

THE STABILITY OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE

John Gill

THE SUPPORT OF A BELIEVER UNDER OUTWARD AND INWARD TROUBLES

(2Sa 23:5) Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.

THE preceding verses have already been considered; an introduction, therefore, to the present discourse, is unnecessary: suffice it to say, our text contains part of the last words of David; in which we may observe,

I. A concession, or something that is granted, that things were not altogether right, or so with David as he desired and wished. Although my house be not so with God.

II. A strong expression of his faith in God, as his covenant God; yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant.

III. The nature and excellency of this covenant described, 1. As an everlasting one. 2. Ordered in all things; and, 3. sure.

I. Here is a concession, or something granted, that things were not altogether right, or so with David as he desired and wished: Although my house be not so with God.

1. By his house, may be meant his kingdom and government. In this sense we find the word used in 2Sa 7; which the Lord, by Nathan, assures David that he would make him a house. Though he does not allow him to build the Temple, which he was desirous of; yet, says he, 2Sa 7:11, the Lord telleth thee, that he will make thee a house: that is, that he would establish a kingdom under him, and in his posterity, as it is explained in the next verse (2Sa 7:12): and when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. That is what is meant by making him a house; and this is still further explained in 2Sa 7:16, where it is said, and thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee. Thine house and thy kingdom: the last clause explains the former, and plainly shows what is meant by his house. In this sense we may understand it here; for a kingdom is as a house, or family to a king, and the subjects are as his children, and a good prince is the father of them: such a one was David.

Now David was sensible that the kingdom which was in his hands, which he had the government of, was not like the kingdom and government of the Ruler, ruling in the fear of God, before described. Mine house is not so with God: so bright, so splendid, so glorious as the kingdom and government of this great and illustrious person, whom I have been speaking of, who is like the light of the morning, even a morning without clouds, when the sun riseth; like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain: but so it is not with me, with my kingdom and government. "Nevertheless, he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, though it is not so." Or, it may be read thus, Although my house, or kingdom, be not firm and stable: so some cause to render the words. "Though it is in some respects tottering;" it has been so in various instances; yet he hath made me an everlasting covenant.

When he was first set upon the throne, Abner set up Ishbosheth over the ten tribes, in opposition to him. When that difficulty was over, and David was made king over all Israel, in process of time, a son out of his own bowels, Absalom, rebelled against him; and caused him not only to flee from Jerusalem, but even to pass over Jordan's river, to be in safety from this rebellious son. When this rebellion was quashed, there was an insurrection made by Sheba, who blew his trumpet, and said, We have no part in David; neither have we inheritance in the

son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel: {2Sa 20:1} and all Israel it is said followed after him; only Judah clave to David. And after this, just before his death, (and it may be immediately before he uttered these his last words), Adonijah usurped the throne, and got himself proclaimed instead of Solomon. Now with respect to all this, he might say, "Although my house, my kingdom, is not stable and firm, but in a tottering condition; yet God hath made with me an everlasting covenant." In which he may have respect either to the covenant of royalty, that there should not want one to sit upon his throne; and which in some sense may be said to be an everlasting covenant; for so it is represented in (Jer 33:20-21); If (says the Lord) ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night; and that there should not be day and night in their season: then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne. Now David may have respect to this covenant of royalty. Though his kingdom had been tottering, yet the covenant that God had made with him would be firm and sure. Indeed some writers, especially Jewish ones, understand this in a quite different sense. Not as expressing any disorder in David's kingdom and government; but the reverse; they understand it thus, "Although my house be not so with God, so tottering, so unstable, and uncertain as the things before mentioned" The morning is sometimes a morning without clouds, as expressed in the preceding verse; and the sun rises with great brightness and clearness: at other times it is a morning with clouds; the heavens are covered with darkness, and all is gloomy, and every thing uncomfortable. Sometimes it is fine weather, at other times foul sometimes the sun shines, at other times it is in a cloud; but my house, my kingdom is not so uncertain and unstable. But then this must be understood with respect to his more remote and glorious offspring, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ; whose throne is for ever and ever, and of whose government, and the peace thereof, there shall be no end whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and who reigns over the house of Jacob, and upon the throne of David, for ever and ever.

2. By his house may be meant his family. Although my house, my family is not so with God; some cause to render it, "though my house or my family is not, with God, mean, low, and despicable," as it had been in comparison with some families in Israel, (as he himself intimates when he says), Who am I, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? {2Sa 7:18} That is, what am I, a poor creature of mean extraction, and what [is] my family that I sprung from, that thou shouldst raise me to so much dignity? Jesse's father was a mean person, comparatively speaking his family small in Israel, and Bethlehem his native town and place of residence, one of the least of the thousands of Judah, Now with respect to this he might say, "although my house, my family is

comparatively small; nothing in it for which any particular and special favour should be bestowed upon me, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant." Or this may have respect to the disorders in his family, to the many evils committed by one and another therein. They were guilty of some of the grossest crimes. Ammon committed incest with his sister. Absalom rebelled against his father. Adonijah usurped the throne: all which pressed hard, no doubt, upon this good man; and therefore he might say, "although my house, my family, be not right with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant."

