

## The Mighty Watcher, and His Twofold Work

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"And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord." Jeremiah 31:28

True religion,—vital godliness, (the words with me are synonymous), has two sides to it. And by this mark it is distinguished from all pretension without actual possession.

If, for instance, we cast a glance at the profession of some, it is all upon the *bright side* of things. Constant, unwavering assurance, continually triumphing in Christ, complete victory over doubt, fear, sin, and Satan, is the staple of their religion. And they would fain have you believe, that they are actually and experimentally before God what they profess to be before men. But when we come with near and jealous eye to watch the fruits, internal and external, that spring from this splendid profession, how little do they correspond with the profession itself! Pride, covetousness, worldly-mindedness, levity, frivolity, a hard, contentious spirit, irreverence in divine things, bitter and contemptuous speeches against God's tried and tempted family, intermingling with politics, and, in many cases, love of strong drink, running heedlessly into debt, and general looseness of conduct—how often are these dark marks stamped upon this bright profession of 'always triumphing in Christ!'

But again. We may cast a glance at others who are always upon the *dark side*; who never seem to rise beyond a knowledge of the evils of their heart, and the power of

temptation; who are continually falling into open sin, and seem to know nothing of faith in Christ, of hope in his mercy, of love to his name, nor any deliverance from time to time by the hand of God from besetting lusts; nor again, anything of sighs, cries, groans, holy mourning, godly sorrow, or self-loathing for their vileness and baseness. The staple of their religion, as well as the warp and weft in the web of their conversation, is man's fallen condition by nature, and his helplessness and weakness; and yet this seems more expressed than felt, as sin never appears their grief and burden.

Thus of these two classes in the religious world, one is all upon the malady, the other all upon the remedy; both hold truth doctrinally, but each only a part of truth; and the work of the Spirit upon the heart seems to both alike unknown.

From these two extremes, true religion, vital godliness, is distinguished by having two sides, and these as intimately and closely connected as the mortice and the tenon. It is not all light, it is not all darkness; it is not all faith, it is not all unbelief; it is not all joy, it is not all sorrow; it is not all life and holiness, it is not all death and devilism. And I think, if God enable us to see the mind of the Spirit in the words before us, we shall discover something of these two sides in our text; and then it will be found not a dream of the brain, not a fiction of mine or of any other man's imagination, not a crafty substitution of mere natural feelings and nervous impressions for the work of the Holy Ghost upon the heart—in a word, not "a cunningly devised fable," but a spiritual reality, and one which God himself has stamped with his own divine testimony.

Two things we may observe, then, in the words before us. *First, the watching of God to pull down; and secondly, the*

*watching of God to build up.* And these two things, corresponding to the two clauses of our text, I shall, as the Lord may give strength, wisdom, and utterance, endeavour to set before you this evening.

I.—"*And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict.*" Every expression here demands a separate examination. Gods word cannot be lightly passed over. Every syllable dictated by the Holy Ghost is pregnant with instruction; and if we cannot dig deep into this mine of spiritual and experimental truth, the fault is not in the mine, but in the miner. The vein of spiritual ore is deep and inexhaustible. We indeed may not have wisdom or experience to penetrate beyond the surface; but let us not complain of the thinness of the vein when we should rather complain of our ignorance how to reach the treasure that coucheth beneath.

i. "*And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them.*" Is there not something very expressive in this word?—the Lord watching over his people to bring about a certain work before designed in his own eternal mind? To my mind, the word contains much worthy of our closest enquiry and deepest observation. Several things may be gathered from the expression.

1. *The all-seeing eye, and the all-accomplishing hand of God.* Does he leave anything here for the creature to perform? Is one iota of the work put into the hands of man? No; God claims it to Himself as his own inviolable prerogative to watch over his Zion for a peculiar purpose.

2. Mark, too, a *certain tenderness* connected with God's spiritual watching over his people to bring about in them the

secret purposes of his good pleasure. The fond mother watches over the cradle of her child; so the Lord, challenging a comparison with the tenderest mother that ever breathed, says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." (Isa. 49:15.) Thus as the fond mother watches her sleeping child till it awakes, so does the Lord tenderly watch over his Zion till his sleeping purposes awake on her behalf.

