

THE EYES OF THE LORD UPON, AND HIS POWER ENGAGED ON THE BEHALF OF THOSE WHOSE HEARTS ARE UPRIGHT TOWARDS HIM

2Ch 16:9 For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him.

Notwithstanding Asa, king of Judah had received such remarkable tokens of divine goodness and power, in appearing for him, when Zarah the Ethiopian came out with a vast army against him, so that he obtained a complete victory over him, and returned with a large spoil; yet, when Baasha, king of Israel, attempted to build a city upon his borders, he distrusted the providence of God; betook himself to the king of Syria, and sent him gold and silver out of his own treasury, and out of the treasury of the house of the Lord, to prevail with him to break the league which he had entered into with the king of Israel, and make a diversion in his favour; which was accordingly done. Upon which, the prophet Hanani came unto him, and said, Because thou hast relied on the King of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God; therefore is the host of the King of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Then he reasons with him upon that remarkable success which he had against the Ethiopians. Were not the Ethiopians and the Sabines, a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand. Intimating, that had he relied upon the Lord his God now, and not upon the king of Syria, that the Syrian army would have been delivered into his hands. The reason is given in the words I have read, For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him. In speaking to which words, I shall

I. Inquire what we are to understand by the eyes of the Lord.

II. In what sense these are said to run to and fro throughout the whole earth.

III. The end of their running thus.

I. What we are to understand by the eyes of the Lord? These words are not to be understood literally, or in a corporal sense; for though the various parts of a human body are, in Scripture, attributed to God; yet we are not to entertain such a gross notion of the divine Being, as if he had a body consisting of parts like ours. When, therefore, any thing of this kind is ascribed to him, it is only expressive of some power, or action done by him, which is similar thereunto.

Hast thou eyes of flesh, or seest thou as man seest? No, Jehovah has not eyes of flesh; he does not see as man sees. Man can only see things that are near him, not at any great distance; but the eyes of the Lord, as in our text, run to and fro throughout the whole earth. Man's eyes can only see and observe objects, one after another; but the eyes of the Lord behold altogether; all objects throughout the whole universe, at one and the same time. The eyes of man can only see when there is light; but light and darkness are both alike to the Lord. Only external objects are to be seen by the eyes of men; but the eyes of the Lord discern internal things; the heart of man, and the recesses of it. The eyes of men are often deceived; but the sight of God never. His are not eyes of flesh; nor does he see as man sees. But this is to be understood figuratively of him; and in our text, designs his all-seeing providence; and that, as concerned in a special manner with his own people; who are described as having their hearts perfect towards him.

This phrase, The eyes of the Lord, designs sometimes his general providence, as it respects every individual person. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, throughout the whole universe, beholding the evil and the good; evil men and good men; their dispositions and actions, whether good or bad; but here, and elsewhere, the eyes of the Lord, intend his all-seeing providence, as concerned in a special manner with his people. So we find in the prophecy of Zechariah, seven eyes are said to be upon one stone, laid before Joshua; which stone seems to be none other than that cut out of the mountain without hands, the stone which the builders refused, and is made the head of the corner; the foundation and chief corner stone, our Lord Jesus Christ. The eye of God, in its full perfection, signified by seven eyes, is said to be upon that stone. It is also upon every one that is laid upon that stone; built upon that sure foundation; which is matter of joy, as it is said, in the fourth chapter of that book. They shall rejoice when they see the plummet in the hand of Zerubabel, with those seven: they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro throughout the whole earth. The very phrase used in our text.

The eyes of the Lord are pure and holy. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Sin is the abominable thing which his righteous soul hateth; being contrary to his nature, repugnant to his will, and a breach of his righteous law. It makes men abominable in the sight of God. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water. He is not a God that takes pleasure in sin, neither shall evil dwell with him. He hates all the workers of iniquity, who make a trade and business of sinning. His eyes, as they are set upon the wicked, are upon them for evil, I will set mine eyes upon

