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The Providence of God in the Calamities of Men.

A SERMON 2

PREACHED FOR THE DUANE-STREET CHURCH, AND ALSO IN THE RUTGERS-STREET CHURCH, ON SABBATH DECEMBER 20, 1835;

ON OCCASION OF THE DESTRUCTIVE FIRE,

IN THE FIRST WARD IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK,

ON THE NIGHT OF DEC. 16—17 PREVIOUS.

By JOHN M. KREBS,

PASTOR OF THE RUTGERS-STREET CHURCH.

[Published by request of the Trustees and Session of the Duane-street Church.]

NEW-YORK :

LEAVITT, LORD & CO., 180 BROADWAY.

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NEW-YORK, 21st December, 1835.

REV. JOHN M. KREBS :

Reverend and Dear Sir—In the name of the Session and Trustees of the Duane-street Congregation, we thank you for the solemn and very important discourse you delivered to us yesterday morning.

“ A word spoken in season, how good is it ! ”

You came to our desolate church, deprived, for the present, of its stated ministry, and found us crushed beneath the mighty hand of God, under that dreadful visitation wherewith it has pleased Him to overwhelm our devoted city—and involve us, in common with our fellow-citizens, in peculiar trials and deep distress. It was indeed a word “ fitly spoken—like apples of gold in pictures of silver ; ” solemn, tender, admonitory, consoling, and encouraging. We are instructed to solicit this sermon for publication, that its important truths may be disseminated and pondered, and the minds of many be directed to a right understanding and just estimation of the awful calamity which the Almighty, in His just judgment, has sent upon us as a community, to rebuke us for our sins, and warn us to repentance.

Your kind compliance with our request, you may be assured, will be duly appreciated by all our people, and we trust may be made instrumental, in God's hand, of much good, not only to them, but to all who may be permitted to participate therein, which is the earnest hope and prayer of,

Reverend and dear sir,

Yours, very respectfully,

WM. HOWARD,

President of the Board of Trustees.

THO. MASTERS, *Stated Clerk of Session.*

*To the Session and Board of Trustees }
of the Duane-street Church :*

Dear Brethren—But for your solicitation, I should never have thought of committing the following discourse to the press.

It was prepared, *with immediate reference, (as I announced, when it was preached,) to the people of my own charge : but being called on unexpectedly, to address you also, on the same day, I felt that I could select no subject more generally appropriate, than the reflections suggested by the recent appalling calamity, with which the city has been visited.*

In consenting to your united and urgent request for its publication, I am aware that your approbation and estimate of its adaptedness to do good,

must arise from our common and intense sympathies with the occasion to which it refers ; and from the simple conviction, which you have intimated, that, in the present condition of our community, when there is such easy access to the emotions of the heart, even a very plain, and humble and imperfect *attempt* to improve the event, and fix the thoughts on God and His wise providence, by directing attention to the declarations of the Bible, may obtain a hearing, and assist in raising the heart to Him, on whom we depend for "life and breath and all things:" while, in other circumstances, these pages, which contain mere sketches of appropriate thought,—and often disjointed hints and notes, hastily thrown together, of necessity, were better kept from public view.

I submit the discourse, therefore, to your service, as it was written and preached, with no other alteration than the addition of such few, brief sentences, as a rapid revision suggested, for the clearer illustration of the argument.

Committing it to God, I join with you in the prayer, that it may do good, in "stirring up the minds of Christians to remembrance" of His power, wisdom and goodness, who is "our hope,"—in leading the afflicted to trust Him,—and, in inclining all who may deign to read it, to regard His supremacy, and return to their allegiance to our Saviour and Ruler, Jesus Christ.

With very great respect,

I am, gentlemen,

Your friend and servant in the gospel,

JOHN M. KREBS.

NEW-YORK, Dec. 21st, 1835.

SERMON.

Amos iii. 6. SHALL A TRUMPET BE BLOWN IN THE CITY, AND THE PEOPLE BE NOT AFRAID? SHALL THERE BE EVIL IN A CITY, AND THE LORD HATH NOT DONE IT?

Psalm cxivii. 1. EXCEPT THE LORD BUILD THE HOUSE, THEY LABOUR IN VAIN THAT BUILD IT: EXCEPT THE LORD KEEP THE CITY, THE WATCHMAN WAKETH BUT IN VAIN.

