

The good man's security in times of publick calamity : a sermon preach'd in Maid-Lane, Southwark, on occasion of the plague in France publish'd at the request of many that heard it / by Obadiah Hughes.

Contributors

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*The Good Man's Security in Times of
Publick Calamity.*

A
S E R M O N
P R E A C H ' D in
Maid-Lane, Southwark,
On Occasion of the
P L A G U E
I N
F R A N C E.

Publish'd at the Request of many that heard it.

By O B A D I A H H U G H E S.

L O N D O N:

*Printed for JOHN CLARK, at the Bible and Crown in
the Poultry, near Cheapside: And JOHN MORLEY,
next door to the Swan and Hoop in Cornhill. 1722.*

Price Four Pence.

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PREACHED IN

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By ORABIAN HUGHES.

LONDON.

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Price Four Pence.



ISAIAH XXVI. 20th, and Part of
the 21st Verse.

*Come, my People, enter thou into
thy Chambers, and shut thy Doors
about thee : Hide thy self as it
were for a little Moment, until the
Indignation be overpast. For be-
hold the Lord cometh out of his
place to punish the Inhabitants of
the Earth for their Iniquity.*



THE ruling Principle of Nature,
Self-Preservation, puts all Men
upon providing against Danger,
when they see it approaching:
Religion directs to the most pro-
per Methods of Security.

My Text contains the gracious call, or kind
advice of God to his People, to take the most
effectual measures for their Safety during that
general Calamity, which by his Prophet he had

declared he would send on the whole Earth.
Chap. xxiv.

The first step to be taken in discoursing on these Words, is to give you the Explication and true Sense of them.

חַרֵּר *Come, my people.* Not *go*, but *come*; intimating, that God directed them no whither, but where his Presence should be with them. *Enter into thy Chambers, and shut thy Doors about thee.* The Hebrew Word, which we translate *Chambers*, signifies the inmost and safest Part of any House; and inasmuch as Men usually choose such a Part to rest in, the Word is often in Scripture used to denote the *Bed-Chamber*. So that here good Men are directed to get into the safest and most secret Places, and then to *shut their Doors*, to make all fast about them: But God's Judgments can reach Men, how closely soever inclosed within strong Walls; they'll all fall down before his Indignation; the Arrows of the Almighty will pierce through the stoutest Trenches or Barricades. These Words therefore are not to be taken in a *literal* but a *figurative* Sense. [The Flourishes of Rhetorick are very much used in the Prophetical Style, especially by *Isaiab*; who (suitably to his Quality, as being of the Blood Royal of *Judah*, and a Courtier during several Reigns) used a Style free from Rusticity and Roughness, and much more polite and refined than the other Prophets.]

This is a *Metaphor* taken from the Custom of Men in Times of Danger. *Q. d.* "As Fear
 " and Prudence put Men on securing them-
 " selves within the safest Retreats in stormy
 " Weather, and when Dangers threaten: So
 " *come, my People*, now my Wrath is descend-
 " ing

“ ing on the Earth, take such measures to secure your selves, as will be more effectual, than the strongest Places can be in ordinary Cases.” It is very probable, that here is an Allusion to the Charge which God gave to the *Israelites*, to keep within their Houses, and not go out of their Doors, while he was passing thro’ to smite the Egyptians. Or else reference may be had to the Condition of Security given to *Rahab*, to keep within doors during the Destruction of *Jericho*. Exod. xii. 22, 23.

Hide thy self as it were for a little Moment, until the Indignation be overpast. Josh. ii. 19. i.e. Rest securely, for I will hide you from all Danger; and don’t be too much terrified, tho’ you see sad Desolations effected by my Indignation, because the Time is short, and my Wrath shall cease. Some Expositors * interpret the Word *Indignation*, as referring to Men; *till the Anger of the Tyrants, or the Fury of the Assyrians be overpast*: But this does not seem agreeable to the next Clause; *for behold the Lord cometh out of his place*, in order to shew his Indignation, and to punish the Inhabitants of the Earth. The Seventy Interpreters have therefore thought fit to supply the Word *Kuejs*, reading it, *until the Anger of the Lord be overpast*; and so do other Versions.

It is surprising to find some Critics † expounding the Words as referring to the General Judgment of the last Day; when there does not appear to be any Word looking that Way; and when the very following Words determine the Sense to a temporal Judgment, which

* Vatablus & Grotius apud Crit.

† Menochius & Sanctius apud Pol. Syn.

God at that Time was about to bring on the Earth; *for behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the Inhabitants of the Earth for their Iniquity.* These Words must certainly have a very forced Construction, if they are extended to the Judgment of the Great Day. The Purport therefore of God's Advice is, *q. d.* " The Sins of the Inhabitants of the Earth are
 " come up to me with a great Cry; so that I
 " am determined to arise out of my place, to
 " be no longer silent, but will visit them for
 " their Iniquities, a common Calamity I will
 " bring on the Earth. But I remember you,
 " my People, and have thoughts of Mercy to-
 " wards you; and therefore I give you this
 " Warning, that you may secure your selves
 " in your Places of Refuge, while the destroy-
 " ing Angel is executing his Commission; and
 " for your Comfort I assure you, that he shall
 " make quick Work, and the Time shall be
 " short e'er my Anger cease, and the Storm
 " blow over.

There is but one Difficulty in these last Words to be solved, *viz.* what is meant by the *Lord's coming out of his Place.* There is only one Passage more in Scripture, where this Phrase is used concerning God, *Mic. i. 3. The Lord cometh forth out of his Place, and will come down.* In both Passages we must not understand a *local Motion*; for God fills all Places, and is every where present: But it is the custom of Scripture, in Condescension to our shallow Capacities to ascribe to God humane Actions. The *Seventy* read it, *God from his holy Place brings his Wrath on the Inhabitants of the Earth.* The *Chaldee Paraphrase* has it, *Behold the Lord shall be reveal'd from the Place of his*

his Majesty. By *his Place* here must be understood Heaven, the Seat of God's Residence and Glory: and his *coming out of his Place* to the Earth, can denote no more than his appearing to take notice of what is done here below, by the extraordinary Effects of his Power, either in Favour of his People, or in a way of Judgment against his Enemies. In both these places it signifies God's exerting his Power against a sinful People, and coming forth in a terrible manner to punish those, who oppose his Government. Some by *his Place* understand the Temple, and so interpret this Phrase, as meaning *God's withdrawing the gracious Tokens of his Presence, which he was wont there to exhibit; and that he would go from the Mercy-seat (which was emphatically his Place) to his Throne of Judgment, and from thence execute his Wrath on the Inhabitants of the Earth for their Iniquity**. This last Interpretation (though I can't think it the proper Sense of this Place, yet) contains in it a certain Truth with respect to the great God. *Mercy* is his darling Attribute, and *Judgment* is his strange Work; and *the Lord* Zech. ii.
is raised up out of his holy Habitation, from the 13.
 Seat of his Mercy, when he is forced to proceed to the Measures of Justice.

Having thus explained the Words; the Method in which I shall consider them will be, to raise some *Propositions of Truth* contain'd in them; and add some *Rules of Duty* plainly deducible from them.

* V. Pocock on *Micah* i. 3.

The *Propositions* are six.

1. That whatever Afflictions or Calamities befall a People, the great God is the Dispenser of them.
2. That with respect to Men, Sin is the procuring Cause of them.
3. That tho' God punish the Inhabitants of the Earth for their Iniquity, yet he will not always be angry.
4. That such Calamities are not of long Continuance.
5. That in Times of common Calamity, God's People have Places of Security, wherein they may hide themselves.
6. That God gives his Servants Warning, before he sends his Judgments on a Nation, and admonishes them to provide a Shelter from the Storm.

Of each in Order.

Prop. I. That the great God is the Dispenser of all the Afflictions or Calamities which befall a People. *The Lord cometh out of his Place, &c.* It is usher'd in with a Note commanding Attention and Regard, *behold*; observe, take notice whence your Troubles come. *Shall there be Evil in a City, and the Lord hath not done it,* says the Prophet? All Calamities are the Acts of Providence; all Events that befall us proceed from God. *Affliction, as Eliphaz says, cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground.* This was a common Proverbial Speech in the *Eastern Countries*, to signify that no Event happen'd by Chance, without God's Leave or Direction: And it is certain it does

does come from him ; it is He who *forms the Light, and creates Darknefs* ; it is He that *makes Peace and creates Evil* ; *I the Lord do all these Things*, says he. Every Disease or Trouble on a private Person, or a whole Community, comes from the Hand of God ; its Commission is sign'd and seal'd in Heaven. Isaiah xlv. 7.

We are apt indeed, under sore Trials, to inveigh against *second Causes*, as if all were to be ascribed to their Influence ; whereas they are entirely subordinate to the Will of God, and cannot offend us without his License or Order : He by his All-wise and All-mighty Providence superintends and guides them all. The Observation concerning the great Famine in *Samaria* was just, tho' it was made by a wicked Man ; *Behold, this Evil is of the Lord* : But the Conclusion was wrong, *What should I wait for the Lord any longer* ; since he ought to have argued, Is it of the Lord ! therefore I should wait for him, till he who sent it, sees fit to remove it. *Job* knew this Doctrine to be true, when he answer'd his Wife, *Shall we receive Good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive Evil ?* 2 Kings vi. 33. Neither was *David* a Stranger to it, as appears by what he said when *Shimei* cursed him ; *Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David*. Job ii. 10. 2 Sam. xvi. 10.

God, as he is supreme Lord, must be acknowledged to have an absolute Power over all things ; they are under his Controul, limited by his Power, cannot act without his Leave, and must act when he commands ; *the very Winds and Waves obey him*. The destroying Angel cannot pass thro' *Ægypt*, without God's Commission ; nay, 'tis worth the remarking, that God is so far the *Author* of such Calamities,

B

that

that it is mention'd as if God was the very
 Exod. xii. *Executor* of them; *the Lord*, says *Moses*, will
 23. *pass through to smite the Egyptians.*

Neither is it less *impious* than *common* to ascribe our Calamities to the meer Agency of *inferiour Causes*, without observing the hand of God in them. This argues vast Ignorance, stupid Negligence, and a very weak Mind. The Notions which we form of the Divine Being, will make it clear to a considerate Man, that He must needs be the Dispenser of Afflictions. God is *Omniscient*, so that nothing can happen without his Knowledge; he is *Almighty*, so that nothing can be done against his Will, because otherwise he might prevent it. From hence it necessarily follows, that he must give leave to *second Causes* to act, and that they can go no farther than the Bounds which he prescribes to them. And besides, if He be *Almighty*, it follows, that these must be absolutely at his Command, they must execute his Pleasure in whatever way he sees fit to employ them. It is God's Royal Prerogative to assign to every thing its Business, and to use it for what Purposes he pleases.

