

and sets the solitary in families, places them designedly in circumstances where they are always exposed to trials and calamities which they often experience;—He intends that their hopes should be often frustrated, their designs baffled, their families thinned and desolated by diseases which, perhaps, leave their thoughtless neighbors undisturbed. The Christian has no earthly good which he may not soon lose; he has no firmer hold upon temporal enjoyments than other men, and is sometimes wrecked in the storm which the wicked outride in safety. Perhaps, too, the things which he prizes most, he is most likely to lose. Where the current of his affections sets with the strongest power, where his desires fasten with the intensest eagerness, there perhaps more than anywhere else he will meet with disappointment. If there be one form of worldly good which he seeks more earnestly than another, of that he may be deprived; if there is one whom he loves with an affection peculiarly strong, that one may turn to be his bitterest enemy, or may be cut down like a flower in the freshness of its bloom. Not that God takes pleasure in dashing his brightest hopes, but because these strong attachments are the most insidious and dangerous foes to his Christian character, and because disappointment in regard to these is most useful to those who are exercised thereby.

Hence, as the Christian is taught beforehand that he will be called to undergo tribulation, it becomes his interest, as apart from this it is his duty, so to moderate his love for the world and the things that are in the world, as to be prepared at any time to relinquish them in obedience to the will of God. The more that he clings to them, the more painful will it be to yield them up, as in all probability he will be called to do.

But why, it may be asked, why should it be so? We may not be able to discover all the reasons, but we can discover enough to exhibit the wisdom and the grace of God in such an appointment, which I remark, thirdly,