These things prove that grace does not run in a carnal line, comes not by natural descent. Good men are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. There is nothing in carnal descent, or nothing to be depended upon on that, account. This however must be a sensible affliction to this great and good man, to observe such disorder in his family, such sins committed by his children; but still this did not affect his covenant interest: although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant.

The afflictions of God's people, whether personal or domestic, do not affect their covenant interest. That remains always the same; David's afflictions were many; remember David and all his afflictions. {Ps 132:1} The phrase denotes his afflictions were not few, but many, very many. Many are the afflictions of the righteous; {Ps 34:19} but these do not at all affect their covenant interest, that remains unshaken notwithstanding all their afflictions, trials and exercises. The love of God towards them is the same, his affection for them is the same, he has the same special regard unto them: and takes the same special notice of them. He never withdraws his covenant mercy from his people. Covenant interest continues notwithstanding all these things. It is said the covenant of peace shall never be removed: {Isa 54:10} and it follows in the very next verse, O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted. Of the very same persons this character is given, "afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted;" concerning whom God had that very moment said, "my loving kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." So that covenant interest continues firm and unshaken, notwithstanding all afflictions. These are never to be considered as arguments against covenant interest; no, they are rather to be considered as evidences of it. For such whom the Lord loves he rebukes and chastens, and

scourges every son whom he receives; whom he receives into covenant, and into covenant as a son of his. He often afflicts them; but then it is when it is necessary he should deal with them. Afflictions are fruits of the covenant of grace. This is what is said in covenant, if his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments: if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him; nor suffer my faithfulness to fail: my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out from my lips. {Ps 89:30,34} The afflictions of God's people make for their good. They work together for good; sometimes for their temporal good; as in the case of Joseph. For their spiritual good, the exercise of their graces; and that they may be made more and more partakers of his holiness. And for their eternal good; .for these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us afar more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. {2Co 4:17}

3. By his house, he may mean himself; or, at least it is applicable to himself, his own heart; although my soul, my heart, be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. Our Lord compares the man that hears his words, and acts according to them, to a wise man that builds his house upon a rock; and one that does not, to a foolish man, that builds his house upon the sand; {Mt 7:24,27} that is, that builds himself, his faith, his hope, and his eternal affairs and concerns upon the one, or upon the other. So this phrase here is applicable to David, or any other good man's self, his own heart or soul, although that is not so with God; not so right as he could wish and desire nevertheless, covenant interest remains.

1. Though there be a great deal of sin, as there is in all good men a great many failings and infirmities in their lives and conversation, as there are in the best men upon earth: nevertheless, interest in the covenant of grace continues. David was very sensible he had a great deal of sin in him, and that sin had been committed by him: O how does he bewail and lament himself under a sense of his sin. Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities are more than the hairs of my head: therefore I cannot look up, {Ps 40:12} with delight, boldness, and pleasure, as I had used to do. Again he says, mine iniquities are gone over my head as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of my sin. {Ps 38:3-4} It is so with every good man, more or less. It was so with the apostle of the Gentiles. In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. {Ro 7:18} I see a law in my members, warring against

the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. {Ro 7:23} And yet covenant interest remains. Though a man finds many workings of corruption in his heart, and breakings forth of it in his life; nevertheless covenant interest continues. Original and actual sin, were no bar to the admittance of God's people into the everlasting covenant of grace. He knew very well what they would be. He knew that they would be transgressors from the womb: that their neck would be as an iron sinew, and their brow as brass. He saw all this, and yet this was no hindrance, obstruction, or objection at all to his admitting them into his everlasting covenant of grace. Indeed, he is sometimes represented after the manner of men, as if he were struggling in his mind; expostulating with himself what he should do in this case: How shall I put thee among the children? {Jer 3:19} Take thee into the everlasting covenant, and bestow blessings of grace upon thee; and give thee a goodly heritage of the host of nations; an eternal inheritance. How shall I do it when thou art, or wilt be so vile a creature? But grace overcomes all these struggles and difficulties, as they are, humanly speaking: hence it is said, I will be their Father, and they shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. {2Co 6:18}

Sin, in the whole compass of it, in its blackest colors, was foreseen, and yet no bar to the admission of these persons into the everlasting covenant of grace. All the impurity of their nature, and the whole course of sin, during a state of unregeneracy, did not hinder covenant grace taking place in effectual vocation. Notwithstanding all that impurity of nature, in which the Lord's people are brought forth into the world, and in which they continue; and notwithstanding they go on fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; they being, by nature, children of wrath, even as others; yet such is the great love wherewith the Lord has loved them, that he quickened them when dead in trespasses and sins. Though they are like the wretched infant cast out into the open field, to the loathing of their persons in the day they were born, lying in all the impurity of nature, and act agreeable to their nature; yet this did not prevent the Lord from looking upon them with a look of love; or hinder him from casting his skirt over them, and entering into covenant with them that is, manifesting his covenant to them, and they openly becoming his. Notwithstanding all their trespasses, original and actual, through the blood of this covenant, (so the blood of Jesus is called; Heb 13:20), they are delivered out of the pit wherein is no water: and are encouraged to turn to the strong hold, as prisoners of hope. And they are, by this blood, cleansed from all sin. So covenant interest continues. "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