This Proposition is undoubtedly true; and I have been the larger in discoursing of it, because 'tis a Truth of vast Importance. The Belief that God governs the World, and that all afflictive Evil, as well as Good, is under the Direction of his Providence, will help to compose Men's Spirits under the Apprehension of *future Evils*, as well as support them under the Weight of *present Troubles*; inasmuch as it tends to beget in their Minds Patience, and a Resignedness to God's Will, whatever it be.

Prop. II.

Prop. II. That with respect to Men, Sin is the procuring Cause of all Calamities. *The Lord cometh out of his Place to punish the Inhabitants of the Earth for their Iniquity.* The Original Word (and so our English Word *Iniquity*) does in its strictest Sense denote the particular Sin of *Injustice*, unequal and unfair Dealing. And it is certain, that Injustice, Oppression, Persecution, and the like, are very provoking Sins, and will go a great way towards bringing down God's Vengeance on that Nation, where they are practised. It is not improbable, that this particular Sin is here peculiarly referred to: The last Clause of the Chapter seems to warrant this Supposition; *The Earth also shall disclose her Blood, and shall no more cover her Slain.* However, it can't be amiss to consider the Word in its most extended Sense, as including all kinds of Sin, Sin in the complex Notion of it: And it will hold true concerning all Sin, that it is the procuring meritorious Cause of all Calamities: So inseparable is the Connection between Sin and Sorrow, that the same Hebrew Word is used for both; sometimes for the Sin it self, at other Times for the Punishment of Sin.

The Truth of this Proposition is undeniable. Had not *Sin* enter'd into the World, we had never known *Trouble*: When we cease to be Sinners, we shall sorrow no more. The Sins of Men precede the Judgments of God, and are so effectual a procuring Cause of them, that the Prophet seems to wonder how a Man can offer to complain under his Afflictions, when he so directly brought them on himself; *Wherefore doth a living Man complain, a Man* Lam. iii.

for the Punishment of his Sins? we ought rather to accuse Ourselves, than exclaim against Providence. God is chiefly disposed to acts of Mercy; he is a God *gracious and merciful, long-suffering, abundant in Goodness and Truth*. He does not willingly afflict, or grieve the Children of Men; 'tis only if need be. If they sin, God must punish. Indeed, as to particular Persons, God deals promiscuously with them in this World: The Good are often in great Afflictions, while the Wicked flourish and prosper. So that no Man must be markt for being a notorious Sinner, merely on account of his suffering great Troubles, as Job was by his Friends; for there is *no knowing Love or Hatred* by these Things. On the other hand, no Man must be deem'd at all the better, because he abounds in Riches, and lives in Ease and Health and Plenty, free from Troubles and Sorrow. The Reason of all this is plain; because there is another Day coming, when God will reckon with the Wicked, and reward his Servants. Good Men have their *evil things* here, the Sinner his *good things*; but in the next World, they *shall be comforted*, and he *be tormented*.

Ex. xxxiv. 6.
Lam. iii. 33.
Ecclef. ix. 1.
Luke xvi. 25.

But the Case with Nations and whole Societies is different; "Because (as a great Man observes*) "Publick Bodies and Communities of Men, as such, can only be rewarded and punished in this World. For in the next, all those Publick Societies and Combinations, wherein Men are now linked together under several Governments, shall be dissolved." We must consider God, not only as good and mer-

* Archbishop Tillotson's Serm. on Prov. xiv. 34. Vol. I. p. 130. Edit. the First.

ciful, but as the just and sovereign Ruler of the World, and that it becomes him to maintain the Honour of his Government: From whence it follows, that if a People rebel against God, violate his Commands, and will not be reclaimed by the gracious Methods he is pleased to use with them, his Justice will at length take place: If his Mercy will not reform them, his Judgment will destroy them. Publick Sins bring down Publick Judgments; if the Sins of a Nation go up to Heaven with a mighty Cry, we may expect that Calamities will rush in upon that Nation with a mighty Torrent. National Troubles are often times the natural Product of National Sins: For the Vindication of God's Honour he punishes publick Sins; he will not let them escape publick Judgments. The sacred Scripture, and the History of all Ages join in the proof of this. So that wherever publick Calamities at any time fall, they must be interpreted as the Signification of God's Displeasure with that Nation. For tho' we must not say, that they are greater Sinners than all other People, because they suffer such things: Yet we may without Breach of Charity say (what they themselves ought to think,) that God is contending with them for Sin; since all (even the best) Nations under Heaven, are so fill'd with Iniquity, that at all times they deserve the severest Rebukes of God's Providence, and he would be just, tho' they were consumed.

I do not say that God is obliged, in Vindication of his Honour, to punish this or the other Nation for their crying Sins, when they at first commit them. We see that God spares them long, and is willing by gentle Methods
to

to bring them to Repentance, and make them return to their Duty. Common Experience shews, that God is loth to give up a People, and to use that Severity with them which he justly might. God usually deals with a People *at first* by his Word: If they will not attend to that, he *next* shakes the Rod over them: And, if this will have no effect, *then* he strikes the Blow, and makes them bear the weight of his Wrath. But this I say, that whenever the Calamity comes, they must consider it as the Fruit of their own Doings, and an Evil of their own procuring. And in case a Nation has been long spared, and highly favour'd of God, and several Methods have been used to reclaim them, which all proved ineffectual, they must expect that God's Hand will fall the heavier. Heinous, repeated and aggravated Sins will be followed with surprising Punishments.

