

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION TO HEBREWS 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 shows 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, (^{<S121>}Hebrews 12:1), 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, (^{<S122>}Hebrews 12:2-4). And that they must expect chastisement, and should bear it patiently, he cites a passage of Scripture out of (^{<S123>}Proverbs 3:11,12) which suggests, that those who are the children of God, and are loved and received by him, are chastened and scourged, (^{<S124>}Hebrews 12:5,6). 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, (^{<S125>}Hebrews 12:7,8). 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, (^{<S126>}Hebrews 12:9,10). 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, (^{<S127>}Hebrews 12:11). 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, (^{<81212>}Hebrews 12:12,13). He exhorts them in general to follow peace with all men, and particularly holiness; which is absolutely necessary to the beatific vision of God, (^{<81214>}Hebrews 12:14), 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, (^{<81215>}Hebrews 12:15), 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, (^{<81216>}Hebrews 12:16,17) 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, (^{<81218>}Hebrews 12:18-21). 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, (^{<81222>}Hebrews 12:22-24). 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 spoke on earth, at Mount Sinai, which was shaken by his voice; and the rather, since it appears from a prophecy in (^{<37016>}Haggai 2:6,7), that under the Gospel dispensation, not only the earth but the heavens would be shaken, (^{<81225>}Hebrews 12:25,26) 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, (^{<81227>}Hebrews 12:27). 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, (~~3828~~ Hebrews 12:28,29).

Ver. 1. *Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about*, etc..], As the Israelites were encompassed with the pillar of cloud, or with the clouds of glory in the wilderness, as the Jews say; (see Gill on “~~4600~~1 Corinthians 10:1”), to which there may be an allusion, here, since it follows,

with so great a cloud of witnesses; or “martyrs”, as the Old Testament saints, the instances of whose faith and patience are produced in the preceding chapter: these, some of them, were martyrs in the sense in which that word is commonly used; they suffered in the cause, and for the sake of true religion; and they all bore a noble testimony of God, and for him; and they received a testimony from him; and will be hereafter witnesses for, or against us, to whom they are examples of the above graces: and these may be compared to a “cloud”, for the comfortable and reviving doctrines which they dropped; and for their refreshing examples in the heat of persecution; and for their guidance and direction in the ways of God; and more especially for their number, being like a thick cloud, and so many, that they compass about on every side, and are instructive every way. Hence the following things are inferred and urged,

let us lay aside every weight; or burden; every sin, which is a weight and burden to a sensible sinner, and is an hinderance in running the Christian race; not only indwelling sin, but every actual transgression, and therefore to be laid aside; as a burden, it should be laid on Christ; as a sin, it should be abstained from, and put off, with respect to the former conversation: also worldly cares, riches, and honours, when immoderately pursued, are a weight depressing the mind to the earth, and a great hinderance in the work and service of God, and therefore to be laid aside; not that they are to be entirely rejected, and not cared for and used, but the heart should not be set upon them, or be over anxious about them: likewise the rites and ceremonies of Moses's law were a weight and burden, a yoke of bondage, and an intolerable one, and with which many believing Jews were entangled and pressed, and which were a great hinderance in the performance of evangelical worship; wherefore the exhortation to these Hebrews, to lay

them aside, was very proper and pertinent, since they were useless and incommodious, and there had been a disannulling of them by Christ, because of their weakness and unprofitableness. Some observe, that the word here used signifies a tumour or swelling; and so may design the tumour of pride and vain glory, in outward privileges, and in a man's own righteousness, to which the Hebrews were much inclined; and which appears in an unwillingness to stoop to the cross, and bear afflictions for the sake of the Gospel; all which is a great enemy to powerful godliness, and therefore should be brought down, and laid aside. The Arabic version renders it, "every weight of luxury": all luxurious living, being prejudicial to real religion:

and the sin which doth so easily beset us; the Arabic version renders it, "easy to be committed"; meaning either the corruption of nature in general, which is always present, and puts upon doing evil, and hinders all the good it can; or rather some particular sin, as what is commonly called a man's constitution sin, or what he is most inclined to, and is most easily drawn into the commission of; or it may be the sin of unbelief is intended, that being opposite to the grace of faith, the apostle had been commending, in the preceding chapter, and he here exhorts to; and is a sin which easily insinuates itself, and prevails, and that sometimes under the notion of a virtue, as if it would be immodest, or presumptuous to believe; the arguments for it are apt to be readily and quickly embraced; but as every weight, so every sin may be designed: some reference may be had to (Lamentations 1:14) where the church says, that her transgressions were "wreathed", *wgr tcy*, "wreathed themselves", or wrapped themselves about her. The allusion seems to be to runners in a race, who throw off everything that encumbers, drop whatsoever is ponderous and weighty, run in light garments, and lay aside long ones, which entangle and hinder in running, as appears from the next clause, or inference.

And let us run with patience the race that is set before us. The stadium, or race plot, in which the Christian race is run, is this world; the prize run for is the heavenly glory; the mark to direct in it, is Christ; many are the runners, yet none but the overcomers have the prize; which being held by Christ, is given to them: this race is "set before" the saints; that is, by God; the way in which they are to run is marked out by him in his word; the troubles they shall meet with in it are appointed for them by him, in his counsels and purposes; the mark to direct them is set before them in the Gospel, even Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, whom they are to look

unto; the length of their race is fixed for them, or how far, and how long they shall run; and the prize is determined for them, and will be given them, and which is held out for their encouragement, to have respect unto: and it becomes all the saints, and belongs to each, and everyone of them, to “run” this race; which includes both doing and suffering for Christ; it is a motion forward, a pressing towards the mark for the prize, a going from strength to strength, from one degree of grace to another; and to it swiftness and agility are necessary; and when it is performed aright, it is with readiness, willingness, and cheerfulness: it requires strength and courage, and a removal of all impediments, and should be done “with patience”; which is very necessary, because of the many exercises in the way; and because of the length of the race; and on account of the prize to be enjoyed, which is very desirable: the examples of the saints, and especially Christ, the forerunner, should move and animate unto it.

Ver. 2. *Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*, etc..] Not with bodily eyes, for at present he is not to be looked upon in this manner, but with the eye of the understanding, or with the eye of faith; for faith is a seeing of the Son; it is a spiritual sight of Christ, which is at first but glimmering, afterwards it increases, and is of a soul humbling nature; it is marvellous and surprising; it transforms into the image of Christ, and fills with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: a believer should be always looking to Christ, and off of every object, as the word here used signifies. Christ is to be looked unto as “Jesus”, a Saviour, who being appointed and sent by God to be a Saviour, came, and is become the author of eternal salvation; and to him only should we look for it: he is able and willing to save; he is a suitable, complete, and only Saviour; and whoever look to him by faith shall be saved; and he is to be considered, and looked unto, as “the author and finisher of faith”: he is the author or efficient cause of it; all men are by nature without it; it is not in the power of man to believe of himself; it is a work of omnipotence; it is an instance of the exceeding greatness of the power of God; and it is the operation of Christ, by his Spirit; and the increase of it is from him, (^{<476>}Luke 17:5) and he is the finisher of it; he gives himself, and the blessings of his grace, to his people, to maintain and strengthen it; he prays for it, that it fail not; he carries on the work of faith, and will perform it with power; and brings to, and gives that which is the end of it, eternal life, or the salvation of the soul.

Who for the joy that was set before him; the word ^{<477>}αὐτί, rendered “for”; sometimes signifies, in the room, or stead of, as in (^{<478>}Matthew 2:22

20:28) and is so rendered here in the Syriac and Arabic versions; and then the sense is, that Christ instead of being in the bosom of the Father, came into this world; instead of being in the form of God, he appeared in the form of a servant; instead of the glory which he had with his Father from eternity, he suffered shame and disgrace; instead of living a joyful and comfortable life on earth, he suffered a shameful and an accursed death; and instead of the temporal joy and glory the Jews proposed to him, he endured the shame and pain of the cross: sometimes it signifies the end for which a thing is, as in (^{<4918>}Ephesians 5:31) and may intend that, for the sake of which Christ underwent so much disgrace, and such sufferings; namely, for the sake of having a spiritual seed, a numerous offspring with him in heaven, who are his joy, and crown of rejoicing; for the sake of the salvation of all the elect, on which his heart was set; and for the glorifying of the divine perfections, which was no small delight and pleasure to him. And to this agrees the Chaldee paraphrase of (^{<4920>}Psalms 21:1).

