

out of captivity—once taken from under Satan and sin, and liability to eternal death—and when ignorant themselves how to go—how to hold on their course—how to maintain their path, and promote their sanctification—when they would be themselves bewildered and uncertain how to act best—or how to act at all—when the events of God's providence would perplex or bring them to a stand—it is in these circumstances that God is the guide of his people—their leader—that he leads them forth by the right way—the *right* way. The people of God, if not bewildered, uncertain how to act, would often choose a way for themselves—would chalk out their own course—would form a chart of the wilderness for themselves. They thereby often go wrong, and were God allowing them to pursue that way—it would never bring them to the city of habitation. They may think that such and such is best for them. They may say concerning God's providence: would that it had been otherwise!—would that it had been arranged so and so!—would that it had happened thus! But God takes the direction of his providence into his own hands. He sees the end from the beginning—he sees what is best for us—and leads in his own way that He may bring us to a city of habitation. Now, what is particularly to be noted in regard to the way by which God leads his people is that it is generally a way of affliction or trial. And hence the qualifying expression here—“*the right way* ;” for, were the way always one of happiness and prosperity, we would be all apt enough to suppose that it was the *right* way. We would not challenge that. But it is because it is generally the way of affliction—because it is too often the reverse of what even the people of God would wish—because it seems to be the wrong way—it is at all events a way which they themselves would not choose—therefore, we say, it is that the pen of inspiration calls it “*the right way* :”—it is the right way in opposition to all we may be apt to suppose or imagine. An attentive observance of providence will shew to us that it is by the way of affliction—by a path marked by much suffering and trial, for the most part, that the people of God are led. The history of God's people, as traced in the Bible from Abraham downwards, shews this—Abraham tried by God, and receiving the illustrious testimony at last: “Now I know that thou fearest God:” Jacob

losing Joseph, and Simeon, and threatened with the loss of Benjamin also—“All these things” said the Patriarch, “are against me”:—David, the man after God's own heart, having every kind of affliction, almost, poured into his cup, and leaving on record an experience so extensive and so varied that every child of God repairs to his songs as furnishing the best expression of his own peculiar joys or woes:—the prophets, persecuted, afflicted, tormented:—the apostles—the early Christians—and through every age, whether in the public records of the Church the lives of God's people be recorded, or in the more private annals of Christian biography. Did not the Apostles exhort the early converts that it was through much tribulation that they must enter the kingdom of God? Did not Christ predict: “in the world ye shall have tribulation.” And when the throng of the redeemed are beheld around the throne, is it not as those who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? That they have come out of great tribulation is one of the especial circumstances or marks connected with them. *Great* tribulation: it is generally *great* tribulation that accomplishes God's designs and prepares the soul for heaven—the city of habitation. Sanctified affliction accomplishes the best of purposes. But it is generally not a little affliction that will do it:—the process needs to be repeated:—the stroke needs to be reiterated. Were not the children of Israel forty years in the wilderness—and was not all this necessary that God might prove them and try them, and that they might learn his law? Was it not necessary to prove what was in them, and that they might thus know themselves, and repent and seek the Lord? Some may need less correction than others, but undoubtedly it is true—that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. It is thus the people of God are disciplined and prepared for heaven, are made partakers of the divine holiness, and fit for entering the city of habitation. It is by a circuitous path, often one strewn with thorns, lying through the wilderness, its most gloomy recesses perhaps, the most destitute of verdure, and the most studied with dark precipitous, and awful mountains—it is through such a path that they are led to a city of habitation, a city where they may dwell—a place contrasted with the desert as a place