them for evil, and not for good, And again. The eyes of Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, to destroy it. {[Am 9:4-8](#)} The eyes of the Lord, as they are set upon his own people, are like the eyes of doves; expressive of mildness, gentleness, tenderness, and love: but as they are set upon wicked men, his eyes are as flames of fire; expressive of wrath and vengeance; sparkling with rage and fury. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil; his countenance is a terrible one, and the effect of it is to cut them off from the face of the earth. But his eyes are set upon the righteous in a favorable way. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. {[Ps 34:15](#)} His eyes of providence are upon them, attended with love, mercy, and kindness. He takes delight in them, as they are clothed with the righteousness of his Son; for none are righteous, but such who are made so by his righteousness. No man is justified in his sight by the works of the law; but such as are clothed with the righteousness of Christ are accepted before him. He beholds them with pleasure, and he never turns his eyes from them. They are upon them for good. The eyes of some are full of envy; but his eyes are full of goodness. Is thine eye evil (envious) because I am good, kind, and bountiful? Such is the eye of the Lord towards his people, his righteous ones. It is good and bountiful. His eye is upon them to bestow all needful good; to cause all things to work together for good. His eye is an eye of love, grace, and mercy unto them. The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, and upon them that hope in his mercy. This is no other than his grace and mercy, which are from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him; and that according to his sovereign will and pleasure, who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and is gracious to whom he will be gracious, He looks upon his people with complacency and delight. His countenance beholds the upright. His own people are his Hephzibah, in whom he delights; his Beulah, to whom he is married: and as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so does he over them: yea, he rests in his love towards them, and rejoices over them with abundance of joy.

It is further said of the eyes of the Lord, that they try the righteous. His eyes behold, and his eye-lids try the children of men. The Lord tries the righteous; he distinguishes them from others, even in the way of his providence; for though he is the Saviour of all men, yet especially of them that believe. He distinguishes them by the gifts of his grace; which he makes them partakers of, while others are not: so that they have abundant reason to say, with admiration! Who hath made us to differ? In this sense are we to understand the eyes of the Lord, as they are concerned with his own people; which are no

other than his all-seeing providence, accompanied with his love and mercy towards them.

Now these eyes of his love and mercy were set upon them from everlasting, in his eternal councils and decrees. He loved them with an everlasting love. He looked upon them and chose them, in his Son, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and happy. He blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus. He gave them grace in Christ before the world began. He put them into the hands of his Son, made them his care and charge; and said unto him, as their surety, Feed the flock of slaughter. To which he agreed, and said, I will feed the flock of slaughter; even ye, O poor of the flock.

His eyes are upon them in time, even as soon as they are brought into the world. He takes them under his special protection, from their mother's womb; so says the apostle, Who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace. Not that he called him by his grace as soon as he was born; but so early he distinguished him by a special providence over him, in order to his being effectually called by grace in due time. This he observes concerning others, as well as himself. Who hath saved us, and called us; saved us to be called; saved us, in a special providential way. The Lord's eyes are upon all his people in a peculiar manner, as soon as they are born; and all the while they are in a state of unregeneracy. This is remarkably manifest in the case of the apostle Paul, I am now speaking of. What notice is taken of him in the sacred history, before he was effectually called by grace! When Stephen, the proto-martyr, was stoned, it is said, the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul: and, further it is observed, that Saul was consenting unto his death. There were multitudes consenting unto his death besides Saul; but he is particularly taken notice of, that the grace of God might be magnified in his conversion. It is further said, Saul made havoc of the Church. Saul was breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of Christ. Thus you see what notice was taken of him; how God's eye was upon him, even before he was called by grace; and that because he was a chosen vessel of salvation. So our Lord said to Nathaniel, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Before he was called either in a ministerial way, or effectually by the grace of God, the eye of the Lord was upon him. The Lord's eyes are upon all his people, even in this state, until the time comes in which they are to be effectually called. There is a time for every purpose under heaven; and there is a time for God's calling his people by his grace; for they are all of them called according to his purpose.

Now till this time Jehovah waits; waits to be gracious to them; waits as it were with longing eyes, till the time is up; and with respect to some, he waits even till the eleventh hour: and his long-suffering towards his people, whether it be longer or shorter, always ends in salvation; for the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is willing that all should come to repentance. When the set time is come, he passes by them, looks upon them; and his time is a time of love. He looks upon them not with loathing and contempt; but with commiseration. When no eye pities them, he looks upon them; and shews mercy to them. He looks upon them, while in their blood, and says unto them, live; and washes them from all their pollutions and defilements. He looks upon them, when in the hands of Satan; and snatches them from thence: observes them to be as brands in the burning, and takes them from thence. He looks upon them, and sees them in a pit, wherein is no water; in the mire and clay; and taking them from thence, he sets their feet upon a rock and establishes their goings. Thus he looks upon them with an eye of pity and compassion.

