

GOD IN THE SEASONS;

or, how to reap the blessings of the Covenant made with Noah.

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Gen. viii. 20—"And Noah builded an altar, &c. . . . ver. 21—And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake. . . . ver. 23, While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, &c., . . . shall not cease."

It is sad to observe how soon the history of man becomes a history of sin and suffering. The preceding chapters record the melancholy extent to which human depravity had developed itself in the days of Noah, and the judgments which, as might have been expected under the government of a righteous God, it brought down upon the existing race. A deluge of water swept the entire generation, with a few exceptions, from the face of the earth. The event remains in history a monument of God's distributive justice. It is referred to in later Scripture as a token of a yet coming retribution, and of the suddenness as well as certainty with which destruction shall overtake the impenitent. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the coming of the Son of man."

Yet judgment was not unmixed with mercy. We see the forbearance of God, in his striving long with those antediluvian transgressors. During a hundred and twenty years, while the Ark was preparing, the servant of the Lord warned his ungodly contemporaries of the approaching catastrophe. But all in vain. Yet, the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation. And we see mercy in sparing a remnant, as well as in warning the mass. "Come thou," it was said to Noah, "and all thy house into the Ark: for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." Noah was saved, and his house with him: not only so, but mercy so far rejoiced over judgment, that through him words of comfort were spoken to the races to come after him. The heart of God, yearning over the folly of his children, found utterance in the assuring words of

our text; and by a condescending pledge that the course of nature should go on undisturbed again by such a catastrophe, the hand of industry was encouraged which else might have been paralyzed, and the earth, instead of being destroyed, was turned into a theatre for the manifestation of long-suffering and mercy. Here is the promise by which the husbandman is encouraged to till the ground, in the hope that he shall gather the fruits of his labours. Here is the guarantee for seed-time and harvest, of which even the irreligious who walk the earth, reap the benefit. Here is the promise which the pious husbandman pleads, and here is the intimation to others of that goodness by which the Father of all would lead them to repentance.

I. Before examining more particularly the import of the promise, it may be profitable to consider the act of faith on the part of Noah, with which this promise was given.

II. We may consider what the promise amounts to—what it does not mean, as well as what it means.

I. The act of Noah mentioned in the text; or more largely the gospel of Noah's day, as it appears in his faith and worship.

(1.) It claims our notice that Noah was eminently "a righteous man," and his safety was connected with his righteousness. This is testified concerning him very plainly. Jehovah recognises his righteousness, when assuring him of exemption from the general judgment, "for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation" (chap. vii. 1). The character of "perfect" is applied to him, as to Job: