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Mr. BUTLER's

3.

# Fast-SERMON

Preach'd before the

## Lord Mayor,

AND

COURT of ALDERMEN,

Sept. 16. 1691.

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# Pilkington Mayor

*Jovis xvii<sup>mo</sup> die Septembris 1691. Annoque  
Regni Regis & Reginae Willielmi & Ma-  
riae Angliae, &c. Tertio.*

**T**Hese are to desire Mr. *Lilly Butler* to  
Print his Sermon, preached yester-  
day in the Parish-Church of *St. Mary Le  
Bow*, before the Lord Mayor, Aldermen,  
and Liveries of the several Companies of  
this City.



*Goodfellow.*

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# A SERMON

Preached at

3.

*St. Mary-le-Bow,*

Before the

*Lord Mayor,*

COURT of ALDERMEN,

AND

CITIZENS of LONDON,

On *Wednesday*, the 16<sup>th</sup> of *September*,  
a day appointed by their Majesties  
for a solemn Monthly Fast.

By *Lilly Butler*, Rector of *Bubbingworth* in  
*Essex*.

LONDON,  
Printed for *R. Baldwin*, near the *Oxford-Arms* in *War-  
wick-lane*. MDCXCI.

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To the Right Honourable  
**S<sup>R</sup> Tho. Pilkington,**

Lord Mayor of the City of *London,*

AND THE  
**COURT of ALDERMEN.**

My Lord,

**I** Know not any thing could move you to require the Printing this plain Sermon, but a great affection to the design of it: Which I pray God increase in you all, and make you signally instrumental in promoting that Reformation, wherein the safety and happiness of our Country is so highly concerned. And if the publishing of this discourse may confer but any

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little



little matter towards it, whatever other defects may be found in it (especially after so kind and favourable an acceptance from you) will not much concern

My Lord,

Your most Humble and

Obedient Servant,

L. Butler.

[ 1 ]

Isaiah LVII. 21.

*There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

**T**He Prophet towards the beginning of this Chapter, upbraideth the *Jews* with their abominable wickedness and Idolatry; for which they were shortly to be made Captives in a *strange land*. From whence, he telleth them, they should in vain expect to be delivered, by the Nations whose Gods they worshipped, and with whose wickedness they had complied. *V. 13. When thou criest let thy companions deliver thee: but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them.* Nevertheless, if they should at length *be-think themselves, in the land whither they were carried captive*, heartily bewail their sins, and turn unto the Lord, they should again see *Jerusalem* in prosperity, and peace upon *Israel*. *But he that putteth his trust in me, saith God, shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain.* All things shall be made ready for a happy return. *V. 14.*  
Cast

*Cast ye up, cast ye up, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people. The high and lofty one will revive the humble and contrite Spirits, v. 15. For I will not contend for ever, saith the Lord, v. 16. neither will I be always wroth. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me and was wroth; I have seen his ways, v. 18. I have seen them at length corrected and reformed, therefore I will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him, and to his mourners. Their mouths shall be filled with Praise and Thanksgiving, for the restoration of their peace. I create the Fruit of the Lips; Peace, Peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him.* But if upon their return out of Captivity, they should forget their Redeemer, and return to their former wickedness; their Peace and Prosperity would soon be disturbed again. For saith the Prophet, *the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest*, which he explaineth in the words of the Text, and confirmeth with the Testimony of his God that sent him; *there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

By the *wicked* in this place, we are chiefly to understand a wicked Nation or People, as appeareth plainly by the account I have given of the context. And by *peace*, Prosperity and Happiness in general; according to the common use of the

use of the word *peace* in the old Testament. The meaning of the words then may be expressed in this plain Proposition. That prevailing wickedness is most certainly destructive of the prosperity and happiness of a People. In discoursing upon which, I shall endeavour to do these Four things.

First, To clear and manifest the truth of this proposition.

Secondly, To shew that we of this Nation, are very much concerned in the Truth of it, and that it *propheseth evil concerning us.*

Thirdly, To shew what is to be done by us, in order to the preventing this evil. And

Fourthly, By some proper motives and arguments to persuade every one to do his own part in it.