Prop. III. That tho' God punish the Inhabitants of the Earth for their Iniquity, yet he will not always be angry. *The Indignation will be overpast.* Texts of Scripture are numerous, that prove the Truth of this Proposition, which has been confirmed by the Experience of all Nations in all Ages. Every Community at one time or other has had its Calamities, *Famine, Sword, Pestilence*, or the like; and sometimes it may be to that Degree, that they have thought their Case desperate and remediless; yet at length the Storm has blown over, and the Sun has broke through the Clouds: Except in those Cases where God determined to make a full End of a People; as in the Instance of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, when all were destroyed, unless *righteous Lot* and his Family, who were

were snatch'd as Firebrands out of the Burning.

Thus when God reproves the *Jews* for their Idolatry, and intimates that he would reckon with them for it, as he had already in some measure done; he tells them, *I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth.* The Reason given will hold good in all Cases, as well as in this of the *Jews*; says he, *For the Spirit should fail before me, and the Souls which I have made.* Parallel to which is that of the Psalmist, *He will not always chide, neither will he keep his Anger for ever: For he knoweth our Frame, he remembreth we are but Dust.* In like manner it is alledged as a Reason for God's mitigating the Calamities of the *Israelites*, and dealing tenderly with them: *He being full of Compassion, forgave their Iniquity, and destroyed them not; yea, many a time turned he his Anger away, and did not stir up all his Wrath: For he remembred that they were but Flesh, a Wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.* All which Passages sufficiently hint, that there will be an end of Calamities, God's *Indignation will be overpast*: And they furnish us with a very substantial Reason, viz. If God should go on in an endless way of punishing, the Spirits would sink, and be overwhelmed with Horror and Despair, inasmuch as People would be unable to bear the full Wrath of the Lord; and therefore the Consideration of Man's Frailty and Weakness inclines God sometimes to put a stop to his just Proceedings against them; otherwise God would scarce do any thing but destroy the Works of his own Hands, *The Souls which he has made.*

Isaiah lvii.
16.

Psal. ciii.
9, 14.

Pf. lxxviii.
38, 39.

This may be farther evinced from the *very Design* of Publick Distresses ; which (except in some desperate Cases) is not to ruin, but to reform a People, to make them holier, and wiser ;

Isai. xxvi. 9. that *the Inhabitants of the World* may hereby learn *Righteousness*, and be made to stand in awe of God, and not sin against *him*, who is the sovereign and wise Director of all such Calamities. Now when God has magnified the Greatness of his Power *thro' terrible Things in Righteousness*, and discover'd his Displeasure against the Sins of a Nation, by making a vast Desolation and Havock in it ; he then for a Time removes his Rod, to try whether those, who outlive the common Calamity, are made better by it ; whether they have a quick Sense of God's Hatred of Sin left on their Minds ; and whether they *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*. If his Providential Scourge hath not effected this, God then usually betakes himself to still rougher Measures, as he did in the case of the *Israelites* : He sent them *first* a Famine, *then* a Drought, *next* Blasting and Milderew and Vermine, *afterwards* the Pestilence, *at length* a Destruction like that of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*. Here were several Breaks, you see ; God left off to try what would be the Effect of his Judgments : But when he found that *Israel* was incorrigible, and that notwithstanding all the Measures he had taken, they *did not return to him* ; he then takes up the last Resolution, *thus will I do unto thee*. It is worth the observing, God does not say how he would deal with them ; but the Expression is very emphatical, and carries in it, that God would now proceed to the last Judgment. Q. d. " Here, " *Israel*, I have tried you once and again, " but

“ but in despite of all my Judgments, you still
 “ remain incorrigibly obstinate, and therefore
 “ I am now determined either to bend you, or
 “ to break you ; I’ll see whether I, *whose*
 “ *Name is the Lord, the God of Hosts*, cannot
 “ be avenged of such a perverse Generation.

Prop. IV. That such Calamities are not of a long Continuance ; only *as it were for a little Moment*. The *Hebrew* Word signifies the smallest Point of Time. A Point in *Geometry* is so small a thing, that it is supposed to have no Dimensions, but to be in every respect indivisible: Thus a Point of Time, or *Moment*, must be understood to mean the smallest Measure of Time that can be. And yet (as one observes*) “ if there be one Moment less than
 “ another, that must be understood here; for
 “ tis said, *a little Moment*.” The Text then, I think, does warrant the Proposition to be true; and it needs no otherwise to be explained or proved, than by considering that *long* and *short* are comparative Terms, and therefore must be referr’d to something else.

The Publick Calamities which befall any Nation are not of long Continuance, either

1. In Comparison with that much longer Time of Prosperity, which most (if not all) Nations are indulged with. “ God (says a great Man †) “ illustrates his Goodness in his
 “ disposing of Things in such a manner, that
 “ there is a hundred times more Good enjoy’d,
 “ than Evil suffer’d, in the World. How seldom is the World affrighted, or chastised,
 “ with Signs or Prodigies, Earthquakes or In-

* Mr. Henry.

† Dr. Grew’s *Cosmol. Sacra*, p. 97. 98.