EVERY event in the providence of God is worthy of our notice. We are placed here as *spectators* of His works; and it is his design that we should receive instruction. *When His judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants thereof will learn righteousness.* But we are also *affected* by the movements of His power and wisdom; and in the complex, and ramified, and widely-extended relations of causes and effects, there is nothing, great or small, which may not be regarded, as having an important bearing on our interests and destinies. In manifold instances, we may even trace the influences of catenated events, in determining for us a lot of blessedness, or one of disaster;—while the enjoyment or the distress of to-day, may be ultimately seen as the prolific occasion of future results, for good or for evil, the magnitude of which, eternity alone can calculate. A revolution in the old world; an earthquake, or a conflagration; a famine or a pestilence, reaches across the ocean in its influences, and operates for years, in shaping the character, in determining the habitation, in stimulating or retarding the

prosperity of men, in nations most remote, like the casting of a pebble into the bosom of a placid lake, whose rippling agitates the surface to the surrounding shores. But there are events again, that *immediately* affect us, or, in their nearer relations, demand our most excited sympathies, and touch our interests in a manner that we cannot fail accurately to appreciate. Such is the nature of that calamity, on which our appalled vision has so lately fallen ; which has concentrated so much disaster in the midst of us ; which has blighted so many hopes ; which has spread fear and consternation over our city ; which fills the thoughts of every mind ; and stimulates the emotions of every heart ; and makes the absorbing theme of every tongue ; which has destroyed such riches ; which has made poor so many ; which has arrested such enterprise ; which has ramified its influences through all the relations of society ;—taught us our mutual connections ;—and caused every man to feel that this calamity is the calamity of the *community* ; that it is *his* calamity ; and that he cannot sever his interests, whatever be their nature, from those of his neighbour, any more than he can remove them from under the perfect control of the God of providence. Whether we have been personal, immediate sufferers in the recent conflagration or not, it is equally *our concern*. It not only occupies the memory with images of awful terror ; but it fills us every moment with alarm, and agitates every bosom, with apprehension of what may yet be, in the now more distressful results of succeeding conflagrations ; or in the effects on property and mercantile reputation, and commercial prosperity, and mechanical ingenuity and enterprise, for months and years to come. It is your calamity, my hearers ; it is mine ; it is that of our children. We do not always

feel, or appreciate, or notice the relations of occurrences comparatively smaller, and apparently more confined in their effects. There is sometimes an indifference and a selfishness which heed not events, melancholy as they are, that are yet of less marked general importance; a buoyancy and energy of spirit that mounts superior to the ruin,—as I doubt not with the favour of God will yet be manifested in this disaster;—a courage and enterprise which repairs the desolation, and, rising like the fabled phœnix from her fires, in the freshness of youth and with strength renewed, rejoices in ultimately more exalted prosperity. But events of the same kind are comparatively greater or smaller; and here is repeated on a large scale, in a wider theatre, before a nation's gaze and for a nation's sympathies, an ordinary occurrence of Divine providence, near, increased, accumulated, till it fills the eye and the heart too, and compels us to pause and reflect, amid the whirl of worldly excitement, on the startling operations, the grander movements, the loud voice of God's great providence in manifested supremacy,—when the still small voice, and even the fire and the thunder, the earthquake and the pestilence, were previously unheeded.

While then the attention of all minds is engaged in amazed or melancholy contemplation of our terrible calamity, let us open the book of God, and read the lessons of wisdom, which His revelation suggests for the improvement of His providence. For in such a time as this, we are reminded of that God who is in Heaven, whose throne rules the Universe, who comes forth to show *the hidings of his power* in the earth,—and *burning coals go forth at His feet*. “*Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Shall a trumpet*

be blown in the city, and the people be not afraid ?" The Scriptures teach us, and His providence bears witness of itself, in illustrating the truth,

THAT THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IS CONCERNED IN THE AFFLICTIONS AND DISTRESSES WHICH BEFALL MANKIND.

We have assumed the fact of Divine providence, in our previous remarks ; and we always shall assume it, since it is written so clearly before our eyes—and with the noontide brilliancy of the sun. But it is useful to appeal to some outline hints in evidence of the fact, and to *stir up your minds by way of remembrance*, in presenting the bearings of the argument.

And here, we leave out of view the relations of the subject to the moral world. Our present concern is with providence, as it governs natural events, and is employed more particularly in the infliction of temporal evils.