3. But the word "watch" points also to a fixed time in God's own bosom when a certain predetermined work is to be brought forth. He is watching (if I may use the word with all reverence) for a time to expire which was before purposed in his own eternal mind—"the set time to favour Zion."

4. It also points out how *every circumstance is fore-arranged*—that no event comes by chance, or springs out of the dust; that they are not the fruit of human wisdom, or the product of human industry; but are so foreappointed in the eternal mind that it is as if God has "watched" for every circumstance to arise whereby he means to bring his purpose to pass.

5. The word also points out (for we have not yet exhausted all that is lodged in the expression) the *means, ways, and instruments* which God designs to make use of in order to execute his own purposes.

6. And, not to draw too much out of the word, it also points to this, that God will *never cease to watch* until his work is fully accomplished.

Carry, or endeavour to carry these things in your mind, while I attempt, in the Lord's help and strength, to open up what

he is watching to do.

"And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord."

What a repetition of apparently almost synonymous expressions is here, all pointing to one work! But dare any say, a needless repetition? Dare any one charge God with that which he forbids in us, to think to be heard on account of much speaking? Has God forbidden us to speak to him with "vain repetitions;" and will he use vain repetitions when he speaks to us? We may not indeed be able to enter into the fulness of every word here; yet doubtless, these varied expressions have each their separate and distinct meaning. As God may enable, then, let us endeavour to bring something spiritual and experimental out of each. I feel my ignorance and inability. The Lord teach and enable me to open up his own blessed mind out of the text.

ii. The first thing the Lord "watches" to do, is "*to pluck up.*" What is the idea contained in that expression? Carry your mind to a field covered with noxious weeds, overspread with thorns, thistles, and briars—is not "plucking up" an operation needed there? Take your eyes into your own bosom; look at that field by nature! Does not a field covered with thorns, thistles, weeds, and briars, represent in some measure what your heart is by nature? It was once the garden of the Lord, a smiling Eden; but sin came in; and through the entrance of sin, these briars and thistles have sprung up. Must they not be plucked up? "Ye are God's husbandry." (1 Cor. 3:9.) "My Father is the husbandman." (John 15:1.) God here takes to himself the name, title, and prerogative of cultivating the soil, the barren soil, of the human heart. And his first

operation is, to "pluck up" the weeds he finds there. Does not the Lord himself say, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up?" (Matt. 15:13.) And is not this true of the elect inwardly as well as of the ungodly outwardly?

One of the first weeds which the divine Husbandman plucks up is—our *own righteousness!* O that weed! how thickly it is spread over the surface of the soil! Sometimes, as we journey through the country, we see whole fields covered with weeds; some blazing with the scarlet poppy, others yellow with the blossoms of the charlock. Our eye tells us in a moment that the weeds, the noxious weeds must be plucked up before good corn can grow there. And our own righteousness!—is not our heart by nature overspread with it, as the field before alluded to blazes with the poppy, or is all yellow with charlock? It must, then, be plucked up. And will plucking up be very easy and pleasant work? When the husbandman sets to his hand to "pluck up" by the roots our own righteousness, must not pain attend the operation? Could the earth feel, and speak as well as feel, would she not groan and shriek as the plough tore open her bosom? And as the plough of God's holy law enters into the conscience of a guilty sinner to turn beneath the soil the weeds of nature, shall his bosom be like a nether millstone, and feel no inward pang? It cannot be, it cannot be; pain must attend the operation.

And O how many things, did time suffice to enumerate them here, have to be "plucked up." What prejudices! what secret love to sin! what cleaving to the things of time and sense! what embracing in the arms of our carnal affection things that God hates! O how spread, how overspread our carnal mind is with everything hateful and horrible, noxious and loathsome in the eyes of infinite Purity!

