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HOPE and FEAR

BALANC'D:

IN A

SERMON

Preach'd at the

Tuesday Lecture

AT

SALTERS HALL,

July 24. 1711.

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

By MATTHEW HENRY,
Minister of the Gospel.

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HOPE and FEAR

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PSALM CXLVII. III.

*The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him,
in those that hope in his Mercy.*

THE Dignity and Privilege of the Righteous, that are God's Favourites, here appears *Bright and Blessed, very Blessed, very Bright*, and to an *Eye of Faith*, the Lustre of it far exceeds even that of Crowns and Coronets; tho' their *Honour* like their *Life is hidden*, and therefore *the World knows them not*. What can speak them more *Great*, what more *Happy* than this, that the God of Heaven takes pleasure in them? Col. 3. 3.
1 John 3.

That God should be at peace with any of the *Children of Men* (that degenerate, guilty, and obnoxious Race) is more than we could have expected, considering his *Justice and Holiness*; but that he should take pleasure in them, should set them apart for himself, gather them in Ps. 4. 3.
IIa. 40. 11.
Mal. 3. 17. his Arms, carry them in his Bosom, value them as his *peculiar Treasure*, and make them up as his *Jewels*; this is that which Eternity it self will be little enough and short enough to be spent in the thankful admiration of. *Lord, what is Man that thou shouldst thus magnify him, and set thine heart upon him!*

God takes pleasure in his Saints, that is, in his own Image upon them: *He rejoiceth in the Work of his own Hands*. Not that God is capable of receiving any Addition to the infinite Complacency he takes in himself, and in his own Perfections, from any Creature; but Ps. 104. 31

- Pf. 106. thus he is pleas'd to express the *Favour he bears to his Chosen*. He delights not in the Strength of a Horse (so
4, 5. 'tis said in the foregoing Verse) he *taketh not pleasure in the Legs of a Man*. Princes and Great Men take delight in these; both for their *Entertainment*, they divert themselves with Horse Races and Foot Races; and for their *Service*, they make use of Horse Guards and Foot Guards, bring into the Field Squadrons of Horse and Battalions of Foot, and review their Troops with a great deal of Satisfaction. But doth God do so? No,
Pf. 11. 7. he *takes pleasure in them that fear him*: He *delights to behold the Righteous*, delights to converse with them, invites them into *Fellowship* with himself, and *with them his Secret is*. He delights to employ them, and makes them the Instruments of his Glory; and herein he magnifies himself, that he hath *pleasure in the Prosperity of his Servants*.
Pf. 35. 27.

But the *Character* here given of God's Favourites is that for the sake of which I chose this Text, and which I shall speak more largely to. They are such as both *fear God*, and *hope in his Mercy*. The *Fear of God* I know is often put for *all Religion*; but it being here distinguished from a *Hope in his Mercy*, I chose rather to understand it in a more limited Sense, as signifying a Dread of his Majesty.

Fear and *Hope* are Passions of the Mind so contrary the one to the other, that with regard to the same Object, it is strange they should meet in the same laudable Character; yet here we see they do so; and it is the Praise of the same Persons, that they both *fear God*, and *hope in him*.

From whence we may gather this Doctrine,
That in every Concern that lies upon our Hearts, we should still endeavour to keep the Balance even, between Hope and Fear.

We know how much the *Health of the Body* depends upon a due *Temperament* of the Humours, such as preserves any one from being predominant above the rest; and how much the *Safety and Peace* of the Nations results from a due *Balance of Trade and Power*, that no one grow too great for its Neighbours: and so necessary is it to the Health and Welfare of our Souls, that there be a due Proportion maintain'd between their Powers and Passions, and that the one may always be a Check upon

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upon the other, to keep it from running into Extremes; as in these Affections mention'd in the Text. A Holy *Fear* of God must be a Check upon our *Hope*, to keep that from *swelling* into *Presumption*; and a pious *Hope* in God must be a Check upon our *Fear*, to keep that from sinking into Despondency and Despair.

This Balance must, I say, by a wise and steady Hand be kept even in every Concern that lies upon our Hearts, and that we have Thoughts about. I shall instance in those that are of greatest importance.

We must keep up both Hope and Fear,

- I. As to the Concerns of our Souls, and our spiritual and eternal State.
- II. As to our outward Concerns, relating to the Body, and the Life that now is.
- III. As to the publick Concerns of the Church of God, and our own Land and Nation.

In reference to each of these we must always study and strive to support that Affection, whether it be *Hope* or *Fear*, which the present Temper of our Minds and Circumstances of our Case make necessary, to preserve us from an Extreme.

For the First: Nothing certainly doth so much concern us, and ought to lie so near our Hearts, as the Prosperity of our Souls, and their Happiness in the Favour of God, and their Fitness to serve him here, and enjoy him for ever. This certainly ought to be the chief and continual Care of every Man in this Life, to approve himself to an Eternal God above him, and to prepare himself for an everlasting State before him. This is the Concern of the Better Part, and is of all other the most weighty Concern. Now for the due managing of this Concern, 'tis requisite that we take our Work before us, and give each part of it its Place and due Proportion, so as that one devout Affection may not intrench upon and jostle out another. As the Beauty of God's Being consists in the Harmony of his Attributes, so the Beauty of his Image on our Souls consists in the Harmony of our Graces, and the Concurrence of them all to the maintaining of our due Subjection to God, and due Government of our selves.

In Eternity there is neither *Hope* nor *Fear*: in Heaven they are both lost in an endless Fruition. Glorified Saints, as they are for ever quiet from the Fear of Evil,
and

Rom. 8. 24. and out of the reach of it, so they have nothing more or better to hope for, than what they are already enter'd into the enjoyment of; And *what a Man sees why doth he yet hope for?* In Hell they are both lost in an endless Despair: They have nothing to fear there where they know the worst, and must feel to Eternity what they would not fear; nor have they any thing to hope for, when the Door of Mercy is shut against them, and a great Gulf fixed between them and all Blessedness, never to be removed. But in our present State there is and must be a Mixture both of *Hope and Fear*, and we must keep up our Communion with God, and do our Duty to him by the reasonable Exercises of both; and thus we must sing both Ps. 101. 1. of *Mercy and Judgment*, and sing unto God of both.

1. We must keep up both a *holy Dread of God*, and a *humble Delight in him*; both a *Reverence of his Majesty*, with a Fear of incurring his Displeasure, and at the same time a *Joy in his Love and Grace*, and an intire Complacency in his Beauty and Bounty, and that *Benignity of his which is better than Life*.

Our Affections towards God must correspond with the Discoveries he has made of himself to us. As he has proclaim'd his Name for our Instruction, so we must proclaim it to his Praise. Now in God there is both every thing that's *aweful*, and every thing that's *amiable*; and in his Manifestations of himself he seems to have taken a delight in putting these together, and setting the one over-against the other. When he makes himself known in his Greatness, as riding on the Heavens by his Name *J A H*, he adds in the next words this Instance of his Goodness, that he is a *Father of the Fatherless*, and a *Judge for the Widows*. Is he the high and lofty one that inhabits Eternity, and dwells in the holy Place? Yet we must know that with *this Man* he will dwell, to *this Man* he will look, that is of a *contrite and humble Spirit*. And on the other hand, when he tells us how *gracious* he is in *forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin*, he tells us presently how *just* he is also, that he will by *no means clear the impenitently guilty*.

Ps. 68. 4, 5. Isa. 57. 15. —66. 1, 2. Exod. 34. 6, 7.

