

as Adam was, or as Christ is. It is true, the promise concerned others as well as himself; and in a certain sense Noah was a second father of the human race. The blessing was connected, in the way of gracious reward, with his faith; and others are blessed along with him. So it is in the case of many a good man. He believes and is saved; and "his house" with him. But we do not say, *in* him; or that his righteousness is directly imputed to them. In the strict sense of representatives, whose acts affect others directly, Adam and Christ stand alone. They are the "*first*" and the "*second*" man: Adam the head of the entire race; Christ of a spiritual seed. The covenant with Noah concerned one matter simply, and that rather a temporal than a spiritual matter. It was indeed made with him for the benefit of many; but it was not a covenant of works; nor was it the covenant of grace, though to Noah it was a certain development of the latter; a leaf of it—an appendage to it. It was a promise having an important relation to the designs of grace; and to all who have Noah's faith, it comes with the other and better blessings of that covenant—comes as itself a spiritual benefit, though concerning earthly things. To others,—to the unbelieving—it is not such; it is but in the forbearance of God they share in the earthly good, to which believers have the covenant right, and which is to them only a real and promised blessing. Noah received the promise as a believing and accepted man; others enjoy it with him for good or for evil, in the love or only in the long-suffering of God, just according as they are, or are not, heirs with him of the righteousness which is by faith.

II. Let us examine the promise itself. The terms of it are remarkable. It is a promise of mercy: "I will not again curse the ground for man's sake." Yet the reason given for it might seem more fitted to

preface an announcement of judgment; "*for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth,—(for, or though, as some prefer to translate). Strange reason! but how worthy of God! He fetches an argument from man's weakness for the restraint of his own power. He will not contend with his poor sinning creature at such odds. Man's depravity—his inveterate, and, except by grace, incurable depravity, might warrant judgment without measure; but the Creator sees in it an appeal from his power to his mercy in man's behalf: "I will spare him; by goodness will I try him, and not again destroy the earth as I have done." Behold the relentings of a Father's heart!—of one who loves to bless rather than to curse—to whom judgment is "his strange work"!*

It is not implied that the original curse on the earth is totally removed. What is said is that he will not again curse the ground in such sort:—so, one clause explains another,—"*neither will I again smite everything living as I have done.*"

It is an assurance that the course of nature shall not again be suddenly interrupted, or the elements confused, as when the fountains of the great deep had been broken up, and the windows of heaven opened. Sun and moon should fulfil their revolutions with constancy; earth and sea should obey their assigned limits; day and night, summer and winter, should observe their vicissitudes. How great is the power which has ordained these laws, and controls these elements! How surely, by the removal for one moment of the Creator's upholding hand, would the order of the universe be again exchanged for uproar and wild misrule! How slight the change necessary in the position of the earth's axis how small the derangement in its relation, to the sun, to affect injuriously those alternations of day and night, of cold and heat, of seed-time and harvest! How easily by