The providence of God is a doctrine which results from the very *Being of God* ; from every essential attribute ; by necessary and direct inference from His perfection. Not only is He the great Creator of the planets "which wheel unshaken in the void immense," but He also formed the tiniest atom that floats in the sun-beam. Nor is He only their creator. By Him, the stars maintain their courses,—and "hold their midnight festival around the throne," obedient to His nod. *By Him is appointed the number of our months. He saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth ; likewise to the small rain and to the great rain of His strength ; He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy. Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without Him.* So the Scriptures assert ; so reason. All the works of His hands bear the impress of wise design ; and the highest

idea we can form of the wisdom and goodness of God comprises the supervision of all things, and their adaptation and direction to the best results. With this idea is blended a sublime and splendid impression of His mighty power : in all places of His dominion, He maintains His rule ; according to the eternal counsels of His sovereign will, He executes His pleasure, *in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.*

But it is directly asserted in the Scriptures that he controls the actions of men, and conducts them to designed results, by the agency of second causes. He disposes of them ; sends them prosperity by the exercise of His constant vigilance, as *the Father of lights, and the Giver of every good and perfect gift* ;—and also takes away their delights, and sends defeat and disappointment to their wisest plans.

There is, in the Bible, a particular ascription to God, of an agency of which no creature is independent ; which is specific and minute ; which detects the thoughts of our hearts, and numbers the hairs of our heads ; an agency which is so comprehensive, in causing *all things to work together for good to them that love Him*, that we cannot exclude from the idea of His providence either present natural evils that thus are made to work for good ultimately, or those ultimate evils which are not simply fatherly chastisements, but are the visitations of his punitive anger.

While our sinful heart deceives our judgment,—loth to admit a righteous providence in our deserved afflictions,—and we ascribe them to men, or to chance, in the spirit of atheism,—the book of God declares that *afflictions spring not from the dust*. He represents Himself as the moving and directing energy. *I form light and*

create darkness ; I make peace, and I create evil ; I, the Lord, do all these things. “ The dreadful evils which sometimes scourge the earth and afflict mankind, such as war, famine, pestilence, God calls His great plagues. With these He chastised Israel, and poured out fury on their enemies.” Sometimes he sent an army of locusts and caterpillars,—before them was a fruitful field, behind them a desert ; blasting and mildew, and drought, were among His instruments ;—and the resources employed by His agency are manifold and countless. Against Egypt and Babylon, Damascus and Tyre, and Samaria, he threatened, by the mouths of Jeremiah and Amos, to send the devastating fire that should kindle upon their walls and devour their palaces ; and amply did this destroying agent—not poured down from Heaven, as on the cities of the plain, but lighted by the hand of men, and seeming accident, accomplish the denunciation of the Almighty. To Jerusalem, he also said : *If ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day ; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof ; and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.* How remarkably was this fulfilled by the hands of the Babylonians—and especially when, centuries after, their city and temple were destroyed by the armies of the Romans !

Men limit their inquiries to the influence and agency of natural causes, and forget that “ all nature is but a name for an effect, whose cause is God.” To Him true philosophy refers. What power is there in natural causes independently ? In all their operations, God announces His presence and agency, to correct His ungrateful and rebellious creatures.

“ There are some things apparently so uncertain in their issue, and some which occur so unexpectedly and so contrary to all human calculation, that they cannot be reduced to any laws of man, or ascribed to any known regular causes in nature; and about which, of course, we are all in darkness. These, instead of referring to the decision and providence of God, we give into the hand of some unintelligible thing called *chance*, or fortune, or accident. But what says our divine philosophy? How often do we see the clouds, which are filled with fatness for the earth, and to which the husbandman looks with longing eyes and anxious heart, carried hither and thither high above our heads, by contending winds!—now, they seem about to pour their treasures upon this field; and now on that. A thousand hopes are disappointed; a thousand calculations falsified. Who shall say whither they shall be carried? to what distance they shall be hurried, ere they fall, leaving far behind the murmuring expectants? ‘It is all chance,’ says the atheist; ‘these clouds are the sport of winds, and may yet fall on the very place where they are least needed.’ We have a book which tells us, that *it is the Lord who causeth it to rain on one city; and it is the Lord who causeth it not to rain upon another city.* Take another instance. When one man, by an unlucky blow, undesignedly takes away the life of another, we call it chance: but the Scripture says: *The Lord hath delivered such an one to death. As when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour that he die,—*‘This is chance,’ says the atheist,—*The Lord hath*

