

CHAPTER 8

The work of ministers is rightly to divide the word of truth and to give every one his portion. So the prophet is here instructed to do, in the further answer he gives to the case of conscience proposed about continuing the public fasts. His answer, in the foregoing chapter, is by way of reproof to those that were disobedient and would not obey the truth. But here he is ordered to change his voice, and to speak by way of encouragement to the willing and obedient. Here are two words from the Lord of hosts, and they are both good words and comfortable words. In the former of these messages (v. 1) God promises that Jerusalem shall be restored, reformed, replenished (v. 2-8), that the country shall be rich, and the affairs of the nation shall be successful, their reputation retrieved, and their state in all respects the reverse of what it had been for many years past (v. 9-15); he then exhorts them to reform what was amiss among them, that they might be ready for these favours designed them (v. 16, 17). In the latter of these messages (v. 18) he promises that their fasts should be superseded by the return of mercy (v. 19), and that thereupon they should be replenished, enriched, and strengthened, by the accession of foreigners to them (v. 20-23).

~~XXX~~ ZECHARIAH 8:1-8

ENCOURAGING PROSPECTS

The prophet, in his foregoing discourses, had left his hearers under a high charge of guilt and a deep sense of wrath; he had left them in a melancholy view of the desolations of their pleasant land, which was the effect of their fathers' disobedience; but because he designed to bring them to repentance, not to drive them to despair, he here sets before them the great things God had in store for them, encouraging them hereby to hope that their case of conscience would shortly determine itself and that God's providence would as loudly call them to *joy and gladness* as ever it called them to *fasting and mourning*. It is here promised,

I. That God will appear for Jerusalem, and will espouse and plead her cause.

1. He will be revenged on Zion's enemies (v. 2): *I was jealous for Zion, or of Zion*; that is, “I have of late been heartily concerned for her honour and interests, *with great jealousy*. The great wrath that was against her (^{<307>}Zechariah 7:12) now turns against her adversaries. I am now *jealous for her with great fury*, and can no more bear to have her abused in her afflictions than I could bear to be abused by her provocations.” This he had said before (^{<304>}Zechariah 1:14, 15), that they might promise themselves as much from the power of his anger, when it was turned for them, as they had felt from it when it was against them. The sins of Zion were her worst enemies, and had done her the most mischief; and therefore God, in his jealousy for her honour and comfort, will *take away her sins*, and then, whatever other enemies injured her, it was at their peril.

2. He will be resident in Zion's palaces (v. 3): “*I have returned to Zion*, after I had seemed so long to stand at a distance, and I will again *dwell in the midst of Jerusalem* as formerly.” This secures to them the tokens of his presence in his ordinances and the instances of his favour in his providences.

II. That there shall be a wonderful reformation in Jerusalem, and religion, in the power of it, shall prevail and flourish there. “*Jerusalem*, that has dealt treacherously both with God and man, shall become so famous for fidelity and honesty that it *shall be called* and known by the name of a *city of truth*, and the inhabitants of it shall be called *children that will not lie*. The *faithful city* has become a *harlot* (^{<232>}Isaiah 1:21), but shall now become a *faithful city* again, faithful to the *God of Israel* and to the worship of him only.” This was fulfilled; for the Jews after the captivity, though there was much amiss among them, were never guilty of idolatry. Jerusalem shall be called *the mountain of the Lord of hosts*, owning him and owned by him, and therefore *the holy mountain*, cleared from idols and consecrated to God, and not, as it had been, the *mount of corruption*, ^{<223>}2 Kings 23:13. Note, The city of God ought to be a *city of truth* and the *mountain of the Lord of hosts* a *holy mountain*. Those that profess religion, and relation to God, must study to adorn their profession by all instances of godliness and honesty.

III. That there shall be in Jerusalem a great increase of people, and all the marks and tokens of a profound tranquillity, When it has become a *city of truth* and a *mountain of holiness*, it is then peaceable and prosperous, and every thing in it looks bright and pleasant.

1. You may look with pleasure upon the generation that is going off the stage, and see them fairly quitting it in the ordinary course of nature, and not driven off from it by war, famine, or pestilence (v. 4): *In the streets of Jerusalem*, that had been filled with the bodies of the slain, or deserted and left desolate, shall now dwell *old men* and *old women*, who have not been cut off by untimely deaths (either through their own intemperance or God's vengeance), but have the even thread of their days spun out to a full length; they shall feel no distemper but the decay of nature, and go to their grave in a full age, as a *shock of corn in his season*. They shall have *every one his staff in his hand, for very age*, to support him, as Jacob, who *worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff*, ^{<S12>}Hebrews 11:21. Old age needs a support, and should not be ashamed to use it, but should furnish itself with divine graces, which will be the strength of the heart and a better support than a staff in the hand. Note, The hoary head, as it is a crown of glory to those that wear it, so it is to the places where they live. It is a graceful thing to a city to see abundance of old people in it; it is a sign, not only of the healthfulness of the air, but of the prevalence of virtue and the suppression and banishment of those many vices which cut off the number of men's months in the midst; it is a sign, not only that the climate is temperate, but that the people are so.

2. You may look with as much pleasure upon the generation that is rising up in their room (v. 5): *The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets*. This intimates,

(1.) That they shall be blessed with a multitude of children; their families shall increase and multiply, and replenish the city, which was an early product of the divine blessing, ^{<O1>}Genesis 1:28. Happy the man, happy the nation, whose quiver is full of these arrows! They shall have of both sexes, *boys and girls*, in whom their families shall afterwards be joined, and another generation raised up.

(2.) That their children shall be healthful, and strong, and active; their boys and girls shall not lie sick in bed, or sit pining in the corner, but (which is a pleasant sight to parents) shall be hearty and cheerful, and play in the

streets. It is their pleasant playing age; let us not grudge it to them; much good may it do them and no harm. *Evil days* will come time enough, and *years* of which they will *say* that they have *no pleasure in them*, in consideration of which they are concerned not to spend all their time in play, but to remember their Creator.

(3.) That they shall have great plenty, meat enough for all their mouths. In time of famine we find the children *swooning as the wounded, in the streets of the city*, ^{<2011>}Lamentations 2:11, 12. If they are playing in the streets, it is a good sign that they want for nothing.

(4.) That they shall not be terrified with the alarms of war, but enjoy a perfect security. There shall be *no breaking in* of invaders, *no going out* of deserters, *no complaining in the streets* (^{<11244>}Psalm 144:14); for, when there is playing in the streets, it is a sign that there is little care or fear there. Time was when the enemy hunted their steps so closely that they could not go in their streets (^{<2018>}Lamentations 4:18), but now they shall *play in the streets* and fear no evil.

(5.) That they shall have love and peace among themselves. The boys and girls shall not be fighting in the streets, as sometimes in cities that are divided into factions and parties the children soon imbibe and express the mutual resentments of the parents; but they shall be innocently and lovingly *playing in the streets*, not devouring, but diverting, one another.

(6.) That the sports and diversions used shall be all harmless and inoffensive; the boys and girls shall have no other play than what they are willing that persons should see *in the streets*, no play that seeks corners, no playing the fool, or playing the wanton, for it is the mountain of the Lord, the *holy mountain*, but honest and modest recreations, which they have no reason to be ashamed of.

(7.) That childish youthful sports shall be confined to the age of childhood and youth. It is pleasing to see the *boys and girls playing in the streets*, but it is ill-favoured to see men and women playing there, who should fill up their time with work and business. It is well enough for *children* to be *sitting in the market-place*, crossing questions (^{<1116>}Matthew 11:16, 17), but it is no way fit that men, who are able to *work in the vineyard*, should *stand all the day idle* there, ^{<1113>}Matthew 20:3.

IV. That the scattered Israelites shall be brought together again from all parts whither they were dispersed (v. 7): “*I will save my people from the east country, and from the west; I will save them from being lost, or losing themselves, in Babylon, or in Egypt, or in any other country whither they were driven.*” They shall neither be detained by the nations among whom they sojourn nor shall they incorporate with them; but I will *save them*, will separate them, and will bring them to their own land again; by the prosperity of their land I will invite them back, and at the same time incline them to return; and *they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem*, shall choose to dwell there, because it is the holy city, though, upon many other accounts, it was more eligible to dwell in the country; and therefore we find (⁴¹⁰Nehemiah 11:2) that *the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.*

V. That God would renew his covenant with them, would be faithful to them and make them so to him: *They shall be my people and I will be their God.* That is the foundation and crown of all these promises, and is inclusive of all happiness. They shall obey God's laws, and God will secure and advance all their interests. This contract shall be made, shall be new-made, *in truth* and *in righteousness*. Some think that the former denotes God's part of the covenant (he will be *their God in truth*, he will make good all his promises of favour to them) and the latter man's part of the covenant — they shall be his people in *righteousness*, they shall be a righteous people and shall abound in the *fruits of righteousness*, and shall not, as they have done, deal treacherously and unjustly with their God. See (³⁷⁹Hosea 2:19, 20. God will never leave nor forsake them in a way of mercy, as he has promised them; and they shall never leave nor forsake him in a way of duty, as they have promised him. These promises were fulfilled in the flourishing state of the Jewish church, for some ages, between the captivity and Christ's time; they were to have a further and a fuller accomplishment in the gospel-church, that *heavenly Jerusalem*, which is from above, is free, and is the *mother of us all*; but the fullest accomplishment of all will be in the future state.

All these precious promises are here ratified, and the doubts of God's people silenced, with that question (v. 6): “*If it be marvellous in the eyes of this people, should it be marvellous in my eyes? If it seem unlikely to you that ever Jerusalem should be thus repaired, should be thus replenished, is it therefore impossible with God?*” The *remnant of this*

people (and God's people in this world are but a remnant), being few and feeble, thought all this was too good news to be true, especially *in these days*, these difficult days, these cloudy and dark days. Considering how bad the times are, it is highly improbable, it is morally impossible, they should ever come to be so good as the prophet speaks. How can these things be? How can dry bones live? But should it therefore appear so in the eyes of God? Note, We do both God and ourselves a deal of wrong if we think that, when we are *nonplussed*, he is so, and that he cannot get over the difficulties which to us seem insuperable. *With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible*; so far are God's thoughts and ways above ours.

~~388~~ ZECHARIAH 8:9-17

ENCOURAGING PROSPECTS

God, by the prophet, here gives further assurances of the mercy he had in store for Judah and Jerusalem. Here is line upon line for their comfort, as before there was for their conviction. These verses contain strong encouragements with reference to the difficulties they now laboured under. And we may observe,

I. Who they were to whom these encouragements did belong — to those who, in obedience to the call of God by his prophets, applied in good earnest to the building of the temple (v. 9): “*Let your hands be strong, that are busy at work for God, you that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, and are not disobedient to them as your fathers were, in the former days, to the words of those prophets that were sent to them. You may take the comfort of the promises, and shall have the benefit of them, who have obeyed the precepts given you in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid, when you were told that, having begun with it, you must go on, that the temple might be built; God told you that you must go on with it, and you have laboured hard at it for some time, in obedience to the heavenly vision. Now you are those whose hands must be strengthened and whose hearts must be comforted, with these precious promises; to you is the word of this consolation sent.*” Note, Those, and those only, that are employed for God, may expect to be encouraged by him; those who lay their hands to the plough of duty shall

have them strengthened with the promises of mercy; and those who avoid their fathers' faults, not only cut off the entail of the curse, but have it turned into a blessing.

II. What the discouragements were which they had hitherto laboured under, v. 10. These are mentioned as a foil to the blessings God was now about to bestow upon them, to make them appear the more strange, to the glory of God, and the more sweet, to their comfort. The truth was the times had long been very bad, and the calamities and difficulties of them were many and great.

1. Trade was dead; there was nothing to be done and therefore nothing to be got. *Before these days* of reformation began *there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beasts.* The fruits of the earth (though it had long lain fallow, and therefore, one would think, should have been the more fertile) were thin and poor, so that the husbandman had no occasion to hire harvest people to reap his corn, nor teams to carry it home, for he could be scarcely said to have any. Merchants had no goods to import or export, so that they needed not to hire either men or beasts; hence the poor people, who lived by their labour, had no way of getting bread for themselves and their families.

2. Travelling was dangerous, so that all commerce both by sea and land was cut off; nay, none durst stir abroad so much as to visit their friends, for *their was no peace to him that went out, or came in, because of the affliction.* The Samaritans, and Ammonites, and their other evil neighbours, made inroads upon them in small parties, and seized all they could lay their hands on; the roads were infested with highwaymen, and both city and country with housebreakers; so that neither men's persons nor their goods were safe at home or abroad.

3. There was no such thing as friendship or good neighbourhood among them: *I set all men every one against his neighbour.* In this there was a great deal of sin, for these wars and fightings came from men's lust, and this God was not the author of; but there was in it a great deal of misery also, and so God was in it a just avenger of their disobedience to him; because they were of an *evil spirit* towards him, a spirit of contradiction to his laws, God sent among them an evil spirit, to make them vexatious one to another. Those that throw off the love of God forfeit the comfort of brotherly love.