“O Lord, in thy power shall the King Messiah ydj y, “rejoice”, and in thy redemption how greatly will he exult!”

And also because of his own glory as Mediator, which was to follow his sufferings, and which includes his resurrection from the dead, his exaltation at the right hand of God, and the whole honour and glory Christ has in his human nature; (see ^{<4918>}Psalms 16:8-11) and with a view to all this, he endured the cross; which is to be taken not properly for that frame of wood, on which he was crucified; but, improperly, for all his sufferings, from his cradle to his cross; and particularly the tortures of the cross, being extended on it, and nailed unto it; and especially the death of the cross, which kind of death he endured to verify the predictions of it, (^{<4926>}Psalms 22:16 ^{<4920>}Zechariah 12:10) and to show that he was made a curse for his people; and this being a Roman punishment, shows that the sceptre was taken from Judah, and therefore the Messiah must be come; and that Christ suffered for the Gentiles, as well as Jews: and this death he endured with great courage and intrepidity, with much patience and constancy, and in obedience to the will of his Father: despising the shame; of the cross; for it was an ignominious death, as well as a painful one; and as he endured the pain of it with patience, he treated the shame of it with contempt; throughout the whole of his life, he despised the shame and reproach that was cast upon him; and so he did at the time of his apprehension, and when upon his trial, and at his death, under all the ignominious circumstances

that attended it; which should teach us not to be ashamed of the reproach of Christ, but count it an honour to be worthy to suffer shame for his name.

And is set down at the right hand of the throne of God; Which is in heaven; and is expressive of the majesty and glory of God; and of the honour done to Christ in human nature, which is not granted to any of the angels: here Christ sits as God's fellow, as equal to him, as God, and as having done his work as man, and Mediator; and this may assure us, that when we have run out our race, we shall sit down too, with Christ upon his throne, and be at rest.

Ver. 3. *For consider him,* etc..] In the greatness of his person, as God, the Son of God, the heir of all things; and in his offices of prophet, priest, and King, as the Saviour of lost sinners, the Leader and Commander of the people, as the apostle and high priest of our profession: consider him in his human nature, his conversation on earth, and what he did and suffered for men; how that in his nature he was pure and holy, in his conversation harmless and innocent, in his deportment meek and lowly; who went about doing good to the souls of men, and at last suffered and died, and is now glorified: consider the analogy between him and us, and how great is the disproportion; and therefore if he was ill treated, no wonder we should consider him under all his reproaches and sufferings:

that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself; against his person, they denying his deity, and speaking against his sonship, and against his offices; mocking him as a King, deriding him as a prophet, and treating him with the utmost contempt as a priest and Saviour; and against his actions, his works of mercy to the bodies of men, when done on the sabbath day; his conversing with sinners for the good of their souls, as if he was an encourager of them in sin, and a partner with them; his miracles, as if they were done by the help of the devil; and against the whole series of his life, as if it was criminal. Now we should analogize this contradiction, and see what proportion there is between this, and what is endured by us: we should consider the aggravations of it, that it was “against himself”; sometimes it was against his disciples, and him through them, as it is now against his members, and him in them; but here it was immediately and directly against himself: and this he endured “from sinners”; some more secret, as the Scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees; some more open, as the common people; some of them the vilest of sinners, the most abandoned of creatures, as the Roman soldiers, and Herod's men of war: and this should

be considered, that we cannot be contradicted by viler or meaner persons; and it is worthy of notice, with what courage and bravery of mind, with what patience and invincible constancy he endured it: this should be recollected for imitation and encouragement,

lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds; contradiction is apt to make persons weary and faint, as Rebekah was, because of the daughters of Heth, and as Jeremiah was, because of the derision of the Jews, (^{<0274>}Genesis 27:46 ^{<008>}Jeremiah 20:8,9) but a consideration of Jesus, and of what he has endured, tends to relieve the saints in such a condition; (see ^{<0025>}Matthew 10:25 ^{<0231>}Luke 23:31).

Ver. 4. *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood*, etc..] They had resisted sin, and Satan, and the world, the men of it, and the lusts of it, and its frowns and flatteries, and also false teachers, even every adversary of Christ, and their souls; but they had not, as yet, resisted unto blood, or to the shedding of their blood, as some of the Old Testament saints had done; as some in the times of the Maccabees, and as James the apostle of Christ, and as Christ himself: wherefore the apostle suggests, that they ought to consider, that they had been indulged; and what they had been engaged in, were only some light skirmishes; and that they must expect to suffer as long as they were in the world, and had blood in them; and that their blood, when called for, should be spilled for the sake of Christ:

striving against sin; which is the principal antagonist the believer has, and is here particular pointed out: sin is here, by some, thought to be put for sinful men; or it may design the sin of those men, who solicited the saints to a defection from the truth; or the sin of apostasy itself; or that of unbelief; or rather indwelling sin, and the lusts of the flesh, which war against the soul. Now this is said, to sharpen and increase the saints resentment and indignation against it, as being their antagonist, with whom they strive and combat, and which is the cause of all the evils in the world, exposes to wrath to come, and separates from communion with God; and to encourage them to bear their sufferings patiently, since they are not without sin, as Christ was; and since their afflictions and sufferings are for the subduing of sin, and the increase of holiness.

Ver. 5. *And ye have forgotten the exhortation*, etc..] Or consolation, the consolatory word or doctrine, in (^{<0011>}Proverbs 3:11). This, by their conduct, the apostle feared they had forgotten, and therefore puts them in

mind of it; or it may be read by way of question, “and have ye forgotten?”, etc.. do not ye remember? it would be right to call it to mind:

which speaketh unto you as unto children; not as the children of Solomon, but as the children of God, or of Christ, the wisdom of God: here, by a prosopopeia, the word of exhortation is introduced as a person speaking,

my son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord; by which is meant, not vindictive punishment; this would not be speaking to them, nor dealing with them as children, and would be contrary to the love of God towards them; besides, chastisement in this sense has been upon Christ for them, and it would be unjust to lay it on them again; but a fatherly correction is designed, and which is given in love by God, as a Father, and for the instruction of his children, as the word used signifies: and it is called not the chastening of men, but of the Lord; every chastening, or afflictive providence, is appointed by God, and is looked upon by believers, when grace is in exercise, as coming from him; and it is directed, and governed, and limited by him, and is overruled by him for his own glory, and their good: and this is not to be despised, as something nauseous and loathsome, or as not useful and unprofitable, or as insignificant and unworthy of notice, but should be esteemed for the good ends, which are sometimes answered, by it:

nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; God has various ways of rebuking, reproving, and convincing, sometimes by his Spirit, sometimes by his word and ministers, and sometimes by afflictive providences; by these he rebukes his people for their sins, convinces them of them, and brings them to acknowledgment and confession; he makes them hereby sensible of their duty, in which they have been remiss, and brings them to a more constant and fervent discharge of it; he reproves them for, and convinces of their folly in trusting in the creature, or loving it too much, and of every wrong way they have been walking in; and these rebukes are not in a way of wrath, but love, and therefore saints should not faint at them: there are two extremes they are apt to run into, under such a dispensation; either to take no notice, and make light of an affliction, or else to be overwhelmed by it, and sink under it; both are guarded against in this exhortation.

Ver. 6. *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth*, etc..] All men are not the objects of God's love, only a special people, whom he has chosen in Christ; for whom he has given his Son, when they were sinners and enemies; whom he quickens and calls by his grace, justifies, pardons, and accepts in

Christ; and whom he causes to love him; these he loves with an everlasting and unchangeable love, and in a free and sovereign way, without any regard to any motive or condition in them. Now these are chastened by him, and loved while they are chastened; their chastening is in love, as appears from the nature of God's love to them, which changes not; from the nature of chastening itself; which is that of a father; from the divine supports granted under it; from the ends of it, which are, among others, that they might be more and more partakers of holiness, and not be condemned with the world; and from the issue of it, which is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. So the Jews^{f280} often speak of *hbha l ç yrwsy*, “chastisements of love”, in distinction from evil “chastisement”, or vindictive ones:

and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; by whom are meant, not any of the angels, nor all the sons of men, but such whom God has predestinated to the adoption of children, and in the covenant of his grace has declared himself a father to; for whom Christ has a special regard, as children, and therefore partook of human nature, and died to gather them together, and redeemed them, that they might receive the adoption of children; and who appear to be the children of God by faith in Christ; and who have the spirit of adoption, witnessing their sonship to them; this is a valuable blessing of grace, and springs from love: and such are received by God into his heart's love and affection, with complacency and delight; and into the covenant of his grace, to share all the blessings and promises of it; and into his family, to enjoy all the privileges of his house, and into communion with himself; and they will be hereafter received by him into glory: now these he scourges; he suffers them sometimes to be scourged by men, and to be buffeted by Satan; and sometimes he scourges them himself with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men, but always in love.