*delivered him into the hands of him who slew him, saith the Scripture.**

There is an absolute necessity of referring to the agency of God, in all things. How idle and sad the idea that He abandons all thought of the world, and leaves it at loose ends, and exposed to ruin! How consoling to know that he can *restrain the wrath of man, and make it praise him!*—that he can set bars and doors to the rolling flood, and to the devouring flame; and, while He permits the deluge, has affixed the bounds of its ruins, and said, *Hitherto shalt thou come and no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.*

Will it be said, He has impressed general laws, and infused a sustaining energy into nature; relieving Himself from an omnipresent and universal agency? What energy is there at all, but from His present power? Let that be withdrawn, and we die. We must admit His eternal plan of providence; and that His present agency is concerned in the execution of His wise decrees. And to exclude his agency, is to take from the glory of His throne; to blind the light of those eyes which are in every place; to exclude God from the care and management of His own world. Yet it is said, by those who profess to believe the being of God and the general superintendence of His providence, that He cannot take part in trivial occurrences; that they are too small for His notice. My hearers! there is *nothing trivial* in the eye of God; there is nothing *great* in His sight—these are comparatives for men:

“ He sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish—and a sparrow fall;
Atoms or systems into ruin hurl'd,
And now a bubble burst, and now a world :—”

* Bishop Mead's Sermon before the University of Virginia.

But not with the indifference which infidels ascribe to Him. Nothing is too small for His notice. Have we not seen that He *numbers our hairs*? that *not a sparrow falleth to the ground without Him*? And He, too, guides, preserves, and controls that which is *of more worth than many sparrows*. Even we, whose eye is so short-sighted, and our comprehension so limited, and our adventurous imagination is baffled, and starts back appalled, when it essays to penetrate the clouds and darkness which enshrine the *deep things of God*, and where are hid from mortal gaze the dreadful glories of His throne,—even we can sometimes see the changing value of those things, which are great or small, comparatively and alternately, according to the points from which we contemplate them, and the relations they sustain to other objects.

What is a city compared with the world? What is the “great globe itself and all that it inherit,” but a speck in the immeasured universe? What a century, or the age of the earth, or the life of angels, compared with the eternity of God, *with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*? And what is the universe itself, but an aggregation of individuals, each fixed divinely in its place, and divinely appointed and adjusted to its functions? And can it be, that God attends to the general administration of the universe, and by any possibility neglects the particular parts of which it is composed? Is not the government of a nation found exerting its specific influence by an agency that leaves not unvisited the obscurest hamlet? And who can measure the relative importance of the smallest objects and the minutest portions of time, which, in veriest atoms,—a mere jot and tittle,—have their place, and send their in-

fluence abroad into all the earth, and onward throughout eternity! A spark is small; but let it fall by some *accident*, as men call it, on a powder-magazine, and it may devastate a city. What is seemingly so unimportant, in itself, as that trivial act of neglect, which, whatever its nature, a few nights ago, resulted in a disaster, whereby God has made of a defenced city a ruin. *How great a matter a little fire kindleth*, truly! And who shall measure and survey the influences of the event? The falling of an apple gave the mind of Newton to the world: a trivial disaster in a nursery made way for the ambition, extravagance, and spreading tyranny of Louis the Fourteenth. On a slight shifting of the winds, depended the success of that revolution of England which brought William of Orange to the throne, and confirmed the Protestant ascendancy. Small matters, my hearers, are the starting points of great affairs; the pregnant origin of mighty ruin, or abundant prosperity. Every thing that occurs has connections. Every thing in the universe affects every thing else. All events are links in a vast chain which binds that ultimate result, on which the *thrones and dominions, the principalities and powers* of the universe shall be summoned to gaze; whose wondrous excellency shall be sounded for ever on the *harps of God*. All events, great or small, with mutual connections and dependencies, are all adjusted and essentially contribute to the accomplishment of that majestic scheme, which was represented wheel within wheel to the eye of the prophet by the waters of Chebar; which comprehending all things, is conducting the universe to eternal harmony and subjection under the everlasting throne. Let but a pinion or a pivot start, and the whole power of the vast machine may drive asunder the disjointed fragments,

and disperse every where the flying ruin, devastation, and death. But, *in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. He hath founded His throne upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. His hand is every where, in sovereign control. Known unto Him are all His works. Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him? and the thunder of His power, who can understand? As without His Eternal Word, was not made any thing that was made, so are all things for Him. He is not as men are. That which He made, He governs: and it is beneath Him to do neither the one nor the other. And, ah! my brethren, if God does not govern in the affairs of men, we and the world are at the mercy of the winds. Who would wish to live in such a world? Even a pagan emperor could say, "I could not bear to live another day, in the world, if it were not under the government of Providence."*

But we are taught again, **THAT NO MEANS OF DEFENCE ARE SUFFICIENT TO WARD OFF ANY APPREHENDED EVIL, EXCEPT THOSE WHICH ARE FURNISHED IN THE COVENANT FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.**

I take my argument, here, from the very circumstances which have suggested the subject of this discourse, and to which its application is designed. And it is but a practical inference from the universal providence of God. The distinction of the remark is founded on this fact, that the Lord's agency was not only concerned in our present calamity, but that His agency is absolutely irresistible where He decrees to exert it.

But a few days ago, we assembled in His courts, to thank Him for the multitude of His mercies. And, in the view of them we congratulated ourselves on the un-

exemplified prosperity of the past year ; nor could we omit to notice the goodness of His providence to this favoured city. When we spoke of the sins that courted rebuke, we forgot not our pride and worldliness,—our too frequent forgetfulness of God. We have too often *rejoiced in our boastings ; and all such rejoicing is evil*. We have been proud of our prosperity ; we have boasted of our situation like *Tyre, at the entrance of the sea, a merchant of the people for many isles*. We boasted because *our borders were in the midst of the sea, and our builders had perfected our beauty*. We thought our commercial opulence could receive no shock. Alas ! we feared *nothing* : or if there came a momentary thought of danger, who apprehended the conflagration ? This was not the form in which we looked for disaster. For, if it menaced, and *when it came*, we trusted not in God, but, against His providence, relied on the skill of our intrepid firemen, and beyond that, on the strength of a policy of insurance ! We said in our heart, *we shall not be moved*. But what has one night accomplished ? *God spake and it was done. He brought our counsel to nought. He made the devices of the people of none effect*. In the very theatre of our commercial enterprise ; where speculation was busiest, and where its origin was,—where the merchandise of many lands was concentrated,—where every foot of the soil was a mart,—and there the genius of commerce had reared for our merchant princes her monuments, in piles of magnificent architecture,—the palace-like structures devoted to the purposes of mercantile convenience, and the proud temple where her shrine was erected, and the fine arts at once contributed to her adorning, and evinced the characteristic gratitude and liberalizing spirit of her achievements,—

there where uncounted treasures lay, and busy hearts and anxious spirits matured their plans of wealth and grandeur,—there where the city placed her resources, and we stood by and admired our glory,—even there, a moment introduced an undreaded enemy;—a foe that we despised, laid his flaming hand upon the boasted excellency; and the pride of architecture, and the rich fabrics of the loom, and all the varied productions of industry that there were stored, and the sculptured glories of the statuary, crumbled and wasted beneath the touch of the destroyer. Nor did it even spare the sanctuary of God; *the elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground and keep silence; her gates are desolate; her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness, saying, Our holy and our beautiful house, WHERE OUR FATHERS PRAISED THEE, is burned up with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste.* What an illustration was then afforded, of what we once thought the almost too highly figurative declaration of the Bible, that *riches certainly make themselves wings and fly away!*

Who can resist Almighty power? When He would pluck up and cast down, who can escape the control of Him who rides *upon the wings of the winds, or holds them in His fists, and makes his ministers a flaming fire,* and all the elements the chariots of His Omnipotence? What a conjuncture of circumstances made the visitation of Wednesday night so dreadful! And was this combination produced by *chance? Fire and hail, snow and vapour, and stormy winds fulfil his word.* Before Him the arm of the hardy fireman is paralyzed. The devouring flame leaps from edifice to edifice, and runs through every street; envelopes in a fiery embrace the ill-fated city; and curling toward high heaven in glaring splendour, madly exults over the ruin, and laughs and

triumphs over all opposition. Then, God *scattereth his hoar-frost like ashes ; He casteth forth His ice like morsels ; who can stand before His cold ?* The frozen aqueducts refuse their aid :

“The liquid streams forbear to flow,
In icy fetters bound.”

The ruin triumphs over every defence ; and the strong munitions of men are broken and dispersed ; and desolation reigns, because the *Lord would do evil in the city.* What a proof was this, that *except the Lord keep the city,* we wake, and watch, and labour in vain !