First, I shall endeavour to clear and manifest the Truth of this proposition: That prevailing wickedness is most certainly destructive of the prosperity and happiness of a people. This will be sufficiently manifest by the consideration of these following things.

First, The abounding of iniquity is it self the great unhappiness of a People. So long as a Nation is distempered with vice, *the head sick, and the heart faint, full of wounds, and bruises, and purrifying sores*, as the Prophet describeth *a People laden with iniquity*, no outward Priviledges or Advantages can make it happy. If God should

give us *bread and flesh from Heaven*, and be always working miracles for us, a murmuring and discontented Spirit would still make us miserable. The bondage of *Egypt*, and a deliverance from it, would be equally grievous and uneasy to it. Tyranny and Oppression, Sedition and Rebellion, Schism and Faction, are the names of great Judgments, as well as of great Sins. Sensuality transformeth Men into the likeness of Beasts, and hatred and malice of Devils: and what a wretched Society must such people make? Can a People be happy, where they are continually envying and vexing, cheating and defrauding, censuring and reviling, striving and quarrelling with one another, *where judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off, where truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter?* Is not this the character of a very unhappy, as well as of a very wicked People? We can hardly mention any sin, but the common and constant practice of it, is not only likely to procure, but is it self a great Judgment upon a Nation. It is therefore mentioned as a heavy curse upon *Israel*, *Pf. 81. 12.* that *God gave them up to their own hearts lusts; and they walked in their own counsels.* *Oh that I had in the wilderness,* saith the Prophet *Jeremiah, a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people and go from them: for they be all adulterers, an assembly*

*sembly of treacherous men.* *Jer. 9. 2.* *David* also maketh the same wish, *Pf. 55.* when he saw *violence and strife in the City, deceit and guile in her streets.* The desolation and barrenness of a *wilderness* were a desirable refuge, from the greater calamities of these sins.

Secondly, Sin doth farther tend to make a Nation unhappy, by the natural fruits and consequences of it. Is it not vice and passion that break the bands of love and concord, the most necessary preservatives of publick happiness? *From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, of your lusts that war in your members?* *Jam. 4. 1.* It is our *Saviours* own observation; That *a Kingdom divided against it self cannot stand.* And from whence is it, that a Church or Kingdom is divided into Sects and Factions, that some are of *Paul*, and some of *Apollos*; is it not because they are carnal? Are not combustions of States and Kingdoms, and all unhappy broils, the natural fruits of pride and ambition? *He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife,* and *Only by pride,* saith *Solomon, cometh contention.* *Prov. 28. 25. 13. 10.* Is it not natural for proud and ambitious spirits to do all they can to unsettle that Government, which doth not advance them according to their opinion of their own merits; and to try by repeated changes and revolutions, to raise themselves to

their affected greatness? *The love of money is the root of all evil*, from whence those evil practices do naturally spring, which are continually disturbing the world, wasting and spoiling, confounding and ruining, the Nations of it: Idleness and Luxury impoverish a Nation, and make it unable to bear the charge of its own defence: Sensuality impair-eth the understanding, and enfeebleth the spirits of men, and maketh them unfit for counsel or action; it taketh them off from all concern for the common good, and from all other care, but for their own ease and pleasure; and maketh them unwilling to part with any, for the Publick safety, for fear they should want it to *consume upon their lusts*: Irreligion and Prophaness dissolve the strongest obligation, which is that of Conscience, faithfully to observe those Laws, upon which all Societies are founded and subsist. And if the Community suffer, through the rashness or negligence, the unfaithfulness or treachery, of riotous, and lewd, and Atheistical men, intrusted to manage the affairs of it; no one can think any strange thing hath happened. It would be very easy to shew, of all particular sins and vices, that they have a very ill influence upon Societies, and do naturally tend to the great damage and dissolution on them. Certainly then the condition of a wicked people must needs be most desperate, when they have

have nothing else to secure them from Misery and Destruction, but an extraordinary interposal of the Divine power and providence. For can we imagine that God will always work miracles on the behalf of his enemies? and alter the natural tendency of things, meerly that the wicked may go unpunished? Will he still refuse to avenge himself, when nothing more shall be required towards it, but to stand still and suffer *wickedness to overthrow the sinner*? On the contrary