Ver. 7. *If ye endure chastening*, etc..] In faith, with patience, with courage and constancy, with humility and reverence: there are many things which may encourage and animate the saints to endure it in such a manner; as that it is but a chastening, and the chastening of a father; it should be considered from whence it comes, and for what ends; that it comes from the Lord, and is for his glory, and their good; the example of Christ, and of other saints, should excite unto it. The Jews have a saying^{f281}, that

“the doctrine of chastisements is silence;”

that is, they are to be patiently bore, and not murmured at. The Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions, read the words as an exhortation; the former of these renders it, “persevere in discipline”; the Syriac version, “endure correction”; the Arabic version, “be ye patient in chastisement”; and the Ethiopic version, “endure your chastening”: but then the word, “for”, should be supplied in the next clause, as it is in the Syriac and Ethiopic versions, making that to be a reason, enforcing this,

for God dealeth with you as with sons: chastening is owning of them for his children, and it discovers them to be so, and shows that they continue such; he does not chasten them but when it is necessary; and whenever he does, it is in love and mercy, and for good, and in the best time, seasonably, and in measure:

for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? no one can be named, not the Son of God himself; he had the chastisement of our peace upon him; nor the more eminent among the children of God, as Abraham, David, and others; nor any in any catalogue, or list of them, such as in the preceding chapter; not one in any age or period of time whatever, in any bodies, societies, or communities of them, either under the Old or New Testament.

Ver. 8. *But if ye be without chastisement*, etc..] Or have no affliction:

whereof all are partakers; that is, all the children of God; they are all alike children; they are all in a state of imperfection, and prone to sin; God has an impartial respect unto them: and though they are not all alike chastened, nor chastened at all times, yet none are exempted from chastisement, but have it in some way or another, and at some time or another.

Then are ye bastards, and not sons; all are not sons that are under a profession of religion; all that are under a profession of religion are not chastised; but then those are not the children of God, but the children of the world, of Satan, and of the antichristian harlot; for though all that are chastised are not children, yet all that are children are chastised: hence we learn, that outward peace and prosperity is not a note of a true church; and that such have reason to distrust their state, who know not what it is to have the chastising rod of God upon them; and that afflictions are rather arguments for than against sonship.

Ver. 9. *Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh*, etc..] Earthly parents; who are so called, because they are the immediate causes and

instruments of the generation of their children, and of their fleshly bodies and worldly beings; and to distinguish them from the Father of spirits: and this shows, that they have not the spirit or soul from them, only the flesh or body, and which is frail and corrupt; and therefore goes by this name.

Which corrected us; early, and at proper seasons, in love, and for instruction, and to prevent ruin, and death:

and we gave them reverence; by submitting to their correction, and hearkening to it; by taking shame to themselves, and acknowledging the offence committed; by retaining the same affection for them; and, by a carefulness not to offend for the future.

Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? that is, to God, who is so called; not because he is the Creator of angels, who are spirits; but because he is the Creator of the souls of men; the soul is the more noble and excellent part of man: it bears a resemblance to God; it is, the life of man, and is immortal; it is exceeding precious, and the redemption of it; this was at first immediately created by God; and he still continues to create souls, which he preserves in their being, and has the power of saving and destroying them. Besides, God may be so called, because he is the author and donor of all spiritual gifts, and particularly of regenerating grace; it is he who renews a right spirit in them, and puts a new spirit into them: now such ought to be in “subjection” to him; not only as creatures to a Creator, and as subjects to their prince: but as children to a father, and particularly to him, as and when correcting; they should bow to his sovereignty, resign to his will, be humble under his mighty hand, be still and quiet, and bear all patiently; the advantage arising from such a subjection is life: “and live”; or “that ye may live”; or “and ye shall live”: more comfortably, and more to the glory of God, in communion and fellowship with him here, and in heaven to all eternity.

Ver. 10. *For they verily for a few days chastened us,* etc..] Which respects not the minority of children, during which time they are under the correction of parents, and which is but a few days; nor the short life of parents; but rather the end which parents have in chastening their children, which is their temporal good, and which lasts but for a few days; which sense the opposition in the latter part of the text requires: and this they do

after their own pleasure: not to please and delight themselves in the pains and cries of their children, which would be brutish and inhuman; though

corrections are too often given to gratify the passions; nor merely in an arbitrary way, and when they please; but the sense is, they correct as seems good unto them; in the best way and manner; to the best of their judgments, which are fallible:

but he for our profit; saints are no losers by afflictions; they lose nothing but their dross and tin; they do not lose the love of God; nor their interest in the covenant of grace; nor the presence of God; nor grace in their own hearts; nor spiritual peace and comfort: on the contrary, they are real gainers by them; their graces gain by them fresh lustre and glory; they obtain a greater degree of spiritual knowledge; and a larger stock of experience; and are hereby restored to their former state, duty, and zeal; and become more conformable to Christ; yea, their afflictions conduce to their future glory; many are the profits arising from them. The Alexandrian copy reads in the plural number, “profits”: particularly God's end in chastening of his children is,

that we might be partakers of his holiness; not the essential holiness of God, which is incommunicable; but a communicative holiness of his, which it is his determining will his people should have: it comes from him, from whom every good and perfect gift does; it is in Christ for them, and is received out of his fulness; and is wrought in them by the Spirit; and it bears a resemblance to the divine nature: now men are naturally destitute of this holiness; they have it not by nature, but by participation; as God's gift; and they first partake of it in regeneration; and here an increase of it is designed, a gradual participation of it; and it may include perfect holiness in heaven: afflictions are designed as means to bring persons to this end; to bring them to a sense of sin, an acknowledgment of it, an aversion to it, and to a view of pardon of it; to purge it away; to wean the saints from this world; to increase their grace, and lead them on to a perfect state of glory, where there will be no more sin, and no more sorrow.

Ver. 11. *Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous*, etc..] These words anticipate an objection, taken from the grief and sorrow that comes by afflictions; and therefore how should they be for profit and advantage? The apostle answers, by granting that no affliction “seemeth” to be joyous, in outward appearance to flesh and blood, and according to the judgment of carnal sense and reason; in this view of afflictions, it must be owned, they do not appear to be matter, cause, or occasion of joy; though they really are, when viewed by faith, and judged of by sanctified

reason; for they are tokens of the love of God and Christ; are evidences of sonship; and work together either for the temporal, or spiritual, or eternal good of the saints: and so likewise indeed “for the present time”, either while under them, or in the present state of things, they seem so; but hereafter, either now when they are over; or however in the world to come, when the grace, goodness, wisdom, and power of God in them, in supporting under them, bringing out of them, and the blessed effects, and fruits of them, will be discerned, they will be looked upon with pleasure: but for the present, and when carnal sense and reason prevail, it must be allowed, that they are not matter of joy,

but grievous; or matter, cause, and occasion of grief; they cause pain and grief to the afflicted, and to their friends and relations about them; and especially, they are very grieving, and occasion heaviness, and are grievous to be borne, when soul troubles attend them; when God hides his face, and the soul is filled with a sense of wrath, looking upon the chastening, as being in wrath and hot displeasure; when Satan is let loose, and casts his fiery darts thick and fast; and when the soul has lost its views of interest in the love of God, and in the grace of Christ, and in eternal glory and happiness.

Nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby: who are used unto afflictions; “trained” up and instructed in the school of afflictions, as the word may signify; in which many useful lessons of faith and hope, patience and experience, humility, self-denial; and resignation of will, are learned: and to such afflictions yield “the fruit of peace”; external peace and prosperity sometimes follow upon them; and oftentimes internal peace is enjoyed in them; and they always issue to such in eternal peace and everlasting happiness; and this peace arises from the “righteousness” of Christ, laid hold upon by faith, which produces a true conscience peace, and entitles to that everlasting joy and rest which remains for the people of God. Moreover, the fruit of holiness may be designed, which saints by afflictions are made partakers of, and the peace enjoyed in that; for there is a peace, which though it does not spring from, yet is found in the ways of righteousness; and though this peace may not be had for the present, or while the affliction lasts, yet it is experienced “afterwards”; either after the affliction is over in the present life, or however in eternity, when the saints enter into peace; for the end of such dispensations, and of the persons exercised by them, is peace,

Ver. 12. *Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down*, etc..] These words may be considered as spoken to the Hebrews, with respect to themselves; accordingly, the Syriac version reads, “your hands”, and “your knees”; who were sluggish, and inactive in prayer, in hearing the word, in attendance on ordinances, in holding fast their profession, and in the performance of those things which adorn it; they were weary and fatigued with weights and burdens of sins and afflictions; and were faint, fearful, and timorous, through distrust of the promised good, because of their persecutions, being in present distress, and in a view of approaching danger, with which they might be surprised, as well as affected with their present afflictions: and then the exhortation to “lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees”, is to be active in every duty; to be courageous against every enemy: to bear patiently every burden; to take heart, and be of good cheer under every afflictive providence: or else they may be considered as an exhortation to them with respect to others, which seems to be most agreeable to (^{238B}Isaiah 35:3) from whence they are taken; and then what is signified in them is done by sympathizing with persons in distress; by speaking comfortably to them, and by bearing their burdens.

Ver. 13. *And make straight paths for your feet*, etc..] By “feet” are meant the walk and conversation of the saints, both in the church, and in the world, (^{200E}Song of Solomon 7:1) and there are paths made ready for these feet to walk in; as the good old paths of truth, of the word and worship of God, of faith and holiness: and to make these paths “straight”, is to make the word of God the rule of walking; to avoid carefully joining anything with it as a rule; to attend constantly on the ordinances of Christ; to go on evenly in a way of believing on him; to walk in some measure worthy of the calling wherewith we are called, and by way of example to others.

Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; a lame member, as the Syriac version, a lame member of the body of Christ, the church; or a lame person, as the Arabic version, a weak believer; one that is ready to halt, either through the corruption of nature, or through the weakness of grace, or through want of light and judgment, and through instability and inconstancy; lest such an one should, through the irregular walk and conversation of others, be stumbled and offended, and go out of the way, and leave the paths of righteousness and truth. God takes care of, and has a regard to such, and he would have others also, (^{300E}Micah 4:6 ^{319E}Zephaniah 3:19). The Ethiopic version reads, “that your halting may be healed, and not offended”: that you yourselves may not halt and stumble.

But let it rather be healed; the fallen believer be restored, the weak brother be confirmed, the halting professor be strengthened, and everyone be built up and established upon the most holy faith, and in the pure ways of the Gospel.

Ver. 14. *Follow peace with all men*, etc..] That are in a natural and domestic relation to one another, being of the same family; and that are in a civil and political one, being of the same nation, city, or society; and that are in a spiritual one, being members of the same church; or, if not, yet being saints, and though in some things different in judgment; yea, even peace is to be followed with enemies, as much as in us lies: and perhaps by “all men”, the Gentiles may be more especially designed, whose peace the Hebrews thought they were not to seek, (^{4E206}Deuteronomy 23:6) mistaking the sense of the text, by applying it to the Gentiles in general: to “follow peace”, signifies an eager pursuit after it, in the use of proper means; exerting the utmost of a man's power to attain it, in all things possible: many things serve to enforce this upon the saints; this is most agreeable to all the three divine Persons; to God, who is the God of peace; to Christ, the Prince of peace; and to the Spirit, one of whose fruits is peace; and to the characters of the saints, who are sons of peace, and who are called to peace, and who make a profession of the Gospel of peace; and to the privileges they enjoy, being interested in the covenant of peace, partaking of spiritual peace now, and being entitled to eternal peace hereafter: and this agrees with the sayings and counsels of the ancient Jews. It was a saying of Hillel ^{f282}, who lived about the times of Christ;

“be thou one of the disciples of Aaron, who loved peace, $\mu\omega\iota \zeta$
Pdwrw, “and followed peace”.”

This is said of Aaron in the Talmud ^{f283}, that

“he loved peace, and followed peace, and made peace between a man and his neighbour, as is said, (^{3M6}Malachi 2:6).”

They recommend peace on many accounts, and say, great is peace, and among the rest, because it is one of the names of God ^{f284}:

and holiness: this being added to peace, shows that peace is no further to be followed than is consistent with holiness; and holiness here does not design any particular branch of holiness, as chastity of the body and mind, but the whole of holiness, inward and outward; and intends true holiness, in

opposition to ceremonial holiness, which the Hebrews were fond of, and pursued after: it means even perfect holiness; for though holiness is not perfect in this life, yet it will be in heaven; and there is a perfection of it in Christ; and it is to be followed after, by going to Christ for more grace, and exercising faith upon him, as our sanctification; and by eager desires that the Spirit of God would sanctify us more and more, and enable us, by his grace and strength, to walk in the way of holiness, till we get safe to heaven:

without which no man shall see the Lord; or “God”, as the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions read; that is, with the beatific vision in heaven: or the Lord Jesus Christ, “our Lord”, as the Syriac version reads; even in this life, so as to have communion with him; and hereafter, so as to behold his glory, both intellectually and corporeally: to such a sight holiness is necessary; for God is holy, and Christ is holy, and so is heaven, and so are the angels, and the souls of men in it.

Ver. 15. *Looking diligently*, etc..] Acting the part of bishops, or overseers, as the word signifies; and so this exhortation either respects officers of the church of the Hebrews, whose business it was more especially to inspect into the principles and practices of the members of it, and take care that they did not imbibe false doctrines, or live immoral lives; or rather the several members of the church, whose business it is to watch over one another, since this epistle seems to be written to the whole church.

Lest any man fail of the grace of God; not the free favour and love of God in Christ, which is everlasting, unchangeable, and from whence there is no separation; nor the grace of God implanted in the heart in regeneration, which is incorruptible, never failing, but always remains, as do faith, hope, and love; but either the whole doctrine of the Gospel, which is a declaration of the grace of God; or particularly the doctrine of free justification by the righteousness of Christ, which men may receive in vain, and fall from, (~~2~~ 2 Corinthians 6:1 ~~4~~ Galatians 5:4) to which these Hebrews might be prone: and such “fail” of it, who either come short of it, do not come up to it, receive and embrace it; or who having professed it, drop it and deny it: now such should be looked after, and such a case should be diligently looked into; because the glory of God, the honour of Christ, the good of souls, and the well being, and even the continuance of the church state are concerned:

lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, [and] thereby many be defiled; the Alexandrian copy reads **οι πολλοι**, “the many”, the common people, the private members of the church; though it may intend either things or persons: it may design things; and these either the corruption of nature in general, which is a root that lies hidden in a man's heart; and is a root or gall of bitterness; and is apt to spring up, and bring forth bitter fruit, and gives trouble both to a man's self and others; and is of a defiling nature, in particular sins; such as malice, strife, and contention, covetousness, lust, pride, oppression, idleness, etc.. which make bitter work, and occasion great trouble in churches, oftentimes: or errors and heresies, which sometimes, like roots, lie under ground, secret and undiscovered; and are bitter ones in their effects, bringing ruin and swift destruction on the souls of men; and these sometimes spring up in churches, while ministers and members are asleep, or not so diligent and watchful as they should be; and occasion great trouble, and are very infectious, and defiling: moreover, persons may be designed; which agrees well with (^{<f2918>}Deuteronomy 29:18) from whence this phrase is taken; and with the instance in the following verse, such as all immoral persons, and false teachers, particularly self-justiciaries, that preach the doctrine of justification by the works of the law: this was the capital mistake, and rooted error of the Jewish nation; and a bitter one it was; it produced many bitter fruits of pride and vain glory; and this sprung up in the church, and troubled and defiled many there and elsewhere, being spread by the abettors of it; (see ^{<4153>}Acts 15:24 ^{<4106>}Galatians 1:6 5:9,10). Now, care should be taken, that no such person be in churches, holding such an error; because of the glory of God, Father, Son, and Spirit; the comfort of souls; the peace of the church, and the growth and increase of it, which must be hurt by such men and doctrines; so **ριζα αμαρτωλος**, “a sinful root”, is used for a “wicked man”, in the Apocrypha:

“In those days went there out of Israel wicked men, who persuaded many, saying, Let us go and make a covenant with the heathen that are round about us: for since we departed from them we have had much sorrow.” (1 Maccabees 1:11)

and **γρμη ςρωϑ**, “a root of bitterness”, signifies, in Jewish writings ^{f285}, an error, or heresy, in opposition to a root of faith, or a fundamental doctrine.