But God, in the case of his Zion, "watches" over her to "pluck up." Time, circumstances, means—all are in God's hands. Time cannot be hastened; circumstances cannot be created; causes cannot be produced, except as God "watches" over his Zion to bring about the purposes of his heart. But as sure as God has foreordained to "pluck up" self by the roots—be it righteous self or unrighteous self, profane self or professing self—the time will come, circumstances will arise, and causes will appear, all in the hands of God, and do his work. It may be under a sermon; it may be by reading the experience of gracious men; it maybe in conversation with a godly person; it may be upon a bed of sickness; it may be upon a bed of death! All these things are in the hand of God; for he "watches" over his Zion to do a certain work; and as sure as you belong to his Zion, will he "watch" over you to "pluck up" your weeds and briars, if that operation has not yet taken place.

iii. *"And to break down."* What is the idea contained in this expression? View a city built in, as Jerusalem was, with towers and bulwarks, and almost impregnable. Shall that be broken down? It shall; and not one stone left upon the other shall mark the place where the temple stood. Is not this true spiritually? What towers, what bulwarks, what walls are in our heart!—like the cities of the Canaanites, "walls built up to heaven." What enmity against God's truth! what obstinacy of mind! what determination to have our own will and way! what perverseness! what self-esteem! what self-conceit! what deceitfulness! what delusion in all its shapes and forms!—walls, towers, bulwarks, these all built up against the entrance of God into the soul! And can the King of Zion find entrance into our breast when every gate bristles with battlements against him, and the very walls of our heart are armed to resist him? But forth he must come, conquering and to conquer; for the ancient word to him is, "Gird thy

sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride on prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee." (Psa. 45:5, 6.) Thus the Lord goes forth, and "watches" over Zion to break her down.

And what a mercy it is to be broken down! To have our prejudices against God's truth broken down; to have the carnal enmity of our mind against God in some measure broken down; to have the obstinacy, waywardness, and wilfulness of our heart in any degree broken down; to have unbelief, infidelity, and all the suggestions of our evil nature against God and godliness broken down! The conquerors of old did not enter the city through the gates; the walls were broken down for the triumphant chariot to enter in. So with King Jesus. The walls of prejudice, unbelief, carnal security, and enmity against God, like those of Jericho, must fall before the ark; the battlements of wilfulness, waywardness, and perverseness must all be broken down that Christ may come into the heart, and take possession of the soul.

iv. *"And to throw down."* What is this idea? Something lofty. To "break down," embraces the low as well as the high; it takes a general sweep against all that stands in the way of the Almighty: but to "throw down," points to those lofty buildings which are violently hurled down, as if by an earthquake. And is not this the case spiritually and experimentally in God's Zion? O what airy castles have we in time past built up, their very tops lost in the heavens! And have not some of these airy castles been thrown down? O youth, youth! what pleasing prospects danced before our entranced eye in youth! What future happiness in a long vista of coming years! What daydreams did buoyant youth and



cheerful spirits picture forth!—days, alas! that never came. And it is our mercy they never did come. To picture days of happiness, prosperity, and joy for ourselves, and not one thought of God in them!—does the Lord approve of these airy castles thus built up? No. How can he approve of them? Were they not, like the Babel of old, built up in defiance of God? Was not this the secret language which every one of these airy castle builders uttered? 'I can be happy without God; I can have pleasure without those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore; I want not the Lord to make me happy; let me have what my carnal heart desires, it is enough.' Treason, treason against the Majesty of heaven! The Lord cannot, then, consistently with his own perfections and purposes, allow these castles to stand. Throw them down; level these proud pinnacles in the dust; hurl them into deserved ruin. But O how painful to have these airy castles dissolved like the clouds of a summer's evening! When the sun was dipping beneath the horizon, how they shone gilded with his expiring rays and beams, but when he sunk, they were turned into pitchy darkness! And O, how many clouds, springing from youth and cheerful spirits, and once gilded by the unclouded sun of health and strength, instead of proving substantial realities, have dissolved into thin air, or burst in storms over our heads! Throw them down.

And is there not in our hearts what I alluded to this morning—an idol worse than Juggernaut? Self! self! And must that idol stand where God in Christ deigns to dwell, and make it his temple? for "God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Cor. 6:16.) Shall this Juggernaut self, then, stand in the place where God himself means to dwell? It cannot be. For "Christ hath no communion with Belial." It must be thrown down. Worldly self, righteous self, professing self, profane self, holy self—down they must go into the dust

that the Lord alone may reign supreme.

