

The Deliverance of the Kirk of God

by Samuel Rutherford

The sermon emphasizes the promise of deliverance for the Kirk of God, highlighting the union and fellowship between Israel and Judah, and the lawfulness of private worship.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:7, Psalm 16:10, Psalm 118:17, Isaiah 10:5, Jeremiah 50:4, Micah 7:8, Zechariah 12:10, Acts 20:19, Romans 8:24, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 11:9

Topics: "Divine Deliverance", "Redemption Assurance"

Description

Samuel Rutherford preaches on the prophecy of the fall of Babylon and the deliverance of Jerusalem, emphasizing the union and fellowship of a divided Kirk and the people of God. The Scripture describes the thankfulness of the children of Israel and Judah upon their deliverance, as they journey from Babylon to Zion, weeping, seeking the Lord, and making a perpetual covenant with Him. The sermon highlights the assurance that the Kirk of God will be delivered from trouble, as faith sees beyond the present struggles and believes in God's promises of redemption and salvation.

Transcript

"In those days and in that time, says the Lord, The children of Israel shall come, They and the children of Judah together; with continual weeping they shall come, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces toward it, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that will not be forgotten." Jeremiah 50:4,5.

[A controversy had arisen in the General Assembly concerning the lawfulness of home meetings for Bible study and prayer.]

In this Scripture, beloved in our Lord, we have a prophecy of the fall of Babylon, the golden city. And in it we have a description of the full and final wrath that shall fasten upon all the enemies of Zion, and the enemies of all them who have such a bill to give in to the Lord's court as the Kirk has in this chapter. "The violence done to Me and to My flesh be upon the inhabitants of Babylon." There is a violence done to the Kirk of God by Babylon, and their complaint is put in before the Lord; and the complaint is heard by Him, and there is a prophecy given here before the people of Israel be carried away to their captivity, for this prophecy is given out in the time while they were in the way of carrying away captive. And the Lord here He gives out a prophecy-- first, of the ruin of Babylon; and, secondly, He has another prophecy here of the deliverance of Jerusalem. Now to take the words as they lie in order.

(1) The time of the deliverance is set down: "At that time and in these days saith the Lord." (2) We have the parties that are delivered: these of Israel and the ten tribes, and with them the children of Judah. (3) We have the union and sweet fellowship of a divided Kirk and the people of God who before could not join with either: "The children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together." They were separate from others for many years, because the ten tribes they had desertion from the true religion, as that is the thing that makes a separation among people; and, upon the other hand, there is nothing that is such a needle to sew people together as when people join all together in the truth of God--when we have all one Lord, and faith, and baptism, and hope, and inheritance, &c. The (4) particular is, What shall be the thankfulness when they are delivered from their captivity? And this is set down unto us in many particulars. The first is, they shall take a journey from Babylon towards Zion.

Second: We have the manner how they go to Zion--they shall go weeping while they are going there. Third: The errand wherefore they shall go to Zion, shall be to seek the Lord their God. Fourth: They shall ask the way to Zion, and while they are asking for it, their faces shall be towards the same. And then, lastly, while they are thus going to Zion together, there is a conference between them, and, in their conference, they resolve both of them upon this: "Come and let us join ourselves in a perpetual covenant to the Lord that shall not be forgotten."

Now for the first, To wit--The time when the Lord will deliver His people from their captivity and bondage. Look unto the time when this prophecy is given out, and that is, They are not well come to Babylon at this time, and yet there is a triumph promised even before they be sent away. And there is in this chapter a prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, and that is for the encouragement of the people of God, who were carried thither; and before utter misery and desolation come upon them, there is a prophecy of their delivery and of the destruction of their enemies.

The first doctrine arising from this point is, The Kirk of God never sooner enters in any trouble, but they have the Lord's bond given unto them that they shall be brought out of it again; and they, have a guarantee and caution of the Lord that death, hell, and all sort of trouble shall not work upon them to destroy them (Psa. 16:10). When our Lord Christ is put to that strait that they get Him put dead into the grave, that any would think He is gone now for evermore, He has it backed with that promise: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in grave, neither wilt thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." Happy may that subject be to go into prison who beforehand has his king's pardon and assurance that he shall not die in the prison. And the Kirk and children of God, they have this much for them when they go under any strait or trouble, or, as it were, to prison, that they shall not die into that prison, but Christ shall bring them safe out of it again. And there are two special reasons wherefore this is that the children of God, albeit they be under trouble, yet they succumb not under the same.

The one is, If there be anything in the world that sees over the water, it is faith and so it sees over beyond the trouble, and therefore succumbs not under it; as ye see it is said (Mic. 7:8): "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy: when I shall fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." There is a stout look of faith looking over to the other side of the trouble, and taking the answer before the answer come, and gathering faith that all shall be well, albeit, for the present, it stand hard with them. The 118th Psalm, it was penned when the servant of God was in very great trouble; and yet in it he promises to himself in the Lord's name: "I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord." There faith on the one side, and yet looking to the other shore and believing life in death And he believes salvation when all is black about, and that foul winter will turn in a fair, clear summer. He believes, and the Kirk of God in trouble believes, that He that will come, will come, and shall not tarry, believing this, that none shall die in

prison who look out at the window of their prison to God. And this, indeed, should hearten us, and make us not to cast down our hearts for any appearance of ill that yet we see, although they were greater than they are. But this I speak only to the children of God, who when they are in trouble, or it is in coming on them, they can send letters to their friends, as faith does and say, "I shall live, and not die, and declare the works of the Lord."

Another reason of this promise of delivery beforehand is by reason of that fair promise made to the Kirk and people of God, that the waters shall not drown them, the fire shall not burn them, nor the flame kindle upon them--a promise made that even death itself, which has so awesome a grip, and so strait, yet it shall not slay them, as our Saviour says (John 11:26): "He that believeth in Me shall never see death." And having such promises as these, it is no wonder that good news He preached to the Kirk beforehand that their King and their Lord lives and so His salvation is near to them who wait on Him.

Now the second thing we observe upon the time, it is said "in these days." What days were these? Days wherein the vengeance of the Lord fastens upon Bablyon and upon the enemies of the Kirk. Then Israel and Judah shall come back to their own land to seek the Lord and to join in a covenant with Him.

So that the second doctrine is this, that the fall of the enemies of the Kirk of God, and the rising of the fallen Kirk, these go together; for the enemies and we laugh not together, and weep not together, but when we weep they laugh, and when we laugh they weep. When the Lord drowns Pharaoh and his chariots and all his army in the midst of the Red Sea, then Moses and the people of God they are set safe upon the shore to sing of the praises of the Lord. When the land of Canaan spews out the inhabitants thereof, as a foul stomach spews out the meat that is in it that troubles it, then the Lord He plants His people into the land, and as it is in Psalm 42:4, the Lord has a safe house to keep His children in, while there is a pit digged for the wicked (Psalm 94:13). When Haman's cup is full, and he is at the top of the ladder in his court, that he must fall down again, then Mordecai and the people of God they must be delivered.

It is even here as it is in war. When a soldier has stood his watch, and has remained over the night standing in the cold, when his watch is over, another is put in his place, and he is sent to his warm bed. Even so is it here. When the people of God get rest, then the enemies of God they fall, and these go always together, the rest of the people of God, and the trouble of the wicked. And therefore a word of terror to those who are the enemies of the Kirk of God.