Thus therefore must we have an eye to him, both as he is infinitely *Great*, and greatly to be feared, and as he is infinitely *good*, and greatly to be loved. And as no Love on this side that which is *perfect* must cast out all Fear; so no Fear of those that have received the Spirit of

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of Adoption must damp the *Delight* which as Children we must have in our *Father*. We must both *fear God's Name*, and *love* it; both *fear the Commandment*, and *love* it. We must *delight our selves* always in the *Lord*, Pl. 37. 4. and yet we must *make him our Fear and our Dread*, and Isa. 8. 13. be in the *Fear of him every day*, and *all the day long*. In the *Duties of Religious Worship* we must *know our Distance*, and in consideration of that we must *serve him with Reverence and Godly Fear*, because God, even our Heb. 12: God, tho' he be a rejoicing Light to those who serve him 28. faithfully, yet he is a *consuming Fire* to those that trifle with him: but we must also *know our Privilege*, and *draw near to him in full assurance of Faith*, and must Heb. 10. *serve the Lord with Gladness*. 22.

2. We must keep up both a *trembling for Sin*, and a *triumphing in Christ*, as the *Propitiation for Sin*. We must be afraid of the *Curse*, and the *Terrors of that*, and yet must rejoice in the *Covenant*, and the *Riches and Graces of that*. With one *Eye* we must look at the *Fierly Serpents*, and see what *Danger* we are in by our having been stung by them; but with the other *Eye* we must look up to the *Brazen Serpent* lifted up on the *Pole*, and John 3: see what a fair way we are in of being help'd and heal- 14. ed by looking to it. *Look unto me* (saith Christ) *and be ye saved*.

We must not so look upon the *Comforts of the Gospel*, as to forget the *Condemnation of the Law*, and that we are *guilty before God*, and liable to that *Condemnation*; which we must be ever mindful of; that we may daily reflect with regret upon *Sin*, and may be quicken'd to *flee from the Wrath to come*, and to *flee for Refuge to the Hope set before us*, and that knowing the *Terrors of the Lord*, we may be perswaded to *stand in awe, and not sin*. And yet we must not so look upon the *Condemnation of the Law*, as to forget that *we are under Grace, and not under the Law*; and that we have Rom. 6: a *Redeemer to rejoice in*, and with an intire Confi- 14. dence to rely upon, who dy'd to *save his People from their Sins*. We must look upon *Sin*, and be *humbled*, and be afraid of *God's Wrath*; but at the same time we must *look upon Christ*, and be *satisfied*, and hope in his *Mercy*.

3. We must keep up both a *Jealousy of our selves*, and of our own *Sincerity*, and a *gratejul thankful Sense of God's Grace in us*, and the *Workings of that Grace*. It is

is

- Jer. 17. 9. *is true The Heart of Man is deceitful above all things, and in nothing more so than in its Judgment of it self. We are all apt to be partial in our own Favours, to say we*
- Rev. 3. 17. *are rich and increased with Goods, when we do not know, or will not own that we are wretched and miserable. We have therefore reason to fear lest we should be mistaken, lest our Graces should prove counterfeit, and we should be rejected as Hypocrites at last. And O that those who live a carnal, worldly, sensual Life under the Disguise of a Religious Profession, were awaken'd to see their Mistake before the Flames of Hell awaken them! O that Fearfulness might surprize those who indeed are Hypocrites, and that the Sinners in Zion were afraid; and that their vain Hopes, which are built upon the Sand, might be taken down before they are thrown down.*
- Isa. 50. 10. *But let not those who fear the Lord, and obey the Voice of his servant, walk in Darkness, but trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay themselves upon their God. Let not those who through Grace are brought to prefer the Favour of God before the Smiles of the World, and are more in care about the things that relate to the Soul and Eternity, than about those that have reference only to the Body and Time, let not their godly Jealousy over themselves run into an extreme. Let them not be upon all Occasions arraigning their Evidences, and questioning, Is the Lord among us, or is he not? Hearken to this, you that tremble at God's Word, and are fearing continually every Day. How can you say you do not love God, when you cannot but say that you would not for all the World wilfully offend him, and that there is nothing you desire so much as to be in his Favour, and in Communion with him? And therefore tho' you have no reason to trust in your own Merit, yet you have a great deal of reason to hope in that Mercy of God,*
- Mat. 26. 41. *which accepts the Willingness of the Spirit, and overlooks the Weakness of the Flesh. Why should you wrong yourselves by bearing false Witness against your selves? as they do that make themselves poor, and yet have great Riches. And why should you wrong God, by robbing him of the Honour of what he has wrought for you? 'Tis true we must not be proud of our Graces, but we must be thankful for them; we must not pretend to justify our selves to the Covenant of Innocency, for we are not*

not *innocent*, yet we must not therefore reject the Advantages of the *Covenant of Grace*, nor put from us the Comforts that flow from thence.

4. We must keep up both a *constant Caution over our Goings*, and a *constant Confidence in the Grace of God*. When we consider how weak we are, how apt to *stumble in the Way*, and *wander out of it*, apt to *tire*, and apt to *turn aside*, we shall see cause enough to *walk humbly with God*. And yet when we consider how the Promises of Divine Aids are adapted to our Case in all the Exigences of it, how rich, how sure they are, and how certainly made good to all those who depend upon them, and by Faith derive Strength and Wisdom from them, we shall see cause enough to *walk boldly with God*. He that *walks uprightly*, walks with a good assurance, and Prov. 1 may travel in the greatness of the Strength of him who 9. is mighty to save.

We have need to stand always upon our guard, as knowing that our Way lies through an Enemy's Country, where we have reason to expect that *Ambushes* will be laid for us, and all the Stratagems of War made use of to do us a Mischief: We have need to look well to our Goings, and never so much as to *feed our selves* Jude 1 without fear, lest our Table should become a Snare; nor Psa. 65 walk abroad without trembling, lest under the green 22. Grass there should be a Snake; lest for want of Watchfulness we should be surpriz'd by a sudden Temptation, for want of Resolution we should be overpower'd by a violent Temptation. Happy is the Man who thus fear- Prov. 1 eth always, as seeing himself never out of the reach, no 14. nor ever out of the way of Satan's Temptations, till he comes to Heaven.

But still in the midst of this Fear we must hope in God's Mercy, that he will take our part against our spiritual Enemies, will watch over us for good, will preserve our Souls from Sin, from every evil Work, the only thing that can do them any real Damage. What Christ said to St. Paul, when he was buffeted by a Messenger of Satan, he hath said to all who like him fly to the Mercy of God, and continue instant in Prayer: My Grace is 2 Cor. sufficient for thee, tho' thou hast no Strength of thy own 9. that is so. Infinite Wisdom knows what Grace thy Case calls for, and thou shalt have enough to secure the Life and Happiness of thy Soul, from every thing that aims

at its Death and Ruin. *Be strong therefore in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might: Go forth and go on in his Name, as David against Goliath, and be assur'd that the God of Peace, the God of your Peace, will in order to that be the God of your Victory; he will tread Satan under your Feet, will do it shortly, will do it effectually, that he may be to Eternity the God of your Triumphs.*

5. We must keep up both a *Holy Fear* lest we come short, and a good *Hope* that through *Grace* we shall persevere. If we rightly understand our selves, we cannot but be often *looking forward*, and considering what will be our last End, what will be our future State. And what will it be? will our End be Peace? will our endless Condition be a happy one?