Ver. 16. *Lest there be any fornicator or profane person*, etc..] The first of these is guilty of a sin against the second table of the law, as well as against

his own body; and which is opposed to the holiness the apostle had before exhorted to; such who are guilty of it, are not to be continued in the communion of the church; and it is a sin, which, lived in not repented of, excludes from the kingdom of heaven: the latter is one who is a transgressor of the first table of the law; who is an idolater, a swearer, a despiser of public worship and ordinances, and who behaves irreverently in divine service, and mocks at the future state, as Esau; to whom both these characters seem to belong: and this agrees with what the Jews say concerning him: they have a tradition ^{f286}, that he committed five transgressions on the day he came out of the field weary.

“He committed idolatry: he shed innocent blood; and lay with a virgin betrothed; and denied the life of the world to come (or a future state); and despised his birthright.”

It is elsewhere ^{f287} a little differently expressed.

“Esau, the wicked, committed five transgressions on that day: he lay with a virgin betrothed; and killed a person; and denied the resurrection of the dead; and denied the root, or foundation, (i.e. that there is a God,) and despised his birthright; and besides, he desired his father's death, and sought to slay his brother.”

It is common for them to say of him, that he was an ungodly man; and particularly, that he was a murderer, a robber, **Paww**, “and an adulterer” ^{f288}; and that he has no part in the world to come ^{f289}: who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright; the account of which is in (⁽⁰²⁵³⁾Genesis 25:29-34) this includes all the privileges which he had a right unto by being the firstborn; as a peculiar blessing from his father; a double portion of goods; and dominion over his brethren: and it is commonly said by the Jews, that the priesthood belonged to the firstborn, before the Levitical dispensation; and that for this reason, Jacob coveted the birthright ^{f290}, Esau being a wicked man, and unfit for it. The birthright was reckoned sacred; it was typical of the primogeniture of Christ; of the adoption of saints, and of the heavenly inheritance belonging thereunto; all which were despised by Esau: and so the Jewish paraphrases ^{f291} interpret the contempt of his birthright, a despising of his part in the world to come, and a denial of the resurrection of the dead: and his contempt of it was shown in his selling it; and this was aggravated by his selling it for “one morsel of meat”; which was bread, and pottage of lentiles, (⁽⁰²⁵⁴⁾Genesis 25:34). The Jewish writers speak of this bargain and sale much in the same language as the apostle here does; they

say ^{f292} of him, this is the man that sold his birthright **μῆλ ῥῆκ δ[β]**, “for a morsel of bread”; and apply to him the passage in (^{<1821>}Proverbs 28:21) “for a piece of bread that man will transgress”.

Ver. 17. *For ye know how that afterwards,* etc..] After he had had his pottage; after he had sold his birthright for it, and the blessing with it; after his father had blessed Jacob: this the apostle relates to the Hebrews, as a thing well known to them; they having read the books of Moses, and being conversant with them, in which the whole history of this affair is recorded:

how that when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; by his father, who refused to give him the blessing, but confirmed what he had given to Jacob; and also by God, he being the object of his hatred; concerning whom he had said, even before his birth, the elder shall serve the younger, (^{<4911>}Romans 9:11-13),

for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears, (^{<0273>}Genesis 27:34,38) though he was very solicitous for the blessing, and shed many tears to obtain it, yet he had no true repentance for his sin in soiling the birthright. Tears are not an infallible sign of repentance: men may be more concerned for the loss and mischief that come by sin, than for the evil that is in it; and such repentance is not sincere; it does not spring from love to God, or a concern for his glory; nor does it bring forth proper fruits: or rather, the sense of the words is, that notwithstanding all his solicitude, importunity, and tears, he found no place of repentance in his father Isaac; he could not prevail upon him to change his mind; to revoke the blessing he had bestowed on Jacob, and confer it on him, (^{<0273>}Genesis 27:33) for he plainly saw it was the mind of God, that the blessing should be where it was; whose counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. This latter seems to be the better interpretation of the words, though the former agrees with the Targum on (^{<3151>}Job 15:20)

“all the days of Esau the ungodly, they expected that he would have repented, but he repented not.”

Ver. 18. *For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched,* etc..] The design of the apostle in the following words is, in general, to engage the Hebrews to adhere closely to the Gospel, from the consideration of the superior excellency of it to the law; and in particular, to enforce his former exhortations to cheerfulness under afflictions; to an upright walk in the ways of God; to follow peace with all men, even with the Gentiles, and

holiness both of heart and life; and to value the doctrine of the Gospel; and to take heed that none fail of it, or act unbecoming it: and here the apostle observes, what the believing Hebrews were not come to, being delivered from it, namely, the legal dispensation, which was their privilege; the happiness of which as expressed by a detail of particular circumstances, which attended the giving of the law to the Jews: it was given on a “mount which might be touched”; that is, by God, who descended on it, and by, touching it caused it to smoke, quake, and move, (^{<D98>}Exodus 19:18). Compare with, (^{<D88>}Psalm 68:8 104:32 144:5) for it was not to be touched by the Israelites, nor by their cattle, (^{<D92>}Exodus 19:12,13), that is, at the time that the law was given, and Jehovah was upon it, otherwise it might be touched; and the meaning is, that it was an earthly mountain, that might be approached to, and be seen and felt, and not of a spiritual nature, as Sion, or the church of God; and so may be expressive of the carnality of the law, and also of the movableness of it:

and that burned with fire; as Mount Sinai did, (^{<D98>}Exodus 19:18) (^{<D81>}Deuteronomy 4:11 5:23) which set forth the majesty of God, when upon it, at whose feet went forth burning coals; and also the wrath of God, as an avenging lawgiver and Judge; and the terror of that law, which strikes the minds of the transgressors of it with an expectation of fiery indignation; and so points out the end of such transgressors, which is, to be burnt:

nor unto blackness and darkness; which covered the mount when God was upon it, (^{<D96>}Exodus 19:16,18 ^{<D81>}Deuteronomy 4:11) and which also may express the majesty of God, round about whom are clouds and darkness; and also the horror of the legal dispensation, and the obscurity of it; little being known by the Jews of the spirituality of the law, of the strict justice of God, and of the righteousness which the law requires, and of the end and use of it; and especially of the way of salvation by Christ; and so dark were they at last, as to prefer their own traditions before this law: it is added,

and tempest; there being thunderings and lightnings, which were very terrible, (^{<D96>}Exodus 19:16 20:18) and though there is no express mention made of a tempest by Moses, yet Josephus^{f293} speaks not only of very terrible thunderings and lightnings, but of violent storms of wind, which produced exceeding great rains: and the Septuagint on (^{<D81>}Deuteronomy 4:11 5:22) use the same words as the apostle does here, “blackness, darkness, and tempest”. This also may denote the majesty of God, who

was then present; the terror of that dispensation; the horrible curses of the law; and the great confusion and disquietude raised by it in the conscience of a sinner.

Ver. 19. *And the sound of a trumpet*, etc..] (^{<12916>}Exodus 19:16,19 20:18), which made it still more awful, as the sound of the trumpet will at the last day:

and the voice of words; of the ten words, or decalogue; which was as an articulate voice, formed by angels; and, therefore, the law is called the word spoken by angels, (^{<8111>}Hebrews 2:2) and is represented, as the voice of God himself, (^{<12101>}Exodus 20:1) who made use of the ministry of angels to deliver the law to Moses; “which” voice is called **pyrbd l wq**, “the voice of words”, in (^{<12112>}Deuteronomy 4:12), and this voice,

they that heard, entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: fearing that they should die; wherefore they desired Moses to be their mediator, and draw nigh to God, and hear his words, and speak them to them, from him, (^{<12119>}Exodus 20:19 ^{<12124>}Deuteronomy 5:24-27).

