

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS ON 2 SAMUEL 22

Thomas Scott

V. 1-20.

When we have received mercies from God, we ought, without delay, to render him our tribute of praise and gratitude; every recent favor should be acknowledged with thankful remembrance of former deliverances; and signal interpositions of the Lord in our behalf ought to be publicly celebrated, with the best endowments which we possess. They who know the Lord in his glorious perfections, and the various relations in which he stands to his rational creatures, and especially as "a God of salvation;" and who thus learn to fear, trust, love, and serve him, choosing him as their Portion, and waiting for his mercy unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ, and according to the covenant which he mediated, may expect from him every conceivable blessing. Nay, words can never express, nor the creation itself afford objects sufficient to represent, all that the Lord is and will be unto them, through time and to eternity. The more they expect and ask from him in humble faith, the larger blessings shall they receive; while past experiences will encourage and dictate further supplications. But while this felicity belongs to all true believers, yet frequently both the events of Providence, and their inward experience, seem to indicate the contrary. They are assailed by powerful enemies, and exposed to manifold troubles and dangers, from without; they are often disquieted by distressing fears and terrors of conscience, from within; while Satan pours in his horrible suggestions to aggravate their distress, and to urge them to despair. Thus they feel, as it were, the very "pains of hell," and are so bound in the snares of death, that they are ready to give up their lives and souls for lost. But in their extreme distress they cry unto the Lord with the greatest earnestness, and he supports them, and appears for their relief: so that all their sorrows and fears shall terminate in the more conspicuous display of the glory of God's perfections, and in the evidence of his special love to them: all shall exercise and increase their grace, prepare the way for future comforts, and become the subject of triumphant praise and thanksgiving; and however pain-

ful their feelings are at present, the retrospect shall hereafter be delightful. When therefore temptations and tribulations abound, and our prayers are mingled with groans and fears, with dismay and anguish of spirit; let us not despond, but be of good courage: for we shall certainly bless God for them ere long, as many before us have done for similar or severer trials. Without a renewal of the miraculous displays, with which Israel of old was favored, the true believer, comparing his dangers, fears, prayers, and deliverances, may be as firmly assured, that the Lord has wrought for him, as that he wrought for that favored people: and that he has not only made his angels, and other creatures, the ministers of good to him; but that his own hand has effected the surprising change which he has experienced, in his condition, character, hopes, and prospects. Nor are the judgments of God less terrible now on the enemies of his people, than they were, when the earth swallowed them up, the depths of the sea overwhelmed them, or the fire of the Lord consumed them: though they are less noticed, because more spiritual, and chiefly executed in the eternal world. For still the whole creation fights against his enemies, yea, his own almighty arm is lifted up to destroy them, as well as to deliver those who trust in him.

V. 21-33.

Under reproaches and persecutions, the testimony of our conscience, to our integrity and sincerity in our religious profession, "not of fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God," will prove a singular support: and it perfectly consists with the deepest humility and the most simple dependence upon the Savior. Nor can we without it expect the witness of the comforting Spirit of God. We should therefore "exercise ourselves to have a conscience void of offence towards God and man:" and, earnestly seeking supporting and sanctifying grace, we should steadily persevere in the path of duty, rejecting every temptation to seek relief by forsaking it. We must keep all God's statutes and judgments before our eyes, without one exception, that we may regulate our conduct and conversation by them; and we must watch and pray especially against those sins which, by constitution, custom, or circumstances, may be called "our own iniquity." If this be our aim and practice, the Lord will plead our cause, and

clear up our characters in due season. For he will deal with us, according as we walk before him in humility and sincerity, or the contrary; both with respect to the dispensations of his providence, and the consolations of his Spirit. In the darkest seasons the Lord will guide and comfort those who trust in and follow him: and of the very many millions, who have tried his word, none ever complained that he was unfaithful; but all have been so assisted, that they have at length wondered at what the Lord had enabled them to do, as well as what he had done for them. Without him all other helpers are vain; and with him they are needless, except as he pleases to work by them as his instruments of good to us.

V. 34-51.

All our talents and abilities are from God, and all our improvement of them: whatever services we have performed, or however consistent our walk has been, the will and the power have been from him: "He is our Strength, who maketh our way perfect." Ability and success in our spiritual warfare, liberty from sin and Satan, enlargement of heart in the service of our God, and preservation in the slippery paths of this ensnaring world, are causes for thankfulness, and not for glorying in ourselves. His gentle rebukes and corrections tend to real advancement, as much as our comforts and prosperity do. (*Note*, Heb. 12:9-11.) Armed with the shield of salvation and "the sword of the Spirit," the Christian soldier, being "strong in the LORD," will pursue his victories, till he has trodden upon the necks of all his enemies, and received the conqueror's crown. (*Notes*, Rom. 8:35-39. Eph. 6:10-17.) For "the LORD liveth," as the God of strength and salvation, and will never leave us nor forsake us, till he has brought us forth from all our enemies, and lifted us up on high, above all that rose up against us. In the prospect of that complete salvation, let us joyfully praise him on the field of battle, surrounded with our enemies, and in the midst of our conflicts: and ere long we shall adore him, and sing praises to his name in more exalted strains, surrounded with millions of the redeemed, and innumerable multitudes of holy angels, who will triumph in our victories, and rejoice in our felicity. But we may here likewise meditate upon the Redeemer's sufferings, and the glory which was to follow, and which

has followed, and shall still far more be displayed: for our sins he was encompassed with the waves of death, the floods of ungodly men, and the very sorrows of hell, in the garden and on the cross. In his distress he called upon the Lord, and was heard, and raised from the dead, and exalted to the throne of glory: while his death was attended by the most stupendous displays of the divine indignation, against those who perpetrated that most atrocious crime. In him the Father delighted: his righteousness was perfect, yea, divine: he was justified from the blasphemies of his enemies by his resurrection and ascension. All power in heaven and earth are in his hands: all enemies shall be put under his feet, and he will destroy all who hate him. He has been "delivered from the strivings of the people, and made the Head of the heathen:" he continually receives the submissions of those who hear of him, and willingly obey him; while many who have no love for him, profess submission to him from fear of his power: but all opposition shall at length melt away before him, and all nations shall do him service. For he is the anointed King, whom the Father has exalted, and his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. (Dan. 7:27. *Note*, Rev. 11:15-18.) May we then accept of his salvation, and submit to his authority; may we now follow him bearing our cross; that, when he shall appear to judgment, we also may "receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."