You, who are enemies to the Kirk of God, laugh as ye will before noon, I will assure you there will be a change after noon. I would not have your next day in another life, and be in your case after days, for all the world. Albeit they have a fair-like blink in the morning, yet it is but beguiling, for they will have a foul afternoon of it. Sorrow and indignation will come upon them. And therefore, I beseech you, eat none of their dainties, nor take no part with them, for the Lord laughs at them, as it is Psa. 37:13: He laughs at the wicked, for He sees their end afar off; He knows what will be the end of all their good cheer and all their merry days. And therefore woe is that man who has no more, but only a part of the laughter of the wicked, for that is but like the crackling of thorns under a pot, that is but a blaze and away. This looks very much like us and our time, that wicked men and the enemies of the Lord, they must come into the place of the Kirk of God and His people, who before were in distress and calamity, and yet He will perform that word (Jer. 20:12, and Isa. 10:12). When the Lord has performed His work in Zion, then He will fall to and punish the stout heart of the king of Babylon. When the Lord has humbled His Kirk, and done His work with His fire there, then the wicked they must fall on it and be consumed thereby, that we may know that it is good

for the children of God to wait upon Him. And that is the second part of the use, that faith and hope are evermore waiting for good at God's hand and for daylight. We never heard of any who waited upon the Lord, but at last they might say: "This poor man cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles."

Again, thirdly, that the delivery of the Kirk of God is not for the present, but "in those days and at that time." We learn here, that there are none who wait upon God but they must prove Him, and as men prove well so God pays well that which is proved. It is not salvation in hand, but an onwaiting life that the Kirk of God has while they are here. And this is to meet with a doubt and a knot that these people could not loose for the present. They might say, for all that the Lord says of the destruction of Babylon, yet we are there captives, albeit the wrath of God be pronounced against them, yet the sparks thereof have come upon us. And we have sore drink of that cup, and, for the present, we have sad days; for the temple of the Lord is burnt, our princes are hanged, our priests massacred, and we ourselves are carried away captive from mount Zion.

How shall this then be that Babylon shall be destroyed and we restored? The Lord answers this, that the deliverance is coming, but it would not come until that day that He had appointed for it. To teach the Kirk of God to give God that much --as alas! He gets but little of that kind of us-- that He will do for His own people at length, though not for the present, and to look to that word in Psalm 25:22, that the Lord will redeem Israel out of all his troubles, and Psalm 62:5: "My soul wait thou only upon the Lord, for my expectation is from Him," even to make God's omnipotence the object of their faith and of their hope, and learn to wait upon God only. "I would do that," says some, "but I have nothing in hand." But we must remember that all their stock is in God's hand who hope rightly in Him; for if they had anything in hand, it were not hope, as it is, Rom. 8:24: "Hope that is seen is not hope." But the thing which one sees not is properly the thing that he hopes for. And so the less we have in hand we have the greater reason of hope. That no man may be troubled with this, I have nothing for the present; but in such a case learn to believe in God, and then ye have the more. How many rich men are there in the world who have no more but only pieces of paper for all that they have, and yet men will account them rich, albeit there be not two pence in their purse. The hoper and onwaiter upon God is this way rich, yet all his sums are in God's hands, who pays His annual rents well, so that His annual rents they are better than the world's principal sum.

A third objection: "I have waited long for deliverance but it cometh not." The text answers, "At that time and in these days," to teach us to set no time to the Lord the creator of time, for His time is always best, and as it is Hab. 2:3, "Albeit it tarry, wait for it; for it will surely come; "and as it is 2 Peter 3:9, speaking of the Lord's general coming to judgment, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness," &c. The Kirk says that the Lord is long in coming, and slack of His promise; but He says He is not slack as men count slackness, but will come and will show mercy to His people and deliver them. As much then as we prove God as much faith and hope indeed have we. He that will go to heaven and have nothing at all in hand, his faith and his hope are strongest; he that believes in Him when he sees not, but believes in the darkness, that is likest faith. Let no man then call godliness fancy, or say, "What have the children of God for the present? They have more weary hearts here than the strong cattle of Bashan, and more tears than they who laugh and rejoice in the world." Let it be so, yet it is an unseen heaven and happiness which the children of God believe. And, indeed, the thing that is seen is not believed. If they saw heaven they could not be said to believe it. As the man that sees Rome, he cannot say that he hears only of it but by report. But believe life, and what is said of it without any more, and that is true faith. To say I believe in God, and I love Him, albeit I never saw Him, as the Apostle Peter speaks, "Whom not having seen, yet ye believe with joy unspeakable and glorious." And ye know the Lord's word He spake to