v. *"And to destroy."* This word is of stronger import than any of the preceding. To "pluck up" weeds, to "break down" walls, to "throw down" towers, fall short of the expression "destroy." We may explain perhaps its import by the words of the Apostle—"a removing of those things that are shaken;" (Heb. 12:27)—or by God's command with respect to the abominations of Canaan, "Ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire." (Deut. 7:5.) Our hearts are by nature full of Canaanitish idols and heathenish abominations, which must be destroyed. Lusts after evil things, adulterous images, idolatrous desires, strong hankerings after sin, besides evils which have the impudence to wear a religious garb, such as towering thoughts of our own ability; pleasing dreams of creature holiness; vain conceits of what we mean to do for God; swellings up of pride and presumption, trussed out and painted in all the tawdy colours of Satanic delusion—how can these abominations be allowed to remain rampant in the human heart? The altars and religious rites of Canaanites were to be destroyed as much as their idols; and thus we may say of that religion, very religious being—man, that his false worship and heathenish notions of God must be destroyed as well as his more flagrant, though not more dangerous, lusts and abominations. The sentence against both is, "Destroy them." They must not, they cannot stand consistently with the honour of Immanuel, who is to have the preeminence in all things, and who is "the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." And O what a mercy it is to have our fleshly and religious abominations alike destroyed; for I am sure that God and self never can rule in the same heart, that Christ and Belial can never reign in the same bosom, each claiming the supremacy.

vi. *"And to afflict."* And is this what God is "watching" over you also to do? 'How cruel! how cruel!' at once whispers a voice in the secret bosom. Recall that thought; it is unworthy of a moment's lodgment in your breast. It may sometimes even escape our lips; but self-pity is at the root. Reflect for a moment in your mind upon what I endeavoured to bring forward to point out what the word "watching" means. Does it not imply the deepest tenderness, the most anxious care, the most sacred affection? Yes; it does. If, then, the Lord "watches" over Zion "to afflict," the afflictions that you now may be passing through are not by chance; your heavenly Father is "watching" over you, and bringing these afflictions upon you. Are you afflicted in body, in circumstances, in family, in mind, or by any of the various troubles that each heart knows and suffers most bitterly from? O could we believe it is the gift of God! O could we believe that the hand of God is in every affliction, in every trial, in every exercise, in every dispensation, however dark, however mysterious! And not only so, but that he is "watching" over the soul with the utmost tenderness, and yet with the utmost wisdom. The affliction must not go beyond its work; it would then cease to be such an affliction as God is bringing about. He "watches" over you. He sees that the affliction which you are suffering under is the affliction, the very affliction that you need. No other would suit you *now*; it is exactly adapted to your case and circumstances. Any other affliction at this moment would not be profitable; but this affliction, whatever it be that you are now suffering under, is exactly suitable to your present case.

God, then, "watches" over you who are his Zion "to afflict." It shall not be too long; it shall not be too deep; it shall not be too heavy; it shall not be too overwhelming. Why? Because he who "holds the winds in his fist," "watches" over his Zion "to afflict." And can he afflict her too long? can he afflict her

too much? can he afflict her (shall I use the word?) with an *unfeeling* heart? He cannot; for he loves her with an everlasting love. Love moves him "to afflict" her for her good and his own glory.

Now, how many of you have been thus passing under the hand of God? Take a review; cast a glance at the dealings of God with your soul. Let them not be unheeded, or cloaked in mystery. God give us eyes to see his dealings! And O, can you not see the truth of these words, that God has "watched" over every plucking up, every throwing down, every destroying, every affliction, for the abasement of your pride, of your self-esteem, of your self-righteousness, of your self-conceit? Can we not at times see how God has "watched" over every thing that he has thus brought upon us? But we may not now see it. No; unbelief may hold our eyes. When the disciples were journeying to Emmaus, they knew not they were walking side by side with their adorable Lord; yet their eyes being "holden" was no hindrance to Jesus being there! When broken-hearted Mary Magdalene saw the gardener as she thought, she knew not the Person of Jesus till he spake to her: yet ignorance of who he was did not prevent him being Jesus, nor prevent his being before her. The horses and chariots of fire surrounded the mountain where Elisha stood; yet the servant could not see them till his eyes were opened. But did his eyes being opened place the chariots there? They were there all bright and glorious, when his eyes were sealed in darkness.