The Lord's eye still continues upon his people after conversion. He watches over them night and day, lest any hurt them. They are engraven upon the palms of his hands, and their walls are continually before him. As the Lord said concerning the temple at Jerusalem, Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually; {[1Ki 9:3](#)} so his heart and his eyes are perpetually upon them: and, as it is said of the land of Canaan, The eyes of the Lord are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, even to the end of the year: so the eyes of the Lord are upon his people, not only from the beginning of one year, to the end of it, but from the beginning of their life, unto the end of their days. Let us now inquire,

II. In what sense we are to understand this phrase, The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth? We have seen that these eyes of the Lord signify the all seeing providence of God, attended with his grace, mercy, and love; as concerned with his people in a special manner. But in what sense are we to consider these eyes of the Lord, as running to and fro throughout the whole earth?

The Omniscience of God reaches throughout the world, and to all creatures. He looks down from heaven, and beholds the sons of men; he looks upon the inhabitants of the earth, and considers all their works, whether they be good or bad. His eyes are upon the ways of men, whether right or wrong. He beholds all their goings, every step they take, whether in or out of the way of

God. There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves: for the darkness and the light are both alike to him. He fills heaven and earth with his presence. His general providence reaches to all creatures. He preserves man and beast; not only upholds them in their beings, but supplies their wants. The eyes of all are upon him, and he satisfieth the desire of every living thing. As in one age of the world and another, he has a people in various parts of the earth: so the all-seeing eye of his providence has been concerned, in a special manner with them; and extends to them, be they where they will. The children of God, those whom he hath predestinated to the adoption of children, according to the council of his will from everlasting, are said to be scattered abroad; some are in one place, and some in another. Hence Christ is said to come to gather these together, to reconcile them to God, by being a propitiation, not for the sins of the Jews only, but for all the people of God throughout the whole world: therefore, when he gave a commission to his ministering servants, he bid them go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; He so orders it in providence, that he either sends the gospel to them, or he brings them to it; or, however, calls them by his grace, and encourages them to look unto Christ, who says, Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. Hence we read of songs of praise from the uttermost parts of the earth; {[Isa 24:16](#)} songs of electing, redeeming, justifying, pardoning, adopting, regenerating, and sanctifying grace, from persons in the uttermost parts of the earth, that are partakers of his grace.

Let the wicked be where they may, they shall not escape his notice: Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them. So let the children of God be where they may, He will find them out. He is the great Shepherd of the sheep; and he will search for them in whatsoever corner they are; and where they have been scattered in the dark and cloudy day. The special providence of God reaches them all, attended with his grace, mercy, and goodness.

When, therefore, his eyes are said to run to and fro throughout the whole earth, on the behalf of these; we are not to suppose any local motion, or change of place, in God; for he is omnipresent. Though he is said, sometimes, in condescension to our capacities, to bow the heavens and come down, and to return to his place; yet these expressions are to be understood after the

manner of men; and not as true in a literal sense. When his eyes are said to run to and fro, it is expressive of his watchfulness over his people. As those who are watchful look here and there, and are very diligent in their observations; so the Lord watches over his people. He expresseth himself in this very language, As I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them to build, and to plant, saith the Lord. {[Jer 31:28](#)} He opens his eyes upon such poor worthless creatures as we are; for he that keepeth Israel, that watches over them, neither slumbers nor sleeps. The phrase is expressive of his readiness, and swiftness, to assist his people in times of difficulty and distress; and answers to that request of the church, where she says, Make haste, my Beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart, upon the mountains of spices. Thus the Lord is a present help in time of trouble. He is ready at hand to assist his people: he helps them, and that right early. His eyes run to and fro, here and there, on their behalf; and this in order to counter-work Satan, who is said to go to and fro in the earth; {[Job 1:7](#)} and is by the apostle represented as a roaring lion, that goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Now the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the earth, to counter-work this adversary; to watch over his people, that they may not be hurt and destroyed by him. He hath, as before observed, those that are the objects of his love and care, in various parts of the earth; and his eyes run to and fro every where on their behalf. Fear not, I will be with thee, I will bring thy seed (spiritual converts) from the East, and gather them from the West. I will say to the North give up, and to the South keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth. Thus you see what is the meaning of this figurative expression, and the propriety of using this phrase; because of the people of God being in different parts of the world, and because of the exquisite care the Lord takes of them. They are under his special notice; and therefore let them be where they will, his eyes are upon them. I now come,

III. To the end, or use, of the eyes of the Lord running to and fro throughout the whole earth. It is to shew himself strong on the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him. Here we shall

- 1. Consider the descriptive character of those who are so peculiarly the objects of his care and special providence. They are described as having their hearts perfect towards God.**
- 2. The exertion of divine power on their behalf. He will shew himself strong on the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him.**