Thomas, "Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed." Blessed are they, blessed are they who believe when they see nothing but contrary appearances; who will die, and yet will hope and wait for the salvation of God, and were at that, as it is in Psalm 23:4: "Albeit I should walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear none ill." When a man is under the shadow of a tree he is near it then, so when a man is within the shadow of death, that is, to be near death, it is faith then to believe in God.

Now the second particular in the text is, the parties that are delivered, and these are Israel and Judah. Israel that was hardly handled by proud Assyria, that was the rod of the Lord's anger and indignation, as ye may read Isaiah 10:5; and poor Judah that was carried away captive to Chaldea by that proud tyrant who was the hammer of the devil to beat them. What nation would have said that ever they should be a kingdom? --the one of them being in Assyria, and the other of them in Chaldea, the temple burnt, their city sacked, the land spoiled, and more, the anger and indignation of God lying upon His people; where we learn this shortly--he is in a weak estate whom the Lord cannot help; he is near death whom He will not quicken. Fatherless! and will not the Lord be a Father to you? Comfortless! and will not the Lord comfort you? Let Israel and Judah be in as hard and miserable a case as they will, the Lord, who is the help of the poor and needy, He will deliver them.

The third particular is the union that is between Israel and Judah at this time. And there is a number of marks of this union. First: That they shall come together to Zion. Second: That they shall serve the Lord together. Third: That they shall ask the way to Zion, weeping. Fourth: That their faces shall be thitherwards while they ask the way to Zion. And, lastly, that they shall all of them have this common resolution: Let us be joined in a perpetual covenant with the Lord, never to be forgotten. So then here the Lord giving unto us a proof that when He sews a Kirk together, that not only people of sundry families, but even people of sundry tribes and of sundry kingdoms, their fellowship shall be seen, and especially in this that they shall worship God together. They shall both have their faces one way, and shall ask the way to Zion together, seek the Lord together. And they shall have a common covenant and band with the Lord, never to be forgotten. Now, whether or no was this ever historically true that Israel and Judah took such a journey as this towards Zion after such a manner and for such an end, there is no necessity to stand upon it now, because many of these prophecies they are accomplished in the Messiah. But there is a ground here to prove the lawfulness of that private service and worship that Israel and Judah performed to the Lord together, albeit they were of sundry kingdoms. And before this they were of contrary worship, for Israel was filled with idolatry, had a calf at Dan, and another at Bethel, and corrupted and changed the whole true worship; yet now they come together and say, "Let us join ourselves in a perpetual covenant with the Lord, never to be forgotten." Now that not only they of sundry towns and of sundry families, but even those of sundry kingdoms, may meet together this way, this text will bear; and that they may, worship the Lord privately, it will bear that also; for some to come from one politic kingdom to another, and join together this way, for them to come to Zion, and each one of them to ask the way of another, and to make a covenant and to have conference amongst themselves: "Let us be joined in a perpetual covenant with the Lord, never to be forgotten." Now in the public worship of God there is no such speeches among private persons: "Let us be joined in a perpetual covenant with the Lord." Neither, as Calvin says, is there in the public worship by words a public spurring up one of another. So, then, this text it will warrant that which all our interpreters and our divines allow, that those who are of diverse kingdoms and diverse families, when they meet together, they may speak one to another, exhort, comfort, instruct and admonish every one another in the mutual duties of the worship of God, each one of them lending their shoulder to another before they come to the part where the public worship of God is.

