. To conceal his shame for adultery, he ventures on murder. And, that the world might know nothing of his sin with Bath-sheba, nor Uriah ever reproach him for it, he determines to have his brave and faithful servant murdered in the battle. Alas! alas! how desperately wicked is the heart of man by nature. Reader, do not fail to remember, that all men by nature are the same. Grace alone maketh us to differ. And even grace, though it renews the soul, renews not the body. Unless, indeed, it restrains the workings of corruption, what one man commits, another is as liable to perpetrate. Oh! Lord! help both him that writes, and him that reads, ever to keep in view that striking question; *Who maketh thee to differ from another?*

16 ¶ And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men *were*.

What the thoughts of Joab were upon this occasion, is not said. But it is melancholy to observe how readily he fell in with David's command. Thus David added another sin to his vast catalogue, and brought Joab, the general of his army, into an accomplice with him.

17 And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell *some* of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

Here is another dreadful aggravation beside the death of Uriah; for it seems that some of David's soldiers fell also. See, David, what a train of bloody business this adulterous act of thine hath induced.

18 Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war;

19 And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king,

20 And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall?

21 Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

It should seem, from the apprehension Joab expressed of the king's displeasure, that he had no knowledge of David's adultery, and the motive for which he had wished the death of Uriah. From the king's letter, indeed, he saw that Uriah's death would be pleasing to him, and that the intelligence of this would soften his displeasure at the success of the Ammonites. The story of Abimelech, which Joab thought the king would consider a similar case to this of the death of Uriah, is related in the book of the Judges. chap. ix. 50—55.

22 So the messenger went, and came and shewed David all that Joab had sent him for.

23 And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate.

24 And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and *some* of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

25 Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him.

Observe, how hardened the heart of David still remained. He hears of the death of Uriah, of the death of several of his brave servants, wholly on this account, for this dreadful sin of his. He hears of the triumph of the Ammonites in consequence thereof; and yet, in the midst of all, only sends a message to Joab, as if it was an ordinary event, and bids him be encouraged. What an awful state was he now in! Still hardened, unfeeling, and without the least remorse!

26 ¶ And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.

What are we to think of this woman! The Holy Ghost hath not remarked any where on her conduct. Was she so artfully seduced by David at the first, that she fell into his snares unconsciously? She sent

unto him indeed, when the effects of their unlawful commerce began to manifest itself to her feelings; as much as to say, she looked to him for protection. For by the law she was liable to be stoned, Levit. xx. 10. But when Uriah came from Joab to the king we hear nothing of her sorrow, or of throwing herself at her husband's feet for pardon.

27 And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

The speedy marriage, and the birth of the child, probably made the matter notorious in the eyes of the people. But the chapter closes with what might well be expected, and alarming enough indeed in the relation, *The thing displeased the Lord.* Oh! what a matter for the most accumulated distress of soul, hath David been heaping up to himself from the dreadful events related in this chapter!

REFLECTIONS.

Reader! let you and I make a most serious pause over the perusal of this chapter, and endeavour to gather the improvements from it which God the Holy Ghost plainly intended the church should gather from the awful subject.

See! that the blessed Spirit hath suffered nothing to be kept back in the relation. Every thing that can possibly tend to give it the most finished representation of infamy and sin is marked in it. And after the enumeration of adultery, with the art and baseness to conceal it; even leading to drunkenness, and to murder; not barely of one, but of many; we discover (and what is in the representation as awful a view as any) the most consummate boldness in sin, rioting in the fruits of it, in the marriage with the accomplice of his former shame, and a total insensibility and hardness of conscience, as if he had committed no evil at all.

And what may we suppose to be the intention of the Holy Ghost in thus unfolding to the church's view the shame of David? Is it not, Reader, to teach every child of God those most useful, however humbling, lessons; that the best of men are but men, and as liable to fall into the worst of sins as the unrenewed and unawakened. Corrupt nature; in the mass of flesh and blood, is the same in all. That the Lord's people are regenerated only in their better part, their spiritual faculties. The body still continues earthly, sensual, and tending to earth and sensuality. If therefore the affections of the body in the people of God do not break out, and shew themselves as vilely as in the unregenerate; this is not from any greater purity in their earthly parts than others, but from the restraining grace of God. This is one precious design which we may venture to believe God the Holy Ghost had in view, in causing this fall of David to be so particularly and fully recorded.

And there is another we may as confidently suppose intended by it, and that is, to teach the infinite importance of being always kept by sovereign grace. David himself was so conscious of it that he cries out in a fervour of the greatest earnestness, *Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.* Depend upon

it, my Brother, the withdrawment of God's Spirit from a child of God, though but for a short space, is the saddest evil in our pilgrimage state. God hath other ways in the stores of his omnipotency, of punishing the sins of his children, than casting them into hell. It is only, as no doubt it was in this instance of David, (in his first giving way to the lust of his corrupt nature, in looking wantonly on Bath-sheba) it is only for the Lord to suspend the operations of his Holy Spirit, and the enemy, who waits for our halting, joining with our own hearts, and the world around, soon makes us to fall. And, if the Lord be withdrawn, the heart, like a cage of unclean birds, is open to the admission of every evil. And who knows what a succession of sins, like those of David, treading one upon the heels of another, may follow during the Lord's suspension of the operations of his grace? How doth the heart, as in his instance, become more and more hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Oh! let us, like him, daily, hourly, minutely, if possible, pray, *Lord! take not thine Holy Spirit from us!*

And, is there not a *third* sweet lesson, believers in Christ have, to draw from this view of David? Yes! blessed Spirit! I venture to assure myself that in thine own most lovely and gracious office, in glorifying the Lord Jesus, thou didst, above every other consideration, design to teach the church, in the fall of David, the infinitely precious doctrine of redemption by Christ Jesus; and that there is *salvation in no other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.* Oh! dearest Lord, let this view of David serve to impress on my soul this grand truth, in yet stronger and stronger characters. Give me to see, to feel, to be convinced, that if a man after God's own heart, (of whom it is said by the word of truth itself, that *save only in this matter of Uriah he turned not aside from any thing that the Lord commanded him all the days of his life.* See 1 Kings xv. 5), if such a man needed redemption, oh! how infinitely endeared to every poor sinner's view ought to be the person, offices, relations, and characters of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes! thou dear Redeemer! with my latest breath, and earliest song, would I chant those sweet words, as the sum and substance of all my trust; *We have redemption through thy blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of thy grace.*

CHAP. XII.

CONTENTS.

This chapter is a continuation of the same subject as the former; and relates the method the Lord was pleased to adopt for the recovery of David after his fall. Nathan the prophet is sent from the Lord to David; opens his commission with a parable. David's behaviour upon this occasion. The Lord's mercy; and his judgment in the death of the child which Bath-sheba bore to David. A relation in the close of the chapter of the war, and the event of it.

AND the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

2 The rich *man* had exceeding many flocks and herds:

3 But the poor *man* had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

I beg the Reader to remark, that a period, of, at least, nine months (how much longer I will not determine) must have elapsed from the commission of David's adultery to this message of Nathan to David; because the child was born. During which time, it doth not appear that David had once expressed sorrow for his aggravated sins. Indeed, as the Holy Ghost is wholly silent upon the subject, it should seem that all communion with the Lord must have been remitted. Reader! do not forget to remark this, and to reflect on the very awful state to which a soul may be reduced by hardening the heart in sin! And do let me beg of you further to remark, how utterly incapable a man is to recover himself, if the Lord doth not recover him. Grace must first enter the heart before a sense of sin can take place in the mind. The Lord sent Nathan *unto* David; not David *sent* to call Nathan, or make supplication to the Lord. *Thou restorest my soul*, (saith David upon another occasion) Psm. xxiii. 3. Without this awakening by grace, neither David, nor any other sinner, could ever awaken himself. If the Reader be not sensible of this, may it please the Lord to make him! The method Nathan took to awaken David to a sense of his sin, and to make him his own judge, was by means of a parable, most happily chosen, according to the general usage of instruction in the eastern world. It is probable that Nathan, as a prophet and teacher in the Lord's service, frequently adopted such a plan, therefore it lulled all suspicion in the breast of the king of any more than an ordinary subject. The parable itself is so plain in its allusion to the case of David in his late atrocity, that I do not think it needful to comment upon it in the explanation. Uriah's one wife compared to David with his many wives, was but like the poor man with his ewe lamb to the many herds of his rich neighbour. So that to let his corrupt passions lead him to this act of oppression and cruelty was beautifully marked out in the case, as Nathan represented it.

5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, *As the Lord*

liveth, the man that hath done this *thing* shall surely die:

6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

David in this spoke the honest feelings of an unbiassed mind. He knew the provision the law of God had made upon such occasions, and he gave sentence upon himself accordingly in condemning the supposed rich man! See Exodus xxii. 1.

7 ¶ And Nathan said to David, Thou *art* the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

11 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give *them* unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

12 For thou didst *it* secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

Here Nathan takes upon him, as a faithful servant of the Lord, the full authority belonging to him. And no doubt, but that he who sent the prophet; commissioned his word with power to David's heart, that he felt the force of the prophet's message too sensibly to attempt the smallest justification of himself. How affecting must have been to the

heart of David the prophet's recapitulation of the divine mercies! And how awful the message of the divine sentence!

13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

Reader! observe how quick and immediate are the Lord's pardons upon the sinner's confession. One short verse contains both, *Oh! taste and see how gracious the Lord is.*

14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *that is* born unto thee shall surely die.

Reader! think what a powerful argument that is, or ought to be, to restrain sin, when we consider how much the offences of the Lord's people give occasion to the adversaries of his cause to blaspheme. Surely! every child of God would rather die than bring reproach, by any evil conduct, upon the Lord's inheritance.

15 And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

The Reader should observe how the conference broke off abruptly. Nathan had executed his commission; and now left the monarch to his own reflections, bitter indeed as they must have been. He stayed not to soften what he had said; nor to soothe David under his trouble. Probably, as a good man, he retired to his house to pray for David. Here let ministers learn, after that they have executed their commission, and dealt faithfully with sinners, to retire to seek a blessing on their ministry from him who alone can render their labours effectual. It is more than probable, that when Nathan went to his house, David retired to his chamber, and poured out his soul before the Lord in the devout and penitential expressions which we find penned in the 51st Psalm: the title of it saith as much; that it was *when Nathan the prophet came unto him after he had gone in unto Bath-sheba.* It would swell the commentary to a length inadmissible, to point out the numberless breathings of a soul truly awakened to a sense of sin and deprecating the divine displeasure, which that Psalm contains. I must therefore suppress what otherwise I should delight to enlarge upon. But there is one circumstance in it which is not perhaps so generally noticed as it ought; and yet it is the very one which, of all others, testifies in the loudest strains the genuine repentance of David for his foul transactions; namely, that as the title of the Psalm also expresses it, it was directed *To the chief Musician*; perhaps David sent it to the singers in the temple service, that it might be set to music, and constantly sung when David attended the worship of the Lord, as a standing memorial of his unfeigned humiliation and sorrow for his crimes; and that he was constantly looking up to God for the pardon of them. Now, Reader, as oft as you think of

David's scandalous fall, think also of his unequalled humility. Figure to yourself the king of Israel not only looking up to God in secret for pardon, but causing all the subjects in his kingdom to know what a sinner he had been, and calling upon the Lord in public to have mercy upon him. Surely! it affords the most complete view that any history ever afforded of real, true, and genuine repentance. See also Luke xxii. 61, 62.

16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.

17 And the elders of his house arose, *and went* to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.

Here is another evidence of the sincerity of David's mind. Humbleness of soul for sin makes the soul truly tender.

18 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?

The seventh day prevented the act of circumcision. No doubt David construed this also as a further token of God's displeasure.

19 But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead.

20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed *himself*, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.

21 Then said his servants unto him; What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, *while it was* alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.

22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether*

God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?

23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

We cannot sufficiently admire the strength of David's faith on this occasion. Here is submission with holy thankfulness, as if conscious of God's wisdom, as well as God's love.

24 ¶ And David comforted Bath-sheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him.

25 And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah because of the LORD.

When we recollect that from this issue, after the flesh, Christ came, how mysterious and unsearchable are the ways of God. It is a subject which challenges our attention, and at the same time our reverence, that in two or three instances the Lord was pleased to mark the descent of the Lord Jesus, as if to humble all human pride, and to throw down all the proud reasonings of men. *Rahab* the harlot; *Ruth* the Moabitish damsel; and *Bath-sheba* the unfaithful wife of Uriah, were in the chosen race from whom, after the flesh, sprung the Lord and Saviour of our nature. Surely! here, if any where, it may be said, the Lord's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts. See Matt. i. 5, 6. *Ruth* iv. 13, 17. *Solomon* means peaceful: *Jedidiah*, beloved of the Lord. And in this we discover the grounds of this name, being so striking a type in many instances of him who is the Jedidiah, the only-begotten and beloved Son of his Father, *full of grace and truth*.

26 ¶ And Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city.

27 ¶ And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters.

28 Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name.

29 And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it.

30 And he took their king's crown from off his

head, the weight whereof *was* a talent of gold with the precious stones: and it was *set* on David's head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance.

Though this relation is put in at the close of this chapter, it should seem that it must have taken place before Nathan's visit to David, and when his heart had not been melted down with true sorrow for his sin; for else the crown of the king of Ammon would have been a mere bauble in David's view after Nathan's visit.

31 And he brought forth the people that *were* therein, and put *them* under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brickkiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem.

The harsh method David here adopted to the Ammonites, serves to confirm the obervation made before. Spiritually considered, God's people should bring indeed the corruptions of their own desperately wicked hearts under saws of iron, and make them pass through the fires to consume them; for these are the *Ammonites* with which our souls are most severely exercised and assaulted. Toward these I would shew no mercy,

REFLECTIONS.

LORD! give me grace in the perusal of this chapter to gather all the precious instructions thine Holy Spirit mercifully intended, in the publishing such a record for thy church and people. Do thou, Holy Spirit, graciously accompany thy written word with the influences of thy divine power, that it may be profitable to my soul, *for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

And here, first, cause me to learn, from this view of thy servant David, what my nature is, even in its highest attainments. The best of men, if left to themselves, may fall into the worst of sins. So I behold it here, and let the view of it humble my soul to the dust before thee.

In the next place; Lord, teach me also, from what I here discover, that a child of God when fallen cannot arise of himself. The first advance towards a recovery must come from thee. The conviction of this most certain truth is enough to make a soul go humbly all his days.

And, blessed God, when thou hast wrought these truths in their own living characters in my heart, oh! lead me to see that from the nature of thy blessed covenant, in the blood and righteousness of thy dear Son, thou wilt not leave thy fallen children in their low state, but wilt recover them for thy name's sake, and for thy righteousness sake thou wilt heal them. Thou wilt send some Nathan, some heavenly messenger; nay, blessed Jesus, thou wilt come thyself, and by the sweet influences of thy Holy Spirit, in convincing of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, thou wilt heal their backslidings, and love them freely. And

though by afflictions thou mayest bring them down, yet for thine own sake thou wilt not cast them off. Unworthy, Lord, as we are in ourselves, yet in Jesus thou beholdest us with complacency. Though thou visit our offences with a rod, and our iniquities with stripes, yet thy loving-kindness wilt thou not take from him, nor suffer thy faithfulness to fail.

Here then, Lord, let my soul rest. And when I have gathered all these sweet and precious instructions from the relation the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to give of David's fall and recovery, in the instances before me; when I have beheld every thing connected with it in a way of improvement, as it refers to his case, and as it concerns my own; let the whole have this blessed effect on my poor, fallen, corrupt, and sinful nature; to endear yet more and more the Lord Jesus to my heart, and to form him there, the one only sure and certain hope of glory. Yes! thou dear Immanuel! thou art the Lord our righteousness! for other righteousness the whole race of fallen Adam can have none. *In thee do I trust; on thee do I lean; to thee do I come, and with thee I pray everlastingly to be found. Be thou made of God to me, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that (according as it is written) he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.*

CHAP. XIII.

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter is related the beginning of David's domestic troubles. Amnon his son ravisheth his own sister Tamar; and Absalom, another of his sons, murders his brother Amnon. David's extreme sorrow in consequence.

AND it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name *was* Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her.

It was among the punishments threatened David by the Prophet Nathan, for the adultery with Bath-sheba, and the murder of Uriah, that the Lord would raise up evil against him out of his own house; and the love, or rather lust of Amnon, after Tamar, opened a source for this purpose.

2 And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she *was* a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her.

Observe, how fleshly lusts war both against soul and body: and of all the lusts of our poor fallen nature, this of uncleanness wars the most. How it levels us with the brute that perisheth. Lord! I would say, in the very thought of it, remember thy sweet promise; in which thou hast said, *I will also save you from all your uncleannesses.* Ezek. xxxvi. 29.

3 But Amnon had a friend, whose name *was* Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother; and Jonadab *was* a very subtil man.

What an awful thing it is to have, in what the world calls a friend, the worst of all enemies. Here is a subtle, ill-designing man, acting as an agent for Satan, and covering it under the mask of friendship. Reader! there is a friend I would earnestly recommend to you whose very wounds are faithful, who loveth at all times, and sticketh closer than a brother. Who can this be but Jesus? Concerning other friends I recommend nothing, unless it be caution in the choice of them. But if you make Jesus your friend, he will insure your choice in all others. See Prov. xvii. 17. Prov. xxvii. 6.

4 And he said unto him, Why *art* thou, *being* the king's son, lean from day to day? wilt thou not tell me? And Amnon said unto him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.

5 And Jonadab said unto him, Lay thee down on thy bed, and make thyself sick: and when thy father cometh to see thee, say unto him, I pray thee, let my sister Tamar come, and give me meat, and dress the meat in my sight, that I may see *it*, and eat *it* at her hand.

6 So Amnon lay down, and made himself sick: and when the king was come to see him, Amnon said unto the king, I pray thee, let Tamar my sister come, and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat at her hand.

7 Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, Go now to thy brother Amnon's house, and dress him meat.

8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was laid down. And she took flour and kneaded *it*, and made cakes in his sight, and did bake the cakes.

9 And she took a pan, and poured *them* out before him; but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, Have out all men from me. And they went out every man from him.

10 And Amnon said unto Tamar, Bring the meat into the chamber, that I may eat of thine

hand. And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought *them* into the chamber to Amnon her brother.

11 And when she had brought *them* unto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come lie with me, my sister.

12 And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly.

13 And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee.

14 Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice; but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her.

I do not think it necessary to make any long comment upon what is here related. It forms but the same melancholy subject of the breaking out of our corrupt and fallen nature, only diversified according to the various passions of different men. Reader! it hath never been yet fully pondered, nor perhaps ever will this side the grave, what a deadly poison was infused into human nature by the bite of the serpent at the fall. And therefore, from the same cause, never till then will be thoroughly known the infinite remedy procured us by the Person and Offices of the Lord Jesus Christ. What an awful example is here of a deep laid, diabolical scheme, by a brother against the chastity of his own sister!

15 ¶ Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her *was* greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone.

Can the mind conceive any thing more detestable than this unnatural, cruel conduct? Reader! may we not pause over it and ask, is it possible for beings of such malignity to be found among mankind? Are there not here evidently traces of the infernal spirits? Are not those evil spirits which first tempt us to sin, the very first to accuse us before God? See Zech. iii. 1. Rev. xi. 10.

16 And she said unto him, *There is* no cause: this evil in sending me away *is* greater than the other that thou didst unto me. But he would not hearken unto her.

17 Then he called his servant that ministered unto him, and said, Put now this *woman* out from me, and bolt the door after her.

18 And *she had* a garment of divers colours upon her : for with such robes were the king's daughters *that were* virgins apparelled. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her.

19 And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colours that *was* on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying.

The renting of her garments was doubtless intending, not only as a token of grief, but of the injury she had sustained. It was an ancient custom in the loss of somewhat important, to rend the garment. Thus Samuel, on Saul's loss of the kingdom. 1 Sam. xv. 27, 28.

20 And Absalom her brother said unto her, Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? but hold now thy peace, my sister: he *is* thy brother; regard not this thing. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house.

It should seem from the sequel of the history that, from the first moment Absalom heard of his sister's defilement, he determined to be revenged.

21 But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth.

Why did not David's wrath prompt him to punish the sin in his son Amnon? We hear nothing of this, neither of his bringing his affliction before the Lord. No doubt he connected with the subject of his son's incest the recollection of his own adultery. How beautiful the subject would have been, if David had been introduced as lamenting it before the Lord.

22 And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad : for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.

23 ¶ And it came to pass after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baal-hazor, which *is* beside Ephraim : and Absalom invited all the king's sons.

24 And Absalom came to the king, and said,

Behold now, thy servant hath sheepshearers; let the king, I beseech thee, and his servants go with thy servant.

25 And the king said to Absalom, Nay, my son, let us not all now go, lest we be chargeable unto thee. And he pressed him: howbeit he would not go, but blessed him.

26 Then said Absalom, If not, I pray thee, let my brother Amnon go with us. And the king said unto him, Why should he go with thee?

27 But Absalom pressed him, that he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him.

28 Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant.

29 And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him up upon his mule and fled.

What a renewed example is here of the malignity of the human heart? Well might our dear Lord tell his disciples, that they knew not what manner of spirit they were of. Luke ix. 55.

30 And it came to pass, while they were in the way, that tidings came to David, saying, Absalom hath slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left.

31 Then the king arose, and tare his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent.

Reader! remark the Lord's hand in this distress of David. Thus, like the former, was *evil raised*, as the Lord had said, *out of his own house*.

32 And Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother, answered and said, Let not my lord suppose *that* they have slain all the young men the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead: for by the

appointment of Absalom this hath been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar.

33 Now therefore let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead: for Amnon only is dead.

Reader! remark the friendship of this Jonadab to Amnon. He knew, it seems, that Absalom had intended the death of Amnon for two full years together, and yet had never communicated the matter to his friend Amnon. Such is the world's friendship!

34 But Absalom fled. And the young man that kept the watch lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came much people by the way of the hill side behind him.

35 And Jonadab said unto the king, Behold, the king's sons come: as thy servant said, so it is.

36 And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of speaking, that, behold, the king's sons came, and lifted up their voice and wept: and the king also and all his servants wept very sore.

37 ¶ But Absalom fled, and went to Talmi, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day.

38 So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years.

39 And *the soul of* king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.

The sequel of this feast was mourning and sorrow. How innumerable have been the instances of such revellings in all ages! How quick sometimes the transition from the house of feasting to the house of woe. *Talmi*, king of Geshur, was a relation by the mother's side to Absalom. His mother Maacah was the daughter of Talmi. See chap. iii. 3. And by his abode with the king of Geshur for no less a space than three years, he wore out in his father's mind the grief for the loss of Amnon; and his father's natural affection for him revived.

REFLECTIONS.

THINK, Reader, in the perusal of the history of Amnon's gratified lust, how wretched the man that is given up for a prey to his own corrupt passions! Think also, in the sudden departure of his soul into eternity, in the moment of sin and drunkenness, what an awful termination to a life of iniquity; and how horrible his state, closing his eyes in sin, and opening them again in everlasting misery.

Behold, Reader! in the history here presented to thy view of David's family affliction, how sure the words of the Lord are in their accomplishment. The Lord had told him, that he would raise evil out of his own house, and here we see it. It hath been but a short time since David rioted in adultery and murder; and already we find he had gathered the bitter fruits of the sinful tree he planted. Incest and murder already stain his walls, and these, as the sequel of his history shews, were but the beginning of sorrows.

Precious Jesus! what a relief doth the remembrance of thee, and of thy sweet compassion to our nature, afford in the recollection of the sorrows of it! What but the tidings of great joy, which thy rich, and free, and full deliverance from all the sorrows of our nature brought from heaven, could tend to bind up the broken heart under its manifold afflictions! But when my soul turns to the contemplation of my Jesus, and the everlasting remedy he is in himself, and his complete salvation, here in him alone I find a relief for every sorrow, a balm for every care. Yes, thou sweet Redeemer! my eyes dry up their tears when I consider that every sin, sorrow, and affliction, hath lost its force, and almost its very name in thy gracious sanctification of it by thy blessed, glorious, gracious, and complete redemption. Oh! heavenly Lord! kindly go on to overrule the powers of Satan, and defeat his triumphs over our poor fallen nature, in leading us to sin, by counteracting his malice, and bringing our hearts nearer to thee. Correct, Lord, the angry passions of our nature; let our lusts of uncleanness be subdued; and when at any time the enemy cometh in like a flood, do thou, blessed God, lift up a standard against him. Let me behold with the eye of faith Jesus hastening to my relief, and in the innumerable sorrows that I have in my heart, let the precious promises of thy glorious gospel be the comforts to refresh my soul. Make them as good news from a far country; as rivers of water in a dry place; or as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

CHAP. XIV.

CONTENTS.

The afflictions of David are not over, and therefore in this chapter we are presented with the preliminary step leading to a new scourge. By the ministry of Joab methods are adopted for a reconciliation between David and his son Absalom. The king permits him to come back, and after some little difficulty a good understanding is established between them.

NOW Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart *was* toward Absalom.

Observe, that it was David's natural tenderness to his son which Joab took advantage of. If the Reader will take the pains to examine David's history more closely, he will find that, for the most part, his sins and consequent chastisements, were induced by consulting the feelings of nature more than the glory of God. His winking at Absalom's murder was contrary to God's law. Alas! how little do we keep a steady eye to what the Lord hath said, instead of what we feel.

2 And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead :

3 And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab put the words in her mouth.

4 And when the woman of Tekoah spake to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help, O king.

5 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, I *am* indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead.

6 And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and *there was* none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him.

7 And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband *neither* name nor remainder upon the earth.

8 And the king said unto the woman, Go to thine house, and I will give charge concerning thee.

9 And the woman of Tekoah said unto the king, My lord, O king, the iniquity *be* on me, and on my father's house: and the king and his throne *be* guiltless.

10 And the king said, Whosoever saith *ought* unto thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more.

11 Then said she, I pray thee, let the king remember the LORD thy God, that thou wouldest not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son. And he said, *As* the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth.

The Reader, to enter into the full beauties of this speech, will recollect how much it was the custom in the eastern world to discourse by story and parable. Nathan had adopted this plan to David in his own instance. See chap. xii. And here the woman of Tekoah so represents the outlines of Absalom's assassination of his brother Amnon, that the king for the moment overlooked his own family distresses on the same occasion, in the supposed history of this woman. But the Reader to enter into the principal beauty of this story, must be careful not to overlook the grand point in that law, which made provision that an Israelite should not have, upon any consideration, the right of his inheritance cut off, nor his name destroyed from among the people. This inheritance, no doubt, had an eye to the covenant of redemption; because the same law that made provision for this inheritance, made provision also for its recovery by redemption in the next of kin, in case of loss. See Numb. xxvii. 1—11. compared with Deut. xxv. 5—10. Then turn to Ruth iv. 1—7. Hence you see how sweetly the whole of this gracious provision, respecting the inheritance of Israel, pointed to the Lord Jesus, our *Goel*, our kinsman-Redeemer, who both stops the avenger of blood in becoming our city of refuge, and redeems our justly forfeited inheritance, as our relation, by his redemption. David therefore, no doubt, perfectly well understanding the grand point referred to, concerning the inheritance of which the woman of Tekoah complained she should be deprived, and the coal be quenched, whereby a name, or remainder, would not be left to her husband; entered with more earnestness into the burden of her petition, and with an eye to Christ sware to the woman by an oath, that her case should be as she wished. Reader! think then, how eternally secure must be our inheritance, when Jesus himself, our kinsman-Redeemer, hath purchased it, and how sure the name he hath preserved to his people. This is to be called *by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.* Isa. lxii. 2.

12 Then the woman said, Let thine handmaid,

I pray thee, speak *one* word unto my lord the king. And he said, Say on.

13 And the woman said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished.

14 For we must needs die, and *are* as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect *any* person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.

15 Now therefore that I am come to speak of this thing unto my lord the king, *it is* because the people have made me afraid; and thy handmaid said, I will now speak unto the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his handmaid.

16 For the king will hear, to deliver his handmaid out of the hand of the man *that would* destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God.

17 Then thine handmaid said, The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so *is* my lord the king to discern good and bad: therefore the LORD thy God will be with thee.

The wise woman of Tekoah having obtained her end, as suited to her own case as it appeared to the king's view, now goes on to make application of it, as it suited the king's in the case of Absalom. And she touches upon that string which might vibrate most on the affectionate feelings of David; namely, that Absalom was not only banished, but, says she, it is *thy* son, *thy* banished one, Absalom. I think it hardly necessary to remark, what I should conceive, unobserved by me, the pious Reader would himself instantly suggest; that if David's heart felt for his banished son, what must be the heart of our God towards his poor banished ones, who by sin have committed murder on their own souls, and, but for his clemency in calling them home, must continue banished for ever. *O Israel* (saith God) *thou hast destroyed thyself, put in me is thine help.* Heb. xiii. 9.

18 Then the king answered and said unto the

woman, Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee. And the woman said, Let my lord the king now speak.

19 And the king said, *Is not* the hand of Joab with thee in all this? And the woman answered and said, *As* thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand or to the left from ought that my lord the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab, he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid:

20 To fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord *is* wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all *things* that *are* in the earth.

If David could discern under all coverings, and all disguise, think how open must be all the thoughts and imaginations of our hearts to his view, with whom we have to do! Hosea iv. 12, 13.

21 ¶ And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again.

22 And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant.

23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

Recollect, Reader, that before Joab sent the woman of Tekoah in favour of Absalom, it is said that the king's heart was toward him. The everlasting love of God to poor sinners is *in* himself and *from* himself; the springs of grace have no other source, but God's own infinite love and mercy. The Lord Jesus hath indeed purchased our redemption with his blood: but not the love of God, which gave rise to, and manifested itself in that redemption. I would beg the Reader to read a blessed scripture of our dear Lord's upon this point, that never can be read too often, nor too warmly cherished in remembrance, in the heart. The passage I mean is, that wherein Jesus prays for all the fruits of his Father's love for his people; but not for the Father's love itself. *I say not unto you* (said Jesus) *that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you.* And indeed it was this love of God which gave birth to the coming of the Saviour. See John xvi. 26, 27. iii. 16.

And was it not this love originally; nay, is it not the same love now, which leads our gracious God and Father to call us to him in and by the Lord Jesus, our Almighty Intercessor for us at the right hand of power? Oh! glorious united source of all our joys! The sovereign, free grace of the Father; and the everlasting righteousness and advocacy of the Son; whereby the council of peace between the Persons of the Godhead is fulfilled, and *grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.* Rom. v. 21.

24 And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face.

25 But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

26 And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because *the hair* was heavy on him, therefore he polled it): he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight.

27 And unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter, whose name *was* Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.

Amidst all the beauty of Absalom's person, we hear nothing of the graces of his mind! Alas! what are all outward attractions but vanity. *The Lord seeth not as man seeth.* Concerning Absalom's family, the record of his children is but of short note, for they were soon cut off, as appears, chap. xviii. 18.

