

ment," it was constantly practised by them under the Old Testament, and we find it continued by God's people under the New. Our Lord himself fasted ; he speaks to his disciples of things that could be effected only "through prayer and fasting ;" and though in answer to a question put to him in reference to this practice by the disciples of John, he speaks of it as an exercise not so specially appropriate to the circumstances of his own followers at that particular time, he intimates the approach of a season when, as it would be appropriate to their circumstances, so would it be practised by them. "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them ? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." Accordingly we find that when he was taken from them they *did* fast; they were "in fastings often," nor did they almost ever ordain persons to the work of the ministry, or engage in any other important duty, without having first "fasted and prayed." Looking back to the earlier dispensation, David, we find, "wept and chastened his soul with fasting." Daniel, too, sought the Lord "with fasting and sackcloth and ashes ;" for a season "eating no pleasant bread," nor suffering "wine and flesh to come into his mouth." When Jonah proclaimed to the people of Nineveh, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown, the people believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the King of Nineveh ; and he arose from his throne, and he laid aside his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, (by the decree of the King

and his nobles) saying, let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing, let them not feed nor drink water : But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God ; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent : and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way—and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them ; and he did it not."

Fasting, as we are reminded by the last instance of it is a *natural expression* of godly sorrow. It is not an arbitrary thing, but a thing which in deep grief we cannot but choose to do. Only let our sins be vividly called to our remembrance, and let us be burdened and bowed down under a sense of them, and we shall have small appetite for dainty meat, and the pampering of the body will be the last thing we shall think of. It is from its being thus founded in nature that the practice of fasting has been enjoined and observed at seasons when deep grief is usually felt, such as when the affecting scenes of Calvary are to be more especially brought under the view in the Sacrament of the Supper, or as when some calamity is felt or apprehended, such as plague, pestilence, war, or famine, or civil or ecclesiastical convulsion. At such seasons of sorrow, a people have been naturally led, with one accord, to appoint and keep a day, or days, for afflicting their souls ; and as they have felt that while the grief already pressing upon them has led to this ordinance, the ordinance itself has had a powerful re-action, and tended greatly to deepen their godly sorrow, they have also been led at other times to appoint fasts for the purpose of a-