It may be said that this concerns not us much, that the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom they shall worship God together, and shall speak good words one to another, that they shall enter in a covenant together, but what is that to us? We are another kirk than they were. And so it concerns not us. But remember what the apostle says, "What is written is written for our instruction upon whom the ends of the world are fallen." And howbeit this prophecy should never be historically fulfilled in the persons of Israel and Judah, yet it will serve to warrant the children of God on this point, to exhort, instruct, comfort, rebuke, and to speak of those duties that the Lord requires of His children, and of them toward another before they come to the public worship of God.

Now for the better understanding of this, the Lord would have private Christians to be considered in a threefold relation. The first is as they are a master of a family. Second, as they are fellow-members of the grace of God. Third, as they are extraordinarily favoured of God above others. For the third and last of these, we need not to speak much of it; for a private Christian so graced and qualified it has not been found fault with that they write commentaries, and do other things of that kind. And for the first again, the duty of a private Christian as he is a master of a family, that is also far out of controversy, that a Christian as he is the head of a family, and so has the charge of them who are within the same, ought to discharge himself in this. To say nothing of that place (Deut. 6:7) which warrants this point, and of the Lord's commendation of Abraham (Gen. 18:19): "I know that He will command His children and His household after Him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord," &c., and (Exod. 12:26) where the master of the family is commanded when the children shall ask him what the Passover means, the Lord says, Ye shall tell them it is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses. There the master of the family, albeit he be not a minister, nor a public man, has a charge to expound the doctrine of the sacrament of the Passover to his family, Psa. 78:5: "The Lord established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them, to their children." So that the fathers they are bound to teach the children, and the rest of those who are in the family. Now under the name of a family, ye know we must expound it according to the fourth command, when that is set down that masters of families should be careful to have those within their families keeping the service of God. Ye know there is set down "the manservant," "the maidservant," "the stranger that is within the gates." So when the charge is laid on masters for their families, it is laid on them for all the members of the family, and for all the strangers that are in the same; for while he is there, he is a fellow and joint-member with the rest of the family.

Now all the question is about the duty which the Lord requires of private Christians, as they are fellow-members of the same body one with another; as they are hands, feet, eyes, &c., of the blessed body of Christ. What seeks the Word of God in this case? Hear the Word of God. It is clear also-- Lev. 19:17: "Rebuking one another;" Col. 3:16: "To teach and exhort;" Mal. 3:16: "To speak often one to another;" Heb. 3:13: "To exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day." And that is recommended as a special means for preventing hardness of heart; and there are none, I am sure, but they will acknowledge that whatever is recommended as a means to prevent hardness of heart, it is a duty commanded and ordained of God. But so it is that this duty of exhorting one another is recommended as a means for preventing hardness of heart, and therefore it is a duty commanded of God, and so, lawful and necessary. And 1 Thess. 5:11: "Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another as ye also do." "Warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak."

Now these places they will not only warrant the master of a family to do so, but also all Christians as they have commerce with others, that they join with others in such a manner, and the more coals be together the hotter will the fire be. And there is another place not far from this --Psa. 37:30: "The righteous man he speaketh of wisdom and of judgment, and the law of God is in his heart;" and Prov. 10:21: "The lips of the righteous feed many." This is not to be understood of a pastoral feeding, that because one is a righteous man he should go to the pulpit and take the charge of souls upon him; but he feeds many in a private way, and it is a meaning unknown to the text to restrain it that otherways.