1. The descriptive character given of them who are the care of providence in a special way of grace, mercy, and love: they are such whose heart is perfect towards God. What! is it possible any man's heart should be perfect towards God? It seems, we read of several persons, concerning whom this testimony is borne. It is said of Solomon, that his heart was not perfect, as was the heart of his father, David; which plainly implies, that the heart of David was perfect; and yet that great and good man had many blemishes in his life: but it seems his heart was sound and perfect. So it is said of Asa, even to this very Asa to whom our text has an oblique respect, that his heart was perfect all his days; and yet here is an intimation of some imperfection in him. Which may be reconciled thus: The bent of his heart was, in the main, towards God; and his heart was perfect, as to the outward worship of God; but not as to the inward exercise of grace, particularly faith, in as much as he relied not upon the Lord as he should have done, but upon the king of Syria. Hezekiah appeals to God himself, and says, Lord, remember how I have walked before thee with a perfect heart: and David, in the strength of divine grace, resolves to walk in his house with a perfect heart; but how are we to understand this phrase, a perfect heart?

No man's heart is so perfect in the present state, as to be entirely free from sin. The apostle Paul, speaks of sin dwelling in him; It is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me. When I would do good, evil is present with me. I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? This great, this good, this holy man, who had as perfect a heart, I am persuaded, as ever any man upon earth had, excepting our Lord Jesus Christ, was not so perfect, as to be free from indwelling sin. The beloved disciple, the apostle John, that lay in our Lord's bosom, and enjoyed so much fellowship with him, bears testimony to this, and says, If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. And long before this great and good man, Solomon, the wisest of men, had made this observation, that there is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good, and sinneth not. In many things we all offend. A man may be justified from all sin, and in that sense, be free from it; so all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. In that sense, a man may be perfectly righteous. So Noah was, of whom this character is given. He was a just man, and perfect in his generation. How was he perfect? not by his own righteousness; no; he was a preacher of righteousness by faith; and no doubt he was justified by the righteousness he was a preacher of: and that was the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. In and by this righteousness, men are made perfectly

comely. All their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake; so that when they are sought for they shall not be found. God sees no iniquity in them: they are without fault before the throne: but in themselves they are not perfect. The heart of man is extremely, is desperately wicked; and therefore every sensible sinner prays as David did, that God would cleanse him from secret faults, and keep him from presumptuous sins. Though God sprinkles clean water upon his people, in justifying and pardoning them; cleansing them from all their filthiness and abomination; yet, with respect to themselves, who can say they are pure, and free from sinful thoughts? No man is perfect in this sense.

No man is perfectly holy. Though the work of holiness and grace is begun in them by the Spirit of sanctification, it is but begun; it is not perfected. The God of peace will sanctify wholly those who are in any measure justified; but as yet they are not perfectly sanctified. Nor are the graces of the Spirit of God, wrought in their hearts, perfect. Faith is not perfect; there is something wanting in the faith of the strongest believer. The disciples of our Lord had reason to pray, Lord increase our faith. Love also is imperfect in the best of saints. There is room always to pray, that their love to God, Christ, and one another, may abound yet more and more. Hope is imperfect; sometimes very low, as it was with the church, when she said, My hope and my strength are perished from the Lord. Patience likewise is not perfect, in submission to the will of God, under afflictive dispensations of providence. Therefore, says the apostle, Let patience have its perfect work. Knowledge is imperfect. The path of the just, is indeed, as the shining light, which shines, more and more unto the perfect day; but the perfect day is not yet come. We know but in part. There is such a thing as growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. Whereas there would be no room for it, if this were perfect. No man's heart is perfect in this life. None are free from sin, completely holy; nor are the graces of the Spirit of God in them, arrived at perfection. But when the heart is said to be perfect, the meaning, I apprehend is, sincere and upright. When the ten tribes came to make David king over all Israel, it is said, they came with a perfect heart; that is, in the uprightness and sincerity of their souls. They were quite cordial in what they came about. So David and his people express their great admiration, that they should be enabled, by the Lord, to offer so willingly, with a perfect heart, for the service of God. They did what they did heartily, sincerely, and without any grudging. In this sense we are to understand it here; whose heart is perfect. Such in whom God has created a right spirit, are styled in Scripture the upright in heart. {[Ps 97:11](#)} Their faith is unfeigned, their hope is without hypocrisy, and their love without dissimulation.