28 So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face.

29 Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come.

30 Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

31 Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom un-

to *his* house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?

32 And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? *it had been good for me to have been there still*: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be *any* iniquity in me, let him kill me.

33 So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom.

I did not notice, in its proper place, what was said of the king's refusing to see Absalom when Joab first brought him from *Geshur*; knowing that the same train of thoughts would meet us here. I pass over the mere history of the subject to remark what is much more interesting for us to regard, and which, as an improvement, seems to be suggested in the earnestness Absalom had to see the king's face; namely, how earnest ought we to be, to be brought to court, to see our father's face in the person of our adorable Redeemer! What are all the ordinances of worship in the house of prayer, except Jesus be seen in them. Oh! blessed Jesus! I would say to thee in the language of thy church of old, *Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.* Song ii. 14.

REFLECTIONS.

BLESSED Jesus! Let me find grace from thee, dearest Lord, in the perusal of this chapter, to consider how very like to Absalom my heart is, when by sin and shame I have been running away from thee. But how superior, dearest Lord, art thou to the tenderness of the tenderest parents, in calling home thy banished ones to thy presence; for thou seekest them out, and instead of allowing them to return, thou bringest them home, and bringest them in, and takest them to the bosom of thy love and mercy. Oh! dearest Lord! how often hath sin and Satan made me their captive; and how often hast thou recovered me from their snares. Keep me, blessed Jesus, near thyself, and suffer me to wander no more. Let Jesus *kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine.*

In the mistaken tenderness of David to his unworthy son, Lord, lead me to see, and as strongly to feel, the evil tendency of nature's affection, when those affections are striving against God. Oh! bring down every proud thought and disobedient lust, which would tend to dishonour my God. Let me have strength from thee to pluck out an eye,

to cut off a right hand, and do all holy violence to the improper demands of nature, when my God and Saviour makes it the mark of my duty towards him. I would be found, dearest Lord, wholly thine; and like *Levi*, not acknowledge my brethren, nor know my own children, which have not observed thy word, nor kept thy covenant. I would bend the knee, and bow myself with my face to the ground, in token that thou art my rightful Sovereign, and that I am thy servant; thou hast loosed my bonds. *Therefore shall every good man sing of thy praise without ceasing, O my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.*

CHAP. XV.

CONTENTS.

This chapter opens with the subject of what may be considered as the foundation forming for Absalom's unnatural rebellion against his father. We are here informed of his courting popularity,—his open avowal of his seeking the crown—the party he formed—and his several operations in prosecution of his design. We read also, in this chapter, David's distress upon the occasion, and the sad state to which this rebellion of his son reduced him.

AND it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

The whole life of Absalom seems to have been sinful. He multiplies his train of horses and his chariots, with running footmen to grace his equipage; whereas the Lord had strictly forbidden this to his people Israel. Deut. xvii. 16. Moreover, the Lord had told Israel by his servant Samuel, that the king they would choose, but not of the Lord's approbation, would be of this very character, to take pride in what the Lord had forbidden; and that he would oppress his subjects in the number of his chariots, horsemen, and servants. So that these things ought to have been enough to have made the people look shy upon Absalom; whereas it appears that so far from it, these tended to win their affections. See 1 Sam. viii. 11, &c.

2 And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel.

3 And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but *there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.*

4 Absalom said moreover, O that I were made

judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

5 And it was *so*, that when any man came nigh to *him* to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.

6 And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

It is awful to consider the depth of guilt and sin in the heart of man. Here is a man wishing himself a Judge, that merited judgment, and punishment, for the murder even of his own brother! Here is such a character aspiring to a crown, and yet apparently so very humble as to embrace the poorest creature in the kingdom. Dearest Jesus! hadst thou not come down from heaven to redeem our nature, and hadst thou not sent thy blessed Spirit to renew our nature; what man alive would have believed that the same seeds of sin as are here seen bringing forth their deadly fruit in the instance of Absalom, are in every man's heart by nature. Lord keep me from that evil man myself!

7 And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron.

8 For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.

9 And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.

It is not very easy to ascertain the time from whence we are to calculate these forty years. It cannot mean after forty years of David's reign; for his whole reign was no more than forty; and it should seem that this rebellion broke out at least ten years before the death of David. Some have thought that it means after forty years that Israel had been governed by a king. And if so, this makes the calculation to be just, as it happened in about the thirtieth year of David's reign. Here is another proof of the fallacy of the human heart, to make religion a covering for the basest designs. Was it not enough, Absalom, that you levelled a dagger at your too kind and indulgent father; but must God himself be impiously mocked in the attempt?

10 ¶ But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear

the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.

11 And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, *that were* called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.

12 And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, *even* from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

We feel pity for those two hundred men drawn by surprize into such a conspiracy: but as to Ahithophel, David's counsellor and friend, we feel indignation at his conduct. But here, blessed Jesus! do I not feel my soul drawn to thee and thine unequalled trials, from the perfidy of Judas? Alas! what situation hath any of thy faithful ones been ever placed in from the baseness of unfaithful men, but thou hast experienced it before them. Probably, David wrote the forty-first Psalm on the occasion of this conspiracy, in which he particularly takes notice of the falseness of the familiar friend which eat bread with him. But if so, it is still more interesting and striking, typically considered, in reference to the perfidy of Judas towards our Lord Jesus Christ. And indeed, as such, the Lord himself applies it. See John xiii. 18.

13 ¶ And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.

14 And David said unto all his servants that *were* with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not *else* escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

David was a man of great personal bravery, wherefore then did he wish to flee? No doubt he saw the hand of the Lord in the affliction. God had said, I will raise up evil out of thine own house. Chap. xii. 11. Reader! that affliction which comes immediately from the Lord, and as the correction of sin, throws down self-confidence, and makes men cowards. It is sweet to see the hand of him that corrects however, because as his name is, so is his mercy.

15 And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants *are ready to do whatsoever* my lord the king shall appoint.

16 And the king went forth, and all his hous-

hold after him. And the king left ten women *which were* concubines, to keep the house.

17 And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off.

18 And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king.

No doubt, in this flight, David's mind was much occupied in a variety of thoughts. It is much, however, that we hear nothing of his presenting himself in this distress before the Lord, in seeking counsel and protection.

19 Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou *art* a stranger, and also an exile.

20 Whereas thou camest *but* yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth *be* with thee.

21 And Ittai answered the king, and said, *As* the LORD liveth, and *as* my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.

22 And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that *were* with him.

This is an interesting conversation David held with Ittai. But I admire the generosity and attachment of this poor Gittite. At the time when David's own son, whom he had cherished and loved so greatly, was seeking his life, this stranger's heart was warm towards him. Reader! can you and I say as much for our rightful Lord and King, Christ Jesus? Oh! dearest Redeemer! be it my portion to take up the same gracious resolution; and where thou art, there as thy servant may I be.

23 And all the country wept with a loud voice,

and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

Much as I am pleased with what is here said of the affection of the people to David, I gladly leave the subject of David's passing over Kidron, to view thee, thou dear Redeemer, accompanied with thy chosen few, going over the very same memorable brook, in the night of thy sufferings, when thou enteredst into the garden. Had my soul seen thee, dearest Jesus, in that awful hour; and had I then known what through thy gracious teachings I now know, that that Kidron's brook, into which all the black, polluted waters, emptied themselves from the sacrifices of the temple, was typical of the guilt and defilement of my soul, which is poured upon thee; Oh! how should I, like the people following David, have lifted up my voice and wept, John xviii. 1.

24 And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites *were* with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city.

25 And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me *both* it, and his habitation:

26 But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, *here am I*, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

I have often admired the blessed frame of mind David was in, when he thus expressed himself. Surely nothing but the grace and presence of the Lord with him could have induced it at such a season. It is delightful to see that though the Lord (according to his solemn declaration by Nathan) had raised evil out of his own house, and though the Lord was correcting, he at the same time sustained him under the pressure. His direction to Zadok is as high an evidence of David's devotion and resignation, as we meet with in his whole history. Go Zadok, carry back the Ark! what though I have not the symbol and representation of Jesus, yet I shall have Jesus himself with me; and that will abundantly answer for all. What the designs of my God are in this humbling, sorrowful providence, I know not. Whether I shall ever see Jerusalem again, or whether I shall not; let my Jesus choose for me, I have no choice myself. If I shall find favour in his eyes to return, the Ark will be doubly sweet to my view; the habitation of God's house, and all things pertaining to ordinances. But, if my God say nay to this, he will not say nay to my soul in loving me. He hath spoken peace, and therefore will not unsay it. Oh, Reader! what a

frame of mind is here. Better to be thus in God's hottest furnace, living upon Jesus, than at ease under any pleasing frames, or supposed attainments of our own.

27 The king said also unto Zadok the priest, *Art not* thou a seer? return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar.

28 See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me.

29 Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem: and they tarried there.

Observe, how strong confidence he put in the counsel of God's Seer, that is, God's prophet; through whom the Lord might graciously be pleased to convey instruction. And, Reader! have not we that which is better than a thousand Seers now? even his holy word, which is a constant *light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths*.

30 And David went up by the ascent of *mount Olivet*, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.

How very suitable a frame was David now in! He saw the hand of God in this affliction. This gave the additional bitterness to it. Moreover, he knew not what the event might be. Either way, in success, or the contrary, it was full of evil. If he conquered, it was a son, a beloved son, he subdued. If he fell himself, death would be the consequence. In such a state, as a mourner, he might well go barefoot and weeping. But Reader! can you accompany David in idea up the ascent of Mount Olivet, and not recollect that holy mourner there, David's Lord? Surely! no true believer in Christ can ever hear, or read, the name of Olivet, without connecting with it Jesus and his agonies there. That was the memorable spot where thy Redeemer, my soul, sweat drops of blood, when the agony and convulsion of his soul was so great in sustaining all the weight and pressure of the divine justice due to thy sins, that David's grief for Absalom compared to it was but as nothing. Here the powers of hell besieged him also, until it became necessary that an angel from heaven should be dispatched to strengthen him. And Reader! you will not forget, I hope, how the Son of God in that tremendous hour in Olivet, was agitated backward and forward; when his whole soul *was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*; and when his few faithful disciples were drenched in sleep, as if on purpose that no help, no comfort, should be afforded him: and that, in redemption-work, of the people there should be none with him. Isaiah lxiii. 8.

31 And *one* told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

Reader! do observe how near the Lord is to his people in all that they call upon him for. The issue of this prayer, and the success of it, the subsequent history proves. Ahithophel's counsel was considered foolishness. And through this, as an instrument in the Lord's hand, Absalom lost his cause. Oh! the privilege of the faithful, in their nearness of access to God!

32 And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of *the mount*, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head:

33 Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me:

34 But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O King; *as I have been* thy father's servant hitherto, so *will I* now also be thy servant: then mayest thou or me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.

35 And *hast thou* not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, *that* what things soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell *it* to Zadok and Abiathar the priests.

36 Behold, *they have* there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's son, and Jonathan Abiathar's son; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear.

37 So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

Here we find David at his devotions. Not all the hurry of business, nor all the precipitancy of flight, could stop the fervor of David in his communion with God. The title of the *third* Psalm gives us an acquaintance with the sum and substance of David's prayer, what he said to the Lord upon this occasion: and very sweet the petitions are, to which I refer the Reader. He complains of the number, and of the malice of his enemies: but takes refuge in God, both as a sun and shield, to whom salvation alone belonged. Probably David poured out his soul to the Lord as he ascended the mount, weeping and praying as

he went, and even praising God through all. Beautiful pattern for afflicted souls! Whether suffering under the effects of sin, the ungraciousness of children, or of the world. See Psalm iii. The coming of *Hushai* seems to have been providential. And the event fully justified the advice of David in the moment.

REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE, Reader! over the perusal of this Chapter, and in the contemplation both of the father and of the son, David and Absalom, learn to observe what nature is, and how much grace is needed to correct and reform poor fallen man. Behold in Absalom the awful consequence of indulging the corrupt and pampered passions of children. Had David, as a king in Israel, followed up the divine law, in punishing him for murder, painful as it might have been to nature, yet perhaps the Lord would then have sent his servant the Prophet to interpose; and Absalom being convicted and convinced of the atrocious sin of murdering his brother, would have called forth mercy in his exemplary sorrow and repentance. At least this effect would have been produced by it, that he could not so shortly after have been found in open rebellion against his father. But, when David in the feeling of the father lost sight of his duty as a king, and took again to his bosom the murderer of a son, can it be wondered at, that the serpent so fostered should sting him, or that the wretch forgiven the blood-shedding of a brother, should so ripen in iniquity, as to aim the dagger at the father! Oh! what hath sin wrought in our fallen nature! What is not the heart of man capable of devising in evil, void of divine grace!

Reader! let us remark in David also, how sure God's judgments are, and how certain it is that our sin will find us out. How much more amiable David appears in ascending the hill of Olivet, weeping as he went, than when triumphing in his conquests over Bath-sheba and Uriah! How very gracious the Lord is in condescending to correct his people, in order to bring their hearts home to him, when without those corrections they would wander from him for ever.

Precious Jesus! how dear are thy recoveries! Oh! how very sweet to thy people, are thy many, many redemptions. Yes! dearest Lord, thou hast not only redeemed us to God by thy blood; but the everlasting efficacy of thy precious blood-shedding and righteousness, again and again pleads for us, when by our frequent departures, thy corrections for our recovery are rendered necessary. Oh! Lord! grant that such may be the views, both of him that writes and him that reads, (if it be thy blessed will), of all thy tender corrections for our trespasses, that though thou mayest bring us down by affliction, our faith may yet be assured thou wilt not cast us off: though we are chastened, yet not destroyed. Though in us there is nothing of worth, yet with Jesus there is perpetual merit. He ever liveth to make intercession; and his blood cleanseth from all sin. Now, Lord, would I sing that song, even before I quit this mortal life; and ere long I shall chaunt it loud amidst the heavenly host: *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood:*

CHAP. XVI.

CONTENTS.

The history of Absalom's rebellion, and David's distress, is continued through this chapter. Ziba, by a false report against Mephibosheth to David, obtains his master's inheritance. Shimei cometh forth and curseth David. Ahithophel counselleth Absalom.

AND when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine.

There is much of God's providence in this visit of Ziba. This base servant meant no good to David, it is probable, more than he did to Mephibosheth. But the Lord overruled it for good, David's few friends would need the common necessities of life; and in this manner the Lord was pleased to have him and them supplied. Reader! if you wish to have a real enjoyment of even the most common blessings of life, the secret of so doing, is to trace the hand of the Lord in them. Every mercy is doubly sweet, when we can discern the Lord's appointment in it. Paul's thought on this point is delightful; Phil. iv. 19.

2 And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? and Ziba said, The asses *be* for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink.

3 And the king said, And where *is* thy master's son? and Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To-day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.

4 Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine *are* all that *pertained* unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee *that* I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.

It appears from every part of the history, that Mephibosheth was a man of no ambition. What a cruel, unfaithful wretch was this man, to slander poor Mephibosheth, on this occasion, to David.

5 ¶ And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of

the house of Saul, whose name *was* Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

6 And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men *were* on his right hand and on his left.

7 And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial:

8 The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou *art taken* in thy mischief, because *thou art* a bloody man.

It is a very common thing in the trials of God's people, that when the Lord scourgeth, the agents of the enemy assault and harass the mind also. And, no doubt, these things are permitted of the Lord; for whatever be our trial, let the instrument be what it may, it can go no further than the Lord permit. Reader! it is always profitable to discover the Lord in all.