Ver. 20. *For they could not endure that which was commanded*, etc..] In the law; not that they disliked and despised the law, as unregenerate men do; but they could not endure it, or bear it, as a yoke, it being a yoke of bondage; nor as a covenant of works, it requiring perfect obedience, but giving no strength to perform; and as it showed them their sins, but did not direct them to a Saviour; as it was an accusing, cursing, and condemning law; and, as a fiery one, revealing wrath, and filling the conscience with it; unless this should have any respect to the following edict, more particularly:

and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart; and, if a beast, much more a man: and, how easily, through inadvertence, might this be done? and how terrible was the punishment? nothing less than death, by stoning, or being shot: and this they could not bear to hear, or think of: the last clause, “or thrust through with a dart”, is wanting in the Alexandrian and Beza's Claromontane copies, in the Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions; and yet is necessary to be retained, being in the original text, in (^{<12112>}Exodus 19:12,13).

Ver. 21. *And so terrible was the sight*, etc..] Of the smoke, fire, and lightnings; or of God himself, who descended on the mount; with which agrees the Arabic version, which renders the words, “and so terrible was he who vouchsafed himself to be seen”; not in the bush burning with fire; at which time Moses was afraid to look upon God, (^{<1186>}Exodus 3:6) but on Mount Sinai, when the law was given:

[*that*] *Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake*: perhaps he might say this, when he spake, and God answered him, (^{<1199>}Exodus 19:19). These words are nowhere recorded in Scripture; wherefore the apostle had them either by divine revelation, or from tradition, confirmed by the former: for the Jews have a notion that Moses did quake and tremble, and when upon the mount; and that he expressed his fear and dread. They have such a tradition as this ^{f294};

“when Moses ascended on high, the ministering angels said before the holy blessed God, Lord of the world, what has this man, born of a woman, to do among us? he said unto them, to receive the law he is come; they replied before him, that desirable treasure, which is treasured up with thee, nine hundred, and seventy, and four generations, before the world was created, dost thou seek to give to flesh and blood? “What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him? who hast set thy glory above the heavens!” The holy blessed God said to Moses, return them an answer; he said, before him, Lord of the world, **an[aryym**, “I am afraid”, lest they should burn, (or consume) me, with the breath of their mouth.”

Compare this last clause with (^{<1188>}2 Thessalonians 2:8) and elsewhere ^{f295} those words being cited, he called unto Moses, (^{<1256>}Exodus 25:16) it is observed:

“this Scripture comes not, but **wyl [myyal** “to terrify him”; that so the law might be given with fear, fervour, and trembling; as it is said, (^{<1101>}Psalms 2:11)”

Once more ^{f296},

“at the time that the holy blessed God said to Moses, “go, get thee down, for thy people have corrupted themselves”, (^{<1317>}Exodus

32:7) **hçm [z[dza**, “Moses trembled”; and he could not speak, etc..”

And again, it is said ^{f297}, that when Moses was on Mount Sinai, supplicating for the people of Israel, five destroying angels appeared, and immediately **hçm aryytñ**, “Moses was afraid”. Now this circumstance is mentioned by the apostle, to aggravate the terror of that dispensation; that Moses, a great and good man; and who had much familiarity with God; the general of the people of Israel; their leader and commander; a man of great courage and presence of mind; and was their mediator between God and them; and yet feared, and quaked: the best of men are not without sin; and the most holy man on earth cannot stand before a holy God, and his holy law, upon the foot of his own righteousness, without trembling: it is an awful thing to draw nigh to God; and there is no such thing as doing it without a Mediator; and that Mediator must be more than a creature: and it is our happiness that we have such a Mediator, who never feared, nor quaked; who failed not, nor was he discouraged.

Ver. 22. *But ye are come unto Mount Sion*, etc..] The Alexandrian copy reads, as in (^{<3828>}Hebrews 12:18) “for ye are not come”; which may seem to favour that interpretation of this passage, which refers it to the heavenly state; to which saints, in this present life, are not, as yet, come: but, by “Mount Sion”, and the other names here given, is meant the church of God, under the Gospel dispensation, to which the believing Hebrews were come; in distinction from the legal dispensation, signified by Mount Sinai, from which they were delivered: and this is called Mount Sion, because, like that, it is beloved of God; chosen by him; and is the place of his habitation; here his worship is, and his word and ordinances are administered; here he communes with his people, and distributes his blessings and this, as Mount Sion, is a perfection of beauty the joy of the whole earth; is strongly fortified by divine power, and is immovable; and is comparable to that mountain, for its height and holiness: and to come to Sion is to become a member of a Gospel church, and partake of the ordinances, enjoy the privileges, and perform the duties belonging to it:

and unto the city of the living God; the Gospel church is a city, built on Christ, the foundation; and is full of habitants, true believers, at least it will be, in the latter day; it is pleasantly situated by the river of God's love, and by the still waters of Gospel ordinances; it is governed by wholesome laws, of Christ's enacting, and is under proper officers, of his appointing; and is

well guarded by watchmen, which he has set upon the walls of it; and it is endowed with many privileges, as access to God, freedom from the arrests of justice, and from condemnation, adoption, and a right to the heavenly inheritance: and this may be called “the city of God”, because it is of his building, and here he dwells, and protects, and defends it; and who is styled “the living God”, to distinguish him from the idols of the Gentiles, which are lifeless and inanimate, no other than sticks and stones.

The heavenly Jerusalem: the church of God goes by the name of Jerusalem often, both in the Old and in the New Testament; with which it agrees in its name, which signifies the vision of peace, or they shall see peace: Christ, the King of it, is the Prince of peace; the members of it are sons of peace, who enjoy a spiritual peace now, and an everlasting one hereafter: like that, it is compact together, consisting of saints, cemented together in love, in the order and fellowship of the Gospel; and is well fortified, God himself, and his power, being all around it, and having salvation, for walls and bulwarks, and being encamped about by angels; and it is a free city, being made so by Christ, and, through him, enjoying the liberty of grace now, and having a title to the liberty of glory in the world to come; as Jerusalem was, it is the object of God's choice, the palace of the great King, and the place of divine worship: it is called “heavenly”, to distinguish it from the earthly Jerusalem; and to express the excellency of it, as well as to point out its original: the members of it are from heaven, being born from above; their conversation is now in heaven; and they are designed for that place; and its doctrines and ordinances are all from thence.

And to an innumerable company of angels; which are created spirits, immaterial and immortal; very knowing, and very powerful; and swift to do the will of God; they are holy, and immutably so, being the elect of God, and confirmed by Christ: and saints now are brought into a state of friendship with them; and into the same family; and are social worshippers with them; and they have access into heaven, where angels are; and with whom they shall dwell for ever: and, in the present state of things, they share the benefit and advantages of their kind offices; who have, sometimes, provided food for their bodies; healed their diseases; directed and preserved them on journeys; prevented outward calamities; delivered them out of them, when in danger; restrained things hurtful, and cut off their enemies: and, with regard to things spiritual they have, sometimes, made known the mind and will of God unto the saints; have comforted them under their distresses; helped them against Satan's temptations; are

present at their death, and carry their souls to glory; and will gather the saints together, at the last day: and, as to the number of them, they are innumerable; they are the armies of heaven; and there is a multitude of the heavenly host; there are more than twelve legions of angels; their number is ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands: and this makes both for the glory and majesty of God, whose attendants they are; and for the comfort and safety of saints, to whom they minister, and about whom they encamp: a like phrase is used in the Apocrypha:

“Before the fair flowers were seen, or ever the moveable powers were established, before the innumerable multitude of angels were gathered together,” (2 Esdras 6:3)