Truly when we look upon the *Brightness* of the Crown set before us, and our own *Meanness* and *Unworthiness*, when we look upon the many *Difficulties* that lie in our way, and our own *Weakness*, and utter *Inability* to break through them, we may justly be afraid, lest some time or other we be guilty of a fatal *Miscarriage*, and perish at last. And such a *Fear* as this is recommended to us as a *Means* to keep us from *Apostasy*, that we may not really come short, as the unbelieving *Israelites* did of *Canaan*: *Let us fear lest a Promise being left us of entering into his Rest, any of us should seem to come short, should do any thing that looks like, or tends towards a drawing back to Egypt again.* We have no reason to be *secure*, many that thought they stood, stood as high, stood as firm as we, yet have fallen, have fallen fatally and irrecoverably. Let us therefore who think we stand, take heed lest we fall, and with a holy *Fear* and *Trembling* let us be continually working out our *Salvation*. *Vigilantibus non dormientibus succurrit Lex.*

Yet let not this *Fear* degenerate into *Amazement*, nor take off our *Chariot Wheels*, or make us drive heavily. While we fear lest God should leave us to our selves, and put us into the hand of our own *Counsels*, as justly he might, and then we are undone; let us hope in his *Mercy*, that having begun a good *Work* in us he will perform it. If it be the *Work* of his own hands he will not forsake

it, nay he will perfect it, if it be indeed that which truly concerns us. The same *Apostle* that bids us fear lest we come short, bids us give diligence to a full *Assurance* of *Hope* unto the End; for faithful is he that has called us, faithful

is he that has promised, who will perform his Promise, and perfect his Call. To him therefore let us commit the keeping of our Souls in well-doing, the greatest Trust to the best Trustee, and then let it be our Comfort that we know whom we have trusted, even one who is able to keep what we have committed to him against that Day, when it shall be call'd for. 2 Tim. 1. 12.

Thus you see how in the great Concerns of our Souls there is Occasion both for *Hope* and *Fear*, and each have their Work to do, so as that the two Extremes of *Presumption* and *Despair*, those dangerous Rocks, may be avoided. This is the levelling Work by which the *Way of the Lord* is to be prepar'd: By a good *Hope* every *Vally* shall be exalted, and by a Holy *Fear* every *Mountain and Hill* shall be brought low: And thus the *Glory of the Lord* being reveal'd, all *Flesh* shall see it together. Isa. 40. 3, 4.

For the second. The Balance must likewise be kept even between *Hope* and *Fear* as to our *temporal Concerns*, about which we cannot be wholly unconcern'd. Many *Cares* we have upon our *Hearts* about our *Life, Health, Ease and Safety*; about our *Callings and Estates*, and the *Prosperity of them*; our *Reputation and Interest* among *Men*; our *Relations and Families*, and our *Comfort in them*: All these we hold between *Hope and Fear*, and must take heed, that when things look never so *hopeful*, we be not rock'd asleep in *Security*; and when they look never so *frightful*, we do not faint away in *Despondency*.

First, When the *World smiles upon us*, and our *Affairs* in it prosper, yet then we must keep up a *holy Fear*, and not be too confident in our *pleasing Prospects*; not flatter our selves with *Hopes* of the great *Advancement* and long *Continuance* of our *Peace and Prosperity*; but balance the *Hopes* which *Sense* suggests, with the *Fears* which *Reason and Religion* will suggest. When our *Bodies* are in *Health*, and we are in our full *Strength*, the *Breasts full of Milk*, and the *Bones moisten'd with Marrow*; when our *Relations* are all agreeable, and such as we could wish; when our *Affairs* are in a good *Posture*, the *Trade growing*, the *Credit firm*, and every thing running in our *Favour*; yet even then we must fear *God*, and the *Turns of his Providence* against us, remembering that in such he takes pleasure. Job 21. 25.

Let us not say at such a time, as *David* said in his
 30. 6. Prosperity, we shall never be moved, our Mountain stands
 so strong that nothing can stir it, nothing shake a State
 of Health so confirm'd, a Reputation so establish'd; or as
 Job 29. Job said in his Prosperity, I shall die in my Nest, and
 3. multiply my Days as the Sand; or as *Babylon* in the
 a. 47. 7. height of her Grandeur, I shall be a Lady for ever, I
 ev. 18. 7. sit as a Queen, and shall see no Sorrow. Let us never
 promise our selves, that because this Day smiles upon
 a. 56. 12. us, to morrow must needs be as this Day, and much more
 abundant; since we know not what shall be on the morrow,
 nor what one Day may bring forth. Let us not put the
 evil Day far from us, which for ought we know may be
 very near, and at the door. But to prevent the Secu-
 rity we are in danger of falling into at such a time,

1. Let us keep up an awful Regard to the Sovereignty
 of the Divine Providence, and its Disposals of us and ours.
 We are in its Hands, as Clay is in the Hand of the Potter,
 er. 18. to be form'd, unform'd, new form'd, as he pleaseth.
 6. That which seem'd design'd for a Vessel of Honour, is
 either mar'd, or with one Turn of the Wheel made a
 despis'd Vessel, in which there is no pleasure: And shall
 we say, dare we say, Why hast thou made me thus? May
 not God do what he will with his own Creature? and
 Job 34. 33 shall he not fulfil his own Counsel, whether we refuse,
 or whether we chuse? for we are sure he is Debtor to
 no Man.

Whatever we have 'twas God that gave it us, and
 Job 1. 21. we said when we had it, Blessed be the Name of the
 Lord, who in a way of Sovereignty gave that to us,
 which he deny'd to others more deserving; and what-
 ever we lose, it is God that takes it away, and when it
 is gone, we must say, Blessed be the Name of the Lord,
 who in a way of Sovereignty takes from us that which
 he had given us, and doth us no wrong; for we are but
 Tenants at Will of all our Enjoyments, even of Life it
 self, and may be turn'd out at less than an hour's Warn-
 ing, for our Times are in God's hands, not in our own.

'Tis true Godliness has the Promise of the Life that
 now is, but we must take heed of misunderstanding
 those Promises which relate to temporal good things,
 which are all made with this implicit proviso, as far as
 is for God's Glory and our Good, and further if we love
 either God or our selves, we will not desire them. It

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is promis'd, that *it shall be well with them that fear God*; but it is not promis'd that they shall be always rich and great in the World, always in Health and at ease. It is promis'd, that *no Evil shall befall them*, nothing that shall do them any real Hurt; but it is not promis'd that *no Affliction shall befall them*: For there may be need, that *for a Season they should be in Heaviness*, and it shall be for their Advantage.

2. Let us keep up a full Conviction of the Vanity of this World, and the Uncertainty of all our Injoyments in it. We are very unapt Scholars, if we have not learn'd, even by our own Experience and Observation, that there are no Contentments here below that are *lasting*, but they are all dying things, and that often proves *least safe, that is most dear*. They are as Flowers which will soon *fade*, and the sooner for being much *smell'd to*; as Snow which will soon *melt*, and the sooner for being *taken up* in our Hands, and *laid* in our Bosoms. The things we dote so much upon *make themselves Wings* (tho' we Prov. 33. should not by our own Improvidence and Prodigality 5. make them Wings) and *flee away as an Eagle towards Heaven*. And shall we then set our Eyes and Hearts upon things that are not, the Fashion of which *passeth away*, and we with it?

The things we are so fond of, we call *good things*, tho' if we have not Grace to use them well, and to do good with them, they are to us *good for nothing*: But the Scripture calls them *deceitful Riches*, and the *Mammon of Unrighteousness*, because they put a Cheat upon those that depend upon them, and trust in them; they are not what they seem, perform not what they promise, nor last so long as one would think they should. What God has graciously promis'd us in them they do *perform*, but not what we foolishly promise our selves from them, so that if we are deceiv'd, we may thank our selves; 'tis our own fault for trusting to them. They *perish in* Col. 2. 22. *the using*, much more in the abusing. Let those therefore who are *rich in this World* receive the Apostle's Charge, not to *trust in uncertain Riches*, because they are *uncertain*; nor to *lay up their Treasure* in them, because our Estates as well as our Bodies are subject both to Diseases, for *Moth and Rust corrupt* them; and to Disasters, for *Thieves break through and steal* them. What assurance can we have of, what Confidence can

can we put in those Goods, which may be lost in an instant by the firing of a House, or the foundering of a Ship at Sea, by the unsuspected Fraud of those we deal with, or the overpowering Force of those we contend with? How can we call that *our own*, which is so much in *others Hands*? or think to *hold that fast*, when even that which is *in our Hand* slips through our Fingers like Dust, especially if we *grasp it hard*?