“ undations, Famines, or Plagues? &c.” As God delights in the exercise of Mercy, so the Dispensations of his Providence towards all People, discover more Gentleness than Severity. The History of most Kingdoms will demonstrate this: But then,

2. As these Words are inserted for the Comfort of God's own People, with respect to the Share which they would have in a common Calamity; so the *little Moment* may be consider'd in Comparison with that Eternity, which they have the Promise and Hopes of spending in Peace and Happiness. Supposing the Troubles should not end, till your Lives are concluded, yet 'tis but
- Pf. xxx. 5. for a *little Moment*: *My Anger*, says God, *shall endure but a Moment; Weeping may endure for a Night, but Joy cometh in the Morning.* It is with reference to this, the Apostle says concerning the Afflictions of the Saints, *Their light*
- 2 Cor. iv. 17. *Affliction is but for a Moment.* Man's Life, in comparison with Eternity, is no longer; and therefore the good Man's Troubles must be as short as a *Moment*.

Prop. V. That in Times of common Calamity, God's People have Places of Security, wherein they may hide themselves. *Enter into thy Chambers, and shut thy Doors about thee, hide thy self.* These *Chambers*, or Places of Security, can be supposed to mean nothing else than the Attributes, Providence and Protection of God; and *the entering into them* must denote those Christian Duties and Graces, by the Discharge and Exercise whereof we obtain God's Protection in Times of Danger. We will consider them apart.

*

I. God's

1. God's Attributes, Providence, and Protection, are the great Security of his People in Times of Danger. God by his Providence superintends the Affairs of this lower World, and is present with all the Inhabitants of it: But his special Presence is with his People, his Covenant-Servants; of these he takes a peculiar Care. *In the Time of Trouble*, says the Psalmist, *Pf. xxvii. 5.* *he shall hide me in his Pavilion, in the Secret of his Tabernacle shall he hide me.* "The Attributes of the Lord (says Mr. Henry) are the Secret of his Tabernacle." *The Name of the Lord is a strong Tower; the Righteous runneth in- Pro. xviii. 10.* *to it, and is safe. The Name of the God of Ja- Psal. xx. 1.* *cob will defend his faithful Servants in Danger. He shall be for a Sanctuary to them:* Here seems *Isaiah. viii. 14.* to be an Allusion to the Custom of Men's flying for Shelter and Protection to lay hold on the Horns of the Altar. God will be a sacred and inviolable Refuge to them who fly to him for Safety. The Security which God's People may expect in times of general Distress is very largely described in the *ninety first Psalm*; which Psalm is on good grounds thought to have been composed by *David*, on account of that Pestilence which destroy'd seventy thousand Men in the compass of three Days; the History of which you have at the End of *Samuel*.

In short, as there can be no Safety expected in common Calamities from any but God; so if all the Perfections of God can make his People secure (which, I hope, none of you question) they shall be safe: His infinite Wisdom shall find out Measures for their Protection; his almighty Power shall make them effectual; and his Truth and Faithfulness shall see to the making good all his Promises; so that with Safety

Pfal. xci. 1. good Men *shall abide under the Shadow of the Almighty.*

2. But then, as we expect Protection from God, there are some Terms required of us; something which we must do in order to obtain it; which is the second Thing to be enquired into. The *Chaldee Paraphrase* runs thus; *Do good Works, which may protect thee in time of Tribulation.* Good Works and a holy Christian Conversation recommend us to God's Favour: for he has condescended to bind himself by Promise, that he will take care of, and protect those, who thus behave themselves. *Godliness has Promise of the Life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.*

1 Tim. iv. 8.

The general Answer to this Head of Enquiry may be, the managing our Conversation in all things as becomes the Gospel, and living up to the Characters we bear, as Servants of the most High God. But I shall be a little particular in mentioning some of those Duties which are required of us, that we may secure God's Protection; as,

1. A lively Faith and vigorous Trust in God. By Faith we lay hold on the Promises of God, and with a quiet Spirit trust him for the making them good. In Times of great Distress, God loves to see his Servants act their Faith in him; hereby they bear themselves up, meditating not only on the Promises, but also on the Perfections of God; his Omnipotence, Wisdom, Goodness and Truth. God will reward the lively Actings of Faith. It is said, *The Just shall live by Faith; i.e.* Faith, by the Help of God, shall keep him alive in the midst of thick Dangers. *Noah* believed, built an Ark, and was saved. *Pharaoh's* Servants, who believed

Hab. ii. 4.

Heb. xi. 7.

lieved God's Word, secured their Cattle from the Hail. And says the Psalmist, *Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my Refuge, even the most High thy Habitation; there shall no Evil befall thee, neither shall any Plague come nigh thy Dwelling.* The Believer does, as it were, dwell in God: The Covenant of Grace, which the good Man by Faith accepts, unites God and him together in so close a manner, that he lives in God; God is his *Habitation*. Ex. ix. 18.
& seq.
Psal. xci.
9, 10.

2. A hearty Sorrow for Sin, and a sincere forsaking of it. If Sin is the procuring Cause of God's Wrath, Repentance will remove it; for Repentance in its true Nature, is an actual forsaking of Sin. And if we on our parts forsake it, God on his part has promised to forgive it, and will not suffer his Wrath to fall on us for it. The very Appearance of Repentance has been a means of keeping off God's Judgments, when they have been denounced: As in the Case of *Ahab*; when he humbled himself, God would not bring the Evil in his Days, which he had threatned for the Affair of *Naboth's Vineyard*. And that sincere Repentance will have this Effect, appears plainly from the following Passage; *At what instant,* 1 Kings,
xxi. 27, 29. says God, *I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: If that Nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them.* Jer. xviii.
7, 8. Now if Repentance will be thus successful to guard a whole Kingdom from God's Judgment, and put by the threatned Blow; then no doubt but the Exercise of this Duty is the likeliest Method to secure the few Righteous, when a common Calamity rages in a Nation.

a Nation. Scripture abounds so much with Declarations of God, and Experiences of Men about this, that no one who converses with his Bible can be ignorant of them, and therefore I forbear mentioning more.