2. Though it may be with the people of God, as it was with David; that they are guilty of many backslidings after conversion, after they are called by divine grace; nevertheless covenant interest continues. David was sensible he had been guilty of many backslidings; particularly in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah; and he continued a long time without a sense of the evil he had fallen into; but covenant interest still remained. In virtue of this, Nathan the prophet was sent to him, to convince him of his evil, bring him to a sense of it, to own and acknowledge it before God; and at the same time to inform him that he should not die, because his iniquity was put away: though at the same time, he is also told, that evil should spring out of his house; God would chastise him for the evil he had been guilty of; nevertheless his loving-kindness he would not utterly take from him, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. So it is with the people of God, more or less. What is said of literal Israel, may be said of spiritual Israel, My people are bent on backsliding from me: {Ho 11:7} and, as the same prophet says, "Israel slideth back, as a backsliding heifer." {Ho 4:16} As an heifer that cares not to be under the yoke; so the Lord's spiritual Israel are guilty of great departures from the Lord. O what sad departures do they sometimes make from the living God, through the power of unbelief in their hearts, therefore they are called upon to "remember from whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works." {Re 2:5} Yet, notwithstanding all, this covenant of grace still continues: covenant love is still the same. I will heal all their backslidings, and will love them freely. Notwithstanding their backslidings I will make it appear that I still love them, that my love is a free love: not depending upon any conditions in them. And I will make it known by forgiving their iniquities, for that is meant; or by making fresh applications of pardoning grace. In what a light is this set, in the forty-third chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah: they made him to serve with their sins, they wearied him with their iniquities: by which is to be understood, that they were guilty of sins of omission and commission. Yet, says the Lord, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own name's sake, and will not remember thy sins {Isa 43:25} Covenant grace was still the same.

Covenant relation, therefore, is not broken off by these backslidings and apostasies from God. No; this is most clear from what is said in Jer 3:14. "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you." Turn, O backsliding children: what strange things, what wonders in grace are here! children, and yet backsliders! backsliders, and yet, children! children of God still. Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you: the relation of

husband and spouse still continues. The marriage relation still subsists notwithstanding all your sins. So again in **Jer 3:22**; Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings: and the answer is, behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. Faith gets strength by such declarations of grace, and, notwithstanding all these backslidings, says, thou art the Lord our God.. Thou art our covenant God.

3. The dear children of God are liable to various temptations of Satan; and sometimes are prevailed upon to do those things that are disagreeable to their heavenly Father: yet covenant interest remains. "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an ever lasting covenant." David had his temptations. We have mention made of a very sore one; Satan stirred him up to number the people of Israel. {**1Ch 21:1**} He fell in the temptation, he suffered much, and his people too, through it, but still covenant interest remained. The best of men are liable to temptations. Peter was. Simon, Simon (says our Lord), Satan hath desired to have thee; to have thee in his hands; to do with thee as he would; to harass, distress, and confound thee, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. The great apostle of the Gentiles, had a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him: and extremely distressed he was with it. He besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him; so it is with all the people of God at one time or another. Those very persons, the Corinthians, whom the apostle describes as being washed, justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God; he intimates, in the following verses, that they were liable to the temptations of Satan. Thus the best of men experience his temptations. Nay, even the Son of God himself did, he was in all points tempted as we are; {**Heb 4:15**} and that as violently as ever any of the people of God were; for what greater temptations can they be harassed with, than those with which he was assaulted? But, notwithstanding all the temptations of God's people, yet covenant interest remains. Our Lord has a sympathizing spirit with them, and rebukes the tempter. He says, the Lord hath chosen Jerusalem to rebuke thee. "Is not this one that I have chosen? is not this one that I have called by my grace: snatched as a brand out of the burning, and saved from everlasting ruin? and shall this dear child of mine fall by thy hand? the Lord rebuke thee Satan! What hast thou to do with him? he is one of mine." The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, he knows the fittest time to do it, and he does do it: though he suffers the enemy to go about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, yet he does not suffer him to destroy any of his own children. What is the reason of all this? Covenant interest continues. Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant.

4. They may be, and often are in great darkness of soul, and under great distress on that account; yet covenant interest remains. David knew what darkness and distress of soul was; hence those warm and fervent breathings of his Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thyself in times of trouble? Again, Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled. This has been the case of the best of men in all ages. The man that obeys the voice of the servants of the Lord, may walk in darkness and see no light. It is said, even of the church in general, that he hides his face from her; yet she expresses her confidence. When I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me; {Mic 7:8} she was satisfied covenant interest still continued. Indeed unbelief prevails frequently in such dark and distressing circumstances; and the people of God are brought into such reasonings and doubts, in their own minds, about their covenant interest, as to say, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me, {Isa 49:14} when it is impossible he should; for they are engraven on the palms of his hands, and their walls are continually before him. And though he does hide his face from them for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness will he gather them; for as he has sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth; so hath he sworn that he will no more be wrath with them, or rebuke them. Even though the mountains may depart and the hills be removed; yet his loving-kindness shall never depart, nor the covenant of his peace be removed. So that darkness of soul, the hidings of God's face, divine desertions, are no arguments against covenant interest.

5. The people of God are subject to great coldness, indifference, sleepiness, sluggishness, and slothfulness; it often attends them, as it did the Church when she said, I sleep but my heart waketh; {Song 5:2} but still we find she was recovered out of this frame of soul, and brought to the exercise of strong faith in the Lord: this is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. {Song 5:16} All the virgins, wise and foolish, slumbered and slept.. This may befall the best of men, and yet notwithstanding that, their covenant interest remains.