There is no king saved by the multitude of a host ; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. A horse is a vain thing for safety ; neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy ; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the Lord, He is our help and our shield.

My brethren, our resource and defence is in His mighty providence. He stayed the progress of the flame when its work was done. And he directed it, too, with discriminating care,—I mean not only so as to give promise that

“Those ruins shall be built again,
And all that dust shall rise ;”

but what extremes of suffering should we now endure, had the flames fallen upon an equal number of dwellings and exposed the many sick, and thousands of helpless women and children, to the uncertain escape of midnight, and the blast of the furious tempest, to shiver and to die, unhoused wanderers, under the inclemency of a wintry sky—or had overwhelmed with fiery ruin unnumbered

lives of men ! He tempers his judgments. *He stayeth his rough wind, in the day of the east wind.* But, beside all this, we are just as safe from future calamity, as we ever were, and no danger can assail us now, if His benignant providence watch over us ; and nothing can save us, if it do not. We have been taught, indeed, that we are completely dependent upon Him. But let us *contemplate* our dependence, and feel that our safety is in better hands than when we thought it was in our own.

When the inhabitants of this city lay down to rest on Thursday night, there was a universal consciousness that they had no longer any security against the Providence of God. The frozen fountains—the crippled condition of the fire department—and policies of insurance that were little better than blank paper—left us exposed, and we had no resource but that of the Providence of God. But what a resource was this !—We could just as reasonably *lie down and be quiet from the fear of evil* ; for it is *He only*, who, at any time, *maketh us to dwell in safety*. The eye that never slumbers kept guard over every couch of repose, and the *angels of the Lord encamped around our habitations, when we feared Him* ; and we were better kept than before.

What other resource have we ? *None*. And what had we last week ? **EXPERIENCE TELLS US, NONE.** We are no less secure than we were then—we were then no better defended than now. Had this calamity been postponed until next week ; and you were told to-day of the uncertainty of human possessions, and warned to lay up treasures in Heaven, why, how many would think the preacher sought to alarm them with imaginary dangers ! But what hath God wrought ?—and would you be any more secure to-day, than you would have been, if this calamity were yet future ? Is not the earth in the

hand of the Lord? If it were yet future, and were fore-told to you, you would but see the coming *experience* of real insecurity, now—then—for ever,—except in God. And to-day you only realize what the Bible has declared for a thousand years—a dependence on Providence no more complete at this hour than it was a year ago. You have the advantage, my hearers, of *knowing the fact*; and it is well to know it:—*Shall a trumpet be blown in the city and the people not be afraid?* But that which God has done, He could do again, ten times over. Are we not left then to Him; and to the confidence of His mighty arm?

I am aware that I address myself to many that have lost their property, not only directly by the fire consuming it, but in the stocks, as insurers,—and in instances suffered severely. You feel not only the insecurity of what remains—but God has taken away your husbanded means. The principle of the remarks just made, governs your case, my brethren. You, in the midst of your distress, may take consolation from the fact, that you are in the hand of Providence, and can suffer no further than He permits; and that a week ago you were, in fact, no safer than you are now. There is this difference. You have more room for faith; that obstacle which may have prevented its exercise is taken away; and you are now called upon to exert it. You can see that it is vain to *trust in uncertain riches*, and that your confidence must refer to Him who is the *Preserver of men*—and a *faithful Creator*. Is it not true that *except the Lord keep the city, the watchman walketh but in vain*. While *some trust in chariots, and others in horses, remember ye the name of the Lord our God. Behold the works of the Lord, and the desolations He hath made in the earth: He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in*

sunder ; He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still and know that He is God. He will be exalted among the heathen ; He will be exalted in the earth. But He is our refuge and strength—a very present help in time of trouble. The Lord of Hosts is with us ; the God of Jacob is our refuge. He feeds the raven ; He clothes the lily ; the sparrow finds a house, and the swallow a nest for her young by His altars ; and shall He not care for you as well as ever, and as long as you need ? Let faith adopt the language of the prophet—Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine ; 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. Learn to say with the man of Uz : The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away : Blessed be the name of the Lord.

I add one more remark. God has a design in all that He does. And does not his PROVIDENCE TEACH US TO FEAR HIM ? *Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid ?* The trumpet is the signal of danger at hand ; it calls for alarm, and preparation. And when afflictions befall us, are we not rebuked, and rightly bidden to *hear the voice of the rod, and who hath appointed it ?* We are *cast down, but not destroyed.* But we can readily appreciate now, that if we provoke Him, yet *a worse thing can come upon us.* Is it adventuring too nigh the prerogative of God, to suggest the interpretation of His Providence, with the Bible in our hands ? *Surely the Lord God will do nothing but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets. The lion hath roared ; who will not fear ? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy ?*

Does He not call upon us to humble ourselves for our

sins? Speaks He not to the church to reprove her worldliness, and show the worthlessness of those possessions, which so engross our time, our labours, our conversation; and trench upon the duties of piety, and the business of the closet, and the thoughts and feelings appropriate to the house of God—for which, nevertheless, she has been so ready to sell her heritage? Oh that God were known even now in *His palaces for a refuge!* It is his way to hedge up the course of *His people with thorns,—to allure them and bring them into the wilderness, that He may speak comfortably unto them, when they are made to say, I will go and return unto my first husband, for then was it better with me than now.* Does he not speak to you, O! men? is not *His voice unto the sons of men?* To them who did not know that he gave corn and wine and oil and multiplied their silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal; Therefore, saith the Lord, will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and will recover my wool, and my flax given to cover their nakedness. Speaks not wisdom to-day? She uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates,—in the city she uttereth her words, saying, *How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scornors delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof.* Go up and down and visit the scene of devastation, and say whether any divine can preach to you like the providence of God,—and we pray you, heed His admonition. He does not forbid the fit enterprises of commerce, nor the exertions of human industry. He encourages them. He promises prosperity to righteousness; and he will give it, for *He is the living God who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.*

But honour the Lord with thy substance, and He will

increase it, for good ; while He will correct by chastisements the abuse of this world. When He visits with bereaving calamity, we know that it is for our iniquity ; that it is to wean us from the love of earth ; that it is to provide some better thing for us ; and often to prepare the way, as in the case of Job, for *giving twice as much as we had before*. But He warns us not to be *greedy of gain*. He shows us that the *fashion of this world passeth away*. For how expressively does calamity declare the folly of *setting our affections on the things that are on the earth*, to the disparagement of those *which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God!* He commands us to *seek FIRST the kingdom of God and His righteousness* ; and to obtain those treasures of *wisdom, the merchandise of which is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold : she is more precious than rubies ; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her*. He commends to you, to forego every thing for the *pearl of great price* ; and to acquire, by faith in Jesus, a title to the house of many mansions ; and through the regenerating grace of the Holy Ghost, a rejoicing *inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, in the city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God*. For must you not die ? Do not all go to the grave ? *For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass ; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away : but the word of the Lord endureth for ever*.

Ah ! my brethren, while God thus loudly speaks, He would persuade ! His precious gospel explains his providence ; and furnishes consolation for sorrow. It discovers a refuge from sin, and from all that the curse involves. The hope of glory in Heaven, through Jesus

Christ, can never perish. Nothing that he redeems can be lost; but He will *raise it up at the last day*. The body and the soul shall survive the tomb, and the wreck of a dissolving world,—and, from the fires of universal conflagration, ascend to God, and be fixed for ever in His high abode, *the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. Then let your heart choose Him, rather than the riches of earth. Nor *let it be troubled* amid surrounding desolation; but believing in Christ, inherit ye the *peace that passeth understanding*.

Do I speak to those that *prefer sin to affliction? When will ye be wise?* Is God's voice to be unheard; and will ye *harden your hearts?* Alas! how many, even now, fear Him not! How many, in this calamity, look not above the clouds, for its origin, and confine all their thoughts to the earth! They studiously avoid the name of Providence. They are not afraid at His voice; they boast of their future plans. But let them know, that if *there be evil in the city, the Lord hath done it*. Let them know, that *except the Lord build the city, they labour in vain that build it again: That except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain*. Wherefore should not our future enterprise glorify the Lord, and bring for us, from Him, a better and a more enduring prosperity? And, *whether men will hear or whether they will forbear*, let them remember that the word of God bids them repent, lest He come upon them and smite them. The day is approaching when you shall come up out of your graves; when *the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up*; and forward to that day of eternity, this question looks, and gathers fearful importance for the impenitent and unbelieving:—*Who can dwell with devouring flames? Who can lie down in everlasting burnings?* 6 FE 68