9 ¶ Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

10 And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?

11 And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now *may this Benjamite do it?* let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

12 It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.

I have often admired the conduct of David upon this occasion, and

have been secretly led to observe how graciously the Lord enabled him so to act. But I have been led yet more, both to admire and adore the Lord's mercy in the midst of his afflictions, in the plentiful supply of grace imparted to him. Well might David say that his song should be of mercy and judgment, and that he would direct this song unto God; for here, as well as in many other periods of his wonderful life, he found occasion to sing of both, as strikingly blended. God was evidently visiting him in judgment. But in the midst of judgment he gave him large proofs of mercy. I beg the Reader to take with him, in the perusal of David's conduct respecting Shimei, those several sweet instructions it brings. Let Shimei curse, saith David, for the Lord hath bidden him. Not that David meant that Shimei did right in what he did, as it respected himself; for Shimei's sin was the same, though the Lord overruled it for good; but he meant, that God was now afflicting David, and therefore made use of this rod, bad as it was, to accomplish his holy purpose. Reader! it is precious to justify God in all our afflictions. The Lord cannot do iniquity, that is certain. David saw the Lord's hand in it, and that was enough; he had not one word to say by way of complaint. Let him curse, the Lord hath bidden him. But this is not all: As the Lord's hand is in this affliction, David was led to hope therefrom an happy issue. It may be, said David, that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day. No doubt David felt all that nature ought to feel in the reproaches of Shimei; but, beholding at the same time that the Lord had commissioned him, trust in God's covenant promises made him conclude that the end would be peace. Reader! see whether your afflictions have this sanctified issue. Do you see the Lord's hand in them? Do they lead you to God? Do they prompt you to approve of God? Job's prayer to this effect is a sweet prayer; *That which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.* Job xxxiv. 32.

13 And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.

14 And the king, and all the people that *were* with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there.

No doubt the spirits of both the king and people were much bowed down, and needed refreshment. How sweet is it, under the persecutions of Satan and the world, when at any time Jesus refreshes the soul with the whispers of his grace!

15 And Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.

The rebellion was become very formidable by this time, when Absalom had taken the capital. No doubt, David's hopes began to give way, and fear took possession of his heart. Reader! it is profitable,

very profitable in spiritual things, to be brought down to the lowest state, that the recovery may carry with it the clearer evidence, that the delivery is wholly of the Lord. We have the sentence of death in ourselves, that our eyes may be altogether to Jesus. 2 Cor. i. 9, 10.

16 And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king.

17 And Absalom said to Hushai, *Is* this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend?

18 And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the LORD, and this people, and all the men of Israel choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide.

19 And again, whom should I serve? *should I* not *serve* in the presence of his son? as I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence.

When the Lord is about to accomplish the sacred purposes of his will, how wonderful are the means by which he works? Instruments the most unconscious, the most improbable, the most unlikely, shall do it. The dissimulation of Hushai, the lying prophet in Israel, shall succeed. Read those scriptures, 1 Kings xxii. 20—23. Psm. lxxvi. 10.

20 ¶ Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do.

21 And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that *are* with thee be strong.

22 So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

23 And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, *was* as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so *was* all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

How strikingly fulfilled were the denunciations of God by the prophet

upon David in this instance! How improbable when they were delivered, and yet how fully brought to pass. See chap. xii. 11, 12. But what an awful state must all Israel have been in at this time! when the counsel of such a wicked man as Ahithophel, as by this advice he proved himself to be, was considered as the oracle of God! Lord! keep thy church, keep thy people from the counsel of the ungodly, and give both according to that sweet promise, *Pastors after thine own heart, which shall feed them with understanding and knowledge.* Jeremiah iii. 15. Remark, Reader, what a connection between David's sin and David's punishment. From the house top David first conceived lust for Bathsheba: on the house top David's concubines shall be dishonoured.

REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! learn from this view of David's sweet frame of mind under very heavy afflictions, the preciousness of faith, and the blessed effects of it. No doubt, in David's estimate of life, those seasons were most highly valued by him, when upon a review of them, after the trying hours were over, he could look back and see how graciously the Lord had led him *through* them, supported him *under* them, and brought him *out* of them. And, Reader, do you mark it down in your experience, for I desire never to lose sight of it in mine, that, painful as afflictions are, a true believer in Jesus is ultimately a gainer by every conflict and trial he is called upon to go through. That promise must be sure, *All things*, how discouraging soever they may now seem, *work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* And, if our faith be enabled to give due credit to God, depend upon it, God will give due reward to faith. And to live upon God's perfections, his promises, his covenant engagements in Jesus, when all the avenues, as they appear to us, are shut up, by which those engagements can be fulfilled; this is precious faith indeed! Dearest Jesus! grant me grace so to live! May my confidence in thee, my interest in thee, my resources from thee, and my life upon thee, be always such, that whether, like David, the streams of outward comforts run low, as in this flight of his from his city; or whether the communications of thy grace remit their accustomed flowing; yet, knowing that thou art the same, and the sovereign efficacy of thy salvation admitting no abatement, my assurance in thee may be the same also. And let my song be like the prophet's, that *though the fig-tree shall not blossom: neither fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive fail, and the fields yield no meat; the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stall; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

CHAP. XVII.

CONTENTS.

The history of Absalom's rebellion, and David's difficulties in consequence thereof, is prosecuted through this chapter. Ahithophel's counsel being rejected by Absalom, and Hushai's accepted, Ahithophel hangeth himself. David receiveth secret intelligence how to act.

MOREOVER Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night:

2 And I will come upon him while he *is* weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that *are* with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only:

3 And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest *is* as if all returned: *so* all the people shall be in peace.

4 And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel.

No doubt the advice of Ahithophel was founded in strong human policy. Poor David, considered in himself and his little army, could have made but feeble resistance. But what a wretch was Absalom, and how lost to all grace the elders of Israel, to be pleased with such an infamous counsel. Reader! do pause here, to remark how different the conduct of the father and the son in the pursuit of a kingdom. David, though anointed by the Lord's command to the kingdom many years before Saul's death, yet waited patiently his death, and even after that, was content to reign only in Hebron, until the Lord should bring him over the whole kingdom. But Absalom, an usurper, and an usurper against the throne and life of his own father, hastens to universal monarchy in defiance of the Lord. But, Reader, let us drop David and his history, to attend to David's Lord. As David was an eminent type of Jesus, we may safely look for the outlines of Jesus's history, upon all occasions of importance which we meet with in David's life. Was not then this persecution of David by his own son, a lively resemblance of the persecution of the Lord Jesus, by his own people the Jews? And as to the personal attack on David, according to Ahithophel's advice, *I will smite the king only*; can there be a more striking circumstance of the personal hatred the Jews had to our dear Lord, whose dislike the Lord figured out, under the similitude of the parable; *Come, let us kill the heir, and the inheritance shall be ours.* Matt. xxi. 38. And who is there that can read the counsel of Ahithophel, that all the people should have peace, if the man whom Absalom sought alone to destroy was taken off; who is there that can read this, and overlook the striking affinity between this advice of Ahithophel, and Caiaphas's prophetic declaration, though unconscious what he said, *that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.* Precious Jesus! of what infinite importance must have been thy death, that the Holy Ghost in glorifying of thee, was graciously pleased to sketch the outlines of it in so gracious a manner! Oh! Lord! fulfil the precious part of this prophecy yet to be fulfilled; and as thou art the *Shiloh*, to whom Jacob, when dying, prophesied that the gathering of the people should be; do thou hasten, Lord, the hour, and gather

together in one the people of God which are yet scattered abroad.
John xi. 49—52, compared with Gen. xlix. 10.

5 Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith.

6 And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Abithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do *after* his saying? if not, speak thou.

7 And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Abithophel hath given *is* not good at this time.

8 For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they *be* mighty men, and they *be* chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father *is* a man of war, and will not lodge with the people.

9 Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some *other* place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom.

10 And he also *that is* valiant, whose heart *is* as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father *is* a mighty man, and *they* which *be* with him *are* valiant men.

11 Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, as the sand that *is* by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person.

12 So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that *are* with him there shall not be left so much as one.

13 Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we

will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there.

14 And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite *is* better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.

The close of those verses throws a light upon the whole matter contained in them. Nothing but the overruling power of God could have made Absalom and his party attend to such advice as Hushai's. It was impolitic: it was foolish: it was cowardly. But, the Lord *taketh the wise in their own craftiness*. Job v. 13. But, Reader, here again, as in the former instance, behold a nobler subject suggested to our meditation in the view of Jesus. Though the Ahithophels of our Lord's day, and the whole council of the Jews all joined together to kill the Lord of life and glory; yet in all they designed, and in all they wrought, they *only* (as the apostles, in their prayer, beautifully expressed it) *did that which the hand and counsel of the Lord determined before to be done*. Acts iv. 27, 28. Oh! it is a precious thing in our holy faith, ever to eye the Lord in all events concerning Jesus and his people.

15 ¶ Then said Hushai unto Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Thus and thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and thus have I counselled.

16 Now therefore send quickly, and tell David, saying, Lodge not this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily pass over; lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people that *are* with him.

Hushai, the faithful friend of David, here followed up his services. He was not certain that Absalom, though at present well pleased with his counsel, might not alter his opinion; and if so, David could not be safe. Our dear Lord had frequent occasion, before his final sufferings and death, to secure himself from the immediate malice of his foes. See Luke iv. 28—30. xiii. 31, 32.

17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed by Enrogel; for they might not be seen to come into the city: and a wench went and told them; and they went and told king David.

18 Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom: but they went both of them away quickly,

and came to a man's house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court; whither they went down.

19 And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon; and the thing was not known.

20 And when Absalom's servants came to the woman to the house, they said, Where *is* Ahimaaz and Jonathan? And the woman said unto them, They be gone over the brook of water. And when they had sought and could not find *them*, they returned to Jerusalem.

21 And it came to pass, after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, Arise, and pass quickly over the water; for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you.

Here we behold a renewed instance of the Lord's overruling power. It would be incredible, but for this, to account how it was that Absalom's suspicion had not been more excited by the departure of the two sons of Zadok and Abiathar. And the least suspicion would have ruined the whole plan, and involved Hushai, Zadok, and all the priests at Jerusalem in it. But the scripture before us explains all: *The Lord had appointed to bring evil upon Absalom*. Awful, when men are given up to a deduced blindness! See that instance of Eli's sons; 1 Sam. ii. 25.

22 Then David arose, and all the people that *were* with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan.

It is supposed that David wrote the 42nd and 43d Psalm upon this occasion; because he speaks there of his remembrance of God, as his God in covenant, from the land of Jordan and the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar; and I think it more than probable. The Holy Ghost doth evidently pour out, in a more copious manner, his precious effusions to endear Jesus, when all other comforts run low. Jordan's sacred river, and the land of Hermon, refreshed the recollection of David concerning former trials. And, Reader, have you not found that past afflictions have brought to the recollection present joy. I believe that God's people would have been strangers to many an holy joy and sweet fellowship with their Jesus, had they been without some of their deepest crosses. We may say, therefore, in this sense, the hill of *Mizar*, in the sweets of recollecting grace, and mercy after, abundantly overpays the painful ascent of it, in the day of David's trouble. But let us drop David: let us view Jesus passing over the brook Kidron with his disciples. And, as David and all his troop by the morning light were safely landed on the

other side, and there lacked not one of them; so, depend upon it, in the everlasting morning, on the eternal hills, when all the followers of Jesus have waded through the Jordan of death, Jesus will again say, *Of all that thou hast given me I have lost none.* John xviii. 9.

23 ¶ And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled *his* ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

Here we see the dreadful end of bad men. Like another Judas, he falls unpitied, unregarded. His name Ahithophel, which signifies *the brother of a fool*, best marked his end; for he died as a fool died. If, as some suppose, David wrote the *fifty-fifth* Psalm on this man's account, when he prayed God to turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness, we see how fully the Lord answered his prayer. There are several verses in this Psalm striking to this point. See Psalm lv. 9, 12—15.

24 Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom passed over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.

25 And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa *was* a man's son, whose name *was* Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah Joab's mother.

26 So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead.

27 And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim,

28 Brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched *corn*, and beans, and lentiles, and parched *pulse*,

29 And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that *were* with him, to eat: for they said, The people *is* hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.

We have here a view of the different armies. But behold, Reader, how the Lord provided for his servant, and raised up friends to support him in the wilderness. But oh! how infinitely short are these things, to what the Lord Jesus is doing for his little army, in all their wilderness dispensations. Yes! dear Lord! thou knowest that thy people are hungry, and weary, and thirsty; but thou givest them that bread of life and that water of life in secret, which is thyself; and thou art to them, that rest *wherewith thou causeth the weary to rest, and their refreshment*; of which the honey, and butter, and sheep, and beds, and basons, and parched corn, given to David, were but faint resemblances! John vi. 51, &c.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let not this chapter pass away from our review, until that we have first gathered from it those gracious instructions, the Holy Ghost so kindly gives us in it. Do you not behold, in the restraints of Ahithophel's advice, a resemblance of that restraining power of our gracious God, over the enemies of our salvation? Would not the Absaloms of the present day, like mad horses, come upon us while we are weary and weak-handed, and tread down and trample us under their feet? And how is it that our enemies are prevented from destroying us? Lord, it is the bridle of thy providence, which thou hast put into their jaws; and thy fear, by which thou overrulest the designs of their hearts. Yes! dearest Jesus! it is thou which, by keeping the reins of government in thine hands, controullest their power; and thou speakest to them as to the proud waves; *Hitherto shall ye come, and no further!* Methinks I hear thee saying now to my soul, as to the church of *Smyrna* of old; *Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer*: though the devil will cast some of you into prison, it is only that you may be tried; and though you have tribulation for ten days, yet fear not. No! blessed Lord! be thou my Counsellor, my strength, my confidence, and I shall never fear. I know that the devil would, but for thee, cast us (not into prison, but) into hell. And I know that in his prison he would keep thy people until they rotted, and died there. But he dare not: *ten days* only, is his limitation! Oh! keep me faithful unto death, and I shall have from thee, *the crown of life which fadeth not away.*

Reader! let David's troubles, sweetened and sanctified as they were at the river Jordan, and the hill Mizar, bring with them to our view, this gracious conviction; sanctified sorrows are precious things. A real sanctified sorrow, in the present wilderness, can never come too often. Jesus parcels them out to his people from his own unerring wisdom and love; and the cover of every one of them is marked in his own blessed hand: *as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.* Depend upon it, in David's view, when he came to sum up his mercies, those he counted most precious, which had brought with them most of God. And in our estimate of real blessings, whether trouble or joy, our calculation will be the same, if so be we know the Lord, as he did. Lead me then, dearest Lord Jesus! lead me as it seemeth best to thy infinite wisdom and love, through all the various paths of the present wilderness state, whether marked from the land of Jordan, or the Hermonites, or

the hill Mizar. Let the way be ever so intricate, ever so rough or thorny; yet if thou art with me, I know it will be *a right way to a city of thy habitation*. And oh! Lord God, fill my soul, my heart, all my faculties, all my powers, with the same love to thee as thou didst David's; for then my very tears, like his, which were his meat day and night, will be, to me, sweeter than the spiced wine of the pomegranate. Then shall the goings forth of my soul, bear a sweet correspondence to his devout aspirations, and my heart will be the echo to his, when he said: *As the hart panteth after the water brooks; so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God; yea, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God!*

CHAP. XVIII.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter concludes the history of Absalom's rebellion, and an awful conclusion, to the rebel it proved. David sendeth forth his armies; gives a charge to his officers to deal favourably with Absalom. Absalom is slain. Victory determines in favour of David; but the king mourneth for his son.

AND David numbered the people that *were* with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.