Ver. 23. *To the general assembly*, etc..] A “panegyris”, the word here used, was a public and solemn assembly of the Greeks, either at their games, or feasts, or fairs, or on religious accounts; and signifies a large collection and convention of men; and sometimes the place where they met together ^{f298}; and is here used, by the apostle, for the church of God, consisting of all his elect, both Jews and Gentiles, and the meeting of them together: they met together, in the infinite mind of God, from all eternity; and in Christ, their head and representative, both then and in time; and at the last day, when they are all gathered in, they will meet together personally; and a joyful meeting it will be; and a very general one, more so than the assembly of the Jews, at any of their solemn feasts, to which the apostle may have some respect; since this will consist of some of all nations, that have lived in all places, and in all ages of time:

and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven; by the “church”, is not meant any particular, or congregational church, nor any national one; but the church catholic, or universal, which consists only of God's elect, and of all of them, in all times and places; and reaches even to the saints in heaven: this church is invisible at present, and will never fail; of which Christ is the head, and for which he has given himself: now the persons, that belong to this church, are styled the “firstborn”; who are not the apostles only, who received the first fruits of the Spirit; nor the first converts among the Jews, who first trusted in Christ; but also the chosen of God, who are equally the sons of God, and born of him; are equally loved by him, and equally united to Christ, and interested in him: they have the same privileges, honours, and dignity, and shall enjoy the same inheritance; they are all firstborn, and are so called, with respect to the angels, the sons

of God, as Christ is with respect to the saints, the many brethren of his: and these are said to be “written in heaven”; not in the earth, (³¹⁷³Jeremiah 17:13), such writing abides not; nor in the book of the Scriptures, for the names of all are not written there; nor in the general book of God's decrees, which relate to all mankind; but in the Lamb's book of life, kept in heaven; and is no other than their election of God: and this way of speaking, concerning it, shows it to be personal and particular; that it is firm, sure, and constant; that it is out of the reach of men and devils to erase it; it denotes the exact knowledge God has of them, and expresses their right to heaven, and the certainty of their coming there: now all such, who are truly come to Sion, are openly come to this assembly and church, and appear to be a part thereof, and are among the firstborn, and have their names written in heaven:

and to God the Judge of all: the Ethiopic version reads, “the Judge of righteousness”, or the righteous Judge: some think that Christ is here meant; who is truly and properly God, and is the Judge: all judgment is committed to him; he is Judge of all; he is ordained Judge of quick and dead; for which he would not have been fit, had he not been God: true believers come to him by faith, and that, as their Judge, King, and Governor; and it is their privilege, that Christ is and will be the Judge of all at the last day and hence is his coming to judgment desirable to them. But since Christ is spoken of in the next verse, as a distinct person, to whom the saints come, God the Father seems rather to be designed here: and it is one of the privileges of the saints, in the present life, that they have access to God: all men are at a distance from him, in a state of nature; and they naturally run further and further from him, and have no desire after him; and, when they are made sensible of sin, they are afraid and ashamed to come to him; nor is there any coming to God, but through Christ; and this is a fruit of God's everlasting love, what follows upon electing grace, is an effect of Christ's death, and owing to the quickening grace of the Spirit; it is performed in a spiritual way, and is by faith; it is a coming to the throne of God, even to his seat, to communion with him, and to a participation of his grace: and it is their privilege that they have access to him as the Judge of all; not only as a Father, and as the God of all grace, but as a Judge, and a righteous one, to whom they can come without terror; for though he is just, yet he is a Saviour, and the justifier of his people, on account of the righteousness of his Son; whose sins he pardons in a way of justice,

through the blood of Christ; and is their patron, protector, and defender, who will right their wrongs, and avenge their cause:

and to the spirits of just men made perfect; which may be understood of the saints on earth, who are “just men”; not naturally, for so no man is, but the reverse; nor in opinion only, or merely externally, as the Scribes and Pharisees were; nor by the deeds of the law; nor by obedience to the Gospel; nor by faith, either as wrought in them, or done by them, though by the object of it; nor by an infusion of righteousness into them; but by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto them: and these are “made perfect”; not as to sanctification, unless in Christ, or in a comparative sense, and with respect to the parts of the new man, but not as to degrees; for no man is without sin, and the best stand in need of fresh supplies of grace; but as to justification, Christ has perfectly fulfilled the law for them, and has perfectly expiated their sins, and perfectly redeemed them from all sin, and has procured a full pardon of them; and they are completely righteous through his righteousness; and the “spirits”, or souls of these are only mentioned, because the communion of saints in a Gospel church state lies chiefly in the souls and spirits of each other, or in spiritual things relating to their souls; and their souls are greatly affected, and knit to each other: though the saints in heaven may be here intended, at least included; whose spirits or soul's are separate from their bodies; and they are the souls of just men, for none but such enter into the kingdom of heaven; where they are made perfect in knowledge and holiness, in peace and joy; though they have not their bodies, nor as yet all the saints with them. Now, believers, in the present state of things, may be said to be come to them, being come to the Church below, which is a part of that above; as also in hope, expectation, and desire. The apostle seems to have respect to some distinctions among the Jews: they divide mankind into three sorts; some are perfectly wicked; and some are perfectly righteous; and there are others that are between both ^{f299}: they often speak of μῦρῳμῳ μῦρῳδχ, “just men perfect” ^{f300}; and distinguish between a just man perfect, and a just man that is not perfect ^{f301}; as they do also between penitents and just men perfect; (see Gill on “~~257~~ Luke 15:7”).

Ver. 24. *And to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant*, etc..] Of the new covenant, and, of Christ's being the Mediator of it, (See Gill on “~~306~~ Hebrews 8:6”). (See Gill on “~~308~~ Hebrews 8:8”). Coming to Christ is by faith; and is different from a corporeal coming to him in the days of his flesh; and from an outward attendance on ordinances; it is a coming to him

under a sense of want, and upon a sight of fulness; and is the produce of God's efficacious grace; and souls must come to Christ as naked sinners; and without a Mediator, without anything of their own to ingratiate them; and it is free to all sensible sinners to come to him, and is the great privilege of saints: it is the blessing of blessings; such are safe, and settled, and at peace, who are come to Jesus; they can want no good thing, for all are theirs; they have free access to God through him, and a right to all privileges:

and to the blood of sprinkling: that is, the blood of Christ; so called, either in allusion to the blood of the passover, which was received in a basin, and with a bunch of hyssop was sprinkled upon the lintel and two side posts of the doors of the houses, in which the Israelites were; which being looked upon by Jehovah, he passed over them, and all were safe within, so that the destroyer did not touch them, when the firstborn in Egypt were destroyed, (⁽¹²¹⁾Exodus 12:1-49) which is the case of all such as are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus: or else to the blood of the covenant, sprinkled by Moses on the book, and on all the people, (⁽¹²²⁾Exodus 24:8) or to the several sprinklings of blood in the legal sacrifices: and the phrase may denote the application of Christ's blood to his people, for justification, pardon, and cleansing, which is their great mercy and privilege:

that speaketh better things than that of Abel; either “than Abel”, as the Vulgate Latin, and Syriac versions render it, who being dead, yet speaks; and who was a type of Christ in his death, and the punishment of it; for as he was slain by his own brother, who was punished for it, so Christ was put to death by his own nation and people, the Jews, for which wrath is come upon them to the uttermost: but the efficacy of Christ's blood for the procuring pardon, peace, reconciliation, and the redemption and purchase of his church and people, shows him to be greater than Abel; and it speaks better things than he did, or does: or else, “than the blood of Abel”, as the Arabic version renders it; Abel's blood cried for vengeance; Christ's blood cries for peace and pardon, both in the court of heaven, where it is pleaded by Christ, and in the court of conscience, where it is sprinkled by his spirit: or than the sprinkling of the blood of Abel's sacrifice, or than Abel's sacrifice; which was the first blood that was sprinkled in that way, and the first sacrifice mentioned that was offered up by faith, and was typical of Christ's; but then Christ's sacrifice itself is better than that; and the sprinkling of his blood, to which believers may continually apply for their justification, remission, and purgation, and by which they have entrance

into the holiest of all, is of greater efficacy than the sprinkling of blood in Abel's sacrifice; and calls for and procures better things than that did; which sense may the rather be chosen, since the apostle's view, in this epistle, is to show the superior excellency of Christ's sacrifice to all others, even to the more excellent of them, as Abel's was, (~~8104~~ Hebrews 11:4).