3. Let us keep up a *humble Sense of our own Undeservings and Ill-deservings*. We shall see a great deal of Reason not to be confident of the Continuance of our Creature Comforts, when we consider that we are *not worthy of the least* of them, no not of the Crumbs that fall from the Table of common Providence: And if we were not worthy to *have them*, much less are we worthy to *have them long*, and to have them secur'd to us. Nay, we have *forfeited* them all a thousand times by our Abuse of them, and God might justly *take the Forfeiture*. He that is in debt is continually *in fear*, lest all he has be suddenly seiz'd on: 'Tis our Case; we are in debt to the Justice of God, and what can we expect, but to be stript of all? We had been so long ago, if God had dealt with us according to our Sins; so that we have liv'd all our Days upon *forfeited Favours*, which therefore we can have no assurance of the Continuance of.

Tho' we have the Testimony of our Consciences for us, that what we have, we have *got honestly*, and not by Fraud and Oppression, and that we have *us'd it charitably*, and in some measure honour'd God with it, which is the likeliest way both to secure it, and to increase it; yet even then we must not be *secure*, for God hath seen that amiss in us, which we have not seen in our selves, and there is none that can say, *I have made my Heart clean, I am pure from Sin*. We have all contracted Guilt enough to justify God in depriving us of all our Comforts in this World, and therefore have no reason to be *confident* of the Continuance of them, but a great deal of Reason, whatever we lose, to say, *The Lord is righteous*.

4. Let us keep up a *lively Expectation of Troubles and Changes in this changeable troublesome World*. 'Tis what we are bid to count upon, and can look for no other in Eccl. 9. 11. a *Wilderness*. *Time and Chance happens to all*: Why then

then should they not happen to us? The Race is not sure to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, no nor so much as Bread to the Wise, much less Riches to Men of Understanding, or Favour to Men of Skill: Why then should we think them sure to us? Can you and I imagine that the World should be more kind, and more constant to us, than it has been to those that went before us? You have read the Story of Job, whom the Rising Sun saw the richest of all the Men of the East, but the Setting Sun left poor to a Proverb. You have in your own time seen those that were once worth Thousands, so reduc'd, that they and theirs have wanted necessary Food: And what Exemption can we pretend to from the common Calamities of Human Life? we are not better than our Fathers, not better than our Predecessors. Shall we think our Prosperity more firm than that of others has been? We might as well think that the Earth should be forsaken for us, and the Rock removed out of its Place.

Nay, Troubles and Changes are good for us, they are necessary for us; the Temper, or rather the Distemper of our Minds makes them so, lest we grow proud and secure, and in love with this World. We read of those that have no Changes, and therefore they fear not God; that are not in Trouble as other Men, and therefore Pride compasseth them about as a Chain. Moab has been at ease from his Youth, and has not by Changes and Troubles been emptied from Vessel to Vessel; and therefore he is settled on his Lees, is grown secure and sensual, he is unhumbled, and unreform'd, his Taste remains in him, and his Sent is not changed. We have therefore reason to expect that God will in Love to us exercise us with Crosses and Afflictions, that he may mind us what we are, and what we have done amiss, may wean us from this World, and draw out our Thoughts and Affections towards that World, the Comforts of which know no Changes.

5. Let us keep up serious Thoughts of Death approaching, and of our speedy Removal to another World. Tho' the Comforts we enjoy should not be taken from us, tho' we were never so sure they should not; yet we know not how soon we may be taken from them, and then how long soever they may last, they are ours no longer. Do we not perceive how frail our Nature is? Are we not

in Deaths oft, in Deaths always, in Death even in the midst of Life? Do we not see our selves, wherever we are, standing upon the brink of Eternity, and our Souls continually in our hands? And what Good then have we to look for in this World, who are hastning apace out of it, and can carry nothing away with us? What is

Job 6. 11. *our Strength that we should hope? If we wait for a larger and finer House, than what we now live in upon Earth*

Job 17. *before it falls to us, perhaps the Grave may be our House,*
11, 13, 16. *and we may make our Bed in the Darkness. And when our Days are past, with them our Purposes are broken off, even the Thoughts of our Heart; we and our Hope go down together to the Bars of the Pit, when our Rest is in the Dust.*

Death will put a Period to all our Hopes in this World, and to all our Injoyments: How loose therefore should we sit to them, when Life it self hangs so loose?

Luke 12.
19, 20.

He that said, *Soul take thine Ease, thou hast Goods laid up for many Tears, eat, drink, and be merry,* was by this proved a Fool, that that very Night his Soul was by Death requir'd of him; and then *whose shall all these things be*

which he has provided, and promis'd himself so much from? None of his we may be sure. Let us therefore be so wise as to consider our latter end, and be daily mindful of it, and then we shall not be such Fools as to rely upon any thing in this World for a Portion and Happiness; we see we have here no continuing City, let us therefore seek and look for one that is to come.

Heb. 13.
14.

Let me now press this Caution upon those whose Hopes are most apt to rise high from this World, that in order to the keeping of the Balance even, they may maintain a holy Fear, and not grow secure.

(1.) You that are young, and setting out in the World, must be minded not to expect great things in it; you hope you shall do as well as the best, but it may prove otherwise, that you may fare in it as ill as the worst. You are apt to look at the things of the World through that end of the Perspective Glass that magnifies them, and to count upon having every thing to your Mind, as if there were nothing but Prizes in the World's Lottery, and so lay a Foundation for the greater Grief in the Disappointment, when whatever Prizes others may have, you perhaps may have nothing but Blanks to your Share, and then 'twill be Folly to curse your Stars (as some

some profanely speak) but Justice to *reproach your selves* for building so high on a *Sandy Foundation*, and promising your selves *Satisfaction of Spirit* in that which you were many a time told had nothing in it but *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*. Think not too well of your selves, for then you are apt to prognosticate nothing but Good to your selves; but lay your selves low, and then you will lay your *Expectations low*.

2. You that are *rich*, and have *abundance of the World*, do not make that abundance your *strong City*, and a *high Wall*, for it is not so really, but only in your own *Con-* Prov. 18.
ceit, and you may soon find it as a *bowing Wall*, and a tottering *Fence*; a broken *Reed* which will not only fail under you, but will *run into your Hand and pierce it*. Keep up such a *Fear of God* and his *Providence*, as may forbid you ever to say unto the *Gold*, *Thou art my Hope*; and to the *fine Gold*, *Thou art my Confidence*; for if the Job 31.
Lord do not help you, much more if he turn to be your 24
Enemy, and fight against you, whence can the *World* help you, *out of the Barn-floor*, or *out of the Wine-press*, 2 Kings
out of the Farms, or *out of the Merchandise*? 6. 27.

3. You that are *cheerful* and *gay*, and cast away *Care*, that walk in the way of your *Heart*, and in the *Sight of your Eyes*, and with-hold not your selves from any *Joy*, let the *Fear of God* be a *Check* to your *Mirth*, and restrain it from growing into an *Excess*. You may perhaps take care that in *Laughter your Hearts* shall not be Prov. 14
sad, but the *End of this Mirth* may be *Heaviness* before 13.
you are aware, when you *rejoice in hope of the Glory of God*, that *Hope will not make you ashamed*; but when you *rejoice in Hope* of the *Wealth and Pomp*, and *Pleasure of this World*, you have *now* reason to be *asham'd* that you place your *Happiness in such things*, and will at length be *asham'd* that you look'd for so much from them. You are but *girding on the Harness*, and there- 1 Kings
fore *boast* not, as tho' you had *put it off*: *Be not high-* 20. 11.
minded, but *fear*; and look for that *every day*, which may come *any Day*.