Anything that can be said against this is, that it is very like the public teaching, that if they may exhort, instruct, comfort, rebuke, admonish, &c., one another, what difference is there between this and the public teaching, except only in the place, that the one is done in public and the other is done in a house. For answer: This is not so much against us as it is against the Scriptures of God, and yet the difference is clear; for every Christian is commanded to exhort, instruct, rebuke, comfort, &c., one another; but for the other it is said, none can preach except he be sent. And so the conclusion of this argument it is as much against the Scriptures of God as against these who defend the lawfulness of this ordinance. And this argument will be as much against these who speak one to one, as against him who speaks one to twenty. And, thirdly, there is very great difference between private exhortation and public preaching; even as when a common soldier gives warning to the army that the enemy is coming on them, and he who is appointed watchman, he gives also warning of the same. Now ask the difference between these warnings. It is clear the one has a calling to it, and authority from the general and the army, to give warning. The other, again, is not so bound. But yet, as he is a part of the army, he is obliged to give warning when he sees them in any danger though not in such a public, and failing therein, he does wrong. And as the difference is between a master, who is clad with public authority for teaching of scholars, and one of the other disciples teaches another on that same lesson that he teaches. Now there is none who will say that either the one usurps the watchman's place or the other the master's charge; but the one does what he does by a special designation for that effect, and the other as he is a member of that body. Again, the one has his place by public authority; and there are two wrongs done when he is disobeyed, one against the Lord's calling and authority, and another against his message and that which he bears. But disobedience to the other is not so great. Again, the public watchman he is ordained to use all means ordinary and possible for the good of people; but the other is only to do in an ordinary way. A private Christian he ought to help others in the way to heaven; but he ought not to make that his study--to study divinity for that effect.

Again, another objection is that this is like interpreting of Scripture, and this is a thing that is altogether unlawful for any but for them who are authorized persons. For answer to this: All who know the controversy between us and the Papists, know that Bellarmine he lays this to the charge of the heretics, as he calls us, that they will not have the interpreting of the Scriptures bound to any kind of men as to pastors, but they will have it a thing common to all. And another of no less note than Bellarmine, to wit, Becan, says, while he is reasoning about the Scriptures: "Wherefore would the Lord have the Scriptures to be obscure, but only because He would have the order of pastors and teachers and doctors and people to be kept and observed." And in his 1 tom. quest. 10, he makes that question, "To whom belongs the interpreting of the Scriptures? And answers, "Only to the Kirk, that is, only to Kirkmen." But this is our judgment in this point, that the power of interpreting the Scriptures in public is due to the pastor only and to no other; but for the private spirit of interpretation of the Scriptures it is a thing that belongs not only to pastors, but also to all Christians. And this is not a thing that is only my device, but that which our divines do approve; for Junius says,, in the third chapter of his book, these: "We will not have interpreting the Scripture bound to particular men, but to be a thing belonging to omnibus fidelibus (all the faithful) in a

private way and manner." Trelcatius he says also the like, and also Rivetus. And Luther and Calvin agree unto this while they are expounding that place. They say of ministers their public interpretation of the Scriptures is not to say that none has power of interpreting the Scriptures but Kirkmen, but all have power and yet difference--the private interpretation from the public. And all our divines, they acknowledge thus far; and Rivetus, while he is answering that Jesuit, he says: "There is a twofold interpreting of the Scripture. The first is public only belonging to pastors, a second is private belonging to omnibus fidelibus; and the professors of Leyden they agree unto this also." And yet this is not to put private persons, whosoever they be, in the chair of ministers, but only this--it is impossible for them to believe the Scriptures unless they can apply such Scriptures for rebuking, comforting, instructing, &c., one another, and to reclaim such as are wandering out of the way. Now if this be true, that the word of God thus gives place to exhort one another for comforting one another, rebuking one another, &c., then the meeting of Christians together for that end cannot be unlawful, for there is none who will meet that way but those who are bairns of that same house.

Again, it is objected that this rebuking, comforting, instructing, &c., is but only of one to one, and no further. But if ye will compare this form of speaking with the original, both in Greek and Hebrew language, and ye will find that it comes very far short of their mind who say so. If ye will look for the Greek language (Rom. 8), you will find the apostle says there: "Owe nothing to any man but love one to one." Now will any think that the law of God will bind one to love only and no more; or rather does it not bind us to love all these who are called our neighbour? And Gal. 5:13 the apostle says, "Serve one another in love." The meaning of that place is not that only one man should serve another man, but the law of God it binds more. And sick like, "Bear ye burdens one of another." Is that only meant of one man? The Word of God will carry it towards all men in so far as a good conscience will permit; and James 5:16: "Pray one for another, and confess your faults one to another." The meaning there is for all the members of Christ's body, so that the Word of God it will not bear us to this, that it is only one to one this duty belongs.