Pf. xci. 14. 3. The Exercise of Love to God. *Because he hath set his Love upon me, therefore will I deliver him.* God is never backward to help those who love him, and can exercise that Love to him at a Time when he appears *cloathed in the Robes of Vengeance.* Those that thus honour God, he will honour; and this way has he sometimes testified the Regard and Love which he has for them, by preserving them from those Evils which have been of fatal Consequence to others. God *will set his People on high; out of Gun-shot, far above the Reach of Danger; so near himself, that no Evil shall befall them: Tho' a thousand fall at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand, yet no* Pf. xci. 7. *Plague shall come near them.*

4. Fervent Prayer to God. Possibly this may be principally meant in the Text, by that Expression, *Enter into thy Chambers, and shut thy Doors about thee.* The Direction which our Saviour gives about Prayer, gives some Countenance to this Supposition; *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy Closet, and when thou hast shut the Door, pray to thy Father which seeth in secret.* Whether this be mainly to be understood in the Text, or no, 'tis certain that *the fervent Prayer of the Righteous availeth much.* Prayer is a Duty wherein we address ourselves to God, and acknowledging our Dependance on him, commend our selves to his Protection and Blessing; and that Prayer which is put up
in

in a right manner, we are assured, shall be effectual to obtain God's Favour.

God has conferred a great Honour on some of his praying Servants, suffering them to stand in the Gap, and by their Prayers to prevent the Ruine of whole Societies. *God repented of the Evil which he thought to do against his People* Ex. xxxii. 14. Israel, at the Intreaty of *Moses*; and had certainly brought it upon them, had not that good Man *stood in the Breach*. Com. Psal. cvi. 23. In like manner he was prevailed on by *Lot* to save a whole Gen. xix. 20. City. Now if the Prayers of God's faithful Servants are so available to preserve others from Ruine, much more may we expect, that they may be effectual to obtain God's Protection of themselves from desolating Judgments. Prayer does, as it were, bind up God's Hands: and therefore when God acquainted *Moses* with the Judgments he would bring on *Israel*, he says to him, *Let me alone*. Ex. xxxii. 10. Now this was not (as one of the Fathers observes*) a Prohibition of *Moses's* Intercession: for we find that *Moses* did afterwards beseech the Lord in favour of that People; which he never would have done, had he thought there was any ground to interpret this as a Command of God not to plead for them. But the Words carry in them an Intimation, that Prayer would be a means to hold back God's hand from destroying: *q. d.* "If you, my Servant, whom
" I love, interest your self in their Cause, and
" go about to plead for them, I shall be loth

* *Sine me*; ac si diceretur, noli eos diligere. Obtemperandum autem esset Domino dicenti, *noli eos diligere*, si hoc jubendo dixisset, & non potius admonendo, & exprimendo quid illum ab eorum supplicio revocaret. *August. Quest. super Ex. 49. p. 67.*

“ to do any thing against them; your Prayers
 “ and Pleadings will make me recede from my
 “ Purpose.” God loves to find his People on
 their Knees, and he will not send them empty
 Psal. l. 15. away. *Call upon me in the Day of Trouble, and
 I will deliver thee,* says God.

To all that has been said under this general
 Head it is objected,

Obj. That in a time of common Calamity all
 Men usually suffer without Distinction; the
 Servants of God fall by the Sword, Famine, or
 Plague, as well as the most profligate and
 abandon'd Sinners; and it does not appear, that
 good Men have that special Protection of God,
 which we have now been speaking of.

Resp. I answer; God's Faithfulness may easily
 be vindicated, if we only consider, that his
 Promises of protecting his People in Times
 of Danger (and indeed all Promises of temporal
 Blessings) must be taken *conditionally*; that
 they shall be literally made good, if they will
 promote our future everlasting Felicity. Every
 Christian will allow, that his eternal Happiness
 is of main Concern to him, and that all things
 must be denominated good or evil, only as they
 further or hinder *that*. From hence it follows,
 that if our Continuance here will not tend to
 our everlasting Advantage, it would rather be
 a Curse than a Blessing to be detain'd here lon-
 ger. The Case in one Word stands thus;
 God, who knows what is best, will do that
 which is best for his Servants: He will deliver
 them from the Curse of Afflictions, tho' they
 are exercised with them; and if it shall make
 for their best Interest to be continued in the
 Body, they shall not fall by those Calamities
 which sweep others away: But if they are ripe
 for

for Glory, and their Work is done; he'll then take them to Heaven. And no Man, who has a right Judgment of Things, can think that God does hereby prejudice his Servants; for it shall certainly *be well with the Righteous.*

Isai. iii. 10.

Prop. IV. That God gives his Servants Warning before he sends his Judgments on a Nation, and admonishes them to provide a Shelter from the Storm. *Come, my People, &c.* Whoever is acquainted with the History of the Old Testament must acknowledge, that this Proposition is true. The Prophets were then near God, and were admitted to the Knowledge of the *Arcana Imperii*; God did not hide his Secrets from them. *Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his Secret unto his Servants the Prophets.* In like manner other Servants of God have been acquainted beforehand of approaching Calamities. *Noah*, you know, *was warned of God concerning the Deluge*; and believing that what God had foretold him of would really come to pass, and being *moved with Fear*, he prepared an Ark for the saving his House. Thus God acquainted *Abraham* with his Design of destroying *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*. The manner of Expression in the Text is very emphatical; *And the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?* The *Seventy* read it negatively (and certainly there is a strong Negation implied) *I will not hide*; I can't allow my self to keep such a thing secret from *Abraham* my Friend, I must acquaint him of it. So likewise *Lot* had Notice of this, before the Destruction actually came; and possibly God might inform *Abraham* of it with a Design that he should discover it to his Nephew *Lot*, who, it seems,

Amos iii.

7.

Heb. xi. 7.

Gen. xviii.

17.

Gen. xix.

12, 13.

seems, was the only righteous Person in the whole Place. Many other Instances of this Nature might be produced.

But God does not discover such things by Divine Revelation now in our Days, as of old. *Prophecy* is ceased, *Visions* are at an end. But we have in our hands a *sure Word of Prophecy*, by attending to which, and a close observation of the Methods of Providence, God's Servants may be able to form a probable Judgment how God will deal with a Nation now. It is the Character of a good Man, that he observes Things, considers and takes notice of God's Doings, *He regards the Works of the Lord*. Now by observing how God has dealt with Nations in former Ages, and by comparing the State of those Nations with that of any other Community at present, a wise and a good Man may in some measure know how 'tis likely God will treat a Nation now in parallel and agreeing Circumstances. As for Instance, when the Sins of a People are highly aggravated, and Men grow bold and harden'd in Iniquity; when good Men, many of them are taken away, and those who survive only live to mourn over the Wickedness of the Land, are not able to stem the Tide of Sin, and scarce have Power to pray or intercede for others; these are sad Symptoms (inasmuch as they are not new ones) that God's Wrath is coming down on such a Nation: And therefore when God's People see such Signs, let them *enter into their Chambers, and hide themselves*.

I don't say that God is obliged, by such foregoing Circumstances, to signify his Designs to his People. Sometimes he strikes the Blow without giving any Warning; and 'tis his Royal Prerogative to use a free Liberty in this Case.

But

But however it is his usual Method, by some such Ways to make his People, who are observant of his Doings, to understand what Measures he is about to take.

The applicatory Part of this Subject shall (as I promised at first) consist in the following Rules of Duty.

1. Let us stand in a holy Awe of this great God, who is the Dispenser of all Calamities. God has an absolute Command of all Creatures, and can make use of any of them as an Instrument to execute his Wrath on a sinful People. Even *Flies* and *Lice*, those mean and despicable Insects, can Plague *Egypt*, if God lets them loose, and gives them Commission. *Let all the Earth* Ps. xxxiii. therefore *fear the Lord*; *let all the Inhabitants of* 8. *the World stand in awe of him*. The Sense of this sovereign Power of God should strike into our Hearts a Dread of his Majesty, a reverential Regard to him, and a holy Fear of offending *Him*, who can crush a whole Kingdom at once, and, if he pleases, lay a whole World in Ashes. We must be stupid to the last degree, if we are not hereby deterred from Sin, and influenced to maintain in our Souls an awful Regard to God.

2. Let us hate Sin, which is the Cause of so much Mischief in the World. What can be more absurd and ridiculous, than to love *that* which produces the most mischievous Effects to our selves; *that* whereby we provoke the Justice of God, and consequently expose our selves to the worst Evils? What more sottish, than to be pleased with *that* whereby we disoblige our best Friend, and render him our Enemy, whose Favour it most of all concerns us to secure?

Let us therefore sincerely repent of what we have done amiss in time past; and let us hate

Sin with a perfect Hatred, shunning it with the exactest Care for the time to come. There is no other way but this, of securing our
 Luke xiii. selves in publick Danger. *Except ye repent, ye*
 3, 5. *shall all perish.* And this, thro' the Mercy of God, and Merits of Christ, may be effectual to our Safety.

3. Let us admire and be thankful to God for his extensive Patience and Goodness, that he does not punish us so soon, nor in so extreme a manner as our Sins deserve. Every one of us may justly admire the Patience of God towards *our selves in particular.* How bold have we been in Sin? how slothful in Duty? how little have we regarded God's Honour, or our best Interests? And yet God has hitherto spared us; and having obtained help of him, we continue to this Time. The worst of his Plagues on *Earth* had been less than our Deserts; and the remediless Torments of *Hell* had been no more than the Wages of our Sins. But *he hath not dealt with us after our Sins, nor rewarded us according to our Iniquities.*
 Psal. ciii.
 10.

We may also admire God's Patience, as exercised towards *our Nation in general.* How unfruitful have we been under the means of Grace? How has the Land groan'd under the Pressure of Oaths, Perjury, Adultery, Covetousness, and the like? How ill have we requited God's Indulgence? We have chosen Darknes rather than Light, and all Flesh among us have corrupted their Ways; and yet how loth has God been to give us up, or to cut us off from being a People! Tho' we have incensed him, he still forbears striking the Blow: And tho' we are at this very Day under the Tokens of his Displeasure (as appears by the Fall of Publick Credit,
 and

and the Confusion into which the Folly of some, and the Villany of others have betray'd us) yet we ought with Thankfulness to take notice of the Divine Mitigation. God yet remembers Mercy; let us join with *Ezra* in saying, *thou our God hast punished us less than our Iniquities deserve.* Ezra ix. 13.