6. Faith, hope, love, and other graces may not be in lively exercise. Faith is sometimes very low. All that a believer can say at most, is, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief; but that does not affect covenant interest; it does not depend upon the lively exercise of grace. Though we believe not, yet he abides faithful: He is faithful to his promises, let it be with us as it will. Hope is sometimes in a

very poor plight; almost gone. The church says, the Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him: {La 3:24} even the very same that before had said, my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord. {La 3:18} Yea, the same may be said of other graces; though low and upon the decline, covenant interest still remains. All this is supposed in the phrase, although my house be not so with God.

II. Here is a strong expression of covenant interest; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant. What is this covenant that God had made with David? and with whom made? It cannot be the covenant of works made with Adam. A covenant was made with him consisting of these terms, that if he acted according to it, he should live; if not, he should die. And Adam was the federal head of all his offspring, and a type of him that was to come, our Lord Jesus Christ. {Ro 5:14} But now this covenant is broken this is no everlasting covenant. They have transgressed my covenant as Adam. {Ho 6:7} This is not a covenant ordered in all things and sure; far from it: hence the covenant of grace is said to be, a better covenant, established upon better promises. {Heb 8:6} Here is no provision made in this covenant for the pardon of sin; no provision made for a justifying righteousness; no provision made for life and salvation, This, therefore, can never be the covenant meant; for David says, this is all my salvation: but there is no salvation by the covenant of works. As no justification, so no salvation from thence. David is speaking of a covenant, from whence he derived abundance of comfort under the most distressing circumstances he could be in; but there is no such comfort to be derived from the covenant of works. By the law is the knowledge of sin; but not of a Saviour from sin. That law convinces men of sin, and curses every transgressor; dooms them to everlasting destruction, and so brings upon them a spirit of bondage. This, therefore, cannot be the covenant.

Nor yet the covenant of circumcision (as it is called) made with Abraham: that is done away, being a yoke that neither the Jews nor their forefathers could bear. This was so far from being ordered in all things and sure, that the apostle declares, to those who complied with it, Christ is become of no effect unto you. Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace. {Ga 5:4}

Nor is this the Sinai covenant; for that was not an everlasting one. It is abolished and done away. Not ordered in all things and sure, for it gave way; otherwise there would have been no need for a second, as the apostle argues. {Heb 8:7}

The covenant which the sweet Psalmist of Israel, in his last dying words, has respect unto, is the covenant of grace: founded on grace; filled with the blessings of grace. It is called the covenant of peace, {Isa 44:10} because a grand article of it is peace and reconciliation with God, by Jesus Christ. He was sent to be our peace; to make peace for us by the blood of his cross. It is called a covenant of life, {Mal 2:5} because a grand article in this covenant is life, and it secures everlasting life to his people; for this is one grand promise of it, that God hath promised unto us, eternal life. {1Jo 2:25}

Now this covenant is said to be made with David: made with his son and antitype, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, who bears his name. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant. {Ps 89:3} A covenant projected by God the Father: it was proposed by him to his Son Christ Jesus, who agreed unto it. A mere creature cannot make a covenant with God; for what has man to give to God, to agree upon with God? What terms can he propose, or have proposed, that he is capable of performing? None at all. When, therefore, God is said to make a covenant with men; the meaning is, he manifests his covenant made with Jesus Christ from all eternity. Therefore, when David says, he hath made with me an everlasting covenant; the meaning is, he hath made it manifest to me, that I have an interest in his everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. This is the meaning of, Hearken unto me, and thou shalt live, and I will make with thee an everlasting covenant. {Isa 55:3} Can any suppose, that when one, under the influence of grace, hearkens to God, then God begins to make a covenant with him? no, the meaning is, God will manifest his covenant love and grace; shew them their interest in the blessings and promises thereof, so that their faith shall lay hold on this covenant, as David did under all those distressing circumstance he was in. Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant: I clearly see my interest in it, and by faith lay hold upon it, and upon the blessings and promises of it.

I should now have considered the nature of this covenant that David saw his interest in. That it is an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; but I must defer these things, with what follows, to another discourse.

THE SUPPORT OF A BELIEVER UNDER OUTWARD AND INWARD TROUBLES.

2Sa 23:5. Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he maketh it not to grow.

In our last discourse of this text, Three things were proposed for consideration.

I. David's concession, that things were not so with him, as he desired and wished.

II. The strong expression of his faith in God notwithstanding; as having made a covenant with him.

III. The nature of this covenant described as everlasting; ordered in all things, and sure.

The two former have been enlarged upon: what remains to be considered, is,

III. The nature of this covenant. It is said to be an everlasting one. That is, from everlasting to everlasting. It bears date from all eternity, and will continue so for evermore. It springs from the everlasting love of God to his people: that is the source of it. God hath loved his people with an everlasting love; not only with a love, which shall abide for ever; but with a love which was from all eternity; for,

our Lord says to his Divine Father, Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me; and thou lovest me before the foundation of the world. {Joh 17:23-24} Now this covenant of grace, springs from this love of God; and is as early as that. Jehovah said, in his eternal mind, mercy, love and grace shall be built up for ever; and in order to it, makes this covenant. {Ps 89:2-3} The basis and foundation of this covenant are, the purposes, decrees, and counsels of the most High; for he does all things after the counsel of his own will; and it may be depended upon, as a most sure and certain thing, that an affair, of so much importance as the covenant of grace is, could not be made any otherwise than after the counsel of his will, and depends upon that counsel; and his counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