And then, if ye will come to the Old Testament, ye will find the word not so strict. As Gen. 42:21: "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul," &c. The word is that every one of them spake to his brother. The text there is about Joseph's brethren. When they saw the hand of God upon them they spake thus. Now will any think that this was one to one, or rather not every one of them to another; and 2 Kings 6: we will find the like also. There was a whole army there, and will any man believe that one of them only spake at once, speaking such a word as they do?--there so that this is nothing else but a subterfuge and a way of escaping. And so they will find no face for this, that this duty it should be only of one to one.

A second objection is, that anything that is done in this, it must be done but by way of occasion, for it is not a direct command that we should be about any such thing, and have set time and place for the same, but only as it is occasioned by the way.

Answer. Anything is called occasional that is occasioned by us and by our blindness and ignorance, and this way the preaching of the word is a thing occasional, and a worthy divine, Rollock, he said this, and so in this sense men might imprison public preaching.

Again, secondly, the meaning is, Ye shall not intend such a thing, but what ye do therein ye shall do it by your intention. And certainly, that cannot be a fair way, as the philosopher could say. They failed in this who said, Men should do anything that is good by their intention. And they who write of moral philosophy, they say thus far, that a good action is the better that it be intended, and where a good action is [not] done

by the intention it is so much the worse.

A third objection is that it is not lawful to appoint such a set time, and a set place for such actions. Certainly if it was lawful for Job's friends to meet together to comfort him, then this was not unlawful, neither that they made a meeting to come together for that effect. I believe that that place says that both the time and the place were appointed beforehand; and is the action the worse of it? No, certainly; for if the ordinance of God be lawful, then the fore-setting of time and place for the same cannot make it unlawful, except they will put religious worship to be used in an unlawful time and place. As to preach upon a day of man's invention to make it holy, that must not be. But for the other part, again, the appointing of time and place for a religious action makes it not worse but rather better. And we should beware of that, to distinguish in these things where the law of God distinguishes not. If it be lawful for a man to pray in private, there is none who will say that for him to appoint six hours in the morning, and such a house [to] pray in at that time, makes his prayer unlawful; and sicklike for preaching in the week time, will that make it unlawful to appoint Tuesday and Thursday for preaching?

Another objection is about the number of those who may together discharge this duty. Say they, "If two or three or some more may meet together for such an exercise, then why may not as well three hundred or a whole congregation meet that way?"

That is an objection soon answered. Solomon he might have houses to dwell in, but he might not exceed in the number of his houses. So Christians, they may thus meet in a private way. But if numbers of them meet together, then it is not a private worship, but a public. A man is bound to give to the poor, but he is not tied to give all that he has to them; that is superfluity and ostentation.

The last objection is: "All that is yet said," say they, will not authorize a manner of conference that has been used by some, that two or three private Christians should meet together, and that every one of them should pray about." I believe there be none against this. But they say there is no warrant for three or four persons to pray after one another. And the argument they use is this: say they, "What ever point of worship wants either promise, practice, or command of God, that is an unlawful point of worship. But so it is, that praying thus one after another is a point of worship that wants practice, promise, or precept, and therefore it is unlawful. But I would answer this with retortion to them who object, the same praying privately is not commanded, and is therefore unlawful to pray in private. No man will say that, I believe. And, again, if it be a thing lawful to preach, will that make it unlawful that one preach after another?"