III. What encouragement they shall now have to proceed in the good work they are about, and to hope that it shall yet be well with them: “Thus and thus you have been harassed and afflicted, but now God will change his way towards you, v. 11. Now that you return to your duty God will comfort you according to the time that he has afflicted you; the ebbing tide shall flow again.”

1. God will not proceed in his controversy with them; *I will not be to them as in the former days.* Note, It is with us well or ill according as God is to us; for every creature is that to us which he makes it to be. And, if we walk not contrary to God as in the former days, he will not walk contrary to us as in the former days; for it is only *with the froward* that he will *wrestle*.

2. They shall have great plenty and abundance of all goods things (v. 12): *The seed sown shall be prosperous, and yield a great increase; the vine shall give her fruit, which makes glad the heart, and the ground its products, which strengthen the heart; they shall have all they can desire, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight. The heavens shall give their dew, without which the earth would not yield her increase, which is a constant intimation to us of the beneficence of the God of heaven to men on earth and of their dependence on him. It is said of a sweeping rain that it leaves no food* (^{<3188>}Proverbs 28:3); but here the *gentle dew* waters the earth, that it may give *seed to the sower and bread to the eater.* And thus God will *cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.* They are but a *remnant, a residue, very few, one would think scarcely worth looking after; but, now that they are at work for God, he will take care that they shall want nothing which is fit for them.* This confirms what the prophet's colleague had said, a little before (^{<3186>}Haggai 2:16, 19), *From this day will I bless you.* Note, God's people, that serve him faithfully, have great possessions. “*All is yours, for you are Christ's.*”

3. They shall recover their credit among their neighbours (v. 13): *You were a curse among the heathen.* Every one censured and condemned them, spoke ill of them, and wished ill to them, upon the account of the great disgrace that they were under; some think that they were made a form of execration, so that if a man would load his enemy with the heaviest curse he would say, *God make thee like a Jew!* “But now, *I will save you, and you shall be a blessing.* Your restoration shall be as much taken notice of to your honour as ever your desolation and dispersion were to your reproach; you shall be applauded and admired as much as ever you were

vilified and run down, shall be courted and caressed as much as ever you were slighted and abandoned.” Most men smile or frown upon their neighbours according as Providence smiles or frowns upon them; but those whom God plainly blesses as his own, shows favour to and puts honour upon, we ought also to respect and be kind to. The blessed of the Lord are the blessing of the land, and should be so accounted by us. This is here promised to the house both of Israel and Judah; for many of the ten tribes returned out of captivity with the two tribes, and shared with them in those blessings; and, it is probable, besides what came at first, many, very many, flocked to them afterwards, when they saw their affairs take this turn.

4. God himself will determine to do them good, v. 14, 15. All their comforts take rise from the thoughts of the love that God had towards them, ²⁹¹Jeremiah 29:11. Compare these promises with the former threatenings.

(1.) When they *provoked him* to anger with *their sins*, he said that he would *punish them*, and so he did; it was his declared purpose to bring destroying judgments upon them, and, because they repented not of their rebellions against him, he repented not of his threatenings against them, but let the sentence of the law take its course. Note, God's punishing sinners is never a sudden and hasty resolve, but is always the product of thought, and there is a counsel in that part of the will of God. If the sinner turn not, God will not turn.

(2.) Now that they pleased him with their services; he said that he would *do them good*; and will he not be as true to his promises as he was to his threatenings? No doubt he will: “*So again have I thought to do well to Jerusalem in those days, when you begin to hearken to the voice of God speaking to you by his prophets; and these thoughts also shall be performed.*”

IV. The use they are to make of these encouragements.

1. Let them take the comfort which these promises give to them: *Fear you not* (v. 15); *let your hands be strong* (v. 9); and both together (v. 13), *Fear not, but let your hands be strong.*

(1.) The difficulties they met with in their work must not drive them from it, nor make them go on heavily in it, for the issue would be good and the

reward great. Let this therefore animate them to proceed with vigour and cheerfulness.

(2.) The dangers they were exposed to from their enemies must not terrify them; those that have God for them, engaged to do them good, need not fear *what man can do against them*.

2. Let them do the duty which those promises call for from them, v. 16, 17. The very same duties which the former prophets pressed upon their fathers from the consideration of the wrath threatened (³⁷⁰Zechariah 7:9, 10) this prophet presses upon them from the consideration of the mercy promised: “Leave it to God, to perform for you what he has promised, in his own way and time, but upon condition that you make conscience of your duty. *These are the things then that you shall do*; this is your part of the covenant; these are the articles which you are to perform, fulfil, and keep, that you may not put a bar in your own door and stop the current of God’s favours.”