Is it not so spiritually and experimentally? The afflictions under which you are suffering have a voice in them; but you cannot hear it. You cannot see the hand of God in the exercises under which you are labouring. No; seeing eyes are the special gift of God. Still, though it is the gift of God by which we see his hand in every thing we pass through, our

not seeing it does not put the hand of God away. If so, the infidel, who says, "there is no God," has annihilated Jehovah, if a word can do it. Our unbelieving, infidel heart indeed may say, 'Can good spring from these afflictions? Can a blessing to my soul come out of these trials? Does this come from God? Does that come from God?' Our unbelieving heart, I say, may mutter these things as much as the unbelieving lord, who said, "If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might such a thing be?" (2 Kings 7:19.) But he was punished for his unbelief. And we, though not trampled down into hell like him, as we justly deserve for it, yet may be chastened. Still, our unbelief does not alter the truth; God forbid. Shall the suggestions of Satan; or the infirmities, unbelief, infidelity, questionings, and suspicions of our heart alter the eternal truths of God! "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." (2 Tim. 2:13.) He is the same, unchanging and unchangeable and he "watches" over his Zion for her spiritual benefit, whether it be to afflict or to comfort, to throw down or to build up.

II.—But we pass on to consider the other side of our subject. "*So will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord.*" May we not, must we not, carry with us still the same idea? Yes. What does "watching" here imply? That all is fore-appointed in the mind of God; all designed to be brought about at a certain time, and in a certain way, by certain means to perform certain purposes, and to effect a certain work. In all these the eye, the heart, and the hand of God are intimately concerned.

1. "*So will I watch over them to build.*" But what comes first? Does not plucking up, breaking down, and throwing down precede building? It must in nature, much more in grace. What? if there is a hovel, a filthy hovel, standing upon the site designed for a palace, shall that hovel stand to be an

eye-sore to the sovereign, or occupy the ground on which a noble edifice is to be erected? Common sense would answer, 'Sweep it off the face of the earth; let not one vestige remain. It must not, it cannot occupy the ground that the palace is to stand upon.' So, if my righteousness, my prejudices, my pride, my hypocrisy, my carnal nature in all its shapes and forms, is to stand up in all its native arrogance, can the lowly Jesus come and take up his abode in my bosom? No; these things must first be broken down; I must be a poor broken-hearted sinner. My pride, my self-righteousness, my self-conceit, my vain hopes and false confidence must all be broken down, laid low, and swept away; not a vestige must remain when the temple of mercy is to be built up in all its fair proportions. I do not mean to carry the figure fully out. I am well aware, (no man better, if I may speak with all humility,) of the rubbish, the legal, the carnal rubbish, that seems at times to choke up the heart. Still there must be "a breaking down" before there can be "a building up."

But what does God build up? *His own work in the soul.* Nothing more, nothing less. He does not rebuild the old ruined temple with stones taken out of nature's quarry; but he builds up his own temple, springing up in harmonious proportions, as the temple of old, under his constructive hands. He builds up true hopes instead of false hopes; faith instead of unbelief; divine love instead of creature affection; Christ's righteousness instead of our righteousness; true holiness instead of fleshly holiness. Thus he builds up the soul upon its most holy faith; builds up the temple of mercy in the heart. And this springs up instantaneously. When the Lord appears, the temple rises to receive him; the building springs up in a moment to receive the heavenly Builder. So when the Lord of glory appears, the temple is prepared to receive him; and those words sound, or may sound (though

not wholly applicable) in the depths within, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." (Psa. 24:7.)

2. But the Lord "watches" over his Zion, not merely "to build" but "*to plant.*" I endeavoured to show, that by the figure "plucking up," there seemed to be some allusion to the human heart as a field—the Lord's husbandry. Now, in that field, once overrun with thorns, thistles, and briars, he "watches to plant" his fear in the heart, his blessed graces in the soul. But let us enter into a few of these graces thus divinely implanted. *Humility*, for instance, never grew in nature's soil; it must, therefore, be planted in our souls by a divine hand. *Sincerity and godly simplicity* are not to be found among the charlock and the poppy of natural growth. They must be planted in our souls by the hand of the Lord himself. *Faith in Jesus* to the saving of the soul; *a good hope* through grace in his mercy; *a love* to his precious name; tender affections, holy desires, heavenly breathings, sweet sensations, divine enjoyments, manifestations of mercy, and discoveries of God's love to the soul—all these trees of paradise are to be found in this heavenly plantation.