It is not said what numbers the whole army consisted of. In all probability, it could not be very many. But Jonathan had before learnt that there is no restraint on the Lord, to save by many or by few, 1 Sam. xiv. 6. Sweet thought to the believer amidst all his warfare!

2 And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also.

3 But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now *thou art* worth ten thousand of us: therefore now *it is* better that thou succour us out of the city.

4 And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best I will do. And the king stood by the

gate side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands.

Every one perfectly well knew the personal courage of David; but beside the reasons here given on both sides for David staying at home, there was in David's breast, a secret cause to keep him back. How unnatural soever Absalom's conduct was towards his father, yet David's heart, as the sequel proved, loved this unnatural child too well to fight against him.

5 And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, *Deal* gently for my sake with the young man, *even* with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

Reader! pause over the perusal of this verse, and remark with me, the astonishing love of David to this most worthless child. Of all the base, ungrateful sons we read of in history, perhaps none, take it altogether, exceeds the character of Absalom. We find, very frequently, in the feelings of nature, parents unaccountably passing by the worth, and tenderness, and affection of many dear children, to bestow their partiality and favours on one the most undeserving. Certain it is, that Abraham preferred Ishmael to Isaac, in that he begged of the Lord that he might have the blessing. See Gen. xvii. 18. And Isaac evidently preferred Esau to Jacob, in that, contrary to the divine command, he would have conferred the blessing of the covenant upon him. See Gen. xxvii. 4. There is no explaining this upon any other principle than that, in these matters as well as others, nature and grace are everlastingly opposite to each other. Thus in the case of David: his commanding his servants to deal gently with Absalom meant, no doubt, not to hurt his person. It should seem as if David had strong confidence of victory. No doubt his communion with the Lord was at this time most lively and fervent. But what an infatuation was David under, concerning this unnatural son. The sole cause of the war was on his account; and yet, in David's wish, he must be saved. Supposing he had been spared; did David hope that his clemency would reclaim him? And could David feel so little regard to the lives of his faithful subjects, as to sacrifice numbers to the saving such a son? But, Reader! while we look at David with wonder and astonishment, let us turn our thoughts to that stupendous contemplation, the love of our God and Father towards us, whose affection, after all our rebellion and baseness, as far exceeds the love of David to Absalom, as the heavens are higher than the earth. God our King and Father, in the dreadful war induced by our rebellion, usurpation, and hatred against him and his government, not only commands all his servants sent to subdue us to his government again, to deal gently for his everlasting love's sake; but that mercy shall be shewn, and grace abundantly displayed, gives up his Son, his only begotten Son, to the accursed death of the cross! *Hear O heavens, and be astonished O earth, for the Lord hath done it!* And while we thus contemplate thine unequalled love, O thou most gracious and Almighty Father, in this unparalleled instance of it, let us no less

admire and adore the matchless grace of our Jesus, who in the accomplishment of all this wonderful design, hath deaft, and still continues to deal most gently with us, in all the manifestations of his love. Yes! dearest Lord! on the very cross, thou pleadest for thine unnatural murderers, whose salvation thy death was then accomplishing!

6 So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim;

7 Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand *men*.

8 For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

Is not this a lively representation, (without straining the figure) in what is said of *the wood devouring more than the sword*, of the awful decision of that final war, when it is said, *the wicked will call to the mountains, and to the rocks, to fall on them to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb*. Rev. vi. 16.

9 ¶ And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that *was* under him went away.

Every prelude to the death of Absalom is awful. His death is not after the common visitation of all men. He is first suspended, as it were, a spectacle between heaven and earth, unworthy of being in either. The simple boughs of a tree, shall begin the preparation of his awful death. A mule shall assist at his execution. Had the animal thrown him: had he broken his neck in the fall; or had a certain man at a venture, shot him through; these would have been among the common things of war. But no! His sin, his rebellion, his whole life, indeed, had been so flagitious, that his death must be marked with more than common infamy. The very beast on which he rides, shall leave him, as if delighted to be no longer burthened with such a sinner!

10 And a certain man saw *it* and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.

11 And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest *him*, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? and I would have given thee ten *shekels* of silver, and a girdle.

12 And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand *shekels* of silver in mine hand, *yet* would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none *touch* the young man Absalom.

13 Otherwise, I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldest have set thyself against *me*.

14 Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he *was* yet alive in the midst of the oak.

15 And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him.

Who this certain man was, is not said; but it serves to heighten the subject very much. Absalom shall not escape. The eye of the Lord is upon him. His time is come. Justice demands his blood. Oh! awful, awful day, when the measure of the sinner's iniquity is full!

16 And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people.

17 And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent.

18 Now Absalom in his life time had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which *is* in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place.

As Absalom's death was awful, so his burying was ignominious. The prophet Ezekiel gives a dreadful representation of the funeral of such men, such as this of Absalom; chap. xxxii. 18, to the end. Observe, Reader! in what is here said of Absalom's pillar, the folly of monumental pillars to the ungodly. Alas! what an awful thing it is, for a

lying stone to speak well of a man where he is not; and the man himself to be in torments where he is.

19 Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies.

20 And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead.

21 Then said Joab to Cush, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cush bowed himself unto Joab, and ran.

22 Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cush. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready?

23 But howsoever, *said he*, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cush.

The Prophet hath remarked how beautiful the feet of those are upon the mountains, who bring tidings of peace. Whether it be the swift footed Ahimaaz, or the slower-paced Cush, yet the tidings themselves were good. But oh! Reader! how beautiful to you and to me, ought to be the tidings of salvation! And these, (do not forget) Jesus himself first really, and truly brought. How beautiful are his feet, to the eye of faith, seen on the cross! How beautiful when he comes in the word of his grace! How lovely, when leaping over the mountains, and skipping over the hills!

24 And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone.

25 And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he *be* alone, *there is* tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near.

26 And the watchman saw another man running: and the watchman called unto the porter, and said,

Behold, *another* man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

27 And the watchman said, Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He *is* a good man, and cometh with good tidings.

28 And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed *be* the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.

29 And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? and Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and *me* thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what *it was*.

30 And the king said *unto him*, Turn aside, *and* stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still.

31 And, behold, Cushie came; and Cushie said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.

32 And the king said unto Cushie, *Is* the young man Absalom safe? and Cushie answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do *thee* hurt, be as *that* young man *is*.

33 ¶ And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

The subject ends just as might have been supposed, from the natural affections of David. No doubt it was in respect to the everlasting state of Absalom, that David felt so exceedingly. And yet, had it been put to the issue, though in the moment David wished he had died for him, yet when death came, David would have shrunk back. It was the unguarded, ill-advised expression of disappointed nature. It was base, as

it related to God, in his own deliverance. It was base, as it referred to man, in the lives of his faithful subjects, whose sacrifice seemed to be nothing in David's eyes, so that Absalom had been spared. Reader! let us learn from it, how everlastingly opposite to grace, in all our views and desires nature is. And let us, therefrom, seek strength from the Lord, to be for ever on our guard against its false teachings. The promise is, that *the elder*, which is nature, *shall serve the younger*, which is grace. Had David consulted this, we should not have witnessed those improper acclamations: *Would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!* Had God taken him at his word, what would have been the consequence? Would he have gone to hell for him too! Alas! the sin and folly of so daring a wish! Reader! let you and I reverse the expression, and bless God that his dear Son hath died for us, and by his death secured our salvation!

REFLECTIONS.

READER! are you a parent, a father or a mother! And are you yourself a partaker of grace, while those of your household are graceless! If so, you will best be able to enter into a proper apprehension of David's feelings for his son. Oh! the unknown, the inexpressible agonies of the mind, in seeing those whom the Lord hath made near, and dear to us in the bonds of nature, totally void of union in the bonds of grace! Oh! did those pious parents, whom the Lord calls to the painful exercises of nature, in the breaches made by death, in their infant years, did they but recollect the accumulated aggravations of sorrow, which attend the deaths of graceless children, ripened in years, and ripened in iniquity; how would they learn to bless God, in those instances of preventing wisdom and mercy! Surely, Sirs! it is far, far better, and a far higher privilege also, to follow infants to their tomb, than have them remain longer with us, to be trained for everlasting misery! What a wound the very thought gives, as it enters the imagination!

But, Reader! what an aggravation to misery is it, when, as in the case of David, the Lord's hand is to be traced in the evils which grow up out of our house, from the children of our own bowels. When David looked round the walls of his dwelling, and beheld the vacancies there made by death, and marked them as divine chastisements, well might he exclaim, O Absalom! my son! my son!

And is there no relief for such a state? *Is there no balm in Gilead: no physician there?* Yes, blessed be God, there is both. Oh! precious, precious Jesus! where, but for thee, should balm be found: or what physician, but thyself, could heal such complicated diseases. Teach me then, dearest Jesus; teach him that reads; teach every poor distressed, exercised soul that believes, to do as David did, after all this series of troubles. Teach our souls to look to thee. And when our *Absaloms*, our *Anmons*, and all our sorrows are multiplied, to look to Jesus, and say as David did; *Although my house be not so with God; yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. And this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.*

CHAP. XIX.

CONTENTS.

The mourning of David for Absalom, is checked by Joab. David is invited back to his capital. This event is accomplished. A circumstance concerning Shimei, is related. These are the principal matters of this chapter.

AND it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom.

2 And the victory that day was *turned* into mourning unto all the people; for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son.

3 And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle.

4 But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!

The unbecoming sorrow of David, concerning the death of Absalom, could not but have its effect upon the whole army. Some, no doubt, felt displeased; and others commiserated the king; but, as the Holy Ghost is silent, as to what passed between David and the Lord, on this occasion, we can only hope that the affliction was rendered profitable.

5 And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines;

6 In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well.

7 Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse

unto thee than all the evil that befel thee from thy youth until now.

Those ministers in divine things, are ever to be valued, which deal faithfully. What a beautiful lesson, may all such learn here, in the conduct of Joab. Surely David needed to be roused, and Joab took a method to do it effectually. When sinners grow cold, and unconcerned, the word of God must be delivered in its naked force, that, like the sword of the Spirit, it may wound the conscience, and its edge be felt.

8 Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent.

Reader! how sweet the thought, that our Jesus, our King sits in the gate to let his people behold his beauty, and to bring all their concerns before him!

9 ¶ And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom.

10 And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?

11 ¶ And king David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, *even* to his house.

12 Ye *are* my brethren, ye *are* my bones and my flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?

I think it is very evident from this strife among the tribes of Israel, that the rebellion by Absalom was deeply laid, and very strong and formidable; for we see, even after such a victory as David's army had obtained, his way to Jerusalem needed opening by favour. But, Reader! is there not a spiritual instruction for you and me in this place? Did David send to the elders of Judah through the priests, that an invitation might be made him to return: and doth it not bring to our recollection how God the Father is everlastingly speaking to us, through him who is an everlasting Priest upon his throne, and Intercessor, that we may ask our God to come and make his abode with us? Doth not our

Jesus, the Son of David, graciously condescend to call us his brethren, his flesh, and his bones; and doth he not say, *Have I been a wilderness to my people, that they say, We will come no more to thee?* Jerem. ii. 31.

13 And say ye to Amasa, *Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh?* God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually, in the room of Joab.

This advance of *Amasa*, a rebel in Absalom's army, over *Joab*, whose faithfulness in David's service, we meet with nothing to question, seems somewhat extraordinary. Perhaps David, by this time, had learnt that Joab with his own hands, had slain Absalom. Certain it is, faithfulness requires great address to procure favour. But in ministers it is particularly demanded by Jesus. To the angel, or minister of the church of Smyrna, the command is striking. See Rev. ii. 8—10.

14 And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as *the heart of one man*; so that they sent *this word* unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants.

15 So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.

Lord Jesus, do thou bow the hearts of thy people, as the heart of one man; then shall we welcome thee, and thy servants, thy ministers to our churches, to our hearts, to our houses, when thou hast made us willing in the day of thy power! Psm. cx. 3.

16 ¶ And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which *was* of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David.

17 And *there were* a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king.

18 And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's houshold, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan.

19 And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remem-

ber that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart.

20 For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king.

The appearance of those men, *Shimei* and *Ziba*, no doubt, was highly gratifying to David. And, I do not know whether the Reader hath perceived it in David's history; but it hath more than once struck me, while attending to those records of it, that David possessed a great generosity of mind, as well as grace.

21 But *Abishai* the son of *Zeruiah* answered and said, Shall not *Shimei* be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed?

22 And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of *Zeruiah*, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I *am* this day king over Israel?

23 Therefore the king said unto *Shimei*, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him.

Abishai's heat and resentment would have led David into an error; therefore he calls him an adversary in his advice. But what a delightful thought ariseth out of this interview between David and his former violent opposer, *Shimei*, considered as it leads our minds to the contemplation of the supposed interview between Jesus, the Son of David, and the self-convinced and self-condemned sinners, who once opposed his government. Yes! dearest Jesus, may every one of this description say, when thus brought down before thee by the Holy Ghost, thy servant doth know that I have sinned, therefore am I come to seek thy mercy. And oh! how inconceivably sweet and precious, to hear the King's voice; saying, Shall there any poor sinner perish, that comes this day to seek the peace of Israel? Reader! remember also, our Jesus hath not only said his people shall not perish, but God our Father hath confirmed it with an oath. *The King sware unto him.*

24 And *Mephibosheth* the son of *Saul* came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came *again* in peace.

The sacred historian hath certainly interested every Reader in favour of *Mephibosheth*. It should seem that the love his father *Jonathan*

had for David, was inherited by his son. The neglect of his person, in dress and cleanliness, were in those days tokens of mourning. Reader! it is no small proof of love to Zion, when the true sons of Zion mourn in her seasons of afflictions. The church speaks of this sweetly in one of the Psalms. See Psm. cxxxix. 5, 6.

25 And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?

26 And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant *is* lame.

27 And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king *is* as an angel of God: do therefore *what is* good in thine eyes.

28 For all *of* my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?

29 And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.

30 And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king *is* come again in peace unto his own house.

It should seem that David, by this time, had discovered the treachery of Ziba; for he here confirms his original grant to Mephibosheth. Whereas, in the moment when Ziba came out to meet David, with information against Mephibosheth, he took all away from the son of Jonathan, and gave to Ziba. See chap. xvi. 1—4. But there appears to have been so much sweetness of temper, and gentleness of mind in David at this time, that he aimed to make every one happy. Reader! affliction is a profitable school, when Jesus himself is the Teacher. Depend upon it, that it was not without reason the wise man said; *it is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting.* Eccles. vii. 2.

31 And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan.

32 Now Barzillai was a very aged man, *even* fourscore years old : and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim ; for he *was* a very great man.

33 And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem.

We had an account of the generosity of th's man before. Chap. xvii. 27, 28. The Lord graciously spreads a table for his people in the wilderness, and will not suffer them to want. No doubt David eyed the Lord's hand in the mercy, and therefore, beside common gratitude, longed to shew affection to Barzillai, as the Lord's instrument to his good. Reader! all blessings bring with them double sweetness, when man's kindness is beheld, and received, as the Lord's predisposing grace and goodness.

34 And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem?

35 *I am* this day fourscore years old : *and* can I discern between good and evil ? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink ? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women ? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king ?

36 Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king : and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward ?

37 Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, *and be buried* by the grave of my father and of my mother. But behold thy servant Chimham ; let him go over with my lord the king ; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.

38 And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee : and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, *that* will I do for thee.