Thirdly, We have abundant reason to conclude, that the providence of God will farther promote the unhappiness of a wicked people, and manifest it self in severe and signal judgments upon them. For

First, The Honour of God is very much concerned in it. When a People have generally *corrupted their ways*; when they that can hardly agree in any thing else, can yet unanimously conspire, to break the Laws, and dare the Power and Justice of God; if he should still *keep silence*, if such publick affronts, such combinations of Sinners do not move him to the execution of judgment upon them: Men will be ready to conclude with those *Zeph. 1. 12. That God doth neither good nor evil.* He is therefore concerned for the honour of his providence, to convince the world, that *he is a God that judgeth in the Earth*, and governeth the Nations.

*Nations of it, to arise and visit for these things, and to avenge himself on such a Nation as this.* Upon occasion of such high and notorious provocations, such a general defection from God, even good men are ready to expostulate with him, in the Language of *Jehosaphat* and *David*; *O our God wilt thou not judge them? How long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?* And then, if ever, it seemeth necessary, for the God to whom vengeance belongeth to shew himself, and to make his power and justice known, by the judgments that he executeth. These National judgments, are such publick manifestations of the Providence and Justice of God, as all the Neighbouring Countries cannot but observe; they are warnings and examples to all the World, teaching *all men to fear*, proclaiming the name of God to all the ends of the earth, and causing it to be *said among the Nations, the Lord reigneth.* And therefore there is abundant reason to expect them from a God that is so highly concerned for the honour of his great name.

Secondly, God hath expressly declared, that his Providence shall interpose in promoting the happiness or misery of a People, according to their doings: That this is the course, he is resolved to take with the Nations of the earth, *to pull down, or to build up*, according as they persist in, or turn from their evil ways. *Jer 18. 7, 8, 9, 10. At what instant*

*I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: If that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil: I will repent of the evil I thought to do unto them. And at what instant, I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to build and to plant it: If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then will I repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. The Lord hath a controversy with the Nations: He will plead with all flesh, he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the Lord. Jer. 25. 31.* And accordingly we find

Thirdly, That the Providence of God hath always interposed in this manner, that in all ages his judgments have followed the prevailing wickedness of a Church or Nation. When God saw that the wickedness of man was great, and that all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth, he sent an overwhelming deluge, to cleanse it of its corrupt inhabitants. And by fire and brimstone from heaven, consumed the proud and lustful Cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*. What a succession of dreadful plagues, did God send on the oppressing *Egyptians*? And what terrible destruction was made of the *Amorites*, and all the Kingdoms of *Canaan*, when at length their iniquities were become full? And all along the Old Testament, we find the judgments of



of God, Famine or Pestilence, Captivity or the Sword, continually following the growing wickedness of his People *Israel*. And when at length they had *killed the Prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto them*; when they would not hearken to the gracious invitations of the Blessed Jesus, and the Son of God himself could not persuade them to repent, the Lord brought their greatest fears upon them; *The Romans came and took away their place and und Nation*. And when the conquering *Romans* themselves, had laid aside that temperance and justice, by which they had been raised; and to their other abominable sins had superadded their Blasphemies against God, and most barbarous violence and cruelty to his people, erecting pillars to their Emperors, as Trophies of their abolishing Christianity: Then did the Providence of God manifest it self in many severe and signal judgments upon them. In the reign of one Emperor; there was in *Rome* a most raging Famine; a Plague, of which, we are told, there dyed in that City 2000 a day: Great multitudes were slain in a Sedition; and a great part of the wealth of the City was consumed by Fire from Heaven. And besides these under *Commodus*, there were many of the like Judgments under their following Emperors until *Constantine*. And when the *Christian* Emperor at length fell into all manner of Vice and Wickedness, the

*Goths*

*Goths* and *Vandals*, and other rude and barbarous Nations, were let loose upon it, and suddenly made most terrible havock and destruction of it. But we need not search into Ancient, or Foreign Chronicles, for instances of the wrath of God punishing the sins of a provoking people. For if a long and bloody War amongst our selves, and all the woful effects of it; a wasting and devouring Plague, and most dreadful and consuming Fires, may be reckoned as publick Judgments; the sins of this Age and Nation have not altogether gone unpunished. This then hath manifestly been the constant course of Gods providence, to shewre down his Judgments on a sinful people. And that we may rationally conclude from hence, that it will be so still, will appear, if we consider these two things.