(1.) “You must never tell a lie, but always speak as you think, and as the matter is, to the best of your knowledge: *Speak you every man the truth to his neighbour*, both in bargains and in common converse; dread every word that looks like a lie.” This precept the apostle quotes (⁴⁰⁵Ephesians 4:25), and backs it with this reason, *We are members one of another*.

(2.) Those that are entrusted with the administration of public justice must see to it, not only that none be wronged by it, but that those who are wronged be righted by it: *Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates*. Let the judges that sit in the gates in all their judicial proceedings have regard both to truth and to peace; let them take care to do justice, to accommodate differences, and to prevent vexatious suits. it must be a judgment of truth in order to peace, and making those friends that were at variance, and a judgment of peace as far as is consistent with truth, and no further.

(3.) No man must bear malice against his neighbour upon any account; this is the same with what we had (³⁰⁰Zechariah 7:10). We must not only keep our hands from doing evil, but we must watch over our hearts, that they *imagine not any evil* against our neighbour, (¹⁰⁹Proverbs 3:29). Injury and mischief must be crushed in the thought, in the embryo.

(4.) Great reverence must be had for an oath, and conscience made of it: “Never take a false oath, nay, *love no false oath*; that is, hate it, dread it, keep at a distance from it. Love not to impose oaths upon others, lest they swear falsely; love not that any should take a false oath for your benefit, and forswear themselves to do you a kindness.” A very good reason is annexed against all these corrupt and wicked practices: “For *all these are things that I hate*, and therefore you must hate them if you expect to have God your friend.” These things here forbidden are all of them found among the *seven things which the Lord hates*, ~~2166~~ Proverbs 6:16-19. Note, We must forbear sin, not only because God is angry at it, and therefore it is dangerous to us, but because he hates it, and therefore it ill becomes us and is a very ungrateful thing.

~~3028~~ ZECHARIAH 8:18-23

ENCOURAGING PROSPECTS

These verses contain two precious promises, for the further encouragement of those pious Jews that were hearty in building the temple.

I. That a happy period should be put to their fasts, and there should be no more occasion for them, but they should be converted into thanksgiving days, v. 19. This is a direct answer to the enquiry concerning their fasts, ~~3028~~ Zechariah 7:3. Those of them that fasted in hypocrisy had their doom in the foregoing chapter, but those that in sincerity humbled themselves before God, and sought his face, have here a comfortable assurance given them of a large share in the happy times approaching. The four *yearly fasts* which they had religiously observed should be *to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and solemn feasts*, and those cheerful ones. Note, Joyous times will come to the church after troublous times; if weeping endure for more than a night, and joy come not next morning, yet the morning will come that will introduce it at length. And, when God comes towards us in ways of mercy, we must meet him with joy and thankfulness; when God turns judgments into mercies we must turn fasts into festivals, and thus *walk after the Lord*. And those who *sow in tears* with Zion shall *reap in joy* with her; those who submit to the restraints of her solemn fasts while they continue shall share in the triumphs of her cheerful feasts when they

come, ²¹⁶⁰Isaiah 66:10. The inference from this promise is, “*Therefore love the truth and peace; be faithful and honest in all your dealings, and let it be a pleasure to you to be so, though thereby you cut yourselves short of those gains which you see others get dishonestly; and, as much as in you lies, live peaceably with all men, and be in your element when you are in charity. Let the truths of God rule in your heads, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts.*”

II. That a great accession should be made to the church by the conversion of many foreigners, v. 20-23. This was fulfilled but in part when, in the latter times of the Jewish church, there were abundance of proselytes from all the countries about, and some that lay very remote, who came yearly to worship at Jerusalem, which added very much both to the grandeur and wealth of that city, and contributed greatly to the making of it so considerable as it came to be before our Saviour's time, though now it was but just peeping out of its ruins. But it would be accomplished much more fully in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ, and the incorporating of them with the believing Jews in one great body, under Christ the head, a *mystery* which is *made manifest* by the *scriptures of the prophets* (⁶¹⁶Romans 16:26), and by this among the rest, which makes it strange that when it was accomplished it was so great a surprise and stumbling-block to the Jews. Observe,

1. Who they are that shall be added to the church — *people, and the inhabitants of many cities* (v. 20); not only a few ignorant country people that may be easily imposed upon, or some idle people that have nothing else to do, but intelligent inquisitive citizens, men of business and acquaintance with the world, shall embrace the gospel of Christ; *yea, many people and strong nations* (v. 22), some of *all languages*, v. 23. By this it appears that they are brought into the church, not by human persuasion, for they are of different languages, not by external force, for they are strong nations, able to have kept their ground if they had been so attacked, but purely by the effectual working of divine truth and grace. Note, God has his remnant in all parts; and in the general assembly of the church of the first-born some will be found *out of all nations and kindreds*, ⁶⁰⁹Revelation 7:9.