These are some of the blessed fruits which this divine hand plants in the field (the garden, we may rather say) of the human heart; "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse." (Song 4:12.) "I am come into my garden," he says. (5:1.) "Awake, O north wind; and come thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." (4:16.) "My Beloved is gone down into his garden," is the language of the church. (6:12.) The Lord watches to plant. When he has plucked up our righteousness, he plants his own. When he has plucked up our pride, prejudices, ignorance, and carnality, he plants his own image—brokenness, tenderness, humility, and godly fear. When he has plucked up the

thoughts of our heart that rise up against his divine Majesty, he plants those graces and fruits in the soul that spring up to his praise. And thus he plants every grace of the Spirit, and causes each and all to bear fruit to the honour and glory of his great Name.

And he brings forth *outward fruits* too. Consistency of life, separation from the world, honesty before men, integrity of lip and integrity of hand, uprightness of conduct, honourable principles and honourable actions; "whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report," the Lord causes to spring up in the garden that he himself plants and waters with his own hand. God give us these fruits; and where given, grant us a blessed increase of them!

But let us for a few moments recapitulate and run over the things spoken, that I may succeed, if the Lord enable, in leaving some definite and solid impression upon your hearts. What brought you here at this time? Was it merely to while away an idle hour upon a Sunday evening, or to listen to the breath of the preacher? God forbid his dear family should come here with such a motive! In their right mind, they hear for eternity; that something may be communicated to their souls which may not pass away like the morning cloud and the early dew, be dissipated by the world, "or prove like the hasty fruit before the summer; which, when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up." (Isa. 28:4.) And my desire is, that the Lord would cause some abiding fruit to spring out of what may fall from my lips; that it may not be spoken to amuse, entertain, interest, or please you; no, but to profit you; and that not for an hour, a day, a week, or a month; but that some lasting fruit may be sown in your soul to all eternity. And this is why, as the Lord enables me, I desire to bring forth *his* truth and *his* words, not *mine*, that he may seal his own truth with power



upon our hearts, and rivet it with his own divine hand in our conscience. What I have been laying before you are solemn realities and eternal truths, whether we believe and feel them or not. God grant that we may increasingly believe and feel them! They are of the deepest importance; God lay them with greater weight and power upon our souls!

Bear with me, then, for a few moments; and let us endeavour to look into our hearts (it is *there* where God works—it is to our conscience that God speaks.) What has been the experience of your soul? Can you look back, and see how there has been this plucking up, breaking down, throwing down, destroying, and afflicting work in your soul? 'Yes,' says one, 'my life, my spiritual life has consisted of little else. But two things try me: one is, I do not see the hand of God plainly in these exercises; my mind is so obscured; my judgment so dark; I want faith to believe that the hand of God is in them. And the other thing that tries my mind is, it seems so much with me affliction and trial, breaking and throwing down, and so little building and planting.' Well; but has there been this work carried on in your conscience? Has there been this plucking up, breaking down, throwing down, destroying, and afflicting? If you cannot see God's hand, can you see the fruit? What is your case? A poor broken-hearted sinner at the footstool of mercy? a beggar, a bankrupt? a poor and needy, lost, and undone wretch? The Lord has done all this. If this be the genuine feeling of your soul before his heart-searching eye, he has "watched" over you in tenderness. You may not see it. The sleeping babe does not see the watchful eye of the tender mother; but the mother watches still, though the babe perceive it not. You may not have perceived, and may not now perceive, the hand of God in your affliction; but the hand and the eye of the Lord are there though you see them not. And be sure of this (the Lord assure us of it, we cannot

be sure of anything of ourselves!) that as the Lord has "watched" over you in the dispensations of his providence and grace, in plucking up, breaking down, throwing down, destroying, and afflicting; so, also, the Lord will "watch" over you "to build" and "to plant."

The time will come which God has designed; circumstances will arise, causes shall work, and the Lord himself will effect his own purposes. The promise stands fast; the word is sure to be accomplished. As he has "watched" over you to do the one, so also will he "watch" over you to do the other. As he has "watched" over every circumstance, the very minutest circumstance, of your soul adversity; so will he "watch" to bring about every, the minutest circumstance, of your soul prosperity.