

cunning, yea, bent on mischief, on falsehood, detraction and destruction, through selfish and self-interested notions.

The Psalmist has here subjoined a statement which may be viewed, either as a reason of the mighty man's boasting, or as the source of comfort to such as are pained by the consideration of his mischief, or participators in its evil effects. "The goodness of God endureth continually," &c.

I. It is because his mercies fail not, that the wicked are *not consumed*. The goodness of God is strongly and strikingly exhibited in bearing long with proud and presumptuous transgressors. Though his justice condemns them, and his holiness abhors them, and his power could in a moment silence their boasting, terminate their mischief, and destroy their might, yet he waits to be gracious. He has no pleasure in their death. He restrains his avenging arm, gives time for repentance, continues their health and prosperity, loads them with his benefits. The Lord is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works: he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil. It is his his air they breathe, his provision they receive, his comforts they enjoy. But for his goodness, their table might have been turned into a snare, and their feasts into mourning; their existence might have been embittered by woes and events unnumbered; their sins might have suddenly found them out; their mischief met with its merited recompense; and their impious exultation ended in misery and perdition, in weeping and wailing.

The original term here rendered *goodness* is peculiarly expressive. It denotes literally the over-flowing of benevolence, the abundant out-pouring of a kind and bountiful heart. It is applied to a camel which may be continually milked without growing dry, and to a spring always flowing with fresh supplies of water. Such is the exuberance of the Divine compassion, of the excellent loving-kindness of God, which has a length and breadth. It embraces the chief of sinners; it cancels the greatest crimes. It exceeds in its freeness and fullness all the possible conjectures and conclusions of men. It extends to sinfulness in its most aggravated forms; to the multiplied offences, effrontery and exultation of mighty men.

The case of Doeg presented a most signal exemplification of the Divine goodness. He was chargeable with crimes of no common magnitude. He was a dissembler, a false accuser, a deliberate murderer of Jehovah's priests; yea, he gloried in his infamous deeds. He was consequently, humanly speaking, a most fit object for Jehovah's vengeance, and well meriting a most marked display of the judgment of God. When standing before his master, Saul, exulting in pride, and rehearsing in vain-glorious parade and infamous delight, his cruel carnage of the priests of the Lord, and of the helpless inhabitants of the city of the priests, the messenger of heav-

en's wrath might have confronted him in visible form, and pronounced his doom; the destroying angel might have appeared to execute the sentence; yea, that God whose service he had spurned, whose servants he had slain, whose majesty he had so impiously insulted, whose authority he had so daringly despised, whose laws he had so flagrantly violated, might have hailed him in a voice of thunder, and made heaven and earth to witness a special act, a signal instance of retributive justice.

The goodness of God was then remarkably manifested in his enduring with much long-suffering this vessel of wrath; in his sparing for a moment this boaster in mischief; in his continuing for a time the strength and stability of this mighty man. And so contemplating the character and conduct of Doeg, the extent of his wickedness, the enormity of his crimes, and withal, his self-elation and triumphing on account of them, the Psalmist, instead of giving way to desponding thoughts, to unbelieving doubts regarding the perfections and government of God, ascribes all to his marvellous and continued goodness. He was confident that it was this, which in every case, prevented the immediate and sudden destruction of the ungodly. He was confident that it was this which permitted for a season the triumphing of the wicked. He knew that it was this which allowed for a time the melancholy play of progressive degeneracy and protracted guilt; yea, that lengthened out the time and the tranquility of the most worthless, that they might be led to repentance and to seek after God.

It is owing to the goodness of God that sentence against every evil work is not speedily executed; that every sin which men commit is not instantly punished. But his goodness becomes more apparent and more astonishing as human depravity increases, and human sinfulness abounds. When mischief is deliberately meditated and wrought; when the mighty among men are perfidious and cruel; when they exult in their craftiness, and glory in their crimes; when the proud are exalted; when they that work wickedness are set up; yea, when they that tempt God are protected and promoted, the forbearance of God becomes more remarkably manifested. It is then that the riches of his goodness and long-suffering are more conspicuously displayed; it is then that his merciful character shines forth in its adoring grandeur; it is then that his gracious compassion strikes with wonder and astonishment his believing people, and calls forth the confident confession here recorded by the Psalmist: "The goodness of God endureth continually."

II. But this statement may also be viewed as intimating the great source of the Psalmist's comfort amidst the treachery and cruelty which he now contemplated, and the sorrows which these occasioned, as well as the prospects which they gave of danger, distress, and even destruction to himself, and to them that