

As I should have shewen several Promises that God hath made, let the affliction be what it will, I will but onely mention one that is the saddest affliction of all; in case of the Visitation, and the Plague. In *Psal. 91*. now those that cannot have their friends come to them by reason of the Plague, and that cannot have other comforts; in other afflictions they might have their friends, and other things to comfort them, but in that they cannot, *Psal. 91:10*. *There shall no evill befall thee, neither shall any Plague come nigh thy dwelling;* then here is a Promise for

the Pestilence in the 5. and 6. verses, this is a Scripture to those that are in danger of it. You will say, This is a promise that the Plague shall not come nigh them; but marke these two are joyned, *There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall the Plague come nigh thee; the evil of it shall not come nigh thee.*

*Object.* You will say, *it doth come to many godly men, and how can they make use of this Scripture? it is rather a Scripture that may trouble them, because here's a Promise that it shall not come nigh them, and yet it doth come nigh them*

as well as others.

Ans. First, this is the Answer I would give, The promises of outward deliverances that were made to the People of God in the time of the Law, were to be understood then a great deal more literally, and fulfilled more literally than in the times of the Gospel, God makes it up otherwise with as much mercy; though God made a Covenant of grace and eternal life in Christ with them, yet I think there was another Covenant too, that God speaks of as a distinct Covenant for outward things, to deal with his people by, according to

their ways, either in outward prosperity, or in outward afflictions, more than now, in a more punctual set way, than in the times of the Gospel; and therefore when the *Children of Israel* did but sin against God, they were sure to have publick judgements to come upon them, and if they did well, always publick mercies; The general constant way of God was to deal with the people of the Jews according as they did well, or ill, (in an ordinarie way,) with outward judgements, and outward mercies: but it is not so now in these times of the Gospel; we cannot

bring such a certain conclusion, that God did deal so severely with men by such and such afflictions, that he will deal so with them now: and so, that they shall have outward prosperity as they had then: therefore that's the first thing, for the understanding of this, and all other Texts of that kind.

The second answer I would give is this, It may be their Faith doth not reach to this promise; and God brings many times many outward afflictions, because the Faith of his people doth not reach the promise, & that not onely in the old Testament, but in the times of

the new Testament; *Zachariah* his time may be said to be in the time of the new Testament, when he was struck with dumbness, because he did not believe, and that is given to be the cause, why he was struck with dumbness. But you will say now, hath Faith warrant to believe deliverance, that it shall be fully delivered? I dare not say so, but it may act upon it, to believe that God will make it good his own way; perhaps you have not done so much, and so upon that, this promise is not fulfilled to you.

Thirdly, When God doth make such promises

to his people, yet still it must be with this reservation, that God must have liberty to these three things.

1. That notwithstanding his promise, he will have liberty to make use of any thing for your chastisement.

2. That he must have liberty, to make use of your Estates, or liberties, or lives, for the furtherance of his own ends: If it be to be a stumbling block to wicked and ungodly men, God must have liberty; though he hath made a promise to you, he will not lose the propriety that he hath in your Estates and lives.

3. God must have so much liberty to make use of what you have, for to shew that his wayes are unsearchable, and his judgements past finding out. God reserves these three things in his hand still.

*Object.* But you will say, *What good then is there in such a promise that God makes to his people?*

*Answ.* 1. That thou art under the protection of God more than others. But what comfort is this if it doth befall me?

*Answ.* Thou hast this comfort, that the evil of it shall be taken from thee, that if God will make use of this affliction for other

ends, yet he will do it so, as he will make it up to thee some other way. Perhaps you have given your children such a thing, but yet afterwards if you have use of that thing, you will come and say, I must have it, why Father may the child say, you gave it me? But saith the Father I must have it, and I will make it up to you some other way: Now the child doth not think that the Fathers love is ever a whit the less to him. So when there is any such promise as this is, that God by his promise gives thee his protection, and yet for all that such a thing befalls thee, it is but

as if the father should say, I gave you that indeed, but let me have it, and I will make it up to you some other way that shall be as good; saith God, Let me have your health and libertie, and life, and it shall be made up to you some other way.

Secondly, When ever the Plague, or Pestilence comes to those that are under such a promise, it is for some special and notable work, and God requires of them to search and examine in a special manner to find out his meaning; there is so much to be learned in the promise that God hath made concerning this particular

evil, that the People of God, they may come to quiet and content their hearts in this affliction. I read in this Psalm, that God hath made a Promise to his People, to deliver them from the Plague and Pestilence, and yet do I find it to come: It may be I have not made use of my faith in this Promise heretofore; and if God do bring afflictions upon me, yet God will make it up some other way; God made a Promise to deliver me, or at least to deliver me from all the evil of it, now if this thing doth befall me, and yet I have a Promise of God, certainly the evil of it is taken away, this Promise tells me, that if it doth befall me, yet it is for some notable end, and because God hath use of my life, and intends to fetch about his glorie some way that I know not of: And if he will come in a fatherly way of chastisement, yet I will be satisfied in the thing: so a Christian heart by reasoning out of the Word, comes to satisfie his soul in the midst of such a heavie hand of God, and in such a distressed condition as that is. Now carnal hearts, they find not that power in the Word, that healing virtue that there is in the Word, to heal their distracted

cares, and the troubles of their spirits, but now, those that are Godly, when they come to hear the Word, they find out, that in the Word, there is as a plaister to all their wounds, and so they come to have ease and Contentment, in such conditions as are very grievous and miserable unto others. But now, for other particular Promises, and more generally for the Covenant of grace, how, and in what mysterious way the Saints do work, to fetch out Contentment and satisfaction to their souls, we shall refer to the next time.