Secondly, When the *World frowns upon us*, and we are *cross'd*, and *disappointed*, and *perplex'd* in our *Affairs*, yet then we must keep up a *good Hope*, and not be inordinately *cast down*, no not in our *melancholy Prospects*, about our *Health*, our *Safety*, our *Name*, our *Relations*, and our *Effects in the World*. We must

not at any time *burthen our selves* with distracting *Care*,
 what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and where-
 withal we shall be clothed; but cast this *Care* upon God,
 and depend upon him to *care for us*. We must not in
 the worst of times *torment* our selves with *amazing Fear*,
 as if every thing that *threatens* us must needs *ruin* us;
 and every fresh Gale would be a Storm presently; and
 as if every *Mole-hill* of Difficulty in our way were an
 insuperable *Mountain*. How black soever things look,
 and how low soever we are brought, we must not al-
 low our selves in fearing *more than there is Cause*, nor
more than is meet; we must not frighten our selves
 with the Creatures of our own Imagination, nor suffer
 our Fears to *disquiet* our Minds, and *deprive* us of the
 Government and Injoyment of our selves, to *damp* our
 Joy in God, to *disturb* our Communion with him, and
discourage our Dependance on him.

But when Fear weighs down the Balance on that side,
 let us endeavour to keep it even, to keep it from sink-
 ing into Despair, by maintaining a holy Confidence in
 God, even as to our outward Affairs; and when we
 are warn'd to *get ready for the worst*, yet we must still
hope the best. Hope that things *are not* so bad as they
seem to be, that they will not be so bad as they are
fear'd to be; and that in due time they *will be* better
 than they *are*: And let this Hope keep our *Head above*
Water, when we are ready to *sink into Despair*; let it in-
 able us to check our selves for being *cast down* and *disqui-*
eted; for as bad as things are, if we *hope in God*, we
 shall yet *praise him*.

i. Hope in *God's Power*; Be fully assur'd of this,
 that how *imminent* soever the Danger is, he can prevent
 it, how great soever the Straits are he can extricate us
 out of them; can find out a way for us in an untrack'd
 Wilderness, and open Springs of Water to us in a dry
 and barren Land; for with him *nothing is impossible*, nor
 is his *Arm* ever *shorten'd*, nor his *Wisdom non-plus'd*.
 Let us honour God by a firm Belief of his Omnipot-
 ence; Lord, *if thou wilt thou canst make me whole*, thou
canst make me clean, thou canst raise me up from a low
 Estate, and raise up Friends for me when I am most for-
 lorn; by trusting in him as a God all-sufficient when
 Creatures fail, and whom we may *rejoice* in as the *God*
of our Salvation, tho' the *Fig-tree* do not blossom, and there
 be

be no Fruit in the Vine. The murmuring *Israelites* did not in any thing affront God so much as in saying, *Can God furnish a Table in the Wilderness? Can he give Bread also?* As if any thing was too hard for the Lord. PL. 78. 19.

2. Hope in his Providence, and believe not only that he can do any thing, but that he doth do every thing, and whatever the Event is, God doth therein perform the thing that is appointed for us; and takes Cognizance of us and our Affairs, how mean and despicable soever we are. The Great God hath all Hearts in his hand, their Hearts particularly that you have Dealings with and Dependance on. The Ships on board of which your Effects are, tho' they are afar off upon the Sea, are under God's Eye, and he is the Confidence of all the Ends of the Earth, the remotest Plantations where your Concerns lie. And shall not that God who governs the World, be intrusted with the Disposal of your Concerns? Job 23. 1
PL. 54. 5.

Hope in the usual Method of Providence, which sets Prosperity and Adversity one over against the other, and when the Ebb is at the lowest, makes the Tide to turn, and the Day to dawn, when the Night is at the darkest. 'Tis the Glory of Providence to help the Helpless, to raise the Poor out of the Dust, and bring back even from the Gates of Death; to breathe upon dry Bones, and say unto them, Live. Let this encourage us to hope, that when things are at the worst they will mend, and therefore as in the Heights of Prosperity we must rejoice as tho' we rejoiced not; so, in the Depths of Adversity we must weep as tho' we wept not. *Non si male, nunc & olim sic erit.* God useth to comfort his People according to the time that he has afflicted them. Ezra 1.

3. Hope in his Pity and tender Compassions, which in the Day of your Grief and Fear you are to look upon your selves as the proper Objects of. The Text directs us particularly to hope in his Mercy; we must depend upon the Goodness of his Nature for that which we have not an express Promise for. Let this silence our Fear, that the God in whose hand our Times are, is gracious and merciful, doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men, much lets his own Children, but when there is Cause, and when there is Need, and therefore will not always chide, will not contend for ever; but tho' because Grief he will have Compassion. We may with a good Assurance fall into the hands of the Lord (and Lam. 3.
31, 32.

whosoever Hands we fall into, they are *his Hand*) for we know that *his Mercies are great*, and those that hope in them shall find them so.

Pf. 119.
49.

4. Hope in *his Promise*, that Word of his upon which he hath *caused us to hope*, and which we have all the Reason in the World to *build upon*; for not one *Iota* or *Tittle* of it shall fall to the Ground. Tho' he hath not promis'd to deliver us from that *particular Evil* we have a Dread of, or to give us that *particular Comfort* and *Success* we are desirous of, yet he hath promis'd that *nothing shall harm* them who are *Followers* of him; nay, that *all things shall work together for good to them*; and (which is enough to silence all our Fears) that tho' our Calamities may separate us from the dearest Comforts and Comforters we have in this World, yet they shall *never be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*, from Divine Comforts, and the Divine Comforter.

1 Pet. 3.
13.

Rom. 8.
39.

And now who is there here that stands in need of this Caution against Despondency of Spirit under discouraging Events, and to whom it is seasonable to recommend a *believing Hope* for the *balancing* and *silencing* of their distrustful Fears? Let them apply this to themselves, and make use of the Hope recommended to them *as an Anchor of the Soul*, to keep them *steddy* in a Storm.

Heb. 6.
19.

1. You that are *beginning the World* with Fear and Trembling, that are humble and honest and diligent, but have little to *begin with*, have many Difficulties to *break through*, and are very diffident of your own Understanding, be not discourag'd, but *hope in God's Mercy*. Your Friends are few, *unable to help you*, or *unkind* and *regardless* of you: *Father* and *Mother* have perhaps *forsaken* you. Know then that you are the particular Care of Providence, which useth to *gather the Outcasts*, and provide even for *young Ravens*, when they are *deserted*. *Trust in the Lord* therefore and *do good*, so shalt thou *dwell in the Land*, and tho' thou be not *feasted*, yet *verily thou shalt be fed*. Tho' the *Beginning* be *small*, the *latter End* may by the Blessing of God *greatly increase*, and a *little one* may *become a thousand*.

Pf. 27. 10.

Pf. 37. 3.

Job 8. 7.

2. You that have *Concerns that lie at hazard*, in danger at Sea, or of being a Prey to the Enemy, that have Debts in *bad Hands*, or dear Relations that you have

depen-

dependance upon, or delight in, in peril; give not way to amazing Fear, that Fear which has Torment, but *hope in God's Mercy*. Give not up any thing for *gone*, till it is *gone*; and when it is gone, yet *give not up all for gone*, as long as you have the good Providence of God to trust to. Say not as *David* in his haste, *I am cast out of thy sight*, or, *I shall one day perish by the Hand of Saul*; but *wait on the Lord*, and be of good Courage, resolv'd to welcome his holy Will, whatever it be. We are sometimes told that the Merchants are *in pain* for such a Ship, such a Fleet. You think at such a time, 'tis only the News of their safe Arrival that will put you out of your Pain. And what if that News never come? then you condemn your selves to a *lasting Uneasiness*. But let me recommend that to you, which will make you easy, whatever the Event be: Commit your way to God by a believing Prayer, and submit your Will to God by a penitent Resignation; and then *let your Thoughts be established*.

3. You that by the Providence of God are *from Fullness reduced to Straits*, have met with Losses which you think can never be repair'd, and conclude you shall never see a good Day again, but are undone to all Intents and Purposes; do not give way to these desponding Thoughts, but *hope in the Mercy of God*, that Mercy which bringeth low and raiseth up. As *Job's Troubles* are a Warning to those in Prosperity not to be *secure*, so his Return to his former Splendor is a Warning to those in Adversity not to *despair*. You know not what better Times you may yet be reserv'd for, as *Job* was, *Job 41: whose latter End God blessed more than his Beginning.* 12.

For the Third. I come now briefly to shew how the Balance must be kept even between Hope and Fear *as to publick Concerns*, both those of the Church abroad, and of our own Nation. Are not the Concerns of the Church abroad our Concerns? They ought to be so. I hope we all lay them near our Hearts, as *Members* of the Great Body, and hearty *Well-wishers* to its Interests, and to the Honour and Kingdom of its Great Head. Are we not in care that the Christian Religion may get ground among Men, and not lose the ground it has; that it may prevail and rule in its Power and Purity; that the Bounds of the Church may be enlarg'd by the Accession both of Jews and Gentiles to it; that the Breaches

Isa. 4. 5. Breaches of it may be *heal'd*, by the pouring out of a Spirit of Love and Charity upon all that belong to it; that the Ordinances of Christ administer'd according to the Institution of them may ever be *its Glory*, and upon *that Glory* there may ever be a *Defence*; a *Cloud created by Day*, and the shining of a flaming Fire by Night, both upon *every Dwelling Place of Mount Zion*, and upon *her Assemblies*?

Jer. 29. 7. The Land of our Nativity ought in a particular manner to be dear to us; for *in the Peace* or Trouble of *that we have Peace* or Trouble. Is it not our Concern, that our Liberty and Property be secur'd; that the Government flourish; that the publick Peace and Tranquility be continued; that Justice be duly administer'd; that the Power and Influence of the Nation abroad be advanc'd; that the Trade be protected and increas'd; but above all that the Protestant Religion be transmitted pure to those that shall come after us; that the Bulwarks erected against Popery may be strengthened; that Atheism, Infidelity, and all *Iniquity*, may be made to *stop their Mouth*; that the *Form of Godliness* may ever be the Beauty of the Nation, and the *Power of it* may ever rule in Mens Hearts and Lives? Is it not our Concern, that our Eyes should still see our Teachers, and that they should not again be removed into Corners, nor our religious Assemblies broken up and scatter'd? If it be, we cannot but look forward with Concern, and while we enjoy Peace and Liberty at present, be in care about the continuance of them; and in our Prospects there cannot but be a Mixture of *Hope* and *Fear*, and we must endeavour so to *fear the worst*, as not to grow secure, and so to *hope the best*, as not to despond or be *dispirited*.

The truth is, we are very apt at some times, when second Causes smile a little, to be very *sanguine*, above what there is reason for, and to conclude, that we shall without fail be *in Canaan presently*; at other times, when things go not just to our mind, we are apt to be very *chagrin*, more than there is Cause, and to conclude that we shall without remedy be hurried back *into Egypt again*. This hour we *soar*, and if the Wind turn, next hour we *sink*; as if when the Sun shines we should think it would never rain, and when it rains we should think the Sun would never shine out again.
And

And have we not liv'd long enough in this World to be ashamed both of those Hopes and those Fears? having often seen our selves disappointed both in the one and in the other; and in the issue things have proved neither so well as we *hoped*, nor so ill as we *fear'd*; so that we have surely at length learn'd by Experience, that it is our *Wisdom* and *Interest*, as well as our *Duty*, to keep the Balance even between Hope and Fear.

First, We have always reason to keep up a *Holy Fear* as to publick Affairs, and to be apprehensive of Trouble before us, even then when things look most *promising*. We have no reason even then when we *dwell peaceably*, as the Men of *Israel* in *Solomon's* time, to *dwell carelessly*, Judg. 18. as the *Men of Laish*. It is true, and we have a great deal of reason to be thankful for it, that we are a happy People; we have long been blest'd with Peace and Plenty at home, and with Victory and Success abroad; we live under a very good Government, which *seeks the Welfare of our People, speaking Peace to all their Seed*; we have long *sitten every one under his own Vine, and under his own Fig-tree*; we have long enjoy'd the free Exercise of our Religion, and great Plenty of the Means of Grace, and there has been none to make us afraid: Our Fleece has been *wet with the Dew of Heaven*, when that of other Nations has been *dry*; while theirs also has been *wet with Showers of Blood*, ours has been *dry*.

Shall *England* then say, *I sit as a Queen, and shall see no Sorrow*? By no means. Happy is the Man that still *feareth*, as *David*, whose *Flesh trembled for fear of God*, Ps. 119. and notwithstanding the many Mercies he had received 120. from him, was *afraid of his Judgments*. And we have reason to be so; for,

1. We are a *provoking People*. Atheism and Profaneness abound among us, notwithstanding the Testimonies born against them, and the Endeavours us'd to suppress them. Vice is become fashionable and epidemical: All Flesh have corrupted their Way; *the whole Head sick, the whole Heart faint*. How is God's Name dishonour'd, his Day profan'd, his good Creatures abus'd to Luxury and Excess; and how doth the unclean Spirit range through the Land! Liberty to sin has been pleaded for as *Christian Liberty*, and the Societies for Reformation branded as *illegal Inquisitions*, and their
pious

Jer. 9. 9. pious Endeavours oppos'd, insulted, and ridicul'd: And shall not God visit for these things? Shall not his Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this? How can a People that hate to be reform'd, hope to be sav'd?

The great Decay of serious Godliness among those that run not with others to an Excess of Riot, is likewise a very threatenng Symptom. If those grow more insolent that are filling the Measure of the Nation's Guilt by their Wickedness; and at the same time those grow more cold and remis, that should empty it by their Prayers and Tears, things look very ill indeed. How woefully do the Professors of this Age degenerate from the Zeal and Strictness of their Predecessors! And such is the Corruption of the rising Generation in many Families, that there is reason to fear a further Degeneracy. And if thus we grow worse and worse, what will become of us at last? If thus, as Ezra speaks, the Holy Seed mingle themselves with, and conform themselves to the People of these Abominations, what may we expect, but that God should be angry with us till he hath consum'd us? For our Religion sensibly consumes, and a Consumption may be as fatal as a Stab. Those may be of any Religion, that are of no Religion.

Ezr. 9. 2,
14.

2. We are a Divided People, and our Divisions give just cause to fear the worst; for what can be expected, but that a Kingdom divided against it self should be brought to Desolation? 'Tis our Enemies Policy to divide us, and our Sin and Folly to serve their Design by our Misunderstandings one of another, and Disaffections one to another, when we might countermine and defeat it by our mutual Love and Charity. For the Divisions of our Reuben there cannot but be great Thoughts and Searchings of Heart among all that are concern'd for the Publick Welfare. We are in danger of being burn'd up by the Heats in our own Bosoms, and broken to pieces by the Blows we give one another: And who can we think will be our Deliverers, if we be thus our own Destroyers?

It is not so much the Difference of Sentiment that is threatenng, nor the Difference of Practice according to that Sentiment: I never expect to see all wise Men of a Mind, and good Men will not act against their Judgment: But that which doth us the Mischief is the Mismanagement of our Differences, our uncharitable

Censures one of another, and Reflections one upon another, our Heats and Animosities and Party-making, to the Destruction not only of Christian Charity, but of common Friendship and good Neighbourhood. The Breach seems *wide as the Sea*, which cannot be *heal'd*, and what will be in the End hereof? If we thus *bite and devour one another*, what can be expected, but that Gal. 5. 15. we should be *consum'd one of another*? While our Enemies *triumph* in our Divisions, it becomes us to *tremble* because of them.

3. God has told us, that *in the World we shall have Tribulation*: all the Disciples of Christ must count upon it, and not flatter themselves with Hopes of an uninterrupted Tranquility any where on this side Heaven. The Church is here *Militant*, its State in this World is a *Warfare*: If it retire sometimes into Quarters of Refreshment, yet it must expect to be drawn out into the Field again next Campaign: If it have its Intervals of Peace, those are intended as Breathing Times, that it may recruit and gather Strength for an Encounter with another Trouble. Once we read that the Land of *Israel* had *Rest fourscore Years*; but we never read Judg. 3. 30. afterwards that it had so long a Respite. We are in a *Wilderness*, and we must expect to fare no better than *the Church in the Wilderness* did, which tho' sometimes Acts 7. 38. it pitch'd where there were 12 *Wells of Water*, yet presently was where there was *no Water* to drink; and Exod. 15. 27. when it removed from the Wilderness of *Sin*, the Cloud — 16. 3. that was their Guide led them to the Wilderness of Num. 10. 12. *Paran*; but still they were in a *Desart Land*, where God, tho' he *led them about*, yet *instructed them*. Let the People of God never expect, till they come to Heaven to be out of the reach of Evil, and therefore never expect to be perfectly *quiet from the Fear* of it.

Far be it from me to suggest any thing that may *create* disquieting Jealousies; all that I aim at in mentioning these Grounds of *Fear*, is, that hereby we may all be *awaken'd* to our Duty.

1. Let us in consideration hereof *stir up our selves to pray*, and to *wrestle with God* in Prayer, for the *turning away* of the Judgments, which our own Sins, and the Malice of those who are the Enemies of our public Peace, *threaten us with*. *Jacob* fear'd *Esau* his Brother, Gen. and then pray'd, *Deliver me, I pray thee*, from him. 11

hr. 20. *Jehoshaphat* fear'd, and then *set himself to seek the Lord,*
and proclaim a Fast. Whatever are the Grounds of our
 Fear, we know God can remove them; he can *turn*
 m. 11. *away Ungodliness from Jacob,* and then he comes as a
Redeemer to Zion.

Let not our Prayers for the *Church of God,* and for
our own Nation, degenerate into a Formality, nor let us
 grow *customary* in them, as if it were only for *fashion sake,*
 that we *pray'd* for the Queen and the Government, the
 Preservation of the Protestant Succession, and the Pro-
 sperity of the Nation and its Allies, and (as some vainly
drink Healths to these) only for a *Complement.* I fear
 lest some that *join* with us in Prayer, however in *other*
 Parts of the Service they think themselves somewhat
 concern'd, when we come to *that,* grow *remiss* and
indifferent, as if that were nothing to them; whereas
 our Lord Jesus has taught us before we pray for our *daily*
Bread and the *Pardon of our Sins,* to pray for the Pro-
 sperity of his Church, that his *Name* may be *sanctified,*
his Kingdom may come, and his *Will* be done. Let us
 therefore not only join heartily with our Ministers in
 Prayer for the Church of God, and for the Nation, but
 let each of us in our Families and Closets be Interces-
 sors with God for publick Mercies; let us stand in the
 Gap to turn away his Wrath, and give him no Rest *till*
 62. *he establish,* *till he make Jerusalem a Praise in the Earth.*
 7.

2. Let us in consideration hereof do what we can to
 prevent the Judgments that threaten us, by a *personal*
Reformation of Heart and Life, and by *contributing* what
 we can in our Places to the *Reformation of others.* When
 r. 18. God *speaks concerning a Nation,* to *pluck up,* and to *pull*
 8. *down,* and to *destroy,* its turning from Sin is the only
 way to save it from Ruin, and that is a sure way. It is
 b 22. the *Island of the Innocent* that is *deliver'd by the Pureness*
of their Hands. Let this Charity to the Public begin at
home. Let every *Israelite,* as once every *Ninevite,* turn
 n. 3. 10. *from his evil Way;* and then *who can tell but God will yet*
return and repent, and leave a *Blessing* behind him? But
 let not this Charity end there; let us appear *on the*
Lord's side; let us act in defence of injur'd Virtue and
 despis'd Godliness, and do our utmost in Humility and
 Sincerity to put Vice and Profaneness out of counte-
 nance. And if we thus return to God *in a way of Duty,*
 no doubt he will return to us *in a way of Mercy,* and be
 better to us than our Fears.

3. Being warn'd of a Deluge coming, let us *provide accordingly*: Let not the Warning make us despond and despair. *Noah* did not; he knew the Deluge should not be a final Destruction of Mankind, but that there would be *another World* after that which was to be drown'd; he knew also that it should *go well with him*, and his Family. With this Hope he encourag'd himself; but being warn'd of God concerning it, he was *moved with Fear*, and made provision for it; he *walked with God*, and they that do so are sure to be *hid in the Day of the Lord's Anger*, to be hid either in *Heaven*, Zeph. 1. or *under Heaven*. He prepared an *Ark*, and then was himself saved in it. Christ is our Ark, God has prepar'd in him a Refuge for all those that *flee to him*, and *take shelter* in him when a Deluge comes. Preserve the Evidences of your Interest in Christ clear and unclouded, and your Hopes of Eternal Life firm and unshaken; lay up a Treasure of Comforts and Experiences; make the Name of the Lord your strong Tower, his Attributes, his Promises your Sanctuary, into which you may run and be safe, in which you may rest and be easy; and then *welcome the Will of God*, nothing can come amiss.

Secondly, Whatever Cause we may see to *fear*, yet still we must keep up a *good Hope*, as to publick Affairs. We hear of the *threatning Powers and Policies* of our Enemies, the *Heads and Horns of the Dragon*, that Rev. 1. *makes War with the Lamb*. We see the Church in many 3. places *afflicted, tossed with Tempests, and not comforted*; her Adversaries many and mighty, her Helpers few and feeble; yet let not our Faith and Hope fail: It is *Day*, tho' it be *cloudy and dark*, and at *Evening time it shall be* Zech. 1. *light*. Let *Israel hope in God*, and wait for him, as those 7. *that wait for the Morning*, and when the Night is long and gloomy, do as *Paul's Mariners* did, *cast Anchor, and* Acts 2. *wish for the Day*. Let us learn to *make the best of that* 29. *which is, and hope the best concerning that which shall be*.