First, That God is the same Wise, and Just, and Holy God, and Governour of the world that ever he was. He is *the Lord that changes not*; and *his Dominion endureth throughout all Generations*. Are not his ways still equal? Will not the Judge of all the world still do right? Is not his hatred of sin as great as ever? and his inclination to punish it? Doth he repent of his past severity, or find cause to correct the wonted method of his providence? Doth not *the Lord still see, or hath he forsaken the earth*? If God be still *the Governour among the Nations*; If

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his providence be still directed by the same wisdom, and holiness, and justice, we may safely conclude, that his dealing with sinful nations, as to the substance of it, will be the same too? that because he hath not, therefore he will not, finally acquit a wicked and impenitent people; but sooner or later, as he hath always done, will *visit their iniquities with Rods, and their sins with Scourges.*

Secondly, The Spirit of God in Scripture doth use this very way of arguing from former examples of Gods judgments. *Jer. 25. 29. God doth thus reason with the Nations. He telleth them, they shall drink the cup of his Fury: For, saith he, Lo, I begin to bring evil on the City which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Do I punish them for their iniquities, and shall I not punish you for yours? ye shall not be unpunished; for I will call for a Sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts.* After the same manner doth St. Peter argue, *2 Pet. 2. 5.* and the following verses. *If God spared not the old world, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turned the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes,* he inferreth, That *the Lord still knoweth how,* that is, is still able and ready, *to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished;* αδίκους εις ημεραν κριστου *καλαζομενους τινεσιν,* that is, To reserve the unjust being punished here, in some such remarkable manner,  
as

as the Old World, *Sodom* and *Gomorrha* were, unto the day of Judgment, when they shall receive their eternal doom and recompence. St. Paul in the 11th to the *Romans*, sheweth the danger the *Gentile* Christians were in, from Gods severity on the unbelieving *Jews.* *Because of unbelief they were broken off; be not high-minded but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Rom. 11. 20, 21.* He telleth us also plainly, *1 Cor. 10. 11.* That the judgments which God sent upon the *Jews* in the Wilderness, happened unto them for examples, and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. To teach all Nations, to the end of the world, to expect the like Judgments if they are finners like them. If the case then of a sinful people be thus desperate, if prevailing wickedness will thus certainly make them unhappy; not only by it self, and the fruits that naturally spring from it; but also by provoking the wrath and pulling down the judgments of God upon them; Doth it not greatly behove us in time to look about us, and to see whether the clouds be not gathering, and the wrath of God ready to fall in most horrible tempests upon us? I come therefore

Secondly, To shew, That we of this Nation are very much concerned, in the truth of the Proposition I have been now proving, and that it

*propheseth evil concerning us.* This will be sufficiently manifest, if we do but *search and try our ways*, and impartially consider what great sinners we are. A meditation very proper and seasonable at this time, now that we are met together *to call our sins to remembrance*, and to humble our selves for them. Give me leave therefore, to *set* some of them *in order before you*, and briefly to represent the sinful state and condition of this our Nation.

And here I am entering upon a subject, will afford us equal matter, both of wonder and of grief; of wonder, that there should be such and so much wickedness practised, where so pure and holy a Religion is professed; and of grief too, that we should be these Offenders, and *Englands* sins the matter of our astonishment. If a man should barely contemplate the purity of our Religion, and the great stir we make about it, with what heat and zeal we contend about some little matters relating to it, he might with reason enough conclude, that we were the most religious and holy people upon earth: But if he come once abroad, and look but with half an eye upon the lives and common practices of men amongst us, he would soon find he was mistaken in his conclusion, and that the most zealous pretenders to the most pure and holy Religion, may be as corrupt and wicked; as those that have *no true knowledge of God in their*  
Land.