May we not hope that this generous man, who was thus looking forward to the grave, was looking also, with the same eye of faith, as the patriarch did, to Him, who by his promised salvation had sweetened the

grave, and taken out all its venom! But how modestly this great man declines the king's favours; as not only unsuited to his advanced years, but also, as himself being unworthy of them. Doth not this suggest to us, what we are told, the faithful servants of Jesus will say at the last day, when the Lord is summing up to the review their various acts, and labours of love: *Lord, (they will say) when saw we thee hungry and fed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink?* Barzillai had truly done so to David, and yet now, when David talks of taking him with him to Jerusalem, he cries out, *Why should the king recompense it with such a reward?* So Jesus will not only recompense every tittle of the poor testimonies of his people's love, but will as much surprize them by the sense he expresses of those testimonies, as by the astonishing greatness of the reward. *Inasmuch, (saith the Lord) as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me!* Matt. xxv. 40.

39 And all the people went over Jordan. And when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned unto his own place.

40 Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel.

41 And, behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren the men of Judah stolen thee away, and have brought the king, and his houshold, and all David's men with him, over Jordan?

42 And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king *is* near of kin to us: wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king's *cost*? or hath he given us any gift?

43 And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more *right* in David than ye: why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? and the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

The restoration of David was not without jealousy, and displeasure.

Some there ever will be, to *put darkness for light, and bitter for sweet*. The son of David hath his kingdom continually opposed. David's troubles are not over. That sentence is still hanging over his head: *The sword shall never depart from thine house*. So that we may close this chapter of David's happiness in his return after the rebellion, with reminding the Reader that new troubles may be soon looked for, and that his prayer is always seasonable; *Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions*. Psm. cxxxii. 1.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! Was it not a gracious act in the Lord, to cause Joab's faithfulness to be successful in rousing David from the unbecoming grief he had fallen into, by the death of Absalom? And shall not you and I consider that graciousness of our dear Lord to us, when by his faithful ministering servants in the gospel of his dear Son, we are roused to a sense of those things which make for our everlasting peace, before they are for ever hid from our eyes? Methinks I would have all ministers faithful, like Joab in this instance. A warmth and zeal for Jesus, ought to mark all God's servants. Soft, easy, cold, and lifeless discourses, do not suit those who stand forth to shew men their sins, and to inform them of their danger. That was a solemn charge of Paul to Timothy, and needful to be given to all that, like Timothy, labour in the word and doctrine: *I charge thee therefore, (says Paul) before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering, and doctrine*.

The behaviour of aged Barzillai suggests a very profitable instruction to aged believers. Though he declined going over Jordan to the court of David, yet he had his views directed to go over the Jordan of death, to the court of David's Lord. And so, my aged friend, should be your views. Oh! Sirs! if Jesus be indeed lovely, truly lovely, and desirable in your esteem, will you not desire to be with him? Can the voice of singing men, or singing women, now any longer delight? Can the mere taste of earthly things be important in your regard? What! have you lived thirty, forty, nay, perhaps, threescore years in a sinful, miserable world, and yet not weaned from it. And will you say your affairs, your children, your families tie you to life. Barzillai had his *Chimham*. But this son, and perhaps it might be his only one, he gave up to the king. And if *you* have truly given up your own soul to Jesus, surely you can trust your children's with him also. See then, my aged Brother! that Jesus is truly precious; for if so, death will have no terrors. Your dying day, will be your Jubilee day; and like Paul, you will *long to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better*; knowing that, when *absent from the body*, you will be *present with the Lord*; and you will labour, as he did, that whether *present, or absent, you may be accepted of him*.

CHAP. XX.

CONTENTS.

A new scene of distress to David this Chapter opens with, in the rebellion of Sheba. Amasa is slain. Joab pursueth Sheba. A woman, by her wisdom, saveth the city. An account of David's officers. These are the heads of this chapter.

AND there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name *was* Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel.

We shall lose sight of all the beauty of David's history, unless we keep in our remembrance the circumstances which the Lord spake concerning him. David hath many foes. But they are but God's instruments. The Lord had said, that he would raise up evil to him. And when the Lord saith this of David, or of any his children, it is not difficult for the Lord to find suitable instruments for his purpose to chasten. Reader! do not overlook this in your own life. Never consider *second* causes, without taking into the view the *first*, and predisposing cause of all. David's conclusion upon another occasion, would have suited all: *I was dumb*, (says he) *I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.* Psm. xxxix. 9.

2 So every man of Israel went up from after David, *and* followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem.

The character of this man is marked by the Holy Ghost; *a man of Belial*. And consequently his life and conversation corresponded to the title. He was a suited person to oppose the man who is stiled, *the man after God's own heart*. See 1 Kings xv. 3. Reader! do not fail to recollect, that the opposition between such different characters, commenced not with David and Sheba. It began at the fall. Abel and Cain were the two first combatants, and the reason was, they were of different seed, though by nature children of the same parents. John explains this; 1 John iii. 12. And still from higher authority; John viii. 44.

3 And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women *his* concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

This act was highly proper, on account of Absalom's incestuous conduct. Alas! what evils have sprung out of the corrupt lusts of our poor, fallen nature!

4 ¶ Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present.

5 So Amasa went to assemble *the men of Judah*: but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him.

The tardiness of the men of Judah, confirms the idea that David was not well received by them.

6 And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than *did* Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us.

7 And there went out after him Joab's men; and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

It is somewhat extraordinary, that as Joab was degraded from being captain of the host, he should still be in the army; yet so it was.

8 When they *were* at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them. And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle *with* a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out.

9 And Joab said to Amasa, *Art* thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him.

10 But Amasa took no heed to the sword that *was* in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth *rib*, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri.

Joab, evidently was a man of blood, a man of uncontrolled passion, and full of vindictive resentment; yet certainly he was a very successful instrument for good to David.

11 And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoureth Joab, and he that *is* for David, *let him go* after Joab.

12 And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him stood still.

13 When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

We hear nothing of David's resentment on this occasion. Probably, the commission he had himself sent to Joab some years before, concerning Uriah, prevented him. Chap. xi. 14—17.

14 ¶ And he went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel, and to Beth-maachah, and all the Beerites: and they were gathered together, and went also after him.

15 And they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maachah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that *were* with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down.

As this city belonged to the tribe of Napthali, it is to be wondered at, that Joab did not according to the law, first propose terms of peace, before that he and his army began to batter the wall. See Deut. xx. 10—14.

16 ¶ Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee.

17 And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, *Art* thou Joab? And he answered, *I am he*. Then she said unto him, Hear the words of thine handmaid. And he answered, I do hear.

18 Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask *counsel* at Abel: and so they ended *the matter*.

19 *I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?*

Solomon speaks of a poor man's saving a city by his wisdom. No doubt, Jesus may be there intended. But here is a wise woman. See Ecclesiastes ix. 14, 15. The expression of asking counsel of Abel, seems to have been somewhat proverbial; meaning, probably, that counsel of advice, in proposing terms of peace, were first made before an army proceeded to battle. Paul dwells upon this feature, of brethren going to war, as unsuitable to the very name of Christianity. 1 Cor vi. 5—7.

20 And Joab answered and said, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy.

21 The matter *is* not so: but a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, *even* against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall.

22 Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast *it* out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

Joab, though a man of blood, desired to prove himself a man of justice, in war. What a blessed compromise this was! How honourable to the woman, whom the Lord had made the instrument of it. Reader! What a glorious event was that, when Jesus voluntarily offered himself a ransom for his people! What a gracious display of love in God our Father, when accepting such a substitute! *Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom.* Job xxxiii. 24.

23 ¶ Now Joab *was* over all the host of Israel: and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites:

24 And Adoram *was* over the tribute: and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud *was* recorder:

25 And Scheva *was* scribe: and Zadok and Abiathar *were* the priests:

26 And Ira also the Jairite was a chief ruler about David.

Observe, Joab retains his post. David did not, or perhaps could not dismiss him. Some alteration had taken place in David's officers since the establishment. Chap. viii. 16—18.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! though the perusal of this chapter before us opens a renewed occasion for reflecting on the troubles of David; yet, I pass by the consideration of these things, for the present, in order to direct your attention, and my own, to the contemplation of our adorable Jesus, in that sweet and most invaluable part of his character of Mediator, which the view of the wise woman in Abel of *Beth maachan* naturally suggests. If it be pleasant to see this mother in Israel, saving a city by her interposition; think, Reader, how very delightful ought it to be, to behold Jesus saving a world, by the exercise of this glorious office. He came in the name of Jehovah, proposing terms of peace. And such terms as astonished angels. Not that one of our rebellious Chieftains, like Sheba, should be given up: Not that a thousand, or ten thousand should die to ransom the rest; though that had been an unspeakable mercy. But that He, the gracious, the merciful, the mighty Ambassador would mediate peace, and reconciliation, by the gift and sacrifice of himself. Well might the prophet exclaim, *Wonder O heavens, and be astonished, O earth!*

But, oh! thou precious Jesus! while I fall before thy footstool, overpowered with wonder and astonishment in the prospect of this mercy, I behold, with increasing love and surprize, the manner of thy gracious performance of the work.

Yes! dearest Lord! as my soul gazes on thy sacred Person as the Mediator, fully qualified, and fully prepared, as God and Man in one Person, to the office; I look also, until my whole soul is lost, and overwhelmed in the view, with what infinite wisdom, tenderness, love, and pity, thou camest to propose the terms, lay the foundation, and complete the whole work, for delivering thy people from *the wrath to come*. Be thou eternally praised; eternally loved; eternally adored, for this thy gracious interposition! My soul, on knees of holy transport, thankfulness, and joy, accepts thee, Lord, with all thy works of grace, desiring in time, and to all eternity, to bless and praise God for his unspeakable gift!

Reader! think, if it be possible, how it must grieve his Holy Spirit, when sinners neglect, and despise this great salvation! Think! how unalterable must be their state, whom, in consequence thereof, he leaves to wander and perish!

CHAP. XXI.

CONTENTS.

More troubles of David are related in this Chapter. Here are mentioned three years famine in Israel. To implore God's mercy, a sacrifice.
VOL. II, 5 D

fice is made, at the request of the Gibeonites, of seven of Saul's sons. A daughter of the house of Saul, named Rizpah, sheweth kindness to the dead. After this, David burieth the bones of Saul, and the bones of Jonathan.

THEN there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, *It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.*

David here appears once more in his proper character; enquiring of the Lord. And, no doubt, interceding for a remission of the punishment. And as such, a type of Him, the glorious David, to come, in after ages. God's gracious answer is soon made to earnest, fervent prayer. That promise is never out of season: Isaiah lxxv. 24.

2 And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites *were* not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah).

The Reader, in order to have a clear apprehension of this subject, must look back as far as to the days of Joshua, and read the league of friendship entered into between Israel and Gibeon. See Joshua ix. 15. The Holy Ghost hath not recorded what the conduct was which Saul manifested towards the Gibeonites. It is sufficient to know, that it must have been particularly odious, because the Lord visited it upon Israel, in those three years famine, so long after Saul's death. Reader! do not fail to remark, how sure, though slow, sometimes the Lord's judgments are. The apostle, speaking of the awful certainty of such things, describes the tremendous visitation with which the Lord will in the end of the day, account with sinners, in those awful terms; *whose judgment, (says he) now of a long time, lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.* 2 Peter ii. 3.

3 Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?

It is probable, that as David had brought this affair before the Lord, and had sought direction from the Lord what to do, the Lord had given direction to him to consult the Gibeonites.

4 And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel.

And he said, What ye shall say, *that* will I do for you.

5 And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us *that* we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel,

6 Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, *whom* the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give *them*.

Their rejection of gold and silver, was meant to shew that nothing so contemptible could be equivalent for the wrongs they had sustained. And by telling David, that they did not expect that he, or his people, should be the executioners of justice, evidently shewed that they were looking to the divine precept, blood for blood. Gen. ix. 6. And that they would, if the king approved, execute the sentence themselves.

7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the LORD's oath that *was* between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.

8 But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Mehola-thite:

9 And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell *all* seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first *days*, in the beginning of barley harvest.

In the choice David made of the persons to be sacrificed, the divine justice may be also traced: Saul had given *Merab*, his daughter, to *Adriel*, though promised to David. And here the issue of that marriage suffers the punishment. If parents would but consider how much their conduct operates upon the future circumstances of their children, what a check might this sometimes prove, to keep back from presumptuous sins. The friendship and the loves of David and Jonathan, are sweetly kept up. Reader! the sacrifice here made is a solemn history. And, no doubt, it being recorded, was with a view to say as much. But, do not fail to keep a steady eye upon the hand of God in it. This reconciles all we meet with in otherwise questionable cases. And surely, far

better that the house of Saul, in every department of which it is said to be bloody, should perish, than that all Israel should be famished: Even Caiaphas could say it was better that one man should die for the people, than that the nation should perish. John xi. 50. Blessed Jesus! thou wast pleased to confirm this by thy precious death. Thou hast died; *the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.* Bring us then to God, oh thou bleeding Lamb, since thou hast taken away sin by the sacrifice of thyself!

10 ¶ And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.

11 And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done.

It should seem that in the instance of those seven persons of Saul's house, hung up to perish by the Gibeonites, there was an evident departure from the law, which enjoined, that the body of him that was hanged on a tree, should not in any wise remain all night, for he that is hanged is cursed of God. See Deut. xxi. 23. Therefore there must be some very special design intended from this present occasion. That those bodies actually continued hanging, is, I think, very clear, not only from the watching of *Rizpah*, (for, wherefore should she have watched, but to preserve them from birds and beasts of prey?) but also from what is said, that David when he brought back the bones of Saul and Jonathan, *gathered also the bones of them that were hanged.* Besides, as the watching of Rizpah continued until the water dropped *upon them* out of heaven; it seems that the famine had been occasioned for want of rain, and that when the rain descended, it was considered as an answer from the Lord, of his approbation; and then, and not before, the bodies were taken down and buried. But, if this be the real state of the case, are we not led to the discovery of a most important thing, shadowed out by this? Reader! look at it again. Here are seven persons, contrary to God's own law, kept suspended between heaven and earth, after being hanged. And the law expressly forbade it on this account, *for he that is hanged is accursed of God.* But after this was done, God was intreated for the land. And could any thing more strikingly set forth, in those remote ages, from the crucifixion of Jesus, a circumstance more in point? Was not Jesus made sin, and a curse for us, and for this express purpose, that he might redeem us from everlasting famine? And after the accomplishment of this great end, was not our God entreated for the land? Yes! thou precious Surety of the poor sinner; thou wert made, not merely the curse of the *judicial* law, but thou wert made the curse of the *moral* law; as if designed on purpose to shew that the blessed Jesus was hung up between heaven and earth, as if unworthy of either, and in all this, being the sinners' Surety, though in

himself holy, harmless, and undefiled, yet he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God, in him. 2 Cor. v. 21. See Gal. iii. 13. And as it was by the bones of those sons of Saul, so is it spoken of our Lord Jesus; *after they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.* Acts xiii. 29.

12 ¶ And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, which had stolen them from the street of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa :

13 And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged.

14 And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded. And after that God was intreated for the land.

15 Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel: and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines: and David waxed faint.

16 And Ishbi-benob, which *was* of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear *weighed* three hundred *shekels* of brass in weight, he being girded with a new *sword*, thought to have slain David.

17 Rut Abishai the son of Zeruiah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.

18 And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which *was* of the sons of the giant.

19 And there was again a battle in Gob with

the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, a Beth-lehemite, slew *the brother of Goliath* the Gittite, the staff of whose spear *was* like a weaver's beam.

20 And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of *great* stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant.