Jesus Christ is the Mediator of this covenant; so he is more than once called, in the epistle to the Hebrews. As such, he was set up from everlasting; from the beginning, or ever the earth was: and therefore the covenant of grace, of which he is Mediator, must be as early. He could not be the Mediator of a covenant, without the covenant itself. Add to this, that the sum and substance of this covenant was from everlasting. David considers the promises of it, and especially that grand promise in it, everlasting life by Christ, that was made before the world was; as it is expressly said, Tit 1:2, In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began. Now, there could be no such a promise as this, unless there was a covenant so early. All the blessings of this covenant are of as ancient date. They are styled the grace (or blessings of grace) given us in Christ before the world began. {2Ti 1:9}

And as this covenant is from everlasting, so it is to everlasting, for God hath commanded his covenant for ever; Holy and Reverend is his name: {Ps 111:9} that is, he hath ordained and established this covenant of grace, so as to continue for ever; nothing shall ever be able to subvert it, or make it null and void. Notwithstanding all that is done by, or done unto, these covenant ones, God will not break his covenant, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips. Though they sin, and he chastises them for their sins; yet his loving-kindness he will not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness, in keeping the covenant, to fail. Though they may so provoke him, by their carriage and behavior, as to cause him to remove his face from them; yet his loving kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed. This is a covenant that will never wax old, will never give way to another, or be succeeded by another; as the old covenant did, and was: no, it is an everlasting one, upon all accounts.

In the next place, it is ordered in all things. Ordered in all things to advance the glory of all the Three Divine Persons; who are jointly concerned therein. To advance and secure the glory of God the Father, and his eternal choice of persons to everlasting life and happiness, in all his purposes and decrees concerning them; which, through this covenant taking place, have their full and complete accomplishment. As also to advance the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; who is the Mediator, surety, and messenger of this covenant: the federal head and representative of the body the church, and the Saviour thereof; that in all things he may have the preeminence. And to advance the glory of the blessed Spirit; whose office it is to be the applier of the grace of this covenant to take of the things of God and of Christ, and shew them unto those who are interested in them; and to convey and apply all grace, needful for them in time, till they come into an eternal world. This covenant is ordered in all things, for the security of all the covenant ones; who are all, for their safety, put into the hands of Jesus Christ, the Mediator, who is able to keep them from falling, and to present them, faultless, before the throne of his Father. In whose hands they being put, are safe; for, as he will never suffer them to fall from thence, so none are able to pluck them out of his hands. This covenant is ordered in all things; all provision is made in it, for the good of the covenant ones, in time and in eternity. In this covenant are contained all spiritual blessings, all grace, all things pertaining to life and godliness: provision is made for the sanctification of the hearts of God's chosen, the justification of their persons, and the pardon of their sins. In short it contains all things needful for them here, and eternal glory and happiness hereafter.

And then it is a covenant that is sure. Sure to Christ, the Covenant Head; and sure to all the seed. Sure to Christ. All the promises made to him are sure as, that he shall see his seed; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. And that he should be exalted on high; therefore, when he fulfilled the work, he said, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was. {Joh 17:4-5} It is sure to all the seed, and spiritual offspring: all the promises of it made to them, in him, are yea, and amen. All the blessings and mercies of it, are the sure mercies of David; and the more sure, as they are put into the hands of Christ, their covenant head and representative: so their spiritual and eternal life is hid with Christ in God: safe and secure: and because he lives, they shall live also.

But I go on to consider the latter part of the text, in which,

I. David expresses his raised expectations upon this covenant; his great regard unto it, and affection for it: This is all my salvation, and all my desire.

II. All this is maintained, notwithstanding the circumstances in which he then was: Although he maketh it not to grow. Though it was not a growing time and season with him and his; yet this his covenant was all his salvation, and all his desire.

I. We shall consider his raised expectations upon this covenant; his great regard unto it, and affection for it, or to Christ, the covenant head, with whom this covenant was made for the words may as well regard the one, as the other. The supplement may as well be, for he is my salvation, and all my desire; as well as it may be supplied, as we do, this is all my salvation, &c. And, in as much as these two agree together, and fall in with each other, and indeed are not separated one from the other, we shall consider the words in both senses; as they may respect both the covenant which our version directs to, and as they may respect the Covenant Head, or he that is the Ruler over the people, before described.