2. How their accession to the church is described: They shall come *to pray before the Lord and to seek the Lord of hosts* (v. 21); and, to show that this is the main matter in which their conversion consists, it is repeated (v. 22):

They shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. No mention is made of their offering sacrifices, not only because these were not expected from the proselytes of the gate, but because, when the Gentiles should be brought in, sacrifice and offering should be quite abolished. See who are to be accounted converts to God and members of the church: and all that are converts to God are members of the church.

(1.) They are such as seek the Lord of hosts, such as enquire for God their Maker, covet and court his favour, and are truly desirous to know his mind and will and sincerely devoted to his honour and glory. *This is the generation of those that seek him.*

(2.) They are such as pray before the Lord, — such as make conscience, and make a business, of the duty of prayer, — such as dare not, would not, for all the world, live without it, — such as by prayer pay their homage to God, own their dependence upon him, maintain their communion with him, and fetch in mercy and grace from him.

(3.) They are such as herein have an eye to the divine revelation and institution, which is signified by their doing this in Jerusalem, the place which God had chosen, where his word was, where his temple was, which was a type of Christ and his mediation, which all faithful worshippers will have a believing regard to.

3. How unanimous they shall be in their accession to the church, and how zealous in exciting one another to it (v. 21): *The inhabitants of one city shall go to another*, as formerly when they went up from all parts of the country to worship at the yearly feasts; and they shall say, *Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord; I will go also.* This intimates,

(1.) That those who are brought into an acquaintance with Christ themselves should do all they can to bring others acquainted with him; thus Andrew invited Peter to Christ and Philip invited Nathanael. True grace hates monopolies.

(2.) That those who are duly sensible of their need of Christ, and of the favour of God through him, will stir up themselves and others without delay to hasten to him: *“Let us go speedily to pray; it is for our lives, and the lives of our souls, that we are to petition, and therefore it concerns us to lose no time; in a matter of such moment delays are dangerous.”*

(3.) That our communion with God is very much assisted and furthered by the communion of saints. It is pleasant to go *to the house of God in company* (~~1581~~ Psalm 55:14), *with the multitude* (~~1546~~ Psalm 42:4), and it is of good use to those that do so to excite one another to go speedily and lose no time; we should be glad when it is said to us, *Let us go*, ~~1521~~ Psalm 122:1. As iron sharpens iron, so may good men sharpen the countenances and spirits one of another in that which is good.

(4.) That those who stir up others to that which is good must take heed that they do not turn off, or tire, or draw back themselves; he that says, *Let us go*, says, *I will go also*. What good we put others upon doing we must see to it that we do ourselves, else we shall be judged out of our own mouths. Not, “Do you go, and I will stay at home;” but, “Do you go, and I will go with you.” “A singular pattern (says Mr. Pemble) of zealous charity, that neither leaves others behind nor turns others before it.”

4. Upon what inducement they shall join themselves to the church, not for the church's sake, but for his sake who dwells in it (v. 23): *Ten men of different nations and languages shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew*, begging of him not to outgo them, but to take them along with him. This intimates the great honour they have for a Jew, as one of the chosen people of God, and therefore well worthy their acquaintance; they cannot all come to take him by the hand, or embrace him in their arms, but are ambitious to take hold of the skirt of his robe, to touch the hem of his garment, saying, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*. The gospel was preached to the Jews first (for of that nation the apostles were) and by them it was carried to the Gentiles. St. Paul was a Jew whose skirt many took hold of when they welcomed him as *an angel of God*, and begged him to take them along with him to Christ; thus the Greeks took hold of Philip's skirt, saying, *Sir, we would see Jesus*, ~~1521~~ John 12:21. Note, It is the privilege of the saints that they have God with them, have him among them — the knowledge, and fear, and worship of him; they have his favour and gracious presence, and this should invite us into communion with them. It is good being with those who have God with them, and those who *join themselves to the Lord* must *join themselves to his disciples*; if we take God for our God, we must take his people for our people, cast in our lot among them, and be willing to take our lot with them.