*Land.* Are not Atheism and Infidelity openly avowed by our Heroick Sinners, and some pretended Refiners of Wit and Reason amongst us? Who, if they will allow *him* to be a Fool that *saith in his heart there is no God*, it is because he saith it only *in his heart*, and declareth it not with them in more publick and daring expressions. And amongst those that *profess to know God*, how many *in works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate?* Blasphemies, Oaths, and Curtes seem to be affected, as the greatest Ornaments of Speech; in which men are as loud, as *Baals* Priests were in their Prayers, and repeat them as often too, as if like them they were afraid lest God should not hear; lest *judgment should sleep, or their damnation slumber.* How many such *walkers* have we of whom *St. Paul* could not speak without *weeping; whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who inordinately mind earthly things?* *Rioting and Drunkenness, Chambering and Wantonness*, are such general and publick vices, that they can hardly now be called the *works of darkness*; not that they better become the light now than formerly, but those that commit them are less afraid of it: Fraud and cozening, lying and injustice, are the common methods of pursuing the profits of this world; and hardly ever any age was better skilled, or more practised, in the several

ral arts of cheating and over-reaching one another. Where is that undiffembled and hearty love, which our Lord hath made the principal badge and cognizance of his Disciples? How are we estranged and divided from one another? And how jealous of all attempts for the uniting and reconciling of us? How uncharitable are we in our censures, how bitter in our revilings, how merciless and revengeful in our behaviour one towards another? How is every thing that is Sacred profaned by us? How great and scandalous are our neglects, how irreverent and hypocritical our performances of the duties of Gods worship? How full of iniquity our most holy things? I have not time to be more particular; we are thus, and much more sinful, after all the various methods of heaven to reform us. *What could God have done more to his Vineyard, that he hath not done in it?* We have had *line upon line, and precept upon precept*? the brightest discoveries of our duty, and most frequent and earnest invitations to perform it: But all this while God hath *stretched forth his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people*. God hath placed us in a fruitful and pleasant Land, and *given us all things richly to enjoy*. We have had *peace within our Walls, no leading into Captivity, no just complaining in our streets*; but have lived in ease and quiet, whilst almost every corner of the  
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World beside, hath been filled with violence, and rapine, and blood. How many, and how wonderful have our deliverances been, from the secret conspiracies and the open violence of our *Romish Adversaries*? *Yea what Nation is there that hath had God so nigh unto them, for all we could call upon him for?* But so prodigious hath been our Ingratitude, that we have frustrated the design of all this goodness which should have led us to repentance, and the strongest *Cords of the divine Love* have been too weak to *draw* us to our God; as if we had resolved to outdo the miracles of his mercy, by a more miraculous Ingratitude. *Thus have we requited the Lord, O foolish people and unwise!* God hath sometimes used severer methods with us, and sent *his judgments into our land*, that from thence *the inhabitants might learn righteousness*. But we have multiplied our transgressions whilst his Rod hath been upon our backs, and *in the time of our distress have sinned yet more against him*. God hath *stricken us*, but we have *revolted more and more*, and have come out of the fire but more hardned and more unmalleable. If all this then be a true, though not a full account of our wicked state, as I would to God it were possible to prove the contrary, certainly put all together, and it will make up the character of a most Prodigiously wicked, ungrateful and incorrigible  
People.

People. What abundant reason then have we to conclude, notwithstanding all *the great things God hath lately done for us*, and the most hopeful appearances we now have, that *for all this his anger is not turned away from us, but his hand is stretched out still*; and that ere long, if we take not due and timely care to prevent it, we may to our utter confusion, experience what a *fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God*. Methinks now the consideration of that sad and terrible abode our sins do make, that *fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to devour us*, they so justly call for, should *prick us all to the heart*, and make us ready to cry out with St. Peter's hearers, *Acts. 2. Men and Brethren what shall we do? What shall we do to be saved from these Calamities, to fly from this Wrath to come?* If this now be the Frame and Language of our Souls, then are we rightly disposed, as they were, to hear our duty; and I would to God it might be with as good success. And thus I come to the next thing I am to do, which is

Thirdly, To shew what is to be done by us, for the preventing that evil our sins threatens us with.

