

CONVERSE WITH GOD IN SOLITUDE

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Converse with God in solitude by Richard Baxter & Benjamin Fawcett

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PREFACE.

If multitudes, who glory in their christian name, were not willingly without God in the world, there would not every where be found such melancholy proofs of aversion to sacred retirement. Every moment of time, and every capacity of nature, would not so studiously be consecrated to the low caresses of fellow worms. Nor would the natural, the unavoidable, and therefore common disappointments resulting from mortal friendship, be received with such horrible surprise or be felt with such exquisite pain; like the man that cried out, when his idols of silver and gold were stolen from him, They have taken away my gods, and what have I more?

Mr. Henry observes, where it is said of our Lord, He went up into a mountain apart to pray, "They are not Christ's followers that do not care for being alone; that cannot enjoy themselves in solitude, when they have none else to converse with, none else to enjoy but God and their own hearts."¹

Oh that all hearts may be so visited with the grace and Spirit of Jesus, as in this instance to make it their highest ambition to breathe his temper, and imitate his example ! Then the multitudes, who have so long and ardently sought their heaven in vain, amongst the tumults of business, or the thoughtless circles of mirth and gayety, will seek and find it in the recesses of devout retirement. Then will the flames of devotion, wherever they are now ascending, ascend yet higher, burn more constant, pure and fervent, and produce more lively foretastes of heavenly joy. That this small but heavenly tract may, through a divine blessing, contribute to answer such desirable purposes, is the sole end of its appearance in the present form.

B. W.

CONVERSE WITH GOD.

Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the father is with me.—*JOHN xvi. 32.*

CHAPTER I.

FRIENDS FORSAKING US IN OUR DISTRESS.

SECT. I. The connexion of the text with the context. **Sect. II.** A general plan of the work. **Sect. III. 1.** Why Christ suffered all his disciples to forsake him. **Sect. IV.—VI. 2.** How we may see ourselves forsaken by our friends. **Sect. VII. 3.** What an aggravated affliction it is to be forsaken by our friends. **Sect. VIII.—X. 4.** Considerations to reconcile us to such an aggravated affliction. **Sect. XI.** The chapter concludes with pointing out the happy tendency of such considerations.

SECT. I. CHRIST thought fit to foretel his disciples how they would

manifest their infirmity in forsaking him. This he did, more fully to convince them that "he knew what was in man," and that he voluntarily submitted to his being forsaken. Thus man did least for Christ, when Christ was doing most for man; even making atonement for man's reconciliation to God, and preparing the most effectual and expensive remedy for man's recovery. Christ foretold them of the consequence of their infirmity, to humble them; that they might not think too highly of themselves for having so freely confessed to him, "Now we are sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from

God." (ver. 30,) Immediately "Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Though Christ would have his servants know his graces in them, he would also have them know their own corruptions and infirmities. We are apt to judge of what we shall do hereafter, by what we feel at present. When we feel the stirring of some corruption, we are ready to think ourselves destitute of the contrary grace: And when we feel the exercise of faith, or love, we are ready to think we shall never more feel the contrary corruptions.

But Christ would keep us both humble and watchful, by acquainting us with the mutability and inconstancy of our minds. When it goes well with us, we forget the time is coming when it may go worse. We may say to ourselves, as Christ to his disciples, "Do we now believe? It is well. But the time may be coming, in which we may be shook by our remaining unbelief. Do we now rejoice in the love of God? The time may be coming when we may think ourselves forsaken of God, and that he treats us as enemies. Do we now pray with fervour? The time may come, when we shall seem to ourselves to be prayerless; or, at least, to pray in vain." What Christ here prophesied of his

disciples, exactly came to pass. In the garden, when he was sweating blood in prayer, they were sleeping. Though "the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak." They "could not watch with him one hour." When he was apprehended, "then all the disciples forsook him, and fled."

SECT. II. In the text there are three things that deserve our distinct consideration. First, Christ was forsaken by his own disciples, and left alone. Secondly, when the disciples left Christ, they were scattered every one to his own. They returned to their old habitations, acquaintance, and employments, as if their hopes and hearts had been almost broken, and all their labour lost in following