4. Let us examine our selves, whether we are of the Number of God's People; and let us endeavour to approve our selves such by our whole Conduct, which is the best Method we can take in order to being safe in Times of common Danger. It is really a Wonder, how any Man can be tolerably easy, while he lives in a World where he is liable to so many Troubles and Distresses, till he is once settled in this Point, and has good reason to hope, that he belongs to God in the most valuable Sense. Let us therefore, by the Exercise of all Christian Graces, and the Discharge of all Christian Duties, make it appear, that we really are (what we pretend to be) the People and Servants of the most high God. A mere outward Profession will stand in no stead: Tho' Men serve a turn by it very often among their Fellow Creatures; yet *God searcheth the Hearts, and trieth the Reins; he knoweth those that are his, and can call his Sheep by their Name.* 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Pf. vii. 9. 1 Tim. ii. John x. 3. Those who shelter themselves under a mere outward Profession, will find it to be a very weak Security for them in Times of Danger; God cannot be mocked, he will find them out.

5. If upon Examination our Consciences testify that we are God's People, let us compose our selves under the Expectation of his Judgments against a sinful Nation, and not terrify our selves with great Amazement, but fly unto him, and take up a holy Rest in him. *God is our Refuge,* Psal. xlv. 1, 2. says the Psalmist, *and Strength, a very present Help,*

Help in Trouble; Therefore will not we fear, tho' the Earth be removed, and tho' the Mountains be carried into the midst of the Sea, &c. Tho' the whole Frame of Nature is disjointed and torn in pieces, the Christian may quietly repose himself in his God, who will be a Sanctuary to him in all Distresses. You have, my Friends, the Experience of the Saints in all Ages to encourage you in the Practice of this Duty. Nay, I'll appeal to your selves, whether you have not found God ready to help you in your private Afflictions; and we all know, how God has once and again appeared for us in Publick Dangers: Let us therefore, with a becoming Confidence, repose our selves in the Almighty. In Cases of a common nature between Man and Man, one, who has approved himself a Friend by many Acts of Kindness, will be much offended, if afterwards he be suspected of Unwillingness to afford his Help in a time of Distress: Much more reason then has God to be displeased, if after all his Kindness expressed to his Servants, all his solemn Protestations of Good-will towards them, they act as if they questioned the Sincerity or the Constancy of his Love, by being anxiously perplexed and terrified at the Apprehension of approaching Evils, forgetting that the Lord reigneth, and that he changeth not. God has been a Friend to these Nations, and has dealt exceeding kindly with us; let us not distrust his Help now; he may possibly be better to us than our Fears; who knows but he may still have Mercy on us? But supposing God should put into our hands the Cup which our Neighbours have been drinking of, and should send the desolating Pestilence into our Borders; yet let the Righteous, the few Faithful among
us,

us, rejoice with a holy Serenity of Mind, since this great God is their God. The good Man may sweetly rest under his Providence; for God will either keep him from, or support him under the worst temporal Calamity, and will certainly make the Issue comfortable to him. Let us therefore say with the Psalmist, *Our Hearts are fixed, O God, trusting in thee, we will not be afraid of evil Tidings.* In all the Changes of the present Life, amidst all the Commotions of a troublesome World, we must make God our Refuge; and having done thus, we should encourage our selves in the Lord, and with Cheerfulness rely on his Fatherly Care and Protection of us, as knowing, that *all things shall be made to work together for Good to them, who love and trust in God.*

Psal. cxii.
7.

Rom. viii.
28.

From the foregoing Discourse we may learn, what to think concerning the present State of our own Nation.

Let us look first on the dark and gloomy side of our Case.

He must be a great Stranger to this Kingdom, who does not know that Sin abounds in it very much: Profaneness, Immorality, and Vice do not creep into Corners, but walk the Streets barefaced without Mask or Disguise. The professing Servants of God are not so strict and watchful as they ought to be. The Decays of serious Piety, and inward Religion are visible; the Love of many waxes cold. We have indeed the *Form* of Godliness, but very little of the *Power* of it. For these things we may expect that God will reckon with us; and how soon he may visit us for our Iniquities we know not. There is reason to imagine that it will not be long first; his desolating Judgments are ravaging

ing in our next Neighbour's Country, not far from our own Borders, even at this time; and they seem to be making their Way towards us. But I would not terrify your Minds too much, and therefore

Let us next look on the bright side of our Case.

Blessed be God, tho' our Case be bad, 'tis not yet desperate; there is Hope concerning us. We are a professing People; and notwithstanding the Sins and Abominations that are committed among us, we have still, for what I know, as much Religion as any Nation under Heaven. There are many righteous Persons, I doubt not, in our Land. We have many pious Christians, who are wrestling with God in Prayer from time to time to suspend his Judgments; many that are mourning over the Impieties of this Nation, and plead with God in behalf of a sinful People. And who knows but that God may hear in Heaven, his Dwelling-place, and give an Answer of Peace. It is a hopeful Symptom, when the Servants of God use their Interest with him, and intercede in the behalf of any Nation. This Symptom, Thanks be to God, we have. Let us therefore take Courage, and return unto God, repent of Sin, and reform our Lives; and then there is reason to hope, Jer. xviii. that God will yet *build us and plant us*, and not 7. & seq. *pluck up, pull down, and destroy us*.

F I N I S.