1. As it may respect the everlasting covenant ordered in all things, and Sure: "for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." All my salvation (as if David should say), is provided for in it, and secured by it; flows from it, and depends upon it. "This is all my salvation;" or, "All my salvation is here;" a very comprehensive phrase, which includes temporal, spiritual, and eternal salvation. All salvation is of the Lord. Salvation, (says the Psalmist) belongs unto the Lord: {Ps 3:8} temporal as well as spiritual and eternal salvation, belongs to him: he is the author thereof, and to him the glory should be given; and particularly, the salvation of his people: the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; and he is their strength in the time of trouble. {Ps 37:39} Even temporal salvation is of the Lord, as their covenant God and Father too; for he is their King and their God, working salvation in the midst of the earth: and every temporal deliverance is wrought for them by their covenant God, and in virtue of this covenant made with them. Covenant ones are saved in this covenant, in a temporal way, in order to be called. Saved they are from many evils in a providential way, while in an unconverted state, in order to be effectually called by the grace of God: and, indeed, all their temporal mercies are covenant mercies, as they come from a covenant God, and in a covenant way; when the mercies of the wicked, though the same for substance as theirs, are not covenant mercies. They are sometimes curses unto them; for the Lord curses their very blessings. {Mal 2:2} Hence it is, that the people of God have what they have, in a temporal way, with the favour of the Lord: hence it is, that a little that a righteous man hath, it is better than the treasures of many wicked: they are blessed, and they are loaded day by day, comparatively speaking, with benefits; for God is the God of salvation, in a temporal sense, and to God the Lord belong the issues from death. {Ps 68:20} But more especially, spiritual and eternal salvation is here meant, Spiritual salvation;

by which is meant, the salvation of the spirit or soul: that salvation, which concerns the spiritual and everlasting good of God's people, called the salvation of the soul: {1Pe 1:9} and everlasting salvation, because it always continues. The fruits, effects, benefits and blessings thereof always remain; and therefore called an everlasting salvation. Israel shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation. {Isa 45:17} Now this began in the thoughts of God's heart; which were thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give them an expected end. In the purposes, resolutions, and determinations of his mind, who appointed his people, not unto wrath, which they deserved: but to obtain salvation, by the death of his Son. He, from the beginning, even from all eternity, chose them, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, as the means, unto salvation, the end, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. In virtue of those thoughts, which were thoughts of peace, and not of evil, this salvation becomes secured unto them for whom he predestined to everlasting life, them he also glorifies; that is, they are everlastingly saved. The scheme of this salvation was framed in the council of grace and peace, said to be between them both; that is, between the Father and the Son. Jesus Christ acted as the wonderful counselor. He is the angel and messenger of the great council; as in the Greek version. {Isa 9:6} God was in him, reconciling, or drawing the model and scheme, the means of reconciliation and salvation.

In the covenant of grace it was eternally settled who should be the saved ones, or partake of this great salvation; namely, those the Lord had a design of grace and mercy towards: and a love for; whom he determined to shew mercy unto, even the vessels of mercy, afore appointed unto glory. All that he hath given unto his Son, put into his hands, and made his care and charge; concerning whom he declares, that it is his will, that of all that he gave him, he should lose none, but raise it up at the last day. Even the whole Israel of God shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation; consisting of Jews and Gentiles, the whole election of grace throughout the whole world; who are the all men God would have to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.

It was also settled who should be the author of this salvation unto them: not angels, for Jehovah puts no trust in his servants, for he charges them with folly: nor men themselves, who are not equal to such a work as this, but the Son of God; of whom the Lord says, I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them; not in this, that, and the other way, but by the Lord their God. This was proposed to the Son of God, and he became our surety and Saviour. Jehovah said to him, Thou art my servant, O Israel: or, it is my will and pleasure it should be so; in whom I will be glorified; and, if it is a light thing for thee to raise up the tribe of Jacob, and restore the presence of Israel, I will enlarge thy commission;

thou shalt be a light to the Gentiles, and the salvation of my people, to the ends of the earth, or of all my chosen ones throughout the whole world. This was the proposal that was made to him; to which he agreed. When the question was put, Who shall go for the salvation of those chosen ones? he made answer, and said, "Here am I, send me:-lo I come, to do thy will, O my God." A covenant, a compact, and agreement was made immediately between the Father and the Son, upon this affair of so great importance and in consequence of this, he was sent in the fulness of time. Herein is love, the love of God the Father, in that he sent his Son to be the Savior of the world; and he sent him in the fulness of time agreed upon in this covenant. Christ came to seek and save them that were lost. This is the sum of the everlasting gospel, which is no other than a transcript of this covenant. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Moreover, all the blessings of salvation were provided and secured in this covenant; and therefore it may with great propriety be said, "this is all my salvation." It was not only settled who should be the saved ones; but what blessings they should be partakers of, and should enjoy to all eternity. Now these are all spiritual blessings, {Eph 1:3} which were given us in Christ before the world began, and upon which account this covenant is said to be, in the text, ordered in all things. For instance, one of these blessings is peace; from which this covenant, as before observed, is called the covenant of peace. It was foreseen there would be a breach between God and his creature man: that peace and reconciliation would be necessary. This was provided for; Christ was proposed to be the Peace-maker. He shall make peace with me; {Isa 27:5} and accordingly he became their peace, and made peace by the blood of his cross. Pardon of sin is another blessing of this covenant, not to be had by the covenant of works; such who sinned against Moses' law died without mercy. Through the blood of this everlasting covenant is the remission of sins: one promise of it runs thus, I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more; and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Justification is another blessing of salvation, provided for in this covenant, Jehovah the Father appointed this work unto his Son, which he agreed to, even to bring in everlasting righteousness; and God promised that he should justify many upon the foot of that righteousness, and as a covenant God he does do it. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? {Ro 3:29} He is; that is, the covenant God of the one, as well as of the other. Now how does this appear? Why in this instance, in as much as he justifies the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith; so that the justification of men, by the righteousness of Christ, received by faith, is a blessing of grace, which God, as a covenant God, bestows upon his people. Provision is also made in this covenant for the sanctification of the Lord's people. Another promise of it is, I will put my laws in their minds and write them in their clean water upon