First, We should humble our selves before God, and *sigh and cry for the abominations are done in the midst of us*. But Oh! what sighs, what sorrow, can

can be great or loud enough for us? For us, who are not only to bewail the sins of some few particular persons, but of a whole *land that lieth in wickedness*; not only some of the lowest rank, but the highest and most provoking abominations? Certainly never any had greater reason than we have at this day, to break out into that passionate wish of the Prophet *Jeremiah, Oh that our heads were waters, and our eyes fountains of tears, that we might weep day and night: Because of the wickedness we have committed to provoke the Lord to anger*. Did our Blessed Lord weep over *Jerusalem*, that ungrateful City, when he considered the greatness of her sins, and the nearness of her destruction; though he was himself without sin, and no ways accessory to the provoking that wrath was coming upon them? And can we look with dry eyes, and unaffected hearts, on those numerous transgressions we have all a share in, on those future judgments we have so much reason to fear, and the best of us all have helped to deserve? God forbid we should be thus insensible! O let us in time, we pretend to do it at this time, *humble our selves and God will exalt us*; Let us *mourn and God will comfort us*; *He will give us beauty for ashes, the oyl of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness*; Let us offer unto God the *Sacrifices of broken and contrite hearts*, and the *High and lofty One will dwell with*

*us, revive and comfort us; Let us turn to him with weeping and fasting and mourning, and even rent our hearts before him; for then, saith the Prophet Joel, Chap. 2. The Lord will be jealous for his people, and pity his land.*

Secondly, To our sorrow and humiliation let us joyn our prayers, implore his pardon, and deprecate the wrath of God. Let us take with us words, and turn to the Lord, and say unto him, Take away all our iniquities and receive us graciously; Let us beseech him with all that affection and importunity, which becometh the importance of the suit, *not to remember our offences, not to take vengeance of our sins, but to spare his people whom he hath redeemed.* Hearty and fervent Prayer hath a mighty prevailing power with God: The greatest blessings are promised to it, and the hardest things have been effected by it: It hath opened and shut the *windows of heaven*, and restored departed souls to their forsaken bodies: It defeated the malice of *Haman*, the wisdom and counsel of *Achitophel*, and put to flight an army of a thousand thousand *Ethiopians*: It hath prevailed with God to revoke the judgments he hath denounced, and to deliver his people after he had declared he would *deliver them no more.* How then should this encourage us *to lift up our hearts with our hands to God in the heavens*; to embrace all opportunities of pouring out our supplications before him, both  
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in our closets, and our houses of prayer? To pray without ceasing, with the utmost vigour of our affections; To cry mightily unto God, to wrestle and not give over, till with *Jacob* we have prevailed, prevailed with God and obtained his blessing?

Thirdly, We must add the reformation and amendment of our lives. Otherwise our Humiliation will be mockery, and our Prayer sin. Our sins are the *Achans*, the *troublers of Israel*; and were but these *accursed things put away from amongst us*, we might then be confident, that God would be appeased and the Nation flourish. It is *to the wicked only that God saith there is no peace.* But the *work of righteousness, is peace, and the effect of Righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.* O then that we would all know, that in this our day we would know the things that belong unto our peace: That every one of us would bid an eternal farewell to his sins, in that passionate stile of returning *Ephraim*; *What have we to do any more with you?* Hence ye disturbers of our peace, ye provokers of our God, and most treacherous underminers of the safety and happiness, both of Church and State. Let us then resolve, and if we do it not we have but dissembled with God in our approaches this day, Let us resolve henceforward to ingage with all our might, in bridling our passions, in curbing our appetites, in mortifying our lusts, in pulling  
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down the strong holds of Satan in us, and in bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. And thus fighting the good fight of Faith, we may as effectually promote, the safety and honour of our Country, as if we had served in its Fleets or Armies. This is the way to strengthen the hands of them that fight for us, to send them most effectual relief and succour, to bring down the Lord of hosts to go before them, the God of Israel to be their Reward, to be a wall of fire round about them; and the glory in the midst both of them and us. O that my people had hearkened unto me, saith God, and Israel had walked in my ways: I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. Ps. 81. 13, 14.

But is it not, may some object, an universal Reformation that must produce these happy effects? To what purpose then will our personal and particular Reformation serve? For the answering of this I shall proceed to the last thing I am to do, which is

Fourthly, To endeavour by some proper motives to persuade every one to do his own part in that; the general practice whereof is the only certain means, to procure the favour and divert the judgments of God. To this end therefore let us consider these following things.

