

CHAP. 12

IN this chapter the apostle presses to a constant exercise of faith and patience, amidst the various afflictions the saints are exercised with; delivers out several exhortations useful in the Christian life; and shews the difference between the legal and Gospel dispensations. Having in the preceding chapter given many illustrious instances and examples of faith, he makes use of this cloud of witnesses, as he calls them, to engage the Hebrews to drop their unbelief, and run with faith and patience the race set before them, ver. 1 and which he further urges from the example of Christ; from his concern in faith, being the author and finisher of it; from what he suffered when here on earth, both the contradiction of sinners, and the death of the cross, for the joy of having his people with him in heaven; and from his glorious state, being set down at the right hand of God. Whereas, as yet, they had not been called to shed their blood in their warfare against sin, ver. 2, 3, 4. And that they must expect chastisement, and should bear it patiently, he cites a passage of Scripture out of [Prov. 3:11, 12](#) which suggests, that those who are the children of God, and are loved and received by him, are chastened and scourged, ver. 5, 6. Wherefore this was no other than dealing with them as children; and should they not be thus

dealt with, it would be an argument that they were bastards, and not sons, ver. 7, 8. And next the apostle argues from the right of parents to chastise their children, and the subjection that is yielded to them; that if the corrections of them, who were the fathers of their bodies, were quietly submitted to; then much more should those of the father of their souls; and the rather, since the chastenings of the former are only for temporal good, and according to their fallible judgments; whereas the latter are for spiritual profit, and an increase of holiness, ver. 9, 10. And though it must be allowed, that no chastening, for the present time, is matter of joy, but of grief; yet the effects of them are the peaceable fruits of righteousness, to them that are exercised by them, ver. 11. Wherefore the apostle exhorts the believing Hebrews to encourage themselves and others under afflictions; and to behave in such manner, and carry it so evenly, that they might not be an occasion of stumbling to weak believers, ver. 12, 13. He exhorts them in general to follow peace with all men, and particularly holiness; which is absolutely necessary to the beatific vision of God, ver. 14 and to take care that no heresy or immorality spring up among them, and be connived at, and cherished by them, to the troubling of some, and defiling of others, ver. 15 and particularly, lest the sin of uncleanness, or any sort of profaneness, should be found among them; of which Esau, the

brother of Jacob, from whence they sprung, was guilty; whose profaneness lay in selling his birthright for a morsel of meat, and whose punishment was, that he should be deprived of the blessing; which decree was irrevocable, notwithstanding his tears, ver. 16, 17 and to enforce these exhortations, the apostle observes to these believers, that they were not now under the law, but in a Gospel church-state. The terror of the legal dispensation they were delivered from is described by the place where the law was given, a mount burning with fire; by circumstances attending it, blackness, darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet; by the matter of it, a voice of words, which they that heard, entreated they might hear no more; and by the effect the whole had upon Moses himself, who quaked and trembled at what he saw and heard, ver. 18, 19, 20, 21. The happiness of the Gospel dispensation, or of the Gospel church-state, is expressed by the names of it, called Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the new Jerusalem; and by the company the saints have there, and their fellowship with them; angels innumerable; elect men, whose names are written in heaven, and whose spirits are made perfectly just; God the Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; whose blood being sprinkled on their consciences, spoke peace and pardon to them; such as neither Abel's blood nor sacrifice could speak, ver. 22,

23, 24. From whence the apostle argues, that care should be taken not to neglect and despise the voice of Christ, who is now in heaven, and speaks from thence in his Gospel and ordinances; seeing they escaped not who rejected him that spake on earth, at Mount Sinai, which was shaken by his voice; and the rather, since it appears from a prophecy in [Hagg. 2:6, 7](#) that under the Gospel dispensation, not only the earth but the heavens would be shaken, ver. 25, 26 which is an emblem of the shaking and removing the ordinances of the ceremonial law, that Gospel ordinances might take place, and remain for ever, ver. 27. Upon the whole, the apostle exhorts the believing Hebrews, that seeing they had received the immovable kingdom of grace, and were admitted into the Gospel dispensation, or church-state; that they would hold fast the Gospel of the grace of God, and serve the Lord, according to his revealed will, with reverence and godly fear, which would be acceptable to him; or otherwise he would be a consuming fire; as he is to all the despisers and neglecters of his Gospel and ordinances, ver. 28, 29.