21 And when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimeah the brother of David slew him.

22 These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

It is worthy the Reader's remark, that as David's first exercise in the field of battle, was with the giant, so his last should be. In the spiritual warfare it is the same. The great champion we contend with, the devil, begins the war, and sometimes gives striking testimonies that he fights with us, as we end the war. But what a precious thought is it, that *more is He that is with us, than all that are against us!* You may, my brother! like David, *wax faint*; and the enemy may think to slay you. But no *new* sword, nor old one, while David's Lord fights your battles, can subdue you; for the promise is absolute: *No weapon formed against thee shall prosper. The heritage, and the righteousness of the servants of the Lord, is of the Lord.* Isaiah liv. 17. Reader! are you faint by reason of sin; or, from the opposition of the giants, your enemies; the world, the flesh, and the devil? Live upon the fulness of Jesus; upon Jesus himself, who brings with him all his promises, which are yea, and amen; and depend upon it, every tittle of his sacred word will be fulfilled: and *the God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly.* Rom. xvi. 20.

REFLECTIONS.

SEE, Reader! in the solemn events of this chapter, in the giving up the sons of Saul to death, how awfully true that denunciation of the Lord is, of *visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him.* Oh! ye that are parents! let this sad example before your eyes, prompt you to seek grace from God, to be kept back from sin; lest the Lord smite the fathers with the children, and both are involved in the evil of their ways.

Precious Jesus! it is impossible to turn to any part in the Bible, or to any subject, or person, or thing contained in it, without finding somewhat that, either by immediate allusion, or in direct reference, points to thee. Every where, methinks, I discover thee. And in every thing

indeed, would I desire to have my soul exercised in the contemplation of thee. For, dearest Lord! that subject loseth all its beauty, all its loveliness, however pleasing in itself, that terminates not in thee. And though the bloody house of Saul is as remote, (and infinitely more remote), as hell from heaven, compared to thee; yet, when I see the ordinary law of our God broken, that in their hanging up, they might be suspended betwixt earth and heaven, until that God was entreated for the land: how is it possible, not to have my mind instantly led to thee, thou sinners' Surety, and sinners' Friend, who literally, and truly, wast made both sin and a curse for thy people, when thou knewest no sin, on purpose that they might be made the righteousness of God, in thee. There on thy cross, blessed Jesus, would I for ever fix my eye, unless, indeed, now and then to follow thee, in the contemplation of thy conquests over it, in thy triumphal entrance into heaven. On Jesus would I for ever gaze. In every ordinance, in every providence, in every prayer, in every song of praise; there, there would my ravished soul look, and say; there hangs my hope, my joy, my everlasting security! And on thee, and thy dear Person, do I hang all the glory of my Father's house, and all the glory of my own salvation. Oh! the precious, precious, Person of my adored Redeemer! So sweet, so suitable, so gracious, art thou to my soul, as a poor convicted sinner, that, like Paul, my determination is fixed; henceforth, *I will know nothing among men, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* And, blessed be my God, I hope and trust I can, with the same assurance of faith, say as he did, *for I know him to be the power of God, and the wisdom of God, for salvation to me, and to every one that believeth.*

CHAP. XXII.

CONTENTS.

The prosecution of David's history is interrupted through the whole of this Chapter, in order to introduce his Song, or Psalm of praise. It is not said when David wrote it; but it is said when he spake it, for the title of it expresses that it was when the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and particularly out of the hand of Saul. It contains therefore, from beginning to end, manifold praises for manifold deliverances.

AND David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day *that* the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul:

We have this same Psalm, only with suitable variations, among the collection of David's Psalms, the 18th in number. In that collection, this first verse forms the title page to what follows. There is a great beauty, as well as a great expression of devotion, in what is here said—*in the day*; meaning, that David suffered not the impression of the Lord's goodness to cool upon his mind, but while the fire of grace, which the Lord had kindled, burned within him, his soul went forth in

the sacrifice of praise and love, to the great Author of his mercies, upon the Altar which sanctifieth the gift, even Jesus.

2 And he said, The LORD *is* my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer:

3 The God of my rock; in him will I trust: *he is* my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.

Do observe how David is labouring for expressions to shew forth the wonderful perfections of God, and that *that* God, with all his perfections, is *his* God in covenant. Oh! it is sweet when faith makes an appropriating right of all that God hath, and is, as our own, when, like the bee, the flowers are not only visited by her, and sipped in the present moment, but she brings home to her little hive constant store for every occasion. Reader! see to it, in your own experience, that this is your case. When you not only contemplate a God in Christ, as the rock, and fortress, and deliverer of his people; but faith can add to it, he is the God of *my* rock, and in him do I trust.

4 I will call on the LORD, *who is* worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

There are two sweet employments David resolves on in this verse, namely, to call upon the Lord: and secondly, because that Lord is so worthy of praise, that he will praise him. Reader! do not forget, that these are the natural, (I had almost said, but I would rather say), the *gracious* consequences of having relationship in, and interest with our God in Christ Jesus.

5 When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid;

6 The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me;

There seems to be from this verse, David's entrance upon the whole subject of his life, in the many deliverances which the Lord had wrought out for him! He compares the many attacks of his enemies, to the image of floods pouring in upon the soul, to overwhelm it. Reader! it is precious to remark in our own experience, that, from the grace that is in Christ Jesus, *many waters cannot quench love, neither all the floods drown it*. No, blessed Jesus! thy love in the hearts of thy people, planted in their souls by thine own Almighty hand, is an incorruptible seed, that liveth and abideth for ever. David uses two other similitudes to describe his trials by; *the sorrows of hell*, and *the snares of death*: meaning, that both hell and death joined in confederacy against him. And from the dangers of both, he had no more power to deliver himself, than sinners from the terrors of the chained in hell; nor, than dead men fast-bound in the grave. Reader! consider this in a spiritual sense, and how will it tend to heighten the deliverance from everlasting misery, and everlasting death, by the Person and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ!

7 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry *did enter* into his ears.

8 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth.

9 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

10 He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness *was* under his feet.

11 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind.

12 And he made darkness pavilions round about him, dark waters, *and* thick clouds of the skies.

13 Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled.

14 The LORD thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered his voice.

15 And he sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them.

16 And the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.

17 He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters;

18 He delivered me from my strong enemy, *and* from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me.

19 They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.

The preparatory verses, are all intended as introductory to what is here said. For, if such was David's misery; such his enemies; such his helplessness, and inability to cope with them; what grace must have been manifested in his deliverance by the Lord God of his salvation. The expressions of which David makes use, of the shaking of the earth, and the foundation of the heavens, are not to be understood literally;

but, the mercies in which the Lord spake to him on those occasions, were as evident tokens of the Lord's kindness and regard to him, as if God had spoken by thunder, and manifested the part he took in it, by a voice from heaven. Reader! spiritually considered, when sinners are awakened, and converted, by the gracious operations of God the Holy Ghost, do not their souls sometimes answer to those mercies, by the first apprehensions of the mind, as if their whole frames were convulsed, like the trembling of the earth, or the shaking of the heavens. Probably, in this high and beautiful style of expression, David had in view, Moses' account of the Lord's leading his chosen out of Egypt. The sacred writers, in more than one instance, seem to have had this in view. See Exod. xv. 2—13. Habak. iii. 2, to the end. Psm. cxiv. 1, to the end.

20 He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

There is a great beauty in this verse, in that it clearly traces the cause of divine favour; not to the circumstance of common providence, but to covenant love, to distinguishing grace, and mercy. Sweet thought! *Who hath saved us, and called us, (saith Paul) with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.* 2 Tim. i. 9.

21 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

22 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

23 For all his judgments *were* before me: and *as for* his statutes, I did not depart from them.

24 I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity.

25 Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eye sight.

I desire the Reader particularly to observe how he reads those verses, in order that he may have a clear apprehension of David's meaning, in what he saith in them. He is here stating the ground of his innocence, as it related to his conduct towards his neighbour, and particularly as it referred to Saul. The title of the Psalm saith as much, that *David spake these words in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul.* And, as far as his history informs us with respect to his conduct towards Saul, his whole behaviour was such that he might plead his innocence. So that when accused by *men* he could plead to God. But Reader! do not from hence imagine that David meant here, or in any other part of his life, that the Lord rewarded him according to his righteousness, or

the cleanness of his hands, in the sight of God. Alas! David was so conscious of his sins, that he cries out, *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.* We may with humbleness of soul, ascribing at the same time the whole glory to God for the grace bestowed upon us in enabling us to perform it; we may bless God when we can appeal to him concerning our integrity between man and man; but with respect to our whole lives before God, every saint on earth must lay his hand upon his mouth, and say with Job, *If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul.* Job ix. 20, 21. Reader! do mark this down in the memorandums of thy heart. Depend upon it, it is a solemn thing for a poor sinner, though looking up for acceptance and justification in the person and righteousness of Jesus, to stand before God.

26 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, *and* with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright.

27 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unsavoury.

To a true believer in Christ, God's righteousness is as dear and precious as his mercy, or his love; because he sees in Jesus, as the God-man, that righteousness fully glorified, and *grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life.* So that to the pure all things are pure. Titus i. 15.

28 And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes are upon the haughty, *that* thou mayest bring them down.

This is a sweet verse. The eyes of the Lord are to humble the proud, to raise up the afflicted. Reader! think of this in your thoughts of Jesus.

29 For thou *art* my lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness.

30 For by thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall.

It is delightful to make improvement of Jesus upon all occasions, as the soul wants him. Am I in distress, he will be my Comforter. Am I in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. Am I shut up and cannot get out; by Jesus's arm I shall leap over the wall. Reader! depend upon it, that it is the great secret of religion to know how to use the Lord Jesus for all things, and to consider our wants, be they what they may, as only affording the better opportunity for the communication of his fulness.

31 *As for* God, his way is perfect; the word of

the LORD *is* tried: he *is* a buckler to all them that trust in him.

32 For who *is* God, save the LORD? and who *is* a rock, save our God?

33 God *is* my strength *and* power: and he maketh my way perfect.

34 He maketh my feet like hind's *feet*: and setteth me upon my high places.

35 He teacheth my hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

36 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy gentleness hath made me great.

37 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip.

38 I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them; and turned not again until I had consumed them.

39 And I have consumed them, and wounded them, that they could not arise: yea, they are fallen under my feet.

40 For thou hast girded me with strength to battle: them that rose up against me hast thou subdued under me.

41 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me.

42 They looked, but *there was* none to save; *even* unto the LORD, but he answered them not.

43 Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the mire of the street, *and* did spread them abroad.

44 Thou also hast delivered me from the strivings of my people, thou hast kept me *to be* head of the heathen: a people *which* I knew not shall serve me.

45 Strangers shall submit themselves unto me:

as soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me.

46 Strangers shall fade away, and they shall be afraid out of their close places.

I beg the Reader in the perusal of these verses to keep his eye close to the mercies described, and his heart closer still to the view of David's referring all unto the will, and sovereignty, and goodness of God. He dwells largely on what the Lord had enabled him to do, and what the Lord had done for him. But he dwells much more largely on the Lord himself. Great things he speaks of the Lord's deliverances for him: but greater things of God himself, the God of his salvation. Reader! do not forget this. The Lord God in covenant engagements is for ever doing great things for his people. But all this is designed to shew us how infinitely more precious the Lord is himself. Carnal men will sometimes speak of God's works, for his providences are so plain and striking as to compel them to it. But gracious men sing of God himself. We may have other blessings from our God, and more gifts of his hand; but we never can have another Jesus. Christ is all and in all.

47 The LORD liveth; and blessed *be* my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation.

48 It is God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me,

49 And that bringeth me forth from mine enemies: thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me; thou hast delivered me from the violent man.

50 Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name.

51 *He* is the tower of salvation for his king: and sheweth mercy to his anointed, unto David, and to his seed for evermore.

The concluding verse of this charming song becomes a key to all the rest. Here David runs the whole of divine mercies up to their source, as centered in the person of God's anointed. And as David was a type of Christ, we may here see how the whole, as a song of deliverance, is directly pointing to redemption-work from spiritual enemies, in the person, and by the conquest and victories to our Lord Jesus Christ. He is indeed the promised seed, the anointed, the only anointed of the Father, full of grace and truth. He hath already, and will finally and fully, at the great day of judgment, beat down all his foes before his face, and by the conquests of his grace in the hearts of his people he

bath brought them down under him, and made them willing in the day of his power. 'Precious Jesus! give me, and give every Reader of thy people, to trace thy steps in the perusal of this divine chapter. God our Father hath given salvation unto thee his king, and hath given unto thee a name, which is above every name. 'And to thee, and thy spiritual seed in thee, the Lord will give blessings for evermore.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us not dismiss this chapter with all its precious contents from our minds, until that we have duly pondered the blessed things it contains; and as duly examined our own personal interest in them. Can you and I say with the same lively sentiments of praise and love, and gratitude, as David did, 'The Lord is my rock, my shield, my tower, my refuge, my Saviour. Oh! precious thought, when the soul hath a well grounded assurance of a covenant interest in Jesus.

But Reader! while we seek earnestly for these things, let us learn also from it, how all such as are called to an interest in Jesus, are called also to a fellowship and conformity in the trials of Jesus, and the persecution of enemies. Communion with our Great Head must necessarily subject every member of his mystical body to a participation in suffering. Waves of death, and floods of ungodly men, will compass us about. We wrestle with flesh, and blood, with evil angels, with ungodly men, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with the Sauls, and the Absaloms, and the Shimei's every where around. Oh! for grace to see, and faith to believe, that in God's strength alone our victory must be wrought. Jesus will light our candle; Jesus himself will be our shield, our sun, our hiding place, our refuge.

But principally, in the review of this chapter, Lord give both Writer and Reader to contemplate Jesus, the Almighty David of his people, as conquering sin, death, hell, and the grave; and beating down all the foes of our salvation, which opposed the deliverance of his people. Yes! Almighty Conqueror! thou art all that is here rehearsed, and infinitely more, to thy people! In thy complete and finished work, when thou camest forth for the salvation of thy chosen, thou didst triumph over all opposition; thou hast spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, nailing them to thy cross. Blessed God! enable me to follow thee to victory, and continually to go forth in thy strength, and in thy name, making mention of thy righteousness, even thine only, saying I shall be more than conqueror through thee who hast loved me.

CHAP. XXIII.

CONTENTS.

This chapter contains some of the last words of David, and as such cannot but be very interesting. To these words of David is added a list of David's worthies, his mighty men.

NOW these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was

raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said,

In remarking those last words of David I would beg the Reader to observe the titles by which David is spoken of in this verse. *First*, looking back to his humble and obscure birth, he takes the name of the son of Jesse. Jesus is uniformly spoken of as a root out of a dry ground, and though Lord of all, yet becoming the servant of all. *Secondly*; David is called the man who was raised up on high. The manhood of the Lord Jesus is exalted to the most sovereign and supreme honours. *All power is given to him in heaven and in earth.* *Thirdly*, David is said to be the anointed of the God of Jacob. Christ also was anointed to his commission, and did not take the office unappointed or uncalled. *Lastly*, David is called the sweet Psalmist of Israel. But why are the Psalms of David sweet, but because they sing of the redemption of Jesus. Oh! dearest Jesus, how delightful is it to trace thy shadows in all things, and thy salvation as the sum and substance of every thing. By the last words of David, I understand not the very last words he ever spake, because frequently after this he spake to the people, and those about him. But by the last words I apprehend is meant the last important words which he spake by the Spirit of prophecy. David was a prophet, and an eminent one. So Peter described him, Acts ii. 29, 30. And as the patriarchs, when dying, were blessed with a more than ordinary out-pouring of the Spirit, to deliver things concerning the church; so David seems to have been eminently under divine teaching when he spake these words. See Gen. xlix. 1. Deut. xxxiii. 1.

2 The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.

3 The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men *must be* just, ruling in the fear of God.

If the Reader carefully attends to those three distinct titles, and yet all one and the same, by which David describes the Lord Jehovah, perhaps he will be inclined to think, as some learned men have done before him, that they imply the threefold, well known character, by which the Lord Jehovah is revealed in a Trinity of persons in the God-head. The God of Israel is the well known title of the Father. The Rock of Israel evidently refers, and in a peculiar manner, to God the Son. And the Spirit of the Lord is the common appellation by which God the Holy Ghost is, for the most part, known in all the sacred writings. Reader! how delightful to behold this glorious foundation article of our holy faith cherished and lived upon by the early fathers in the church. And, before we enter upon the review of these last words of David, I cannot but hope that the Reader will remark that, what David is about in the opening of this chapter to leave upon record to the church, is both what the Spirit of the Lord spoke *by* him; and also what the Rock of Israel spake *to* him. Do not overlook this distinction I beseech you. What the spirit spake *by* David, is what was designed for the instruction of others. What the Rock of Israel spake *to* David, no

doubt is what the Lord Jesus spake for his own personal advantage. The *former* was in the teaching of the Holy Ghost. The *latter* among the blessed manifestations of Jesus. What David delivered to others in his Psalms, or history, as intended for the benefit of the church, brings with it, therefore, all possible authority, for *holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. 2 Pet. i. 21. Blessed privilege! Highly distinguished honour! to have the communications of Jesus for our own felicity, and the teachings of the Holy Ghost for the comfort of others.

4 And *he shall be* as the light of the morning, *when* the sun riseth, *even* a morning without clouds; as the tender grass *springing* out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

Who can this be but Jesus? Of whom, among the sons of men, could it ever be said that he was as *a morning without clouds*? Neither angels, nor men; nor ordinances, nor graces, nor all the moons of the night, nor the suns of the day, ever shone as a morning without clouds. What a sweet similitude to represent him, and his all-perfect salvation, with whom *there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning!*

5 Although my house *be* not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things*, and sure: for *this is* all my salvation, and all *my* desire, although he make *it* not to grow.

How natural and proper was it for David, when speaking of Jesus, and his salvation, to make an immediate transition to his own personal interest in both; and to take comfort from this delightful assurance, amidst all the outward circumstances which had arisen through life to distress him. Reader! as this verse of David's hath afforded comfort to thousands, and will continue to do so until time shall be no more, I would wish you not to pass it over hastily, but look into its several properties, praying over it, that the Lord may grant you to adopt (if it be his blessed will) the same precious assurance on the same precious grounds. Do observe the confession David makes of his personal calamities. *Although* (says he) *my house be not so with God*. Poor man! what a scene of sin and evil did the walls of his house furnish in his graceless children. To say nothing of the great miscarriages he had wrought himself; his day was a day of clouds, from morning even to the evening. How many of his children died in their sins! But what saith David under these trying circumstances? *Although my house be not so with God; yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant*. As if he had said, Jesus is mine, though he be not my childrens'. God hath given me Jesus, and that is enough: for in him I have all things. He is better to me than a thousand sons. Sweet consolation, and a glorious relief, under all afflictions. But this is not all included in it. The covenant in Jesus's blood and righteousness is an everlasting covenant. It reaches into eternity. It is also ordered in all things, brings

* all blessings with it. And it is sure: nothing can break it down. It may well be called *the sure mercies of David*. And lastly; David sums up all in declaring, that it is not only all his salvation, but all his desire, although he make it not to grow. As if he had said, In Jesus my felicity is so complete, my redemption so perfect, and my desires so fully answered, that I find no room for any thing more. It is all my salvation, for it leaves no room for any thing to be added. It is all my desire, for I can want nothing beside. Here then I rest my soul with all its capacious cravings for happiness. In Jesus I have all. Reader! what say you to this blessed conclusion of David!

6 But *the sons of Belial shall be* all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands:

7 But the man *that* shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the *same* place.

What a contrast is here drawn! And in what an awful state he describes the sons of Belial! are these not similar expressions to denote children of the evil one. It is an awful subject, but seems to be accurately drawn by the pencil of God, that the children of the kingdom of grace are not more plainly defined throughout the Bible, than the children of the wicked one. See some of these scriptures in point. John viii. 44. 1 John iii. 8—10.

8 ¶ These *be* the names of the mighty men whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same *was* Adino the Eznite: *he lift up his spear* against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time.

9 And after him *was* Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, *one* of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines *that* were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away:

10 He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the LORD wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil.

11 And after him *was* Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were ga-

thered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles: and the people fled from the Philistines.

12 But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory.

13 And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim.

14 And David *was* then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines *was* then in Beth-lehem.

15 And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem which *is* by the gate!

16 And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Beth-lehem, that *was* by the gate, and took *it*, and brought *it* to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD.

17 And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: *is not this* the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men.

18 And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief among three. And he lifted up his spear against three hundred, and slew *them*, and had the name among three.

19 Was he not most honourable of three? therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the *first* three.

20 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lion-like men of Moab: he went

down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow:

21 And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear.

22 These *things* did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men.

23 He was more honourable than the thirty, but he attained not to the *first* three. And David set him over his guard.

24 Asahel the brother of Joab *was* one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Beth-lehem;

25 Shammah the Harodite, Elikah the Harodite,

26 Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite,

27 Abiezer the Anethothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite,

28 Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite,

29 Heleb the son of Baanah, a Netophathite, Ittai the son of Ribai out of Gibeah of the children of Benjamin,

30 Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash,

31 Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite,

32 Eliahba the Shaalbonite, of the sons of Jashen, Jonathan,

33 Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite,

34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite.

- 35 Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite,
 36 Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the
 Gadite,
 37 Zelek the Ammonite, Nahari the Beero-
 thite, armourbearer to Joab the son of Zeruiah,
 38 Ira an Ithrite, Gareb an Ithrite,
 39 Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all.

I do not think it needful to swell the Commentary unnecessarily, and therefore include all these verses in one reading, and shall not detain the Reader with long observations upon them. As the Holy Ghost hath thought proper to record the names of David's worthies in this manner, I beg the Reader will remember, that if I pass them by without particular observation, it is not because they merit it not, but because I aim to compress, as much as possible, all my notes and observations within the narrowest compass. They may serve to remind us, that if the worthies of David were meriting of so much honour as to have their names recorded in the book of God; how much more shall the worthies of Jesus, David's Lord, have their names written in the book of life. The water of Bethlehem, which David longed for, seems to have had a gospel signification. By the spirit of prophecy David knew that Christ, the well of life to his people, should be born in Bethlehem. In this sense the passage is very sweet and instructive: and serves to teach us how the souls of thirsty sinners are made to long for this blessed water, and how very sure it is that the Lord Jesus will be to them *a well of water springing up unto everlasting life*. John iv. 14. Rev. vii. 17. xxi. 1.

REFLECTIONS.

How sweet are the last words of dying saints. And how doubly so when they are sanctified to lead to Jesus. Reader! amidst all the trying dispensations in the life of the patriarch David; yet observe what confidence in covenant engagements can do, to give a soul comfort and holy joy. David's troubles were so many, so grievous, and so complicated, that it is quite proverbial when we speak of the man, to speak also of his sorrows; *Lord remember David and all his troubles*. But oh! how enviable the trouble that is sanctified! How coveted the situation which Jesus blesses. He saw the day of Christ, like another Abraham, afar off, as a morning without a cloud. He comforted himself in the assurance of the covenant, which was ordered in all things and sure. And he could, and did, take all the consolation of it as the whole of his salvation, and the whole of his desire, whatever outer circumstances in his life arose to exercise his mind.

Blessed Jesus! give my soul, like David, to see thee to be the whole of the covenant; and in thee, and thy finished redemption-work, fix the whole of my desire. Let a throne of grace witness for me, that I would seek life with all its dependencies; life temporal, and life eternal; wholly as David did upon the ground of the Covenant, the everlasting Covenant, through thy blood and righteousness. In all the actions of my

life, and with my dying breath, I would say as David; *It is all my salvation and all my desire.* And oh! thou dear Redeemer! As all my hopes, my expectations, are from thee in thy covenant righteousness, without an atom of any thing of mine to add to it; Lord give me grace to live as I hope to die, in making these my constant study and delight, my songs of rejoicing in the house of my pilgrimage. To Jesus would I daily, hourly come; in him be found. To him would I cleave. With him would I walk; venturing upon Christ, resting in him, and hanging upon him. And as it is said, they shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house, so would I the whole of my salvation. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; *to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

CHAP. XXIV.

CONTENTS.

We have, in this chapter, a part of David's history, the date of which is not certain. He is here in a state of trespassing against the Lord, by numbering the people. The prophet Gad is sent to reprove him, and to propose to his choice one of three plagues with which the Lord would chastise him. We have also the relation of the chastisement, and David's repentance.

AND again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

2 For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which *was* with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people.

It is more than probable that David's sin, on this occasion, was, that he was looking for strength from numbers more than from the Lord. And Satan found occasion to blow up this pride of David into a flame of rebellion against the Lord. Alas! what is man in his highest attainments, if but for a moment left to himself and his own government? Well might David, from his own experience, put up the prayer which he did upon another occasion; *Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.* Psm. xix. 13.

3 And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see *it*: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?

4 Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed

against Joab, and against the captains of the host. And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel.

5 And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Aroer, on the right side of the city that *lieth* in the midst of the river of Gad, and toward Jazer:

6 Then they came to Gilcad, and to the land of Tahtim-hodshi; and they came to Dan-jaan, and about to Zidon,

7 And came to the strong hold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites: and they went out to the south of Judah, *even* to Beer-sheba.

8 So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.

9 And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah *were* five hundred thousand men.

It is worthy remark how ineffectual all advice is when grace leads us not. This childish gratification of David, to speak the best of it, seems to have had so little temptation to lead to the commission of this sin, that we only wonder, at times, how it is that believers, who had been victorious upon great temptations, have fallen by the less. But it is grace makes all the difference. If Jesus keep us, we are safe. If the holding up his arm be but for a moment withdrawn, all our strength gives way to the most pitiful temptation. One should have thought the number both of Israel and of Judah would have been greater. It was now about *four hundred and thirty years* from the time that Joshua brought the people into Canaan; and yet the increase had not been much above double in all that time.

10 ¶ And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

11 For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying,

12 Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three *things*; choose thee one of them, that I may *do it* unto thee.

13 So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me.

Though David's sin seems plainly to have been the sin of presumption, in trusting more to an arm of flesh than in the Lord God of his salvation; yet, it must be confessed, that both in the sin, and in the proposed punishment, we have not so clear marks to form our conclusions as to speak with certainty.

That God should propose what kind of punishment the sinner would choose, appears difficult to explain. I confess that I am much inclined to look at the whole subject in a gospel sense, and consider the representation here made, *the shadow of good things to come*. And I am the more inclined to this idea from what is said concerning it in the very opening of the chapter; that the anger of the Lord was kindled against *Israel*. It was a *national* sin, not a *personal* sin only, in the case of David's numbering the people. And as such, did it not intimate the universal state of man by sin and transgression, all subject to death and destruction! Reader! If we regard it in this point of view, how directly it leads the soul to the redemption by Jesus. When sinners are brought under a deep sense of sin, and accept (as it is called) the punishment of their iniquity; they are then brought into a state of grace for the cordial reception of the gospel of Jesus. See Levit. xxvi. 41.

14 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies *are* great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.

15 So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beer-sheba seventy thousand men.

It is worthy our observation, that this memorable transaction was on the very spot where in ages before the Lord shewed mercy to Abraham, even on *mount Moriah*. And this I cannot but think becomes a fur-

ther confirmation of what I before suggested. Surely so grand an object as the redemption of our sinful nature by the sacrifice of Jesus, was deservedly shadowed forth, at various times, to the several ages of the faithful which were so highly interested in it. Hence Abraham is commanded to sacrifice his son; and the pestilence to Israel lays the foundation for the introduction of this sacrifice again, in the same spot, on mount Moriah. See Gen. xxii. 2. See also 2 Chron. iii. 1.

16 And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite.

17 ¶ And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.

18 And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite.

19 And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded.

20 And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground.

21 And Araunah said, Wherefore is my LORD the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshingfloor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people.

22 And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what *seemeth* good unto him: behold, *here be* oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and *other* instruments of the oxen for wood.

23 All these *things* did Araunah, *as a king,*

give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee.

24 And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy *it* of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

25 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

I do not think it necessary to interrupt the reading of those verses with any observation on the conduct and generosity either of David or Araunah; because what I chiefly wish to have impressed on the Reader's mind, is the shadowy representation it seemeth to possess, of the gospel dispensation by the Lord Jesus. I beg the Reader to observe, however, that I do not presume to say that my views of this passage are right. I leave him to a wiser and better direction concerning them. I confess that I love to search for Jesus, as for hidden treasure, in all the parts of his most holy word. And convinced, as I fully am, that to him the whole of revelation points, I would pass over all lesser objects, so that I may but find him. And when I consider how particularly the prophet Gad commanded David to rear an altar in this spot, mount Moriah, which Abraham had before found so memorable, when I observe further, that this was the same spot on which Solomon built his famous temple, which also was an evident type of Christ; and when I consider that Christ himself is both the altar, the sacrifice, and the sacrificer, for us; and that God our Father, for his sake, and for his sake alone, is entreated for the land, and the plague and everlasting destruction for sin is now stayed from Israel; I rejoice to behold Jesus through those distant mediums so graciously held forth to the church, and cannot but find my heart going forth in songs of holy joy, that the same is he of whom Moses, and the prophets, and patriarchs, did write, Jesus of Nazareth; *Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.* Acts iv. 12.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! with this chapter we close this sacred book of God, which brings us in point of historical relation, very nearly, though not completely so, to the end of David's life. Let us not close it, however, until that we have first blessed the Lord for so truly valuable a part of the Old Testament records: and more especially, for that part of David's history contained in it, which bears evident allusion to the Great Redeemer of mankind, of whom, in many instances, David was a lively

type. It is a precious thing, and most highly to be valued by the true believer in Jesus, when we are led to see the tenderness and love of God our Father to the church, in thus holding forth, under such a variety of similitudes, and representations, to the early ages, the prominent features of a redemption, which was, in the fulness of time, to be wrought out, and completed by his dear Son. And it is as thankfully to be remembered by the believer, in honour and glory to the Holy Ghost, that in his blessed office of glorifying the Lord Jesus, he hath so sweetly caused to be recorded, for the exercise of the faith of Old Testament saints, as well as the establishment of New Testament believers, the very many outlines of His person and offices, whose one glorious work of salvation, hath perfected for ever, them that are sanctified!

Hail! Holy! Holy! Holy! Undivided Three in One; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! Blessed be the Lord God, Jehovah, for all his covenant love, and mercy, in Jesus! and for all the precious records this book contains, of the glorious events of redemption by him. And, oh! thou dearest Jesus, thou blessed Reconciler of a gracious God with poor fallen man! Thou art the Author, the means, the end, the sum, the substance of all true peace in the church, above and below. Give me to see thee, blessed Jesus, as David did, as the gracious Interposer, to stay the destroying angel's hand over Jerusalem. And may my soul go up to the threshingfloor of the poor Jebusite, to offer the sacrifice of thine own blood and righteousness; and these, on thine own sacred Person, the Altar which sanctifieth the gift; that I may find peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. And blessed, for ever blessed be the God of peace, which brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, that he hath been entreated for our guilty land, and the plague of sin, death, hell, and the grave, is for ever stayed from his Israel. All our peace is made in the blood of the cross; and henceforth, there is now *no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Amen, and Amen.

END OF VOL. II.