A third reason is, because all the public actions of the worshippers of God, they are this way ordered by the public worshippers, even so are the private actions of his worship by the private worshippers. If this were retorted to us: "What Scripture have we for that in our public worship, to have first prayer, then singing of Psalms, then prayer, then preaching, then prayer, then singing, &c.," I believe no man would think it needful to give particular Scripture for that, for it belongs to the office-bearers in the house of God to order these things. So if it be lawful for one to pray in private with another, why may not as well one pray after another? And we will find preaching thus allowed (1 Cor. 14:31, and Acts 15.). Peter begins, and then Barabas, and Paul, and then James. So that all this proves clear enough that there is no necessity of objecting against this point of worship, providing that all things be done in the right manner, as the Word of God allows.

Now a word of the manner of their seeking to Zion. They go weeping to seek the Lord. They weep because they had angered the Lord, and weep for the desolation of the holy city, and truly a work of

reformation it requires weeping. And it should not have so much rejoicing and so much security joined therewith. And it looks the liker a judgment, that so few are drawn to repentance by this work of reformation, for the former breach of our covenant and our turning away from the Lord. The work of reformation should draw us to this, as the harlot wife who has been put out from her husband for her harlotry, when she is brought home again to her provoked husband, and he delivers to her again the keys of the house. If she be honest, it grieves her and makes her heart to melt, that she should have provoked such a loving husband. Even so; when the Lord has dealt so graciously with us after our falling away from Him, should there be so many dry cheeks among us as there are? It is not becoming. But withal--

"They asked the way to Zion." All the tears in the world without this, they are but like to Esau's tears, for he resolved in the days of mourning to kill his brother; and like Judas's tears of desperation. But these are better tears that are spoken of Acts 20:19, when the apostle was there leaving the Ephesians to serve the Lord, with many tears and temptations. It is nothing to weep for sin for a time, but to have their faces towards Zion, and asking the way to it, and to weep, that is more. That is an excellent stance their face has. While they are serving the Lord, and know not where to find Him, yet they have their faces towards Him. There is nothing more easily describes the seekers of Zion and of the Lord than their right look. They know not the way to Zion, and yet they have their face there away, and so ask the way thereto.

There are three excellent looks spoken of in the Word of God: Psalms 69:3: "My eyes fail while I wait for God;" and David's comparison that he uses "As the eyes of the watchmen wait for the morning, so wait we for Thee, O God." And then to wait upon God in the day of trouble, that is an honest look also, that look spoken of Isaiah 17:7: "At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel." What day is that spoken of there? That day when the Lord shall visit Zion, and the Kirk shall be left desolate, and there shall be only as it were gleaning grapes in it; even that which is spoken of, Isaiah 8:17: "I will wait upon the Lord that hideth His face, and I will look for Him."

To look to the Lord when the wind blows motes and sand in your eyes, that is an honest look, and then to look to the kingdom of heaven, and farther than time into eternity; as it is, Hebrews 11:9, Abraham, content to dwell in tents, and to seek no abiding city here, because he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And to have Moses' look in the twenty-sixth verse of that chapter. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, because he had respect to the recompense of reward. Moses looked higher than all the courtiers in Pharaoh's court did--beyond time to eternity.

And a third good look is to look to slain Christ. When the Lord shall refine the house of David, and pour the spirit of supplications upon them, then they shall mourn when they look upon Him whom they have pierced. This condemns all the distorted looks that sinners in the world have, whatever they be. There is a look, Proverbs 21:4, a high look, the Lord cannot endure it. And Proverbs 23, for the eyes to behold strange women; and Isaiah 56:2, "They all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter;" and that look, Ezekiel 18:15, that the house of Israel has its eyes toward the mountains and the hills. They look not to the Lord, but to their own gods. The Lord condemns all those who look not to Himself. And that is sure, every man who in faith looks to God and Christ and heaven, he will follow his look. O! that we had hearts and eyes to seek Him, and to look after Him, and to Him who is able to do this for us, --to draw our hearts and eyes towards Himself; to that Lord, only wise, eternal, immortal, invisible, to Christ's Father and our Father, and Himself and the Holy Spirit, be all praise, glory, and honour now and for ever.--Amen.

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