them, and they shall be clean. I will give them a new heart and a new spirit. I will take away the stony heart, and give a heart of flesh. What an ample provision is here made for the sanctification of the covenant ones! Faith, repentance, and every grace are laid up in this covenant. Adoption is another blessing of salvation, and is secured in the covenant of grace. When God puts any among the children; it is a putting them into the covenant of grace; as he says, I will be their Father, and they shall be my sons and daughters. Upon this follows heir-ship; for, if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. Heirs together of the grace of life. Heirs of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Heirs of salvation, as they are called. {Heb 1:14}

Well then, this being the case, that in this covenant it is provided who shall be saved, the Saviour, and the blessings to be enjoyed; with great propriety may it be said, all our salvation is in this covenant. It is secured by it, flows from it, and depends upon it. Then adds David, this is all my desire: and it is no wonder that it should be his desire, when all his salvation was in it; and it is every gracious soul's desire, to see more clearly his interest in it. David saw his interest in it no doubt; but still he desired to see it more clearly, as every good man does, that he may more strongly take hold on the covenant, as it is expressed in Isa 56:4. Take hold on a covenant God, on Christ the Mediator of the covenant, and of the blessings and promises of it, and claim them as his. Every good man desires to be led more and more into this covenant, into the nature, fulness, and glory of it. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant. Those to whom any thing of this covenant has been shewn, cannot but be desirous of being shewn more of it; and especially their full interest in it. They desire also to have a fresh application of covenant grace, and covenant blessings to them, which God hath promised. He says, hear and your souls shall live, and I will make with you an everlasting covenant: the meaning is, that he would manifest and apply unto them, the blessings of this covenant. It is the desire of every good man, that knows any thing of the covenant of grace, and the scheme of salvation by it, to be saved in this way; by and through the covenant of grace, and not of works. It is natural for men, until they are better enlightened, to desire to be saved by a covenant of works; first-convictions generally lead this

way, as in the three thousand persons: say they, what shalt we do? They talked of nothing but doing: so the apostle Paul, when first enlightened, said, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? And the jailor, what shall I do to be saved? And it is natural for every man to think and say, he must do something to be saved. But one that is better enlightened into the covenant of grace and the scheme of salvation, desires to be saved by this covenant of grace, and no other; saved by grace, and not by works. This is all my desire; or, my delight and pleasure; so the

word here used signifies. And O! the delight a good, a spiritual man, has in the covenant of grace, and in the promises of it particularly, which are exceeding great and precious; and which being opened and applied to him, are like apples of gold in pictures of silver: he rejoices in them, when they are brought and applied unto him, more than one that finds great spoil. This is all his desire, comfort, and solace, in the most trying circumstances. When he beholds his interest in this covenant, he can glory even in tribulation; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope. Covenant love is shed abroad in his heart, by the Spirit. Let it be as it will with him, whatever changes he passes through, this covenant, the blessings and promises of it, are the same; therefore he is not moved.

2. These words are applicable to the Ruler over men, before described; or the federal head with whom this covenant is made, and with his people in him; that is, our Lord Jesus Christ: so the supplement may as well be, He is all my salvation, and all my desire: i.e. Christ is so. "He is all my salvation:" He is styled "God's salvation." I have waited for thy salvation: {Ge 49:18} so called, because he is the salvation or Saviour of God's providing and appointing: and at other times he is called the salvation of his people, because they are the subjects of salvation; and they, under the influence of divine grace, choose him as their salvation or Savior, and will have no other, as Job said, He also shall be my salvation; and David, He is all my salvation; that is, he is the author of it. He was appointed to this work: he came, having salvation. He came with power and authority, as Mediator, to effect it; and he came (which was his end in coming), to seek and to save them that were lost; and is become the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him. He is the only author of salvation. There is salvation in him and no other. Saints are not to expect it from any other: nor will a truly sensible sinner, look to any other for salvation. All their salvation is in him; not a part of it only, but the whole of it. A sensible sinner looks to Christ for his whole salvation. He is the author of complete salvation. The redemption which he has wrought out, is a plenteous one; for he saves his people from all iniquity: saves them out of the hands of all that hate them; saves them to the uttermost. It is a complete salvation; and they that are saved are complete in him; and under the influence and witnessing of the blessed Spirit, they can claim their interest in him, and say, "He is all my salvation:" and in this the sensible sinner glories. What would it have been to David if that little word my were left out? if he could only have said, "He is all salvation?" But this was his peculiar support and happiness, that he could add, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire." The most desirable one or, all desirable. He is said to be the desire of all nations; {Hag 2:7} that is, he ought to be so; of right, he should be so. In him all the nations of the earth are blessed, he is the desire of all sensible souls: these,

with the church, will say, with my soul have I desired thee; and the desire of my soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. He is desirable, on various accounts; on account of the glory of his person, the transcendent excellencies which are in him; he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. His glory is as the only begotten of the Father; he is possessed of all divine perfections; he is fairer than the children of men: white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousands; or, as in our text, all desire. And he is the desire of his people, on account of that fulness of grace there is in him: not only because the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in him: but because it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness of grace dwell, for the supply of his people; and out of which they are supplied. They may say, as the Psalmist did, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He is all their desire, as a Saviour, or on account of that salvation he is the author of: whom have I in heaven but thee (says the Psalmist) and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee. None among the angels in heaven, none among all the men upon earth, to be desired with Jesus Christ. There is such an efficacy in his blood for cleansing from sin; such an excellency in his righteousness, that a sensible sinner desires to be found in him, not having on his own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God, by faith. There is such a virtue in his sacrifice, for the expiation of sin, that he has put away sin for ever; and they are perfected that are sanctified {**Heb 1**} sinner, that makes him all desire. He is all my desire. Truly gracious souls, that know any thing of him, they desire to know more of him: know more of his person, offices, and grace; to know more of him, and the power of his resurrection. And no wonder they should, since, this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent: hence they make use of all the means of grace, for the improvement of their knowledge; that they may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and arrive, at last, to the perfect knowledge of him; to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Here all their desire is, not only to know him, but to have more communion with him: they know the sweetness of communion with Christ, and God in Christ; and when they have it, they can say with the apostle, truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. They pant after him, as the hart pants after the water-brooks: saying, when shall we come and appear before God in Sion? His tabernacles are amiable and lovely; they long for his courts; their souls even faint for the living God, a day in his courts being better to them than a thousand elsewhere. Whenever they enjoy fellowship with Christ, it is so desirable to them, that they could wish it always continued: They say, with the disciples on the mount, it is good for us to be here; or to be absent from the body, that they may be present with the Lord. At certain seasons, their hearts are so drawn out after communion with him, that they desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better.-Thus, He is all their salvation, and all their desire.

II. All this is maintained, notwithstanding the circumstances in which David was, when he said these words, "All my salvation, and all my desire; although he maketh it not to grow." Although I am in such circumstances, am not in so flourishing a state as I could wish, yet this covenant is all my salvation: or, this Ruler over men (who is said to be as time tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain), is all my salvation, and all my desire.

This may be understood both literally, and figuratively. Literally, of the natural produce of the earth and so the Psalmist may be considered in the like circumstances, and uttering the same expressions of faith as Habakkuk, when he says, Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation: I will rejoice in my covenant God, in what he is unto me, and hath provided for me. So says David here, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he makes it not to grow:" though there might be a drought and famine in the land as lately had been.

Or this may be understood figuratively of a spiritual growth in grace; for there is such a thing as growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Faith sometimes glows exceedingly, love increases, hope abounds; and every grace is in lively exercise. At other times it is not so. Now, although he make it not to grow: although I am not in so flourishing a condition with respect to the exercise of my graces, yet he is all my salvation, and all my desire: or, this covenant of grace made with me, is all my salvation, and all my desire; things are all safe there, though I am uncomfortable, with respect to my frames. Salvation does not depend upon our frames, nor upon the lively exercise of grace in us; it depends upon the unalterable covenant.

Or this may have respect to David's family, particularly, although he make it not to grow: although my family are not in growing, increasing and flourishing circumstances; though one breach after another is made in it: first, Amnon cut off, then Absalom, and though so many uncomfortable things are there; yet this is all my salvation, and all my desire. Though the horn of David is not made to bud, as is promised; yet, this is all my salvation.

Or, rather this may have respect to the Messiah, the righteous One that should spring forth. "Although that branch does not spring forth as yet:" or thus, "Shall not this branch spring forth? Verily it shall; for a rod shall grow out of Jesse." Now David knew, that though things were not so well as he could wish, yet this was his comfort, that there was an everlasting covenant made, in which his salvation was secured; though, as yet, the Messiah, the branch had not

sprung forth, which he believed would, and which the Lord promised by Jeremiah. {Jer 23:5} So by one of the latter prophets, "Behold, I bring forth my servant the 'Branch.'" Now this is all my salvation, and all my desire; although this branch, as yet, does not grow up out of its place, which he firmly believed, in virtue of this covenant, it would do.

But I shall now come to a close. Let us be led hereby to adore and admire the wonderful and distinguishing grace of God; that he should make such a provision in an everlasting covenant for any of the sons of men, in Christ Jesus. God was under no obligation so to do: it all flows from his free and unmerited love, that here are such promises made in it, and such blessings of grace provided. And notwithstanding those disorders we may be under at times, let not this weaken our faith in covenant interest; for notwithstanding them, as David observes, covenant interest abides. Although my house, my family, heart, life, and every thing else, is not as I could wish; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant. Such who are interested in this covenant, need not fear wanting any good thing: it is ordered in all things. There is nothing that they need, but what is in this covenant; nor can they be in any condition of life whatever, but here is a promise made in this covenant, suited to their case and circumstances. I may say, they need not fear wanting any good thing; for here grace and glory are provided. Blessed are they that put their trust in him. And let us earnestly desire that we may be more and more led into the nature and fulness of this covenant: may the desire of our souls be more and more towards it; may we see our interest in the blessings and promises of it; and find them to be the support of our souls in all the circumstances of life, and in the views of death and eternity.