Ver. 25. *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh*, etc..] Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, whose blood speaks better things than Abel, or than his blood and sacrifice: he was the speaker in the council and covenant of grace, that spoke for the elect; in the creation of all things out of nothing, that said, and it was done; in giving the law to the Israelites, in the wilderness, for he is the angel which spake to Moses in Mount Sinai, he spoke to God for the Old Testament saints, and was the angel of God's presence to them; he spoke in his own person, as the prophet of the church, in the days of his flesh; and he now speaks in heaven, by appearing in the presence of God for his people, and by presenting his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; he speaks by his Spirit, in and to the hearts of his saints; and by his ministers in the Gospel, and the ordinances of it: nor should he be refused, as he is, when his Gospel is made light of, and neglected; when men excuse themselves from an attendance on it; when they will not hear it; or, when they do, and contradict and blaspheme, despise and reproach it, or leave off hearing it. Care should be taken that Christ is not refused in the ministry of the word; which may be enforced from the greatness and excellency of the person speaking, who is God, and not a mere man; from the excellency of the matter spoken, the great salvation: and the rather diligent heed should be had unto him, since there is a backwardness to everything that is spiritual and heavenly; and since Satan is vigilant and industrious to put off persons from hearing the Gospel, or to steal the word from them:

for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth: the Ethiopic version renders it, "who appeared to them on the mount"; that is, on Mount Sinai; meaning either God himself, who descended on the mount, and spoke the ten commandments to the children of Israel; or Christ, the Angel that spoke to Moses in it; or rather Moses himself, who was on the earth, and of the earth, earthly; who spake from God to the people, being their mediator; him the Jews refused, would not obey him, but thrust him away, (~~4173~~ Acts 7:39), though they promised to hear and do all that was said to them; wherefore they did not escape divine vengeance and

punishment; their carcasses fell in the wilderness at several times, in great numbers, and were not suffered to enter into Canaan's land: much more

shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven; that is, Christ, who came from heaven originally; is the Lord from heaven; whose doctrine is from heaven; and who, having done his work, is gone to heaven; where he now is, and from whence he speaks; and from hence he will come a second time, as Judge of all. There have been, and are some, that turn away from him; from a profession of him, and his Gospel and ordinances, and draw back unto perdition; such shall not escape divine wrath and vengeance; the sorest punishment shall be inflicted on them; (see ^{<310>}Hebrews 10:29).

Ver. 26. *Whose voice then shook the earth,* etc..] That is, at the giving of the law on Mount Sinai: Christ was then present; his voice was then heard; which was either the voice of thunder, or the voice of the trumpet, or rather the voice of words: this shook the earth, Sinai, and the land about it, and the people on it; which made them quake and tremble, even Moses himself; (see ^{<129>}Exodus 19:18 ^{<388>}Psalms 68:8)

but now he hath promised, saying in (^{<316>}Haggai 2:6)

yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven; not only the land of Judea, and particularly Jerusalem, and the inhabitants of it, who were all shaken, and moved, and troubled at the news of the birth of the Messiah, the desire of all nations, the prophet Haggai speaks of, (^{<412>}Matthew 2:2,3) but the heaven also; by prodigies in it, as the appearance of a wonderful star, which guided the wise men from the east; and by the motions of the heavenly inhabitants, the angels, who descended in great numbers, and made the heavens resound with their songs of praise, on account of Christ's incarnation, (^{<412>}Matthew 2:2 ^{<410>}Luke 2:10,13,14). How the apostle explains and applies this, may be seen in the next verse.

Ver. 27. *And this word yet once more,* etc..] Or as it is in (^{<316>}Haggai 2:6) “yet once it is a little while”; which suggests, that as something had been done already, so in a very little time, and at once, something very marvellous and surprising would be effected: and it

signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made; which some understand of what will be done at Christ's coming to judgment; as the passing away of the heavens and the earth, which are things that are made, or created, by the power of God; when there will be a

shaking of them, so as that they shall be removed, and pass away with a great noise; and so they interpret the next clause, of the permanency of the new heavens and the new earth, and of the immovable kingdom of glory, and the never fading inheritance of the saints; and of their fixed, unalterable, and unshaken state: but rather this is to be understood of Christ's coming to the destruction of Jerusalem; when there was an entire removal of the Jewish state, both political and ecclesiastical; and of the whole Mosaic economy; and of things appertaining to divine worship, which were made with hands, as the temple, and the things in it; and which were made to be removed; for they were to continue no longer than the time of reformation: and this removing of them designs the abolition of them, and entire putting an end to them; at which time, not only their civil government was wholly put down, but their ecclesiastic state also; for the place of their worship was destroyed, the daily sacrifice ceased, and the old covenant, and the manner of administering it, vanished away; and all the legal institutions and ordinances, which were abolished by the death of Christ, were no more performed in Jerusalem; the temple and temple service perishing together:

that those things which cannot be shaken may remain: the kingdom and priesthood of Christ, which are everlasting; and the good things which come by him, as remission of sins, justification, adoption, sanctification, and the heavenly inheritance; as also the Gospel, and the doctrines and ordinances of it, baptism, and the Lord's supper, and the mode of Gospel worship; all which are to continue until Christ's second coming.

Ver. 28. *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved,* etc..] Not the kingdom of glory; eternal glory is a kingdom, and it is an immovable one; and is a free gift of God, and may be said to be now received; God's people are called unto it, and are made meet for it, and have a right unto it, and have it in faith and hope, and in Christ their head and representative: but the kingdom of grace, under the Gospel dispensation, is meant: there are several things in this dispensation which are called a kingdom; as a Gospel church, the Gospel itself, and the privileges and blessings of grace bestowed, especially spiritual and internal ones, (⁴¹²⁰Matthew 25:1 ⁴¹⁶⁶Luke 16:16) (⁴¹⁴⁷Romans 14:17) and the whole dispensation is called the kingdom of heaven, (⁴⁰⁰²Matthew 3:2 4:17). Christ he is King, believers are his subjects, the Gospel is his sceptre, and the ordinances are his laws and appointments, and all are immovable; and a man may be said to receive this kingdom, when he is delivered from

the power of darkness, is regenerated, and has the blessings of grace actually bestowed on him, and is brought to Zion:

let us have grace; by which is meant, not thankfulness for so great a blessing, though this is highly requisite and necessary; nor the favour of God, though, as the reception of the kingdom springs from hence, a sense of it ought to abide; nor the habit or principle of grace in the heart, unless particularly the grace of faith, and the exercise of it, should be designed; but rather the doctrine of grace, the Gospel, is intended; and the sense is, *εχωμεν*, “let us hold it”, as the Ethiopic version renders it; let us hold the Gospel fast, and a profession of it: the Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions read, “we have grace”; this goes along with the immovable kingdom; all that have truly received the one, have the other:

whereby we may serve God; God is to be served, and not a creature, nor the elements of this world, the ceremonial law, and its rites: nor is he to be served in any form, only in a spiritual way; and without holding to the Gospel, there is no serving him in an evangelic manner; the true and right way of serving him is as follows:

acceptably; in Christ, in the Gospel of his Son, and by faith in him, without which it is impossible to please God:

with reverence; of the majesty of God, with shame for sin, and with a sense of unworthiness:

and godly fear; which has God for its author and object, and which springs from his grace, and is increased by discoveries of his goodness; and which is consistent with faith, and spiritual joy; (see ^{<B11>}Psalm 2:11 5:7).

Ver. 29. *For our God is a consuming fire.*] Either God personally considered, God in the person of Christ; so the Shechinah, with the Jews, is called a consuming fire ^{f302}. Christ is truly God, and he is our God and Lord; and though he is full of grace and mercy, yet he will appear in great wrath to his enemies, who will not have him to reign over them: or rather God essentially considered; whose God he is, and in what sense, and how he comes to be so, (see Gill on “^{<B10>}Hebrews 8:10”), what is here said of him, that he is a consuming fire, may be understood of his jealousy in matters of worship, (^{<B12>}Deuteronomy 4:23,24), and so carries in it a reason why he is to be served acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. God, and he only, is to be worshipped; and he is to be worshipped in a way suitable to himself; and he has the sole right of fixing the manner of

worship, both as to the external and internal parts of it: under the legal dispensation, he was worshipped in a way he then pitched upon, and suitable to it; and under the Gospel dispensation he is to be worshipped in an evangelical way; and he is to have all the glory in every part of worship; and the ordinances of Gospel worship are immovable; nor are they to be altered, or others put in their room, without recurring his displeasure. Moreover, this phrase may be expressive of the preservation of his people, and of the destruction of their enemies, (~~(f301)~~ Deuteronomy 9:1-3). We commonly say, that God out of Christ is a consuming fire; meaning, that God, as an absolute God, is full of wrath and vengeance; and it is a truth, but not the truth of this text; for here it is our God, our covenant God, our God in Christ; not that he is so to the saints, or to them that are in Christ: he is indeed as a wall of fire in his providences, to protect and defend them, and as fire in his word to enlighten and warm them, to guide and direct them, but not a consuming fire to them; this he is to their enemies, who are as thorns, and briers, and stubble before him: and so the Jews interpret (~~(f302)~~ Deuteronomy 4:24) of a fire consuming fire ^{f303}; and observe, that Moses says, thy God, and not our God ^{f304}; but the apostle here uses the latter phrase.