Let our Hopes always be such a Check upon our Fears, as that they may not prevail to *disturb* our Communion with God, to *stop the Mouth* of Prayer, and *weaken the Hands* of honest Endeavour. Hearken not to the foolish Surmises of Danger, nor be put into a fright by *evil Tidings*: Say not a *Confederacy*, to whom this People shall say II. 8. *a Confederacy, neither fear ye their Fear, nor be afraid,* 12.

but *make God your Fear and your Dread.* The more we are govern'd by the *Fear of God*, the less we shall be disturb'd by the *Fear of Man.* *Nehemiah* encourag'd the Builders of the Wall with this, when they were surrounded with Enemies, who design'd to *come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the Work to cease:*

sh. 4. *Be not afraid of them, remember the Lord which is great*
 , 14. *and terrible, greater and more terrible to them than they can be to us, and who will shew himself above them in that thing wherein they deal proudly.* When you *fear continually every day*, as if the Oppressor in his *Fury* were ready to *destroy*, you forget the *Lord your Maker*, and his Dominion over all, and the Dependance of every Creature upon him; which if you had a due regard to, you would look with Contempt upon *Senacherib* himself, and would say, *Where is the Fury of the Oppressor?*

Let me prevail with you at this day to *incourage your selves in the Lord your God* as to public Affairs. While we fear *our own Sins*, let us *hope in God's Mercy*; for tho' our *Iniquities prevail against us*, and threaten to stop the Current of God's Favours, yet *as for our Transgressions he shall purge them away*, and that great Obstacle being remov'd, his Favours shall have a free course again. Tho' the Designs of our Enemies be laid never so deep, and their Hopes rais'd never so high, yet God

65. 3. can make even *their Wrath to praise him*, and restrain the *Remainder of it*; and therefore *take heed and be quiet, fear not, neither be faint-hearted*, but hope that things will *end well at last.*

76. 10. *7. 4.*

There are three things which may incourage our Hope, and keep the Balance even against all our Fears; as to the Concerns both of the Protestant Churches abroad, and our own Nation.

1. The *Word which God hath spoken to us*; which (whatever other Props our Hopes may be supported with) is the great Foundation on which they must be built, and then they are *fix'd.* If our Hopes be grounded on the Promise, and our Expectations guided by it, they are as the *House built on the Rock*; and the Heart that is supported by them is *establish'd and cannot be mov'd*;

112. *Si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinae:*
 3. 46. 2. Tho' the Earth be removed, yet will not we fear. But if our Hopes be founded on the Ability and Agency of Creatures, they rise or fall as second Causes *smile or frown*

frown; as the Ship upon the Water, which is higher or lower as the Tide *ebbs* or *flows*. The Stocks are as the News is; and then every Turn of the Wheel otherwise than we would have it, shakes our Hopes, and robs us of the Comfort of them. Be perswaded therefore to hope for what God has promis'd, according to the *true Intent*, and *full Extent* of the Promise, and because he has promis'd it, and that Hope shall be an *Anchor of the Soul sure and stedfast*.

Is not this the Word which God hath spoken, and on which he hath caus'd us to hope? That the *Kingdoms of the World shall become his Kingdoms*: That *Christ shall have the Heathen given him for his Inheritance*, and *the Ends of the Earth shall see his Salvation*. Hath he not said that the *Man of Sin shall be consum'd*, the *Mystery of Iniquity unravel'd*, and that the *New Testament Babylon shall sink like a Milstone into the mighty Waters*? Hath he not said, that the *Day will come when Swords shall be beaten into Plowshares, and Spears into Pruning-hooks, when the Wolf and the Lamb shall lie down together, and there shall be none to hurt or destroy in all the Holy Mountain*? Hath he not said, that *for the Oppression of the Poor, and the Sighing of the Needy, he will arise, and set them in safety from those that puff at them*? That *the Rod of the Wicked shall not always rest on the Lot of the Righteous, but the Year of the Redeemed will come, and the Year of Recompences for the Controversy of Zion*? Hath he not said, *That a Seed shall serve Christ, which shall be accounted to him for a Generation*: That *the Name of Christ shall endure for ever, and that the Church is built upon a Rock, and the Gates of Hell shall never prevail against it*?

This, and a great deal more to this purpose, he hath said; and *he is not a Man that he should lie, nor the Son of Man that he should repent*. Hath he made the Promise, and shall he not make it good? In this therefore let us *trust*, in this let us *triumph*, *God hath spoken in his Holiness*, he hath given me his Word for it, and then *I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, Gilead is mine, Manasseh mine*: It's all my own as far as the Promise goes, which we must not so much as *stagger at*.

2. The *Work which God has begun among us*. We have reason to hope in God's Mercy, for the Interest that lies so much upon our Hearts, even the Interest of
Reli-

HOPE and FEAR *balanc'd.*

Pl. 138.8. Religion among us, is the Interest of God's own Kingdom, which he hath set up among us, and will therefore keep up: It is the *Work of his own Hands*, which he will never forsake.

Things are not so bad, but blessed be God, there are some hopeful favourable Symptoms in our Case; and none more so, than the National Testimonies that are born against Atheism and Infidelity, and the threatening Growth of Deism, Socinianism, and Scepticism among us: The Complaints that are justly made of the Profanation of the Lord's Day, and the Contempt cast upon the Scripture and Divine Institutions; of the wretched Corruption of Manners, and the Influence which the Profaneness of the Stage has upon it. When these things are *represented* as the real Grievances of the Nation, and *lamented* accordingly, surely now *there is Hope in Israel concerning this thing*, and we may rejoice in that Hope.

Ezr. 10.2. I trust God has among us a Remnant of praying People, a Remnant that hold fast their Integrity, and with an Eye to them God will continue to save us, and will perfect what he has wrought. We may safely argue as *Haman's Wife* doth for the perfecting of the Ruin of our Enemies; *If Mordecai be of the Seed of the Jews*; If the Cause be God's, as certainly it is, before whom, before which thou hast *begun to fall*, thou shalt not, thou canst not *prevail*, tho' thou struggle never so hard, but shalt surely, shalt irrecoverably fall before him and it. And we may also argue as *Manoah's Wife* doth for the preventing of our own Ruin; *If the Lord had been pleased to kill us*, he would not as at this time have shewed us such things as these. As for God, his Work is perfect: If he *bring to the birth*, he will cause to bring forth.

Judg. 13. 23. 3. The Wonders which he hath wrought for us. When we are encouraging our selves with Hopes that God will ordain Peace for us, because he has wrought our Works in us: yet this is discouraging that there are such Difficulties in the way, which we think can never be got over. But let us then consider the former times, remember the Works of the Lord, and his Wonders of old; not only those which our Fathers have told us of, but which we have seen in our own Days, whereby God's Work has been begun, carry'd on in a surprizing way, and by Events which we looked not for.

When

When God had begun to deliver *Israel* out of *Egypt*, and conduct them to *Canaan* by *Miracles*, he expected that in their Straits they should depend upon him still to work *Miracles* for their Relief, and was displeas'd at their Unbelief if they did not. God has begun to save us, tho' not by *Miracles*, yet by *Marvels*, and thereby has encourag'd us to depend upon him that he will still do *Wonders* for us, rather than the Work he has done should be undone again. If a *mean* and *worthless* People may be sav'd by a *Divine Prerogative*, why may not a weak and helpless People be sav'd by a *Divine Omnipotence*?

Be of good Courage therefore, and *hope in God*, that we shall yet praise him; stay your selves upon him, strengthen your selves in him; look upwards with Cheerfulness, and then look forward with Satisfaction. Let your Hopes quicken your Prayers, let them keep you in the way of Duty, and inlarge your Hearts to run in that way; let them quicken your Endeavours in your places, to serve the Interests of God's Kingdom among us to the utmost of your Power; and then let them silence your Fears, and make you always easy to your selves and those about you. Comfort your selves and one another with this, that the same Almighty Hand that has laid the Foundations of his Church among us, will build upon those Foundations, will in his own Way and Time, in his own Method, and according to the Plan of his own Eternal Counsels carry on the Building, till at length the *Top stone* be brought forth *Zech.4.7.* with Shoutings, and we shall cry, *Grace, Grace to it.*

SERMONS *lately Preach'd by Mr. Mat-*
thew Henry.

F*Aith in Christ infer'd from Faith in God*: In a Ser-
mon Preach'd at the Tuesday Lecture at *Salters*
Hall, May 29, 1711.

A Sermon concerning the Forgiveness of Sin as a
Debt. Preach'd *June 1, 1711.*

Hope and Faith balanc'd: In a Sermon Preach'd at
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