Their faith is unfeigned. The end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and faith unfeigned. Such an unfeigned faith Timothy is said to have. Now there is a faith, which is feigned; such as that of Simon Magus, who said he believed, when he was in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. But faith is unfeigned, when a man with the heart believes unto righteousness. Hope also is unfeigned, where it is true. There is, indeed, the hope of the hypocrite; which will be of no avail when God takes away his soul. But true hope is unfeigned. It is a good hope through grace. It is founded on the person, blood, and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. The true grace of love is without dissimulation. It is not in tongue only, or in word; but in deed, and in truth. Love to Christ is in sincerity of heart; and love to the brethren, is with a pure heart fervently, as the apostle says. Now, where these graces are unfeigned, free from all guile and hypocrisy, the heart may be said to be perfect. The worship of God also, should be from the heart, and in a spiritual manner. In some, indeed, it is merely formal and customary: they draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, when their hearts are removed far from him. In others it is otherwise: they draw nigh to God with their hearts; they call upon him in truth, in the uprightness of their souls; their worship is performed under the influence of the Spirit of God; and their hearts concerned therein. Now such, in a gospel sense, may be said to have a perfect heart. But I proceed to consider,

2. The exertion of divine power on their behalf. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro in behalf of such persons, to shew himself strong; or (as in the margin of some of your Bibles), strongly to hold with such; to be on their side, or take their part: to relieve and protect them. The Lord is, in himself, strong. He is the mighty God: the Almighty. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength. If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong. If I speak of mighty men on earth, or of mighty angels in heaven, they are nothing in comparison of God. Who is a strong Lord, like unto thee? and to thy faithfulness round about thee? He hath a mighty arm: strong is his hand, and high is his right hand, to do things exceeding great and wonderful. He hath, in a variety of ways, shewn himself to be strong; as in creating all things out of nothing; in upholding all things by the word of his power; in the redemption of lost sinners; in delivering their souls out of the hands of Satan, who is stronger than they: in all these, and in other instances, he has shewn himself to be strong. But particularly in a way of providence; as it is concerned for his people. His eyes run to and fro through the whole earth, to shew himself strong on the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him. He shews himself strong in supplying their wants, whether spiritual or temporal; for he is able to supply all their need,

according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ. He is able to do more for them than they are able to ask or think. He shews himself strong, in supplying them with every thing needful for time and eternity: in supplying and supporting them under all their afflictions and temptations. He will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear; but will, with the temptation, make a way for their escape. He who hath encouraged them to cast their burden upon him, hath promised to sustain them: hath said, that the righteous shall never be moved: and he is as good as his word. He upholds his people with the right hand of his righteousness; puts underneath everlasting arms, and shews himself to be the mighty God, by supporting them under such trials and exercises, which otherwise, would be intolerable. His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, on the behalf of his people, in strengthening them under all their weaknesses. They are poor weak creatures. Sensible are they of it, and cry unto him for strength. He hears their cries, strengthens them with strength in their souls, with might in their inner man; and makes them strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might: strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He strengthens them to perform every duty required of them, and to exercise every grace wrought in them; to withstand every temptation which besets them, and every corruption which arises up in their hearts, to bear what he is pleased to lay upon them; and to do the work appointed for them in their day and generation.

The eyes of the Lord run to and fro, to protect and defend them. Sin, Satan, and the world, are too strong for them. They would never be able to stand their ground, were it not for the assistance and protection which they have from God, in a way of special providence and grace. But he not only places his angels as guards over them, but he likewise appoints salvation to be walls and bulwarks for them. Yea, he himself is a wall of fire round about them, and a glory in the midst of them. Thus does he shew himself strong in their behalf. Happy are the persons that are under his special care in all these instances.

Let us now praise and adore the grace of our God, if we have any reason to hope and believe, that we have been under his special providential care ever since we have had a being: and especially if he has distinguished us by the blessings of his grace and goodness. Truly we have abundant reason to bless and praise his holy name, if he hath dealt with us after this manner. In how many instances must it have been bad with us, if his eyes had not been over us; if they had not run to and fro, to shew himself strong on our behalf, in things temporal? And how sad would have been our condition, if he had not expressed his love to us, in calling us by his grace? Let what he hath done for

us encourage us to put our trust in him for the future. Let us not rely upon the creature. This was Asa's sin who, notwithstanding all that God had done for him, distrusted his providence: relied upon the creature, and not upon his God. O let us take warning, and not act after this manner; but trust in the living God. Our great concern, under a sense of all should be, to live to his honour. Let us now attend to the advice that Solomon gives at the dedication of the temple, Let your hearts be perfect with the Lord your God; to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.