First, That a General Reformation is nothing else,

else, but the Reformation of all Particulars, and if ever it be wrought amongst us, it must be the work of particular persons, and the result of every one's doing his own part. Let us not then stay for examples, but rather contend for the honour of being examples to others. Let us strive who shall be first, and most active, in so noble a design, in setting forward that work, wherein the Honour and Happiness of our Country is so highly concerned. How great an influence might your examples have upon this whole City? And how soon do the manners and fashions of that overspread the Nation? You are therefore more concerned than others to begin this great and blessed work; to cause your light so to shine before; and above other men, that seeing your good works, they may be won by the charms of a bright and illustrious virtue, to follow your steps, and to glorify your Father which is in heaven. And this would advance your reputation, and perpetuate your memories more than all the dignities of this world.

Secondly, Though by doing our own parts, we should not be able to do much towards a General Reformation, yet we might make up such a number, for whose sake God might spare and bless the whole Land. How ready was God to have spared even Sodom it self, had there been but ten righteous persons found in it. He did spare the City

City Zoar for the sake of *Lot* and the small company with him. A single act of one single man staid the fury of a devouring Plague, and restored health to the Congregation of *Israel*. *Pf. 106. 30. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment; and so the plague was stayed.* To which I may add that gracious Proclamation we find published *Jer. 5. 1. Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment and seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.* One faithful Magistrate executing Judgment had saved that great City. How then should this encourage you to a zealous and upright execution of the Resolution ye have made, Not to bear the Sword in vain, but to make it a terror to evil-doers: Thus avowedly to set your fellyes to destroy the works of the Devil: To be hearty and couragious in the cause of God and righteousness, in the midst of so crooked and perverse a Nation; To contemn all the censures and reproaches the execution of justice and judgment may expose you to? Who knoweth how far this might prevail with God? If a few righteous men can yet save us, none so likely to do it, as such Magistrates, by such heroick piety and vertue. There may be a time indeed when the sins of a Nation are so ripe, that though *Noah, Daniel and Job* were in it, they could not avert the judgments of God, yet consider

Thirdly,

Thirdly, That however *They may deliver themselves by their righteousness.* Our personal reformation may procure a refuge for us in the day of Gods wrath. Thus *Noah* escaped the Deluge of waters, and *Lot* the flames of *Sodom*; and those that sighed and cried for the abominations of *Jerusalem*, the fury of that destroying Angel, who went through the midst of it. In what manner God doth often deal with good men, when his judgments are abroad in the earth, we have at large described in *Pf. 91. Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flyeth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh thee.* If notwithstanding it should seem good to the Divine Wisdom to involve us in the common calamity, yet let us consider

Fourthly, That the conscience of our own personal reformation would be then a most comfortable support to us. What a reviving consideration would it be, when the judgments of God are upon us, that we are not the guilty causes of them; that we have done our parts to prevent them, and are clear from the blood of all men? That even these things will work together for our good, because we love God and keep his Commandments; That all these clouds cannot intercept the light of Gods countenance, or hide his face or favour from us: that



no tribulation nor distress; neither cold nor heat, nor famine, nor nakedness; nor peril, nor any thing able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Lastly, Consider how unsuccessful soever our personal reformation may be in promoting the publick, or our own particular good here; it will not fail of a great and glorious reward hereafter. For so an entrance shall be admittred unto us into that City, which hath Foundations, whose builder and maker is God; into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: Where we shall be free from sin, and all the dreadful consequences of it: and when not only the Cities and Nations of this world, but this world and time it self shall be no more, we shall be still secure in the enjoyment of the most perfect peace and happiness. To conclude then, I exhort and beseech you all, as you regard the Honour and Preservation of your Country, your own present Good and Safety, and the everlasting happiness of the Life to come; by all that is valuable and dear to you, both in this and the other world; that you would no longer delay that Reformation, in which all these things are so highly concerned. O that there were such an heart in every one of us, to repent and turn from all our transgressions, to fear God, and to keep his commandments always, that it might be well with us and with our children for ever, Amen.